

**DOTAC (DIAKONIA of the Americas and the Caribbean)
REPORT to DIAKONIA World Federation
Executive Committee 2019**



As one of three geographical regions in the DIAKONIA World Federation, DOTAC, is comprised of twelve diaconal communities. The DOTAC Central Committee/Board of Directors consists of one representative from each of the member communities. Six of the communities are American, four Canadian, one is based in the Caribbean and one in Brazil. Five are Lutheran, three are Methodist, two Episcopal/Anglican, one Presbyterian, and one United Church.



The Board meets annually face-to-face and we have begun to schedule supplemental electronic meetings in between these annual gatherings. In November, 2018 we met in Valparaiso, Indiana and this year we gathered before and after our Quadrennial conference in Vancouver. In these meetings, we have addressed issues related to

- **Community Updates:** We receive reports from each of the 12 communities noting the commonalities and differences amongst us. We have begun to analyze the patterns in our challenges and concerns and will be developing strategies to address these issues.
- **Finances:** We are currently developing a set of financial policies and guidelines.
- **By-laws:** A new ordering and clarifying of some issues has led to a new set of bylaws passed in May of 2019.

- **Social Justice:** We have been supporting Thursdays in Black as a social focus since November 2018. Our fourth DOVE (Diakonia Overcoming Violence Experience) is being planned for Jamaica in September 20-26, 2020.
- **Theological Reflection:** At our meetings we have devoted time to discussing various documents and community statements related to diaconal identity and practice. And we are imagining ways to encourage and broaden such research and study.

The Board's focus, over the last year and more, has been devoted to planning the 2019 quadrennial conference. In August, the Vancouver conference addressed the theme of "Respecting Covenant – Risking the Journey toward Reconciliation" through the three lenses of:

- indigeneity,
- eco-justice
- global migration.

Almost 160 persons attended the event on the beautiful University of British Columbia campus. Evaluations indicated that the participants found the experience rich and powerful. The speakers, workshops, bible studies and site visits presented challenging and inspiring topics, ideas and motivation. The worship, spiritual practice options and music offered varied approaches and diverse voices. Community was enhanced through table group discussion, a cultural evening, and free time connections. The next assembly will take place in four years, 2023, in the Caribbean.



Transition has become a norm for the DOTAC Board of Directors. Since June of 2018, we have had changes in many of our officers:

- a new president (Ted Dodd, from Diakonia of The United Church of Canada),
- vice president (Noreen Stevens, from the Deaconess Community of the ELCA),
- treasurer (Lisa Polito, from the Lutheran Diaconal Association),
- secretary (Judy Whaley, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada) and
- Second Representative to DIAKONIA Executive Committee (Jan Cherry, ELCA Deacons Ecumenical Engagement Affinity Group).

Thanks are due to those who served previously, with dedication and passion,

- Jan Cherry (President)
- Victoria Rebeck (Vice President)
- Pam Nesbit (Treasurer)
- John Struthers (Secretary).

We have also had several of our representatives replaced or exchanged, and one of our long-term Board members died last November, the much loved and respected Ingrid Vogt, (Igreja Evangélica de Confissão Luterana no Brasil).

After the changes in ministry rostering in the ELCA, the new community of the ELCA Deacons, Ecumenical Engagement Affinity Group, was also welcomed into DOTAC. A celebration ritual was held in Vancouver to mark this historic moment.

Of course, all these alterations involve stress, and sadness and some tension, but it also means we have doubled down on our adaptability, good humour and grace. We have managed these transitions with faith, flexibility, and an unshaken, solid sense of purpose.

As a Board, we have not just been task-oriented; we have attempted to model, and to be, a community of faith living and praying with one another in right relationship and led by diaconal vision. Our meetings have shifted to include not only business but more of an emphasis on education, theological reflection, spiritual practice, and intentional relationship building.

In imagining ways forward, we engaged participants at the Quadrennial in Vancouver to discuss our purpose and mission and imagine ways we could further live into those goals. We will be spending time examining suggestions and comments as input for our Board and the organization's future. We have hopes for reflecting further on diaconal theology, encouraging the diakonia of all believers and enhancing our ecumenical and international diaconal connections. This organization exists to promote the ministry of justice and compassion, in the church and in the world. May God grant us the wisdom, foresight and strength to further that goal.

Submitted with respect,
Ted Dodd, DOTAC President