



# **DIAKONIA**

## **News**

Newsletter  
of  
FOUNDATION DIAKONIA  
WORLD FEDERATION  
of  
DIACONAL  
ASSOCIATIONS  
and  
DIACONAL COMMUNITIES

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**No. 101, December 2015**

## From Your Editors

In the following pages, you will read of the work of DIAKONIA's Executive Committee at its 2015 meeting in Chicago, Illinois. We specifically chose to meet in Chicago so that Executive Committee members would have the opportunity to see Loyola University, the site of the 2017 DIAKONIA World Federation Assembly.



*Laura Lazar*

Chicago welcomed us with lovely warm weather for much of our time. We met at the Cenacle Retreat Center, which is located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Chicago, and is about five miles south of Loyola. (Some of the European Executive Committee members among us walked those five miles for our visit to Loyola. We Americans could not imagine doing so and rode in a car!) Lincoln Park turned out to be a wonderful place to spend a week. It had great neighborhood shops and was within walking distance of Lake Michigan, a park, and a zoo.

I hope that, in reading this newsletter, you will learn that, in spite of the temptations of warm weather and interesting surroundings, the Executive Committee worked hard. We devoted our time to the usual administrative activities required of any committee, and then we spent significant time working on plans for the 2017 Assembly. We particularly

appreciated meeting with the 2017 Assembly Local Arrangements Committee and learning about the work that they are doing.

Please keep in mind the dates of the next DIAKONIA World Federation Assembly - *June 28 - July 5, 2017* - as you make your travel plans for 2017. The next issue of DIAKONIA News, which will come out in about eight months, will contain much more information about the Assembly.

Finally if you have comments or suggestions about how we can improve DIAKONIA News, please contact me.

May this season bring you hope, transformation, and fulfillment as we live into a new year.

*Laura K. Lazar*  
*English Editor*



*Deaconess Ulrike Kellner*

You might have wondered why the 2015 issue of DIAKONIA News is coming out so late (we still hope to send it out until the end of December). It's because the Executive Meeting was extremely late this year, as we met mid-November. Since then, Laura and I have worked hard to compile and edit all the reports given at that meeting. Enjoy the information!

*Dc. Ulrike Kellner*  
*German Editor*

## Reflections from the President

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of DIAKONIA News. Thanks to the editors, Laura Lazar and Ulrike Kellner, for compiling this edition.

This year I had the opportunity to attend two regional gatherings - the DRAE Assembly in Norway, and the DOTAC Conference in Brazil. It was wonderful to get to know diaconal ministry agents engaged in such diverse expressions of diaconal ministry. It was humbling to meet people who have spent so much of their lives in ministries of service. I found their gentle determination and vision inspiring. I also met people who have come to diaconal ministry after establishing careers in other areas. Their vocational life shapes their diaconal ministry in dynamic ways. And it was wonderful also to meet younger adults who have come to diaconal ministry with a fresh way of looking at it, and who will help us all to clarify our own focus and challenge our assumptions by the questions they ask and the practices they develop.

In every generation, God raises up people who orient their lives towards service, who are sustained by communities of faith for their ministry, who stand alongside those who suffer, and who work for justice and peace. And it is a privilege to meet such people for whom service is an inescapable response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who work among people who are hurting, vulnerable, marginalized, oppressed, suffering, overlooked, and even the 'unlovely'. Diaconal ministry is a tangible sign of the presence of God in the everyday world. And we need no reminders about the considerable challenges in our world that call for a response guided by compassion and care, reconciliation and forgiveness, and understanding.

DIAKONIA enables us to learn more about the diverse expressions of diaconal ministry, to pray for and with each other, and to build friendships that acknowledge as well as transcend cultural, social and geographical boundaries. In so many ways, DIAKONIA is a microcosm of the kind of relationships and priorities we would want to see our world - with mutual respect, joy and laughter, friendship, compassion, kindness, care, practical service, peace, reconciliation, and justice for all. Our ministry is a part of God's transforming mission in the world. God bless you in your ministry!

As one year draws to a close, and another begins, we celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus. The gospel story speaks to us of God revealed in the birth of a vulnerable child in a dusty shed, who received visitors - firstly, ordinary workers considered 'polluted' because they worked with animals in the fields outside the towns; and then, educated men who travelled long distances to see the baby, and yet who came from a very different religious, cultural and social background. In time, this baby's family were forced to flee as refugees from state sanctioned violence and murder to another country where they found safety until the danger had passed. And, in time, it would be this child who would reveal most fully the breadth and depth of God's love for the world. Praise be to God!

Love's sacredness is born anew  
a baby touched by grace;  
God's gift to all who see the Child  
in every human face.  
*(words by Helen Wiltshire)*

*Rev Sandy Boyce  
President  
DIAKONIA World Federation.*

# DIAKONIA EXECUTIVE REPORTS 2015

## REPORTS OF THE OFFICERS

### Report of the President

*By President Rev Sandy Boyce*

***God's grace and peace be with you!***

#### **Trade Register, Netherlands Chamber of Commerce**

It has required much work and attention to detail to update DIAKONIA's information for the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce trade register. I visited Bob van Zijl, DIAKONIA's lawyer, in Utrecht in June this year to discuss the issues involved and to plan for the future.

DIAKONIA has been using an address in the Netherlands for correspondence, and everything is written in Dutch. We did not receive vital correspondence, which meant the trade register had not been updated, and we were in breach of the rules as an organization. We were concerned there might have been a financial penalty imposed. Thankfully, the update is now complete, and our status has been restored with the Chamber of Commerce with no penalty. Many thanks to Laura Lazar for her role in clarifying the issues involved and the urgency to respond and to Traude Leitenberger for following up with members of the Executive Committee who needed to provide further specific documentation.

The question about where DIAKONIA is registered will be an ongoing conversation. Now that the Trade Register has been completed to the satisfaction of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, the Executive Committee will need to consider the logistics and potential liabilities of moving the registration from the Netherlands to Germany. This will be a separate item for our agenda.

#### **Attendance at DIAKONIA regional conferences**

This year there have been two regional conferences: one in the DRAE region and one in the DOTAC region. I was able to attend both.

#### **DRAE Regional Assembly, Kongshaug, Norway (July 1 - 5, 2015)**

Theme: *The eye of the storm'. Diaconia - the Biblical challenge for the whole church in the world we live in*



*DIAKONIA World President Sandy Boyce*

It was very special to join DRAE members at the regional assembly in Norway in such a beautiful setting. There were many highlights including the click-clack of knitting needles as participants knitted to contribute to blankets being stitched together for children in need in Estonia. A practical thing to do during the sessions! Many memories of the gathering: the cultural night; the day visit to diaconal institutions in Bergen; the trip by ferry to the island home of Ole Bornemann Bull, a famous 19th century Norwegian

musician, where we were treated to a wonderful concert with piano and violin; thoughtful and insightful presentations by various speakers; and many great conversations with participants.



*At the DRAE Conference*

***DOTAC 13th Regional Conference,  
Porto Alegre, Brazil  
(October 21-25, 2015)***

*Theme: Jesus' Diakonia From Crumbs to Whole Communion*

(I wrote this before attending the conference.)

The theme draws on the biblical text of Mark 7:24-30 (Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman). Despite economic advancements, there are still many people who live under the table and make do with the crumbs. Who are those people and why they are kept from participating on reflections and decisions that are taken around the table? What are the signs for hope and transformation? What are the chances for changing places: from crumbs to the table of whole communion?



*Consecration of Aunty Denise Champion*

Through action and reflection, diakonia intends to promote people's ascension from under the table to around the table. The conference will include presentations, Bible study, workshops, worship, and small group time to explore these questions raised by the theme. A very comprehensive range of visits to social and diaconal projects has been arranged. The DOTAC Central Committee will meet before the Conference, and I hope to be able to join them for a day. I am privileged to have been asked to prepare a sermon for the closing worship. I am very much looking forward to the opportunity to meet diaconal ministry agents in the DOTAC region.



*Anglican Service at DOTAC Conference*

**DAP Region**

The DAP region has not convened a regional gathering though individual associations have held their own national gatherings including DUCA (Diakonia in the Uniting Church in Australia) in February 2015 with the theme *What's Next: Diaconal Ministry in Changing Landscapes*; the Methodist Deaconess Order in Fiji in February; and Diakonia in the Philippines (DIAKPhils) at Silliman University, October 26-30, with the theme *Reclaiming and Embracing the theology of the Diaconate*. The first Aboriginal Deacon in the Uniting Church, Aunty Denise Champion, was ordained in June. Denise is a colleague and friend, and this was a special moment for the church.



### **President's Blogsite**

This blogsite is a way of sharing stories from diaconal communities and associations in DIAKONIA. In exploring websites and Facebook, it also helps me connect with the wider work of the DIAKONIA World Federation. The vitality of the blogsite, of DIAKONIA News (Ulrike, Laura), and the website (Diane) depends entirely on accessing stories of interest. Thankfully, social media and the internet have helped greatly with many associations regularly updating their pages with current news.

### **Monthly prayer letter**

The new way of doing the prayer letter has been very successful in both continuing the tradition as well as

offering a wide range in content and style by the various contributors. Thanks are due to the members of the Executive Committee for their contributions, to Traude for reminding us when contributions are due, to Ulrike and Laura for translation, and Diane for uploading.

### **2017 Assembly and beyond**

There is much to do when we meet in Chicago to engage with the key people who have begun aspects of the planning work and to identify specific responsibilities and timelines. Please come to Chicago prepared to pull up your sleeves and get down to work with both the planning and the delegation of tasks at the conclusion of the meeting that will need further work.

## **DIAKONIA World Assembly 2017 June 28 – July 5, 2017**

**Chicago / Illinois / USA – Loyola University**

### **Shaken by the Wind....**



### **Vom Wind erfasst....**



## Report of the Secretary

*By Sister Traude Leitenberger*

It has been long time since our last Executive Committee meeting, which was held in July 2014 in Kaiserswerth /Germany. The minutes of our meeting were prepared and sent to Executive Committee members to confirm. In December 2014 the editors prepared the 2014 issue of DIAKONIA News, and it was sent to the Executive Committee, the alternates, all DIAKONIA member organizations, and subscribers.



*DIAKONIA World Secretary Traude Leitenberger*

### **Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands**

After our meeting, in August 2014, Treasurer Laura Lazar, President Sandy Boyce, and I worked to update registration of DIAKONIA with the Chamber of Commerce in the Netherlands. Personal data for the Executive Committee members was updated. The process still continues. (See the report from President Sandy Boyce.) The official address of the foundation currently is my address: Melanchthonstrasse 12, 72116 Mössingen, Germany.

### **Church Day in Stuttgart, June 3 - 7, 2015**

The Ecumenical Church Day took place in Stuttgart. This event is held every two years in one of the larger German cities. There are around 80,000 daily participants. Kaisers-

werth Verband, VEDD, and DWF shared an information booth.



*Former German President Köhler visits the information booth at Church Day*

Our focus was on DIACONICAL Education in Germany and worldwide. Prior to the event I asked several diaconal organizations if they were able to offer an internship to German deaconal students or if they might be interested in student exchanges. During the event, we had interesting discussions about community life with young people. There was no specific request for an internship.

### **Membership fees**

In February the invoice for membership fees for DOTAC and DAP were sent. In 2015, for the first time the membership fees for DRAE and DWF were collected together. I sent the updated membership list to DRAE Treasurer Martin Vogler.

### **Monthly DIAKONIA Prayer**

A new system for writing the monthly DIAKONIA Prayer took effect in August 2014. During the Executive Committee meeting, a list was compiled; each member registered for one month up through December 2015. I reminded the person responsible for the assigned month by the end of the

previous month. Laura Lazar and Ulrike Kellner translated the prayer either into English or German, and Diane Kaufman, the webmaster, posted the prayer. I also sent the monthly prayer by e-mail to the Executive Committee and all our members.

### **Post-assembly tour for German participants in Norway**

After the DRAE Regional Conference in Kongshaug, I organized a trip from Bergen to Oslo. Twenty-three participants took part. Virve Tynneberg invited the group to a private guided tour in Oslo, and we had a fantastic day together. We visited the sights of the city and had an interesting visit to the motherhouse at Lovisenberg.

## **Report of the Webmaster**

*By Diane Kaufmann, Webmaster  
www.diakonia-world.org*

The website is operating smoothly but more content is desirable.



*Diane Kaufmann*

Website statistics for the past twelve months: We average 8 visits a day with most of these being first time visitors.

The focus for regular updating of the website has been prayers from Executive Committee members. This has worked well.

We need content for the following pages especially: Theology and Justice; News and Resources; 2017 Assembly

### **Important Internet and E-mail Addresses**

#### **WEBSITES**

DIAKONIA World Federation  
DAP  
DRAE  
DOTAC

<http://www.diakonia-world.org>  
<http://www.dap.info>  
<http://www.drae.info>  
<http://www.dotac.info>

#### **WORLD "OFFICERS"**

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#### **REGIONAL**

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drae.president@diakonia-world.org  
drae.secretary@diakonia-world.org  
drae.treasurer@diakonia-world.org



# Report on DIAKONIA World Federation Facebook Page

*By Lisa Polito, Administrator*



We currently have 467 members on the DIAKONIA World Federation Facebook page. The posts on the page are mostly questions, the President's blog, the prayer letter, and the occasional picture. This year, I have shared photos that I received on my Facebook page – from Deaconesses in the Philippines, the DRAE meeting etc. For a while a diaconal minister from the United Church of Canada was sharing his blog on the site. Sharilynn Upsdell from the United Church of Canada used the site to share pictures of pins that she had taken for her

master's thesis. We have created an event page for the DIAKONIA Assembly in Chicago. We need people to review membership requests to the page. We need everyone to post on the page not just Sandy. We need everyone to advertise the group to the people in their member groups. Currently we do not have any social media guidelines.

Some options are available at <http://socialmediagovernance.com/policies/>. Does something like this need to be adopted?

# Report of the Treasurer

*By Laura Lazar, Treasurer*

Presented below are the actual and budgeted statements of operating income and expenditures for the year 2014. In 2014, our actual operating income was a slightly higher than our budgeted income, while our actual operating expenditures were lower than budgeted.

Not reflected in this report are the monies that we gratefully received as a contribution from the 2013 Assembly surplus. That amount equaled over 70.000 Euros and is reflected in increases to the General and Endowment Funds.

<b>In Euros</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Member fees	26.541	30.000
Interest	567	250
Donations	4.953	500
Draw on General Fund	6.905	14.100
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.966</b>	<b>44.850</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Executive Committee	20.190	20.000
Office expenses	985	750
Communication	53	500
Professional services	2.738	5.000
Honorariums	15.000	15.000
President's Discretionary Fund	0	1.000
Regional support	0	1.500
Ecumenical contacts	0	1.000
Miscellaneous	0	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>38.966</b>	<b>44.850</b>

**Fees, donations and contributions you may send to the following account**  
**Bank account No 4002199                      Stiftung DIAKONIA**  
**Evangelische Bank (former Ev. Kreditgenossenschaft), BLZ 520 604 10**  
**IBAN: DE23 5206 0410 0004 0021 99                      BIC: GENODEF1EK1**

# DIAKONIA EXECUTIVE REPORTS 2015

## DIAKONIA Executive Committee November 2015 – Summary Minutes

The DIAKONIA Executive Committee met in Chicago, November 12-16, 2015. The following provides a summary of some of the discussions and decisions.

### **Executive Committee Membership**

The Executive is well served by its elected members. Many have served for more than one term, and their knowledge and experience is greatly valued. New members have had valuable involvement in their regions.

The appointed officers are incredibly hard working - Laura Lazar (Treasurer), Traude Leitenberger (Secretary), and Diane Kaufmann (Web Manager), who, along with the President Sandy Boyce, manage many aspects of the work of the Executive Committee in between meetings.



*DIAKONIA World President Sandy Boyce  
at DOTAC Regional Assembly*

English is the language used for meetings, which presents challenges for those who do not have English as their first language. The Committee recognizes the need to ensure

adequate space is made in meetings so that all have a voice.

### **Reports from the Regions**

Each of the three regions prepared and presented a written report. The reports provide an overview about highlights, member groups, priorities, and areas of concern. Two of the regional presidents were present to give their reports: Marianne Uri Øverland (DRAE) and Lisa Polito (DOTAC). Alison McRae (DAP) gave the DAP report in the absence of DAP President Emma Cantor.

Regional conferences were held in two regions in 2015: Norway hosted the DRAE Assembly in Kongshaug in July and Brazil hosted the DOTAC Assembly in Porto Alegre in October. These gatherings provided an opportunity for diaconal ministry agents to engage in learning and to build and renew relationships. The DIAKONIA President was able to attend both regional gatherings.

### **Challenges for Regions**

It was acknowledged that each region faces challenges through diverse languages, the variety of countries and nationalities represented, and distance. Effective communication and engagement within and between regions can enhance the capacity of regions. The Executive Committee has asked the three regional presidents to discuss organizational and structural arrangements in each region and to identify areas where practical support can be provided among regions. As well, the regional presidents will look at each regional constitution and identify ways in which they may be consistent

across regions and with the DIAKONIA World Federation constitution.

### **Finances**

The Executive Committee takes seriously the imperative to be good stewards with respect to the management and use of finances. It was noted that the last two world assemblies generated a surplus due to intentional fundraising efforts and special collections. The generosity of the organizers in making the surplus available for use by DIAKONIA has meant that the immediate pressure on the budget has lessened. However, in the long term, income generated from membership fees may be inadequate for each year's anticipated expenditures. The Executive Committee agreed that, rather than raise membership fees at this time, the focus should be on encouraging new member groups.

### **DIAKAID and Emergency Fund**

The Executive noted that no new applications had been received and committed to being pro-active in promoting opportunities to fund projects that meet the DIAKAID criteria. Regional presidents will provide information and receive applications.



*Executive Committee at Loyola University, where the 2017 Assembly will take place*

### **Communication**

The Executive Committee noted the diverse ways that communication currently happens: DIAKONIA website plus regional and member websites; the use of social media including the DIAKONIA Facebook page as well as the Facebook pages of member groups; the President's blog site; and DIAKONIA News (distributed electronically). Effective and regular communication enables member groups to connect with each other, share joys and sorrows, and be informed about the work of DIAKONIA.

There will be a change to the timing for the distribution of the DIAKONIA Prayer Letter in 2016. The electronic mailing will be timed for early in the month, so that the prayer resources prepared by the DIAKONIA Executive Committee can be used throughout the month. On the 26th of each month, members of DIAKONIA are invited to pray for each other.

### **Ecumenical relations**

DIAKONIA maintains ecumenical relations with a number of groups including the World Council of Churches and the IDC, the International Diaconal Centre (a movement for the renewal of the Permanent Diaconate in the Catholic Church). Ulrike Kellner attended the jubilee anniversary of IDC at Fraterna Domus near Rome and gave greetings on behalf of DIAKONIA.

### **Update on DIAKONIA members**

Diakonat Zeriski "Eben-Ezer" Dziegielow, founded in 1923, is a new member of DIAKONIA. The Eben-Ezer diaconate is an association of deaconesses of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland. The deaconesses work at the motherhouse and in a range of ministry contexts including nursing homes with aged people.



Ang Iglesia Metodista sa Pilipinas (AIMP) was accepted as a new member of DIAKONIA. It is an indigenous, autonomous Methodist church in the Philippines founded in 2011 (formerly part of United Methodist Church in the Philippines).

DRAE has received the Tallinn Deaconal Hospital, Estonia, as a new member. Two leaders attended the DRAE regional assembly and made a presentation about their work.

Two groups have concluded their membership with DIAKONIA - Febe Evangelikus Egyesület Anya-haza, Hungary, and Vårsta Diakonar, Sweden (which will remain in DRAE).

### **Planning for the 2017 Assembly**

The DIAKONIA Executive Committee visited the site of the 2017 Assembly at Loyola University in Chicago. The Executive Committee has assumed the responsibility for the program, including choosing Bible study leaders and speakers, and is working closely with the Local Arrangements Committee, led by Diane Marten of Valparaiso, Indiana.



*Diane Marten from the  
DIAKONIA Assembly 2017 Team*

All member groups are encouraged to share information about the Assembly and to keep an eye out for publicity in 2016. Registration will open in September 2016. Post-Assembly tour options for individuals and groups will be arranged through travel agencies.

A Nomination Committee has been formed to manage the logistics for the election of the DIAKONIA President for 2017-2021. The current president, Sandy Boyce, has indicated she is willing to stand for a second term.



*Executive Committee with deaconesses at  
Valparaiso University Chapel*

### **A goodwill visit**

The Executive Committee had the opportunity to visit the Lutheran Deaconess Association's Center for Diaconal Ministry in Valparaiso, Indiana, and attended the Sunday service at the Valparaiso University Chapel. They were hosted for lunch at the Center and met and conversed with students and members.

### **2016 meeting**

The 2016 Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for July 2 - 7, 2016, in Versailles, France.



# DIAKONIA EXECUTIVE REPORTS 2015

## REPORT of the REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

### Report DIAKONIA-Asia-Pacific (DAP)

*By Emma Cantor, Regional President and Alison McRae, Vice-President*

The **Deacon Community within the Uniting Church in Australia** is in good heart. A very good Deacon Intensive was conducted in Adelaide in February 2015, in conjunction with the National Deacon Conference (and Continuing Education event). Sandy Boyce and faculty members from the South Australian Uniting College facilitated the Intensive for Leadership and Theology. Nine candidates from five states attended.



*DUCA NSWACT Deacons*

Thirty-five deaconesses then attended the National Conference and Continuing Education event from diverse settings across Australia and with a wide range of ages and experience. As always, it was good to celebrate achievements over the past two years. The next Deacon Intensive and National Conference and Continuing Education event is to be hosted by the Victoria deacons in early 2017.

There have been a number of ordinations and inductions of deacons across the synods during the year including the ordination of Aunty Denise Champion in the synod of South Australia in June. Aunty Denise is the first Aboriginal woman to be

ordained by any denomination in South Australia. Inductions have included those who have just been ordained and a number of deacons who have shifted into new placements.

There are always some challenges. Some of these include the small numbers of deacons and therefore the potential for isolation; the relevance of education and training within a predominant ministry-of-word environment; the challenge of distance in order to gather for mutual support; and the matching of calls to diaconal ministry with the offerings of placements available.

Many deacons are providing leadership at presbytery, synod, and assembly levels, and their gifts are well respected.



Gay Nye was elected President of the **Australian Anglican Diaconal Association (AADA)** at their biannual conference in Western Australia in 2014. Gay reports that this was a very successful conference. Another one is planned for Melbourne in 2016.



*AADA Ordinants*

Strength of numbers varies across the states and dioceses, but there is a general decline. Conversations continue about the place of the permanent diaconate within the Anglican Church in Australia. Gay is an important part of these conversations. Those deacons involved are passionate about it but often do not receive the support needed from their bishops.

The **diaconate in the Methodist Church of New Zealand** currently appears to be in recess.



*Methodist Deacons New Zealand*

### Anglican Church

Little is happening from an organizational point of view since the joint Anglican/Methodist association went into recess. However, over the past few years, they have attempted to put together a national database of vocational deacons active in ministry in the Anglican Church in this Province. There are 51 names on that database, and there could be a further five to ten people who have not yet come to our attention. We do not have any kind of national association - previous attempts having failed. However the national school (see below) has created a sense of unity and an annual gathering place.

The highlight of past years has been the grant of funding for a national residential Deacon School. This has offered deacons and those in training a chance to gather for weeklong intensive training and formation. The

School was run for three years in Christchurch, three years in Taranaki, and one year in Wellington. This has made it possible for two-thirds of all deacons to participate.

We have not been linked with DAP since the time we no longer had a link through the Methodist deacons/-deaconesses. I would be happy to explore renewing that link in discussion with you. However I can only speak for the Anglican Deacons. We have a growing sense of unity through the networks created at the annual School and there is strong support for the School to continue.

Hopefully this body will be able to find a way of supporting the Anglican Deacons in New Zealand.

The **IKADIWA Diaconate in Indonesia** has 250 deaconesses. Fourteen deaconesses, teachers, and preachers were newly ordained as HKBP church leaders. They are graduates from the Deaconess School and the Bibelvrouw (Bible Women).



In the church body HKBP, the year 2015 was Women's Year. There were programs to empower women, to fight for strategic position, and to lift up women's conditions through studying gender issues.

For nine years, IKADIWA has been working with people in mining areas in Indonesia. The deaconesses educate and create awareness among people in the community about the cost

and impact of mining industries to their lives, especially their health and the damages caused to the environment and food production. The deaconesses accompany their people to fight for their land and the rights of people and the environment.



IKADIWA deaconesses are appointed to:

- ❖ Congregations to serve as preachers, do home visits, bible study, pastoral counseling, caring for children and the elderly, and mission work;
- ❖ Serve in hospitals as nurses and counselors and as lecturers and staff in nursing schools;
- ❖ Help people living with HIV-Aids and educating people;
- ❖ Serve in orphanages as house mothers to care for and help the orphans; and
- ❖ Serve in special ministries according to their skill and knowledge.

The IKADIWA Deaconess Assembly will be held in Tarutong March 2016.

There are 120 **Methodist Church of India deaconesses (MCI)** in 12 annual conferences. Ninety are active deaconesses, and the rest are retired.

About 130 deaconesses attended their quadrennial assembly in October. They studied the following topics: Deaconesses as Leaders; Women are Peacemakers; Reforma-

tion of Deaconess Ministries; and Restructuring Deaconess Ministries.

The bishop is the head of the deaconess movement in India. The bishops' wives are chairpersons of their regional women's committee.

The deaconesses of MCI are not appointed to local churches. They are appointed by the bishops as managers of hostels and principals of schools and institutions. These institutions, according to the MCI Book of Discipline, are entrusted in their name: Deaconesses/women of the church.

The following needs have been identified: further training in leadership, management, and administrative skills; exposure to and immersion in international programs; professionalization; and empowerment. They wish to learn more about the theological perspectives of the deaconess ministry. As in the past, some of them have gone to the Philippines for learning, study tours, and immersion.



*Christian Education Summit Mindanao*

## Philippines

The **United Church of the Philippines Church Women Workers (UCCP)** has 50 active diaconal members. They are engaged in ministries such as feeding programs for children and youth, home Bible studies, Sunday school teaching, and music. Some work in institutional programs and church agencies.



UCCP Diakonia is trying to strategize how to encourage UCCP churchwomen workers to actively participate in the organization. They are trying to create a space within the structure of the church using the name UCCP Women Church Workers. There is now a clamor to implement the ordination process of diaconal ministers comparable to that of ordained ministers. The UCCP DIAKONIA will hold its annual gathering in January 2016.



The **United Methodist Church Commission on Deaconess Service (UMC)** has 300 active deaconesses appointed in 25 annual conferences. The majority is appointed in local churches as teachers of kindergarten, early childhood, and Christian education or as principals, lecturers, professors, and directors.

The deaconesses hold regular convocations, leadership development seminars, and workshops. In the last few months, deaconesses in some annual conferences held seminars on HIV aids, violence against women and children, empowerment, spirituality, and theological studies.

This year more deaconesses have been elected as delegates to the General Conference and to the Philippine Central Conference 2016

than in any year in the past. Also, deaconesses are increasingly engaged in decision-making with significant numbers acting as leaders of organizations, programs, and mission agencies.

The UMC deaconesses will hold their quadrennial assembly in January 2016.

The **Association of IEMELIF Deaconesses** has 50 deaconesses. They hold their annual assembly each year in January. Many are engaged in teaching Sunday school or extension classes, feeding programs, free tutorials, and some are teachers at the IEMELIF Bible School.



During their 2015 AID Assembly, they paid tribute to the deaconess elders of the Church by recognizing their valued service during their active years in ministry.

**DIAKONIA PHILS**, which includes all three diaconal groups, held its biennial assembly in October 2015, at Silliman University in the Southern Philippines. The theme of the assembly was *Reclaiming and Embracing the Theology of the Diaconate*.

Fees, donations and contributions you may send to the following account  
 Bank account No 4002199      Stiftung DIAKONIA  
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# Report DIAKONIA of the Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC)

By Lisa Polito, Regional President

## Personnel

Our region had a number of consecrations and ordinations. We also have a large number of diaconal students within our member groups. We personally welcome new sisters and brothers and introduce them to DOTAC and DIAKONIA.

## Events/Celebrations

The main event for our region was our conference in October: *Jesus Diakonia: From Crumbs to Full Communion*. We focused on questions such as: Who are the people that live under the table and survive eating bread crumbs? Who are the people living under the table that have no opportunity to participate in the reflections and decisions taken around the table? What are the signs of hope, transformation, of changing places from feeding off the crumbs to having full communion?



**DOTAC Regional Assembly**  
**October 22 – 26, 2015**  
**Porto Alegre, Brazil**

Through presentations, Bible study, workshops, worship, and small group time, we explored these questions. Our conference also included the opportunity to meet and share with others doing diakonia in North and South America and in the Caribbean as well as with guests from around the world. DOTAC's conferences are translated into Portuguese and English. Further

information on the conference is in this issue.

Many of our member groups hold meetings each year. They invite ecumenical guests and guests from other DIAKONIA groups from around the world to attend. Listed below are some of these events:

**The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada Diaconal Ministers** wrote materials for their national Diaconal Focus Sunday held on the last Sunday of February for the third year in a row. They are in the early stages of planning for the fourth year. These materials are available on-line.



The **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Deaconess Community (ELCA)** celebrated with Sister Liz Colver as she was consecrated on March 15, 2015, at Luther Memorial Church in Seattle, Washington. Sister Liz was profiled in the ELCA magazine, *The Lutheran*, as one of the ELCA's top leaders under 40 years of age who are doing ministry distinctively. She is the ELCA's first community organizing specialist.

The **Presbyterian Order of Diaconal Ministers in Canada** met at Crieff Hills, Ontario, Canada for their Biennial Council with the theme *The Uniqueness of Christian Community, What it Means to be the Church Today*. Twenty-seven members attended. This



was a higher number than usual as there was a notice of motion from the last meeting in 2013. The motion was that the Order request the General Assembly to close the Order to new members and that the Order continue to meet biennially for fellowship, worship, Bible study, and programming to encourage and uplift the members in their work and personal lives until such time as the members decide they can no longer continue meeting.



The Notice of Motion was removed and a new group was appointed to work on future directions for the Order with respect to education for students and requirements for admission to the Order.

### **Issues/Concerns/Impediments/Challenges**

A number of our member groups face challenges with respect to building relationships, communicating about diaconal ministry to our churches, and working within our church bodies.



*Episcopal Church USA  
Ordination Sudan Gabriel Atem  
and Aimee Marie Altizer*

### **Publicity**

DOTAC has a website and a Facebook page. Please join us!

Many of our member organizations have websites. Many also have Facebook groups. Some are private and others are public.

### **The role and future of diaconal ministry agents**

We all look for ways to partner with others doing diakonia and to support our sisters and brothers across our region. In many places, young people are feeling and answering the call to diakonia. There are many community organizers being recognized. We still have to work on the mindset of the Church that only those ordained can do that type of work.



*Jan Cherry and Lisa Polito representing DOTAC  
at the Executive*

We believe that diaconal ministry will be the way that ministry is done in the future in many of the areas of region. The world - and young people who feel called - need to be able to see that we actually do do those things for the sake of the world that the Church says it is in the business of doing. At the same time, we need to be connected to the centuries-long practice of doing work in the world.

### **Academic/Conferences**

An ecumenical group has been convened to work on the DIAKONIA World Federation Assembly 2017 at Loyola University.

We continue to plan our 2016 DOVE (DOTAC Overcoming Violence

Experience) event which will be held in Canada. The Canadian member groups are planning this event for the Toronto area. DOVE will build an international team that participates in a multicultural, hands-on, action-reflection experience related to overcoming violence in the world. DOTAC will assemble a team of twelve (three from Canada, three from the Caribbean, three from Brazil, and three from the United States). The team will gather in Canada for a full week. Participants promise to: find ways to initiate action/reflection experiences in their own countries; write reflections to

share with the group, their own community, and DOTAC; and seek ways to provide leadership and develop networks to assist others in addressing the Decade to Overcome Violence. This is our third DOVE event. The earlier ones were held in the United States and Brazil.

A group has convened in Vancouver, BC, Canada to begin working on the 2019 DOTAC conference. DOTAC rotates their conference sites: Brazil, Canada, the Caribbean, and the US. All are welcome!

## **Report DIAKONIA-Region-Africa-Europe (DRAE)**

*By Marianne Uri Øverland, Regional President*



**DRAE Regional Assembly  
July 1-5, 2015  
Kongshaug, Norway**

The DRAE region held its assembly in Norway from July 1- 5, 2015, with the theme *The Eye of the Storm. Diaconia - the Biblical Challenge for the whole Church in the World we live in*. The venue was Kongshaug outside Bergen. One hundred forty attendees from nearly 20 countries had nice and blessed days together. The main speakers were Assistant Professor May Bente Matre, Dean Øystein Skauge, and Professor Dr. Theol. Kjell Nordstokke.

The Norwegian motherhouses Haraldsplass, Diakonova, Lovisenberg and the DRAE Region Executive Committee cooperated in planning and arranging the conference.

The Assembly was blessed with beautiful weather, so that participants could fully enjoy God's nature: fjords, mountains, and long summer nights.

### **Celebrations, conferences, and changes in personnel**

The DRAE region is the biggest and oldest region. Therefore there have been many celebrations, conferences and changes in personnel during a year. For 2015 specially:

The *Friederikenstift Hannover* celebrated its one hundred seventy-fifth anniversary. The *Sophienhaus Weimar* and its sisterhood celebrated its one hundred fortieth jubilee. And the *Sisterhood of the Ev. Diakonieverein*, Berlin celebrated one hundred years of existence.

The conference of *Europäischer Verband Freikirchlicher Diakoniewerke (EVFD)* was held at Pilgerheim Weltersbach, Leichlingen (Germany) in September. The theme was *Economy and appreciation - and the challenges for diakonia in the future*.

In September, Diakonistiftelsen Samariterhemmet in Uppsala had a

conference on the theme *To be a sign of mercy for life*.

In September, the forty-second Kaiserswerth General Conference took place in Diakoniewerk Gallneukirchen, Austria. The theme was *Diakonia a strong Brand?! Between Values and Commerce*.

The Norwegian motherhouse *Diakonova* had their fifth hospice conference in Narva, Estonia. The conference included teaching and mentoring.

The *Scandinavian (Nordic) motherhouses* had their annual Forstanderinne meeting at Bergen in July. There were representatives from Denmark, Finland, and Norway.

The *Diaconal Sisterhood Herrenberg-Korntal* has a new leading sister Sr. Heidrun Kopp. The *Friederikenstift Sisterhood* has a new theological leader, Dr. Friedrich Ley. *Stiftung Diaconis, Berner Diakonissen in Switzerland* has a new leader, Dorothea Marti, who was chosen from outside the Sisterhood.

The *Fiaraha Miaima Amim Bavaka MAMRE FJKM Mamre Community* in Madagascar has a new leader: Sister Berthine.



*Consecration Sister Berthine*

### **Changes in DRAE membership**

The sisters at *Tallinn Deaconal Hospital* applied for membership in DRAE. They were accepted at the assembly in Norway.

The *Polish motherhouse* applied for membership both in DIAKONIA and in DRAE. They were accepted at the

Executive Committee meeting for DIAKONIA World in Chicago.

The *Hungarian Deaconesses* ended their membership in DIAKONIA. The reason being that there are only 3 deaconesses left, and they are getting quite old.

*Vårsta diakonikår* has decided to leave the DIAKONIA World Federation but will continue their membership in DRAE.

### **Annual fees for DRAE and World collectively collected**

The new system of sending one annual membership fees letter for DIAKONIA World and DRAE has started. The hope is that this will help reduce the confusion that occurred when there were two different invoices.



*Deacon Kersti Raustorp (Sweden) and Sister Shalom (Cameroon)*

### **The role and future of diaconal ministry agents**

The year 2015 has been one in which many people fleeing from war have found refuge in many European countries. This report will give an input from Sweden on the issue:

- During October 2015, several parishes in Church of Sweden opened their premises for transit accommodation. This requires a great commitment from the parishes and much help from volunteers.
- Great Malmo is one of the cities in the country to which refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa arrive by train from Denmark.

- At Stockholm Central Station, deacons from many parishes in Stockholm receive the refugees. They try to find accommodations and everything that may be needed by those newly arrived in the country.
- The Church of Sweden has sent a letter to all parishes asking to examine their premises to see how many refugees they could house.
- In 2015, 95,000 to 105,000 asylum seekers are expected to come to Sweden (about 55,500 from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan; 11,000 from Eritrea; and 4,500 from Somalia).



*Ulrike Kellner and Sister Elisabeth Meier  
at Kongshaug*

## **Relationship with other Organizations**

DRAE has relationships with several other organizations: Kaire; International Diaconate Center (representing DIAKONIA World Federation); Porvoo Communion; Conference for European Churches; and Eurodiaconia. The responsibilities as contact persons are divided among the DRAE Executive Committee members.

At the moment, DRAE is investigating how to broaden its relationship with Eurodiaconia. The Regional President participated in their annual general meeting in Praha in 2014, and had good discussions with General Secretary Heather Roy. This year the AGM was in Barcelona, and the Regional President and DRAE Regional Executive Committee member Ulrike Kellner attended. Ulrike Kellner continued the talk with Heather Roy at the Kaiserswerth General Conference. Roy has been invited to attend the DRAE Region Executive Committee meeting in Basel in January 2016, with the intention of setting up a partnership agreement.

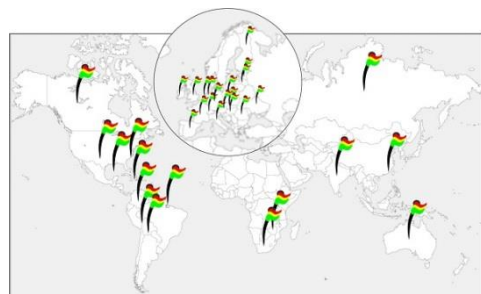
## **DIAKONIA EXECUTIVE REPORTS 2015 ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS**

### **International Centre for the Diaconate (IDC)**

*By DIAKONIA Representative to the IDC, Deaconess Ulrike Kellner*

From October 21 to 25, 2015, the IDC celebrated its 50th anniversary. The jubilee celebration took place at the pilgrim house Fraterna Domus near Rome. Nearly 600 people from 35 countries - Roman Catholic deacons, many with their wives, and some clerical and non-clerical guests - spent four very interesting days. For me it was the third time I had attended an IDC Conference, and I was impressed

by how much more international in attendance it was.





On the first evening, IDC President Professor Dr. Klaus Kießling greeted the attendees and read several greetings. Unfortunately the private audience with Pope Francis and the participation of Cardinal Maradiaga were cancelled because of the ongoing Synod on the Family. Both wrote personal greetings to the conference. The protector of the IDC, Bishop Dr. Gebhard Fürst could not attend – he was ill, but he also sent a greeting. There was an ecumenical presence: Dr. Skaidrite Gutmane from the Christian Academy of Latvia (Orthodox Church) and Sr. Ulrike Kellner (DIAKONIA World Federation). To make up for the unexpected absences, one evening Bishop Bode from Osnabrück/Germany made his way to Fraterna Domus and reported on the latest developments at the Synod.



*Bishop Bode*

October 22 was the day of speeches and discussion. General Vicar Dr. Algirdas of Jurevičius, Lithuania, Monsignor Battisti of Brazil and Professor Dr. Richard Hartmann of Germany all spoke about the diaconate in their countries. Afterwards the speeches were discussed in small groups. Unfortunately there were far too few groups, so the groups were too big to have a real discussion.

The speeches showed how very different the church situation is in various countries. Although you would assume that the Roman Catholic

Church is the same all over the world, at the grass roots level there are huge differences among continents and countries. How much deacons are valued of is diverse too. In many parts of the world, deacons are only a minor form of the priesthood, considered necessary only because there are not enough priests to do the work.



*IDC President Klaus Kießling and Father Gilbert from India*

However, in Germany other aspects of their work count. In addition, the standing of women is very different in Germany than in the rest of the world. German deacons and even some priests are aware that women do most of the actual work in parishes although they are not recognized with equal status. Women are the ones pushing the church towards change.

In the afternoon, six deacons reported on the practical work of deacons in their localities: Australia, USA, South Africa, Hong Kong, South America, and France. Then Finnish professor Esko Ryökäs presented the latest insights about Luther and the diaconate. He pointed out that the word *diakonia* underwent a profound change in meaning over time. At the time of Martin Luther, it meant a house. Afterwards the meaning changed to that of a man helping the priest. In the 19th century, Fliedner connected the word with caring and added humility. Then Collins and his followers put the focus on the deacon being an



ambassador. (It would be very interesting to follow these insights in our own discussions.)

For some years, the IDC has funded research on how deacons see their own ministry and what they think and desire. This has been done by interviews beginning this year. Dr. Norbert Hark explained his method and presented early results.



For the first time, the Pro Diaconia Prize of the IDC and the Diaconia Christi Internationalis Foundation was given. The prize is meant to support and promote diaconal awareness and is aimed at promoting exceptional diaconal initiatives as well as motivating others to take initiatives. The first prize went to Deacon László Gorove and Krisztina Gorove of the Marriage Preparation and Marriage Ministry in Budapest, Hungary.



Three second-prizes were given: Deacon Fulgencio Palacio Bonachea for Human Promotion and Evangelisation of the Paso de Lesca Rural Area, Diocese Camargüey/Cuba; the Deacons of Diocese Mumbai for the Involvement of the Permanent Deacons of the Archdiocese of

Bombay in the Social Ministry of the Church in collaboration with Health Promotion Trust, Diocese Mumbai, India; and Deacon Germán Agustí for the Diaconal Social Project, Gavá, Barcelona/Spain.

As the audience with the Pope was cancelled, we had free time to spend in Rome. After that, we gathered at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, where we heard from deacons and their wives from Colombia and Hong Kong. We then went to San Lorenzo for a mass. San Lorenzo is the church where two deacons of the early church, St. Stephen and St. Lawrence, are buried.

The next day we went to Assisi, a three-hour bus drive from Rome. There we had a very moving mass at the church of the monastery followed by a guided tour around the churches and Assisi. For me, this turned out to be the peak of the conference. The place where St. Francis lived and worked still breathes his spirit although it has become a major tourist spot. But despite the impressive and overbearing art and decorations, it is clear what is behind it: Following the gospel of Jesus Christ and nurturing those who need it most.



The next IDC Conference will take place in Strasbourg/France October 7-10, 2017.

## Report World Council of Churches

*By Sandy Boyce, DIAKONIA World President*



The picture above is of the Rev. Dr. Dongsung Kim, Program Executive for Diakonia and Ecumenical Solidarity in the WCC. He can be contacted at [Dong\\_Sung.Kim@wcc-coe.org](mailto:Dong_Sung.Kim@wcc-coe.org)

The **Second General Assembly of the ACT Alliance** was held October 2014, in the Dominican Republic. ACT Alliance, a partner organization of the WCC, has churches and affiliated organizations working in 140 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people through humanitarian and development projects.

Dr. Kim ran a workshop with Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri, the WCC Associate General Secretary, reflecting on diakonia as a key element in church relations. Dr. Kim said, "When we talk about assets-based 'diakonia', we

mean building and strengthening fellowship among churches and their ecumenical partners. An assets-based diakonia would work as a crucial tool of welcoming the different gifts, skills, and contributions from all levels in the ecumenical cooperation including from the members of the congregations around the world. Exploring assets we have as ecumenical partners in diakonia is actually questioning how we can contribute to more robust ecumenical relationships. Diakonia is an essential part of being a church and mission of the church. The concept of ecumenical diakonia of the WCC is not simply of service but of taking on a transformative role. We are called to transform society."

**An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace** from the 10<sup>th</sup> WCC World Assembly: "We intend to move together. Challenged by our experiences in Busan, we challenge all people of good will to engage their God-given gifts in transforming actions. This Assembly calls you to join us in pilgrimage. May the churches be communities of healing and compassion, and may we see the Good News so that justice will grow and God's deep peace rest on the world."

Question for consideration: What vital connection does DIAKONIA have with the WCC and how can it be fostered further?

# **DIAKONIA Region Africa-Europe (DRAE) Assembly**

## **July 1-5, 2015**

### **at Kongshaug, near Bergen, Norway**

*The Eye of the Storm: Diaconia - the Biblical Challenge for the whole Church in the World we live in.* One hundred forty people from Africa and Europe came together to reflect on this thought-provoking theme at Kongshaug, in English *Hill of the King*, near Bergen, Norway.

Such a theme seemed appropriate for the difficult and stormy times in which we live, and, at the Conference, we wondered, "What does the *Eye of the Storm* mean for us, in this mysterious area, where there is no wind at all?"



*Welcome at Kongshaug*

The DRAE Norwegian member groups - Bergen Diakonissehjem, Diakonova, and Lovisenberg in Oslo - put together a program that addressed the theme from different perspectives: What does the *Eye of the Storm* mean to the church? To diaconal institutions? To the life of each person?

In the evenings, these Norwegian member groups presented themselves in special ways to the Conference attendees.

*God is good, all the time!* With this statement, of African origins, Deacon Ann Wren began her sermon. She stated that it is important to be close to the God who says *I AM*, and she spoke of *light places* and *dense places*. Then finally again: *God is good!*



In place of a traditional Bible study, on two mornings May Bente Stuart Matre talked about the storms people must face: storms that come either from outside or which arise within themselves: How do we as a Christian deal with them? How can we use the Bible as a resource in this situation? To endure personal storms, it is important for us to enter into the middle of the storm, that is, right into the eye of the storm, Matre commented. There you can rest and find consolation and fresh strength.

Dean Øystein Skaug and Bishop Atle Sommerfeldt reviewed the theme from the perspective of the Church. The Norwegian church functions in relative quietness and safety, Skaug observed, although rich people also do have real problems! Thus this period of



time has to be used to help those who are scattered by the storm. He explained what he meant with two examples: the refugee problem in Europe and in the countries that refugees come from and the problems caused by climate change.

An amazing and new way of thinking for me was the theory of Tom Sverre Tomren. Referring to Genesis 1 and 2, he made a case for a new relationship between humankind and nature: Instead of the classical theological perspective that humans are God's housekeepers who stand outside nature, humans are themselves a part of nature and therefore need to protect and save it.

Kjell Nordstokke, a renowned theologian for many years affiliated with Diakonhjemmet Oslo, explored the conference theme from the perspective of diaconal institutions. In a fascinating speech, he argued that motherhouses use their rich traditions of to shape their identities instead of just naming them. This could be done by telling their stories or by living out their own rituals more clearly. On the other hand, new times do need new answers. Therefore they should not maintain tradition at all costs! At this point, a SWOT analysis may be used to help find the right answers for each situation.



*Cultural Evening with traditional Costumes*

Generally, the weather was good to us. The fjord at the bottom of Kongshaug sparkled in the sun, and many of us took the chance to swim in it. It rained heavily only one day. Unfortunately it was the day of our outing. Because of the rain, we needed umbrellas to visit the hospital and university college of the diaconal institution Haraldsplas in Bergen, and at the top of Fløyen Mountain, we did not have the famous panorama view of Bergen but instead white clouds. Therefore, we used that time to explore Bergen in small groups, to shop, or to linger in cafes and restaurants. Fortunately the rain did stop eventually.



Later, in the afternoon, we experienced something very special, which was for me a highlight: a boat trip from the Bergen harbor to the summer house of the composer Ole Bull, who along with Edvard Grieg, is a famous Norwegian composer, and like Grieg, born and raised in Bergen. In 1872-73, Bull built his *small Alhambra* on the island of Lysøen, where he combined different building styles. We listened to a concert of music by Ole Bull (violin and piano) in the large salon. After that, we returned by the boat to Kongshaug.

And then, of course, there was knitting! Wool and needles were there in endless quantity, and the sound of needles was constant. For some, it was the first encounter with needlework, whereas others produced results at record speed! The size of the final knitted product was uniform, but

knitters could choose their own pattern and color. Eventually the individual pieces were connected to form small blankets. These blankets were then given as a gift by DRAE to a kindergarten in Estonia. This kindergarten is managed by a new member group, which joined DRAE at the Conference. Two representatives from that group attended the conference and accepted the blankets. This was a nice sign of a special connection!



The time at the Kongshaug was indeed a time in the eye of the storm: a time of peace, enrichment, and of meeting others with common purposes. After attending the closing service at the local parish of Os, all 140 attendees returned to their own storms. Hopefully, the wind will carry us all to Scotland in four years. There, at the next regional conference we can celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of DRAE. God is good - all the time!

[The Conference speeches and the Power Point presentations that accompanied them are available at <http://drae.diakonia-world.org/en/news/conferences.shtml>.]

*Deaconess Ulrike Kellner*

## **DIAKONIA Region of the Americas and the Caribbean (DOTAC) Assembly, October 22-26, 2015 at Porto Alegre, Brazil**

Members of 12 diaconal groups from Canada, the Caribbean, South America, and the United States remembered and recommitted themselves to table-expanding ministries of compassion and justice at the October 2015 conference of Diakonia of the Americas and Caribbean in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

They learned, discussed, worshiped, and visited ministry sites, all while reflecting on the theme *The Diakonia of Jesus: From Crumbs to Full Communion (Mark 7:24-30)*.



According to Rodolfo Gaede Neto, professor and coordinator of the Bachelor of Theology program at the Faculdades EST of Sao Leopoldo, table fellowship and inviting those who are usually excluded are major themes



in the Gospel stories. He continued that the word *eat* appears more frequently in the Gospel of Luke than *teach* and that the Syrophoenician woman who begged for crumbs from the table in the Mark story proposed opening the table to her and to those excluded. Neto remarked, “This broadens the realm of God to be open to all people.”

Neto described the theological foundation of diakonia as a project of universal reconciliation and of overcoming the factors that divide. He concluded that, at table and over meals, we “converse, dialogue face-to-face, get to know and understand others, play, evaluate, plan, undo misunderstandings, and offer hospitality and reconciliation.”



Another speaker, Felipe Gustavo Koch Buttelli, professor of the sciences of religion in the Municipal University Center of Sao Jose—USJ said, “Jesus lived under the rule of empire, but he never expected to get in positions of power”. He continued, “The power he was trying to show us was a different power than the empire. We do not sit at the seat of that power.”

IELCLB (Brazilian Lutheran) Deacon Irma Schrammel, the third featured speaker, told those gathered that every morning she prays to live the diaconal practice and make diakonia a way of living—to live and breathe this way of being; to transform living into grace.



Participants pondered their own ministries of reconciliation and hospitality as they visited such projects as:



- Sao Lucas Halfway House: a place for people to stay when they travel to Porto Alegre for medical services;
- Bread Workshop: teaches youth bread-making and helps them earn money;
- EcoPaper: helps people generate income through recycling paper into new products and employs and trains mostly women and people of color;
- Faculdades EST and its Diversity Space: ministry among indigenous people, deaconess motherhouse, residence, and

day gathering center for the elderly;

- Center for the Support of Small Farmers;
- A caring residence for girls, teens, teen mothers and babies from violent homes;
- ABEFI: a center for children and youth, educational and skill building, and esteem building; and
- Garbage Recycling Cooperative.

These and others inspired the visitors with the compassion they demonstrate to those who are marginalized and with the ways they empower people to build positive lives for themselves.

Participants also expanded their knowledge and skills through workshops on overcoming domestic violence, hymns of justice, transformative education and reflection, yoga, music of the spirit, climate change, diakonia and mysticism, Palestine and Israel, knowing God through healthy living, and other topics.



Through member reports participants learned that leadership in compassion and justice ministries are taking a broad range of forms throughout the various member organizations. A common theme was the acknowledgement that, although

remarkable and creative ministries are being led by people in diakonia, many church bodies continue to misunderstand or underappreciate this ancient ministry that carries on Christ's self-definition as servant to the marginalized.



On the last evening participants enjoyed an entertaining evening at Galpao Crioulo, a traditional Brazilian churrascaria restaurant featuring plenty of food and a presentation of traditional Brazilian dancing. The evening was offered in memory of United Methodist deaconess Nazgul William, who died in China shortly after the 2013 DIAKONIA Assembly.

Members were deeply impressed and grateful for the exemplary hospitality provided by their Brazilian hosts.

Shown below is the Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession from the closing worship of the Conference, which was celebrated on Sunday, October 25, 2015.

*Victoria Rebeck*

For this amazing community of your people, O God:  
the rich diversity of denominations  
the Pentecostal joy of languages mixed  
the happy combination of  
singing and worship  
dancing and learning  
eating and sharing,  
we offer our deep thanksgiving.

For the jaw-dropping wonder and power of your diaconal call:  
the ministries we embody  
the witness we extend  
the love we tender,  
we offer our profound gratitude.

For the hope and grace with which you surround us:  
the revelation of your scripture  
the mystical holiness of creation  
the sacred testimony of your church,  
we offer our blessed appreciation.

Hear us, O God .  
Your mercy is great.

Under the rules of Empire, coloniality and globalization  
Many barriers divide and separate us:  
culture  
class  
religious certitude  
political hierarchy  
economic disparity  
gender injustice  
environmental destruction.

Jesus, gather us together in your universal reconciliation project  
join us in your common-sense-ual hospitality  
bind us in your commonwealth inclusivity.

Hear us, O God.  
Your mercy is great.

For those who preside over the tables of the world  
those in leadership  
those in power  
those with enormous responsibilities  
we pray for a vision of gentle justice.

For those who crowd under the tables of the world  
those oppressed  
those invisible  
those forgotten  
we pray for an equality of sharing.

May you gather us around the tables of the world  
confident in the faith that  
little by little the Kingdom of God will prevail.

Hear us, O God.      Your mercy is great!



## Sad News

On March 23, 2015, God called our long-term Oberin **Dorothea Demke** into eternity.

Oberin Demke was born in 1930, in Bunzlau/Silesia. After World War II, she finished school in East Germany and started her training as a nurse in 1950, at Martin-Luther-Krankenhaus Berlin, which belongs to Ev. Diakonieverein Berlin-Zehlendorf.

After many moves and further training as a nurse for babies, she became in 1964, the leading sister at the hospital in Mittweida. In 1968, that work had to be given up, and together with 10 sisters and 14 students, she moved to Sophienhaus, Weimar. There she became leading sister of the district and of two sisterhoods.

After ten years, she moved to Paul-Gerhard-Stift in Wittenberg. In January

1979, she took over the administration of the GDR (East Germany) part of the sisterhood of Ev. Diakonieverein. This administration was then dissolved in 1991, and at this time, she retired and lived together with her sister in Potsdam and later on the grounds of Ev. Diakonieverein in Berlin-Zehlendorf.

Many people attended her funeral service on March 30, 2015, at the Van-Delden-House in Berlin-Zehlendorf. Her family and many sisters found consolation in the words, "Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:22).

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