

REGIONAL REPORT NOVEMBER 2019 FROM DIAKONIA - DRAE AFRICA AND EUROPE

REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2019

The regional conference took place Wednesday 19th June to Monday 24th June 2019 at Queen Margaret University in Musselburgh close to Edinburgh, Scotland. The theme of the conference was “in such a time as this” and we had close to 200 participants. The conference celebrated the 25th year anniversary of DRAE; founded in 1944 in Stirling, Scotland.

The planning of the conference was a joint duty by the ExCo and the Scottish planning group. The planning group took especially care of all the logistics and they did a marvellous job!

From the program:

Bible studies and Big Sing by reverend John Bell from Iona

Diaconate discussions on Emerging styles of ministry and How climate change affects ministry

Recognising Black Thursday

Traditional Scottish happenings like Ceilidh, Pipers and Whiskey

Services, social gatherings and making friendship.

REGIONAL BOARD MEETING

The ExCo had its annual meeting around the Regional Conference, two days before and half a day afterwards; 17th – 18th and 24th June. Beside the ordinary issues the ExCo spent some time on two very important issues:

- Domicile and Constitutions
- Strategy and Vision

STANDING COMMITTEE

The standing committee (SC) consist of the Secretary, the Treasurer and the Regional President. The committee mainly works and communicate through e-mails. Since it was not economically viable to have an Exco meeting in January 2019 since we were meeting in June, we decided that the SC should meet to be able to have discussions with the Planning Group for the Conference. The meeting took place January 10th – 13th January 2019.

Important issues from the meeting:

- Regional Conference 2019. The SC went through tasks and program both by itself and together with the Planning Group
- Assembly of Delegates at the Conference
- Applications to the Travel Fund
- Constitution and change of Domicile
- New members
- Officers

THE GROUPS

DRAE is quite big and divided into 9 subregions or groups as we call it. Each member of the board is given responsibility for one group; to stay in contact with the members and do necessary follow ups.

For each group there is a written report. My report will only have some highlights from these reports.

GROUP 1 - UK

Gordon Pennykid – treasurer (W)

Highlights and special events

The Methodist Diaconal Order met twice at Swanick since we last met as DRAE, Gordon Pennykid and Ibronke Oworu attended in 2018. This was a great event and we were well received.

Church of Scotland Diaconate- at the General Assembly in 2018 a new vision report welcomed and received enthusiastic responses.

At GA in 2019 the structural change of the Church was approved, and a new Council created who will oversee Diaconate.

Presbyterian Church of Ireland

The General Assembly has begun consideration of the gender-specie nature of the role of the diaconate within PCI. These preliminary discussions include an exploration of how a non-ordained but called office of the church which may be open to all, might assist the mission of the church.

GROUP 2 and 3 – Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Norway

Marianne Uri Øverland – regional president (W)

Highlights and special events

2018 was a special year for *Haralds plass Diaconal Foundation*. They celebrated their 100 years anniversary. It started with a service at the Cathedral of Bergen on 1st May the day they count as their foundation day. Many people were present, about 400 and the bishop conduct the service. In the afternoon about 120 people were invited to Haralds plass for a reception. So far, during 2019 they have opened a hospital in Sierra Leone.

A challenge from *Diakonissestiftelsen in Copenhagen*

The Deacon community has named these challenges for themselves:

- We will be working hard to attract new deacons into our community. We have established new guidelines and education to attract a younger generation.
- In the Deacon community we will sharpen the attention to extradite the mission statement in the new regulations:
 - to support and contribute to the development and exercise of diakonia in the Danish People's Church, in Danish society and at international level
 - to participate in the activities of the Deaconess Foundation,
 - to provide support and actively participate in a time-related development of the Deaconess Foundation - based on the Foundation's traditions and values

- through the Deacon community to be the source of inspiration for the members' diaconal life and work

The Diaconal Institution in Lahti has been established in 1869 and now it is the 150's Anniversary Year. It began with the visit of the Bishop Matti Repo in January. On 25th of May was a beautiful celebration for the "diaconal family of the house" as well as for the co-operative organisations. About 150 people took part to the celebration.

GROUP 4 – KWV (Kaiserswerther Verband) Germany, France, Austria, Poland
Birgit Banzhaf (W)

Highlights and special events

As the far largest member of DRAE (and of DIAKONIA World Federation) the *KWV* consists of approximately 70 diaconal communities, motherhouses and diaconal institutions throughout Germany. Altogether around 60,000 people are working within these institutions in every possible diaconal way and round about 10.000 students and trainees. Among these employees there are around 1,600 deaconesses and around 3,000 diaconal sisters and brothers. KWV connects diaconal institutions and communities that have developed from the tradition of deaconess motherhouses. They still promote diaconal ministry as an important task of the church and foster communities of diaconal sisters and brothers.

As diaconal communities become smaller and smaller, diaconal institutions of KWV seek other ways to preserve at least the spirit of deaconesses within their businesses. With great success some of them offer a diaconal basic course for employees, in eleven cities for example Dresden, Kaiserswerth and Stuttgart. This shows that there it still interests in learning more about diakonia and the Christian call to it – but people hesitate to commit themselves to a community with certain rules. DIAKONIA/DRAE should try to find ways in including these people as well.

In September 2018 was celebrated the 95th anniversary of the "*Eben-Ezer*"
Deaconess Motherhouse in Dziegielow, Poland

The motherhouse was founded in 1923 by Pastor Karol Kulisz (Born in Dziegielow on June 12th, 1873). After World War I he became known as a preacher, as the leader of the pietist awakening movement, as a social activist and as a patriarch. Even as a vicar in Ligotka Kameralna (today in the Czech Republic) the "Betesda" Senior and Nursing Home.

GROUP 5 - The Netherlands, Switzerland, the EVFD (Europäischer Verband Freikirchlicher Diakoniewerke) and the DGD (Deutscher Gemeinschafts Diakonieverband e.V.)

Elisabeth Meier (W)

Highlights and special events

Europäischer Verband Freikirchlicher Diakoniewerke, EVFD: Every two years a conference of the Association takes place. This will be from September 12 - 15, 2019 in Tbilisi, Georgia, with the interesting theme of "*Diaconal work in an interreligious context – how we can build trust*".

GROUP 6 - Malawi, South Africa, Madagascar, Tanzania, Zambia
Gwynne Lawlor

Highlights and special events

This region, covering the area from Tanzania going southwards to the Republic of South Africa (incl. Malawi, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia), has proved challenging in terms of growing membership of DRAE. The denominations include Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican, United Church of Zambia and Churches of Christ (Malawi). There is still much work to be done in making and retaining contact with current member organizations, and potential new members. Response to requests for contact details and reports continues to be disappointing.

GROUP 7 - Cameroon, Egypt, Rwanda, Kenya, Nigeria
Ibironke Oworu - Vice President of the region (W)

Highlights and special events

It is encouraging to report that at the last National Conference of *Methodist Church Nigeria*, delegates at the Conference voted in favour of training Deaconesses apart from Ministers and to design a different curriculum of training altogether for Deaconesses. To us this a step in the right direction.

GROUP 8 - Verband Evangelischer Diakonen, Diakoninnen und Diakonatsgemeinschaften in Deutschland (VEDD), Germany
Armin Raunigk

Highlights and special events

Glossary - Male and female Deacons and Diaconate

In 2018 VEDD has prepared the „Glossary - Male and female Deacons and Diaconate “including public statements of VEDD and churchly announcements.

We see the need to talk about the position and goals of VEDD depending ministry and profession in Church and Diaconal Work. The glossary will be helpful for an understandable discussion about the points of view depending Office and Job between the different professions. The glossary shows the standing of VEDD as well as positions and laws of the different „Federal Evangelical Churches “in Germany. The glossary figures out the different churchly traditions and the current situation for employment in Church and Diaconal Work.

The glossary shows the agreed view of the Evangelical Church in Germany to male and female Deacons as well as the discussion about the „Ministry of a Pastor “and „Ministry of a Deacon “.

The glossary will be helpful for all communities, for the federal churches they belong to and for the professional public.

GROUP 9 - Zehlendorfer Verband für ev. Diakonie (ZVeD), Germany
Gunhild Heidke

Highlights and special events

We celebrated the 125th anniversary of the *Ev. Diakonieverein Berlin-Zehlendorf* e.V. (EvDV) on 11 April 2019 with about 750 guests in Berlin. It began with a celebration and blessing service in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. The

sermon was delivered by Diakonie President Ulrich Lilie. Afterwards it went on in the Berlin Urania. Invited were Federal Health Minister Jens Spahn, doctor and cabaret artist Dr. Eckart von Hirschhausen and Christine Vogler, Deputy President of the German Nursing Council. The event was moderated by Barbara Manterfeld-Wormit, radio and television representative of the EKBO. Sisters and brothers of the Diakonische Gemeinschaft Berlin-Zehlendorf handed over a position paper to the Minister of Health on the "situation of professional care in Germany".

In January 2019 a joint meeting of the Sisters' Councils took place, which met with interest and lively participation. The topic was "Future perspectives of the sisterhoods/ communities", a topic which has been intensively dealt with by the EvDV in the past two years within the framework of the "Project Future".

OFFICERS

Martin Vogler – treasurer – with a special look for East Europe
Barbara Weidmann – accountant
Diane Kaufmann - webmaster

NEW APPLICATIONS

The Diaconate in the Scottish Episcopalian Church was received as a new member at the conference.

There is also an application from United Methodist deacons and deaconesses in Kenya to be discussed in this ExCo.

Applications for new membership are still being considered by all of the new orders of Anglican deacons. However, they may decide to join under one umbrella Provincial membership, or as Regional entities, rather than individual dioceses. This will be discussed at Regional meetings and at ACSA Conferences.

The possibility of a Lutheran diaconal association joining is also being explored

ECUMENICAL PARTNERS

Eurodiaconia

DRAE has signed a memorandum of understanding with Eurodiaconia. One of the items is to take part in the others general meeting e.g. Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Eurodiaconia and Regional Conference for DRAE.

The AGM for 2018 was in Wroclaw, Poland 13th – 15th June 2018 with the theme "The future of Social Europe?". They had good speakers like professor Piotr Bledowski and Rev Kathy Galloway, devotions, study visits and nice social gatherings. The AGM 2019 was in Edinburgh and Gordon Pennykid attended from DRAE. The GS Heather Roy had planned to come to the DRAE conference but was not able to come. She sent a video greeting to the conference.

World Council of Churches

DIAKONIA has for many years been an advisor to the World Council of Churches and gets invitations to their Central Committee meetings. Their last Central Committee meeting took place 15th to 21st June 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland. A report was given to the ExCo last year. Their next meeting will be in Geneva 18th – 24th March 2020.

The secretary for diaconal matters Matthew Ross had planned to come to the DRAE conference but had to go to Mozambique instead. He sent a video greeting to the conference.

ReDi

Diakonia gets invitations to conferences arranged by ReDi – The International Society for the Research and Study of Diaconia and Christian Social Practice. Lately no one has been able to join.

KAIRE

The Kaire meeting is biannual and took place at Markersdorf in the Schlesische Oberlausitz, (in the "Dreiländereck" of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic) from 15th to 20th May 2019. Sister Elisabeth Meier represented DRAE.

They were 17 participants from 6 countries, 14 Sisters from 7 different Orders (Protestant and Catholic) and 3 Pastors of the Church of England, the Anglican Church and the "unierte Kirche" (Germany)

The theme was "*Storms on the Lake*" - *why are you so afraid? do you not yet have faith?* (Marc 4:35 - 5:1) Reverent Dr. Dagmar Heller was the speaker, in German, French and English herself!

It is interesting to know, that KAIRE started after DIAKONIA was founded, to have an ecumenical setting where protestant, catholic and orthodox people can meet.

In 2021 there will be the 50th jubilee of KAIRE.

OTHER CONTACT

During the year the main contact goes via e-mail. It is an easy way to communicate. Some of the correspondence will be from people more interested in being supported than to actually become members.

For 2018 there were two invitations from member organisations to visit them. Straight after the ExCo meeting in January I went to Tallinn to take part in the Pastor's Conference of the Lutheran Church in Estonia and give a workshop on diakonia. Due to flight cancellations I was not able to take part in the full program but had some good and interesting discussions with the church leaders. In September 13th – 16th. I was invited to take part in the Third Provincial Conference of Anglican Deacons in South Africa at Stellenbosch. The Theme of the Conference was "From the Altar to the Street". I was impressed with the work they are doing in the Church and in the society. And with their efforts to make them be together as one group by a Constitution for the deacons in all of the Province. The Conference had solid devotional gatherings, very good and

including social gatherings and fruitful discussions. A field visit to a youth prison was a moving, touching and impressive experience.

NEXT MEETING:

Board meeting 2020:

The next ExCo meeting will take place in Frankfurt 12th – 14th July 2020 just before the meeting of the World.

Marianne Uri Øverland
Regional President