

DIAKONIA

News



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

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FROM YOUR EDITORS

This Newsletter comes after the World Assembly in Durham and so that is much of the content. We make no apology to anyone who was there and doesn't find this of interest to them but the Newsletter has a wide circulation and many people who will get this could not attend the Assembly. For those who were there maybe it will be a time to remember and to reflect and for those who were not able to be there it may give you a flavour of what happened and spark an interest to attend the next World Assembly in 2009 in the DOTAC Region.

We thank those who have contributed and those whose articles we have taken from their own Association Magazines.

As Editors it is good when people respond by sending something and it gives us a picture of what is happening around the world. **If you have something you would like to share with others please send it to us.** It may be a report, or a prayer re-

quest, a poem or a story or something else that would be helpful to others.

The next Executive Meeting will be in the motherhouse of Sao Leopoldo, Brazil in February 7-13th The WCC Assembly will be held in Porto Alegre starting on 14th February and some of the Executive Committee will attend as visitors. We also hope to share some of that experience with you in a future issue of DIAKONIA NEWS.

As we put the final articles together we are approaching Advent and the Christmas season and are reminded of the Saviour who came among us. May we continue to serve Him as he served others.

*Jane Martin
Ulrike Kellner*

Important Internet and E-mail Addresses

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

We begin these next four years in DIAKONIA World Federation with both challenge and hope.

When we gathered in Durham in July we were reminded of the challenge we face in a world where people live in fear and mistrust. That a number of would-be assembly participants were unable to obtain visas for entry into the United Kingdom was a stark reminder of the increasing difficulty people have as they seek to make connections across national borders. All the more, we in DIAKONIA must rise to the challenge of reaching across all the boundaries in our world to find the commonality we have, belonging to one Creator.

Individually, in our member groups, and as a world federation let us continue to work for a world in which people of good will can move freely from country to country. Let us work for a world in which the powerful no longer take advantage of the vulnerable. Let us work for a world where no one needs to fear mistreatment or abuse because of their race, nationality or economic standing.

Deacons, deaconesses and diaconal ministers around the world are working for such a world. And that is the hope. In Durham we heard story after story of these ministries—caring for those find themselves on the margins, advocating for those who have no voice, and working for change in big and little ways.

While feeling acutely the absence of those who were prevented from being present, we still were able to celebrate our oneness. We made new friends from around the globe. We knew once more that we were not alone in diaconal ministry. We worked on ways to share resources and

hold one another in prayer. We drank deeply from the living waters in our midst. And we left refreshed and renewed for our work back home.

Unfortunately the people present at Durham are only a very small part of DIAKONIA World Federation. Our challenge on the Executive Committee is to discover ways for more and more people to share in these life-giving connections between World Assemblies. We've challenged ourselves, too, to work toward involving younger people in DIAKONIA's activities. And we continue our commitment to find creative solutions to the language difficulties that challenge us.

As the new Executive Committee begins its work, we know some of the challenges we face, and we approach our work with hope. May you, too, know a sense of hope as you face the daily challenges of ministry—following the One who came among us as Servant.

*By E. Louise Williams
Valparaiso, Indiana, USA*



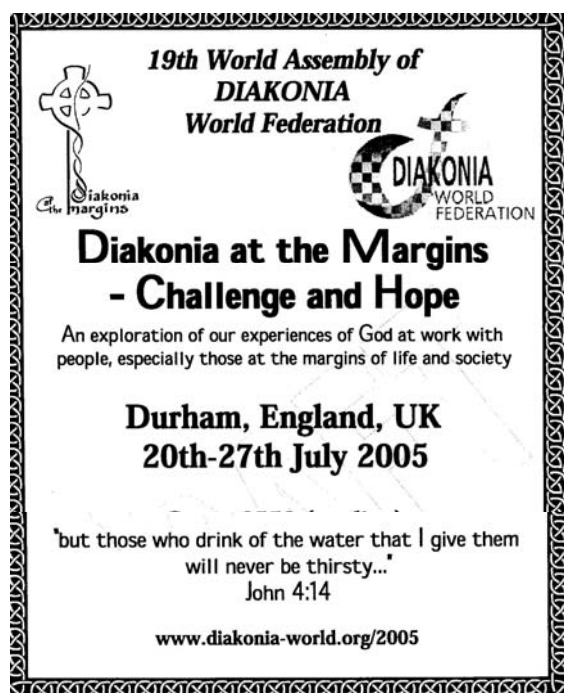
DIAKONIA World President Louise Williams

DIAKONIA WORLDWIDE

DIAKONIA's main web address: www.diakonia-world.org

REFLECTIONS FROM THE WORLD ASSEMBLY

It will not be an easy task to put into words the images and sound, the people,



laughter and love that remain in heart and mind following **WORLD** Assembly 2005 – but I will try.

W = *Welcome, Worship and World.*

As delegates from all over the world, we were welcomes and made to feel welcome by the deacons of the Methodist Diaconal Order and the Diaconal Association of the Church of England who were our hosts. The college staff, and particularly the conference assistants, went out of their way to make our stay as comfortable as possible. Even the shopkeepers in Durham did their best to be helpful especially to our overseas delegates.

The theme of our worship was 'Living Water', based on the story of the Samaritan Woman at the well in John's Gospel chapter 4. All around the conference venues: the Gala Theatre, Durham Cathedral, and the college chapels were displays on the theme as aids for reflection. One of the most moving moments in worship came

when delegates representing each of the regions processed up the Cathedral aisle carrying water from their homeland. The water was placed in the water feature at the front. Once in the amphora, there was no way of distinguishing where one country's water began and another's ended. It was wonderfully symbolic of World Assembly. Night prayer in each of the college chapels was a time for quiet reflection at the end of a busy day.

O = *Oracle and Opportunity*

The theme for this year's Assembly was 'Diakonia at the Margins – Challenge and Hope'.

We were challenged to think about 'the margins' – where were they and what does it mean for us to serve Christ at the extremities of life in our society and in our world. We were also given signs of hope, as delegates from all the corners of the world were invited to tell their stories and to share something of the work they are doing 'at the margins.'

As part of this experience, we visited projects in the local area.

R = *Region*

As a first timer, it was fascinating to learn of the work being done in each of the regions.

In conversation with deacons, deaconesses and diaconal ministers from the three regions, I learned to appreciate the diversity that is DIAKONIA.



Gala Theatre

It was a delight to walk from the colleges down to the Gala Theatre, where our plenary sessions and worship took place. Ahead were streams of diakonia

- the sisters in nursing uniform
- the African sisters in their colourful dresses and headgear
- the deacons in clerical collars
- those of us in casual dress
- each carrying our DIAKONIA bag

It quickly became apparent that though we might speak different languages and express our diaconal service in different ways – at heart we were bound together in the body of Christ.

L = Love, Laughter and Lindisfarne

One of the major highlights of this Assembly was our pilgrimage to Holy Island, Lindisfarne.

Two busloads sped ahead to walk the Causeway across to the island – over the wet sands, the tide having gone out. Some did it barefoot while others wore old shoes – plodding through calf-high water; slipping in others' footsteps; holding on to one another when the going got tough and all the while we laughed and encouraged one another on the way. Packed lunches and the rest of the delegates awaited and we were grateful to be on dry land. Lindisfarne proved as beautiful as we had hoped and the Eucharist service held in the Priory completed a most memorable day.



Walk to Lindisfarne

D = Diakonia, Dancing and Durham

The memory of our World Praise Service in Durham Cathedral will stay with me for a very long time. 400 delegates and more were raising the roof with our singing; stories from around the world in Diakonia: the 23rd Psalm in music and liturgical dance.

My favourite memory of that evening is of us spilling out of the Cathedral singing 'Amen Siyakidumisa'. Once outside, some delegates spontaneously began to dance. More and more joined the circle of dancers, singing all the while. We danced down the path from the Cathedral. We sang and sang. Then without prompting, the singing ceased. Every foot stilled and the dance ended.

All too soon, the week was over, it was time to go home.

As for me, the 20th World Assembly Fund starts here.

Deacon Jean Clark, Scotland (edited)

One of the highlights for me was the Eucharist on Lindisfarne. So many different nationalities and different denominations. I wondered if the island had seen such variation all at the same time before. And I thought how amazed Aidan and Cuthbert would be, and the later monks who had to leave because of the dissolution of the monasteries, to know that in the 21st century people from all over the church and the world were there praising God and sharing bread and wine together.

Gill, UK

The week was crazy! – but informative and inspiring. I'm a big lad in stature and yet at times I felt like Tom Thumb, hearing some of the efforts from around the world. The things we see on the TV news and in papers never seem to get any better – our prayers are endless for them – God is at work in those places – our prayers are being listened to. I've made some new friends too, and shall be keeping in touch with them all. An unforgettable Christian experience.

John Swinhoe, UK

(one of the hospitality team)

Until February last year I knew very little about DIAKONIA. It was then I took part in a quiz which was held by the Zehlendorfer Verband. The prize I won was to attend the world assembly.

Beside meeting each other, talking, workshops, trips and lectures I remember specially the "World Praise" on Sunday night in the beautiful Cathedral of Durham. It moved me deeply. You could feel and realise that the spirit of God was present, joining us and leading us towards the diaconal ministry.

I also realised with joy that there were some younger participants. I think this is one of the challenges for DIAKONIA and for all of us, to include young people in our service and guide them towards the diaconal ministry. I would appreciate to meet a lot of young people at future Conferences because youth are part of diaconia and the future DIAKONIA as well.

Michael Koehler, Germany (edited)

Our arrival in Durham in July 2005 was the culmination of a dream of four years for a group of Deacons from Australia. At the end of the previous Assembly held in Brisbane in 2001 when the venue for the next gathering was announced, some of the group said "We're going to the U.K." For most of them it was "a dream out there!"

Later when it was known Durham was the venue and the programme included a trip to Lindisfarne, the dream intensified and gained energy. This was followed by saving, planning, encouraging others as the group grew to 18 Anglican and 14 Uniting Church Deacons. Many of these had not met before they arrived in Durham as Australian distances between towns are vast. Some of the group had left Australia in May and others at varying dates during June and July so meeting up in Durham was a high point. The long journey of about 12,000 miles was a pilgrimage to Holy places mostly known through theological and spirituality books and publications.



Living waters at the Gala Theatre

The sense of pilgrimage grew as we joined in the opening worship with the theme "Living Waters" (John 4:14) in the historic Durham Cathedral, and later heard the story of the Christian heritage of the region through the "Celtic Fire" presentations by the Northumbrian Community.

Our sense of joy and excitement grew as each day unfolded with new things, people and places as people gathered at meal times to tell of the ministry projects they had visited, the workshops they had attended or their response to the World Focus, Regional, or small group gatherings. For the majority of the group it was their first experience of an international DIAKONIA Assembly and they described it with words including: mind blowing, exceptional, uplifting, incredible, encouraging and humbling.

Another highlight for many was walking the pilgrim way to Lindisfarne. We have many memories of our time in Durham and trust they will be a guide and strength to all who attended the Assembly as they continue to share Christ's Diaconal ministry and serve on the margins.

Heather Toon, Australia (edited)

Some 400 deacons, diaconal ministers and deaconesses from 31 countries struggled with language challenges and financial differences and still managed to find a common thread in their work of servant ministry during the DIAKONIA World Assembly.

One who travelled to the Assembly with us, Diane Wesson Eberhart, said she was amazed to see the variety of ministries provided by diaconal workers in the over 30 countries represented – from providing basic services of food and drink in some remote areas, to providing instruction to women about their role in the church and society, to administering a group of deaconesses working in health ministries.

One of the highlights for me was the stirring presentation of The Rt. Rev. Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield, and the responses from three diaconal workers. They challenged me to review the meaning of my ministry as a deacon when they stated that diaconal ministry is about the church itself being on the margins. What might it mean to be a marginalized church, instead of just seeking out deacons, diaconal ministers and deaconesses to work on the margins on behalf of the church? I think it is a challenge that we as deacons and other diaconal workers are called to communicate to the whole church. As stated in our theme for the Assembly diakonia (and the church) at the margins is both our challenge and our hope.

The other challenge, at the Assembly, which was met with grace, humour and patience, was that of language translation. It is so important that we can talk to, listen to and understand one another. There were five or six major languages spoken, not to mention tribal dialects. This year, translation was provided in German and English. A pledge was made to increase this at the next World Assembly.

The Assembly was a very gratifying and humbling experience for me. Despite the diversity of language and culture: the wide variety of diaconal workers in many countries and denominations; and the uneven disparity of financial resources, diaconal workers from around the globe still find

that they have a great deal in common. They are serving similarly in health care, education, community involvement issues; even though the needs may be unique to the setting.

Sharon G. Rubey, USA (edited)

If this is to have been more than a pleasant holiday we have to ask ourselves “How does this experience shape the life and ministry not just of individual members but also of the whole Body of Christ?”

Questions such as

- How has our understanding of the corporate nature of diaconal ministry been modified?
- How has our sense of being church and our understanding of mission been deepened?
- How has our ecumenical working been developed?
- How do we listen to what hasn't been said?

What do these questions mean for our worshipping communities as we engage with particular questions and issues that our context brings? These questions are ones that for me flow out of particular experiences of the Assembly.

At one point, I thought (cynically) the last three years have been about organising a holiday for some of North American and European colleagues! Then one of the Indian women talked of how being part of this Assembly would inspire her in her somewhat lonely ministry as one of around 30 deacons in her part of the world. I understood what we had really been doing.



“Angel of the North”

I hear how the somewhat aggressive evangelistic styles of some western Christians are making life very difficult for deacons in Egypt and elsewhere. Perhaps we might reflect on the consequences for other people of our way of being church and participating in mission, as well as the consequences of our decisions about trade and the environment.

We tried to hold together the different Christian traditions of praise and worship in a way that demonstrated the respect and honour that each tradition tries to show Jesus. Perhaps we might become aware of when our own sensitivities are more about us than God.

The words of the BCP confession spring to mind – we have left undone those things which we ought to have done: There were times when as an Assembly we did not make space to listen to the agonised cries of our brothers and sisters in Africa who wanted to speak of their pain. Maybe we thought we couldn't do anything, maybe listening would have been sufficient for the time.

Diakonia on the margins: Challenge and Hope. We were certainly able to share in the hope and excitement that being part of a worldwide Christian gathering brings.



Durham Cathedral

However, it must challenge us too. The blessing in the final worship had the words "through the deep waters of our experience, bless us, God of Creation". As members of worshipping communities we have a responsibility to bring some of those challenges of listening, sharing, and thinking more widely than our own backyard to those with whom we life and work

so that the blessing flows through us into the wider world.

Rev. Kathryn Fitzsimons, President of the Diaconal Association of the Church of England (DACE) (Edited)

"How was the Conference?" A German deaconess was asked.

"I was overwhelmed by experiences and talks, by songs and common services and tried long and hard to find the right words to express my main impression of DIAKONIA. Waiting at Manchester airport for our flight home I asked some other sisters how they felt and received a good picture. DIAKONIA is like a small Pentecost. Although language, culture and Christian tradition is different, understanding is possible. It is possible to worship together. There is a common centre. All over the world there are sisters and brothers joined in faith and in service to each other."

Edited from a report by Sister Eva Friederike Knauf.

THANK YOU

These words never seem adequate when we want to show our appreciation of work well done, but that is what we wanted to do to two of our former members of the Executive Committee.

Bouk Doktor had indicated before our Australia Assembly that she would retire from being Treasurer in January 2002. We would have taken the opportunity in Australia to say our Thank you but unfortunately Bouk took ill and was advised not to travel.

Shortly after the Assembly in Australia **Sr. Teresa** underwent some surgery and her recovery was hampered by infection and therefore took a long time, with the result that she resigned as Editor of DIAKONIA NEWS.

To let so many years of valued service, by both of these people, pass with only a few words in a Newsletter didn't seem adequate therefore the Executive invited them as guests to the World Assembly in Dur-

ham where they could be thanked much more publicly for all they had done for this organisation.

Pieter van Rijssel as the new Treasurer thanked Bouk and Jane Martin as the new English editor thanked Sr. Teresa. Louise Williams then presented them with plaques as a token memory of their time in office. It was a very fitting tribute to these two people who had done so much over the years.

From the Executive Committee

DIAKONIA Executive Committee Meeting, Durham, England – July 2005

Much of the business of this meeting was directly related to the Assembly and is therefore reported elsewhere in this Newsletter but there is always the ongoing work that the Committee does on behalf of the member groups and some of that is covered here.

NEW MEMBER GROUPS

The National Deaconess Association of ELCK (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya)

38 Deaconesses and 10 students belong to this order. They are teachers, social workers and do diaconal training within parishes.

Diaconal Ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Approximately 100 persons, both men and women, belong to this association, around 200 are in the candidacy process. They see their ministry in building bridges between the Church and people working in commercial jobs.

Diaconal Ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

This group is similar to the one in USA

Diakonia, Aotearoa New Zealand Association (D.A.N.Z.A.)

This is an ecumenical body of Deacons (*see article under the Assembly reports*)

Sr. Hanna Lachenmann, who had been Secretary and German Editor for DIAKONIA News for a number of years had also retired and we did have the opportunity in Australia to say thank you but she too was presented with a plaque in Durham.

DIAKONIA NEWS

It is still difficult getting information and news for this Newsletter but an English Edition was published early in 2005.

Jane Martin continues to be the Editor of the English version and Sr. Ulrike Kellner was appointed editor of DIAKONIA-Nachrichten. Sr. Helga Hess had fulfilled this position for three years but felt it was time to hand over to someone else. Sr. Helga was thanked for what she had done to make contact with groups and obtain information.

We continue to plea for people to contribute towards this publication by sending articles, photographs or anything that is felt would be of interest to share with others.

It is hoped that in the future we can put this Newsletter on to the Website for those who have access to such a facility. Hard copies will continue to be sent to each member Association. Member Associations are asked to photocopy this Newsletter to make it available to individuals and therefore spread the information it contains. If an individual would like a copy and cannot receive this through their own Association they may contact Jane Martin or Sr. Ulrike Kellner and we will endeavour to send a copy. **Individual copies would cost £2 or 6 €**

Financial Report

Treasurer Pieter van Rijssel presented the financial Report and indicated that there was a deficit for the year 2004, but this was less than expected. Some additional

costs had been due to Legal costs for altering the Constitution.



Treasurer Pieter van Rijssel

A very generous donation had been given by ELCA and this was used in supporting DIAKAID requests.

The Reserve Travel Fund had made it possible to support 32 delegates to attend the World Assembly in Durham.

DIAKAID

Completed or ongoing projects include:

Brazil – a project to overcome violence in a favela by hip-hop-music and to building up youth leadership.

Egypt – The Community Daughters of St. Mary, where new computer equipment was bought for the secondary school.

South Africa, Hibberdene – a bridge-building project bringing together rural poor has very successfully completed their first year of a three year programme.

Rwanda – a dairy farm in an orphanage has completed the first year of three year funding.

Caribbean – receives the final instalment of a three year programme for teachers in a bible school.

Tanzania, Namarila – a report was received on their progress so far for education – they will need to re-apply for further funding as they are behind schedule.

New Requests

Uniting Church in Australia – Deacon Scott Lichfield working with other agencies in Thailand after the Tsunami disaster of last year was granted 15,000 Euro for a 3 year programme.

Cameroon, Bafut Community – granted 5,000 Euro for a bread making project.

Zambia – 2,000 Euro was granted to install electricity for the chicken project organised by the deaconesses.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

From Region Africa-Europe (DRAE)

New Regional representation on DIAKONIA Executive:

Switzerland, France, Netherlands

Executive: Sr. Sabine Kobele, Switzerland:



Nordic Countries

Executive: Terttu Pohjolainen, Finland

& Kari Jordheim, Norway:



Great Britain

Executive: Jackie Fowler:



Executive: Sylvia Kumwenda:



Germany

Executive: Sr. Anke Frickmann
(Kaiserswerther Verband):



Sr. Doris Horn, Zehlendorfer Verband was again elected as President of DIAKONIA Region Africa Europe for a further term.

Switzerland has now officially invited DRAE to hold the next regional Conference 22-27 June 2007 in Basel. The theme will be "Challenge and hope of living as part of the body of Christ in a broken world"

The Motherhouse in **Bern** has celebrated its 160 year anniversary. During a whole year several conferences, speeches and concerts took place. As the Social Funding system in Switzerland is changing the motherhouse is facing major problems

& Sr. Doris Horn (Zehlendorfer Verband):



Finland

There are two diaconal institutions, Oulo and Lahti who are members of DIAKONIA although there are over a 1000 members of the "diaconal workers union". Sr. Doris Horn intends to visit Finland in the near future.

Germany

All four members: Kaiserswerther Verband, Zehlendorfer Verband, Deutscher Gemeinschafts-Diakonissenverband, Bund Deutscher Gemeinschafts-Diakonissen-Mutterhäuser are in the process of evaluation and restructuring. New ways are being found: for example, to open motherhouses; to include diaconal associates, training concepts for deaconesses and diaconal workers, university programmes for diaconal studies, guesthouse work, retreat centres and participation in church and society.

Maria Blackmon Smink of Netherlands has been co-opted as secretary of DRAE for two years.

Neil Thomson of DACE has been co-opted once again as Treasurer of DRAE

Those members from Africa who attended the World Assembly in Durham had a meeting together and elected **Sylvia Kumwenda, Zambia** to continue to represent them on the Executive Committee. To have them meet together gives the opportunity to share information and to bring encouragement to one another.

To encourage young people to attend the World Assembly a quiz with questions about DIAKONIA was included in the magazine of Zehlendorf. A young man won the prize and attended the assembly.

The motherhouse in **Frankfurt, Germany** has had to give up one of the oldest wings of its work. 2005 started the last programme of the School for Social Work Education and in 2008 the school will be closed.

The diaconal community of **Puschendorf, Germany** has had to say goodbye to its old motherhouse. In 1949 this house was the first home to the sisters in Western Germany and served many years as the Motherhouse, Home for the elderly and a Guesthouse. The work of the Puschendorf deaconesses is now done in houses built during the last twenty years.

Historic event:

For the first time, at the 30th Evangelical Church Day in Hannover, May 2005, all three German Diaconal Associations, Kaiserswerther Verband, Zehlendorfer Verband and VEDD (association of deacons) presented themselves together in one booth at the diaconal marketplace. They informed about the various ways of diaconal work and washed feet – as the American sisters showed them. On the stage near by a programme with discussion, music and theatre drew the attention of the visitors to the subject of diaconal work. A lot of people visited the booth and listened to the presentation.

All three associations are considering concentrating their administration in one office. Since 1st July the office of VEDD is at the head office of the Zehlendorfer Verband.

Africa

Communication with the member groups is getting a little bit better and news is trickling through. You will see elsewhere in the Newsletter that **ELCK National Deaconess Association, Kenya**, has joined DIAKONIA. It is hoped that the **Deaconess Association of the Methodist**

Church in Nigeria will make application in the near future.

The Community of **USHIRIKA Wa Neema, Tanzania**, celebrated their 25th Anniversary and Lieselotte Lindner, DRAE Secretary, attended on their behalf.

Madagascar

In diary form Sr. Angeline has given an account of the work of the Mamre Community over the last 6 months. They continue much of their Social Work among children and prisoners and have a closer relationship with their Church. They are indebted for the help in the past from Sr. Ute Hampel (Germany) and Eleri Edwards (Wales) and to the Grandchamp Community in Switzerland. They have had a number of overseas visitors which is an encouragement to them.

From Region ASIA PACIFIC (DAP)

Deaconess Salanieta Naucabalavu of Fiji has been elected as President of the Asia Pacific Region.



DAP President Salanieta Naucabalavu

Deaconess Sabitha Swarai of India will also represent DAP Region on the Executive Committee.

Philippines

Following a typhoon in November last year Emergency Funds were sent to assist the deaconesses to respond to this disaster, many of the deaconesses were involved in the relief work.

Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India

The Tsunami in December last year shattered the lives and villages on the coast line of these countries. Emergency funds were sent to help. Some DIAKAID funding has been sent to an Australian deacon working in Thailand.

An earthquake occurred in January in Aceh Province and again Emergency Funds were forwarded to assist Indonesian sisters to provide assistance.

Because of the vast area and spread of member groups it has been impossible for even the Executive of DAP to meet but a day meeting was planned for the day after the World Assembly in Durham to allow people to meet and to look towards their future in the region.

From Region of THE AMERICAS AND CARIBBEAN (DOTAC)

Linda Ervin, Canada, remains as DOTAC President.



DOTAC President Linda Ervin

DOTAC has invited the next World Assembly in 2009 to the Region. Date and place has still to be decided.

DOTAC held their last Conference in Winnipeg, Canada in 2002 when 150 people attended from The Caribbean, Mexico, Brazil, USA, Canada and Puerto Rico and translation took place in English, French,

Portuguese and Spanish. As a Central Committee they continue to meet annually. The next DOTAC Conference will be in Port of Spain, Trinidad on July 2nd-6th, 2006 when the Theme will be "To act Justly, to Love Kindness and to Walk Humbly with God"

In 2004 DOTAC welcomed a new member group "The Diaconal Minister of ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and in 2005 welcomed a DMELCIC (Diaconal Ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada).

They continue to work on the DOTAC Mission Statement, its' Peace Statement, calling all members to strengthen the commitment to be peacemakers and peace-builders, and is committed to supporting The Decade to Overcome Violence.

Brazil

A Deaconess from the Brazil Motherhouse, Sr. Doraci, was murdered recently in Mozambique. DOTAC remembered her and honoured her work. Sr. Ruthild Brakemeier has been appointed leading sister of the motherhouse in Sao Leopoldo.

United States

DOTAC will welcome a **new member group**. The **Diaconal Ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)**

The Deaconess Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have sold their house in Philadelphia and moved to Chicago. This was a difficult move for them. Anne Keffer is their new Deaconess Director.

DOTAC have offered to host the next DIAKONIA World Assembly in 2009, probably in Sao Paulo, Brazil or in Mexico.

REPORTS FROM ECUMENICAL MEETINGS

REPORT FROM PIECR

This was held 13-17 April 2005 at the Monastery of Bose, Italy and was attended by Doris Horn, President of DIAKONIA Region Africa-Europe. At this meeting there were 10 participants, all from Europe, representing the Catholic, Coptic, Anglican, United Methodist and Reformed Churches.

The Monastic Community of Bose is:

- A monastic Community of men and women belonging to different Christian churches.
- A monastic community seeking God in prayer, poverty, celibacy, and obedience to the gospel
- A monastic community present in the world as a meeting place and a place of freedom.

The community comprises about 80 men and women, catholic, orthodox and protestant. Three brothers live in Jerusalem and four in the south of Italy. They welcome about 15,000 guests yearly, looking for silence, spiritual renewal, retreat and participation in the life of the community. As well as hospitality their other tasks include, icon painting, printing and publishing, translation of old languages, pottery, carpentry, gardening and the study of the bible and monastic traditions.

The Theme of the consultation was "The Consecrated life as a force for reconciliation in a fragmented world". In sharing with each other it became clear that all of us are struggling with similar problems: renewal of faith, vocation, mission, future, unity.

Some of the communities are centres for unity and reconciliation, where members are coming from different denominations, churches, cultures, and languages. Some of the topics being worked on in some communities are "Living a sign of unity in diversity for the church" or "the gift of communion, the gift of being different, diverse, but still part of a unity.

To live reconciliation we have to learn: to listen to the pain and suffering of our fragmented world, to listen to the pain and hurt of our brother

and sisters in our communities before we will be able to listen to the world. Some contributions of reconciliation were given

- not looking back but being reconciled with each other now and to walk into the future together.
- forgive and go on and be forgiven
- listen and hear what the other is saying
- feel the suffering and pain
- listen respectfully, without judgement or reaction

Reconciliation is possible through Jesus Christ, and only possible after being reconciled with God through him, to be emptied of self and filled with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Not all will be changed, not all will be equal after reconciliation but there will be oneness, only found through and in Jesus Christ. We have to live the gospel of Jesus Christ in the midst of turmoil and suffering. The gospel must be – Proclaimed - Celebrated – Lived.

Next meeting will be 16-21 May 2006

Venue still to be arranged – Sweden or France

Theme – The role of communal prayer in shaping religious life

*Doris Horn resigned from her appointment to PIECR after 7 years. The Executive Committee named **Anke Frickmann** as the new representative and **Jackie Fowler** as Alternate.*

KAIRE

Sabine Koebele reported on the last meeting of KAIRE core group held in a Benedictine monastery in Italy. There was a mixture of old and new traditions in this monastery which were impressive. The group were preparing the next KAIRE Conference which will be held in the south of Italy near Bari 16-22 May 2006. The theme will be "Where to find living water"

Sr. Sabine will continue to represent DIAKONIA on this group until after May 2006. The Executive will then review this position.

IDZ

DIAKONIA has had no representation on this group for a few years. **Terttu Pohjolainen** from

Finland will attend their next conference in September 2005 on behalf of other institutions and we will review representation at our next meeting.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING 15 - 22nd February 2005

Once again Louise Williams served as DIAKONIA's representative:

This was the first meeting with Dr. Samuel Kobia as the new general secretary. The first half of the meeting was spent in plenary session – receiving various reports and presentations. Much of this was from the assembly planning team, receiving the preliminary review of the WCC since the last assembly, and exploring some of the new shape in the ecumenical movement. In addition there were plenary presentations on human sexuality and issues of the Pacific Islands.

The next days were spent in committee meetings and I was assigned to the committee responsible for the plans for the Assembly in Brazil next year. The 9th Assembly will be in Porto Alegre, Brazil 14-23 February 2006. Although the number of delegates will be decreased in a bid to save costs and facilitate decision making DIAKONIA will be able to send a delegated representative. In addition, visitors will be welcome but will not likely be accommodated in the plenary hall.

Central to the Assembly will be *Mutirao*. A gathering place for workshops, discussion groups and a place of learning from one another to make a difference. I alerted the planners DIAKONIA's desire to offer a workshop.

Edited from President Louise Williams report

DIAKONIA'S Executive Committee discussed this idea of a workshop and it will take place during the Assembly at the *Mutirao*. A number of the Executive will stay on after the Executive Meeting being held in the days prior to the WCC Assembly to help with the workshop

After nine years as DIAKONIA's representative on WCC Louise felt it was time to step down. Terttu Pohjolainen, Finland, agreed to take over this position.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES Conference on Mission & Evangelism

"Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile" was the theme of the **13th Conference on Mission and Evangelism** organised by the World Council of Churches. 650 people from 105 countries, representing over 300 churches and Christian organisations gathered in Aghios Andreas, 30 km north of Athens, Greece, from 9-16th May 2005. The WCC was delighted that this was the largest number of Churches ever involved in one of their conferences with a significant delegation from the Roman Catholic Church and encouraging numbers from Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. And for the first time ever the Mission & Evangelism Conference took place in a predominately orthodox country.

The sub-theme of the conference was: 'Called in Christ to be Reconciling and Healing Communities.' Those gathered were asked to consider how the churches could be communities of healing and reconciliation in our world today as an effective from of mission and evangelism.

Each day followed a similar pattern. The day started in our **Home Groups** where we shared a form of Bible Study called **Lectio Divina** (Latin for Sacred Reading). The passages studies were on the theme of the conference. The group was the one constant in an ever changing day.

After the Home Groups we took part in **Morning Worship** and these followed the pattern of a different Christian tradition each day. Then followed our main Plenary Session and each day we heard about a different aspect of the theme.

In the afternoon there were choices of around **Synaxeis** (workshops) based on the theme of the day. Also in the afternoon there was the opportunity to share in services of healing from various traditions. The afternoon closed with Evening Worship. In the evening we met again in Home Groups to discuss the day – what we had learned and how we were feeling.

The **opening session** was particularly moving when a cross arrived by boat from Jerusalem. This was a gift from the Christian Churches of the Holy Land and was made from small pieces of olive wood. The wood came from trees, which had been uprooted from around Bethlehem in order to build the new security fence. The Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem spoke of the shared symbolism of the cross, which all Chris-

tians have in common. He saw it as a sign of our salvation and redemption which brought reconciliation to our brothers and sisters – to break down the walls that separate, walls of mistrust and hostility wherever they exist. It seemed to me extremely poignant that this cross should come from a place where a wall was being built to separate people from one another when we were trying to find ways to break down the barriers that divide and separate us.

The **closing session** was also very moving and was held in Athens at the spot where Paul preached to the Athenians and we heard the passage from Acts 17 where he begins by saying “I see that in every way you Athenians are very religious” It was amazing to stand there nearly two thousand years later with people from all over the world, and from many Christian traditions and think of how it all began. That from such a small beginning the Christian faith is now known throughout the world and millions believe.

The Conference was designed to be **experiential** and it was. The Plenary sessions and the synaxeis alike were based on the experiences of people there. We heard stories of violence and hatred from places like Rwanda, South Africa, Palestine/Israel and Bosnia. We listened while people spoke of living with disabilities and HIV/AIDS. We were moved by the experiences of suffering from Aboriginal people and refugees, through women abused in the home and in human trafficking, and even the damage being done to the earth through the way we live. We listened to how the Church was responding and heard words like; healing, life transforming, forgiveness, reconciliation, renewing, friendship, truth, justice, peace, presence, acceptance.

Not everyone was happy that the Conference was taking place and every day there was a small but fairly voluble group of conservative Greek Orthodox gathered at the gates of the camp to **protest**.

We were based in an Army Officers Holiday Camp and there were soldiers constantly in attendance as well as a helicopter hovering overhead. We were told this was for our own security but for some at the conference helicopters were

not a sign of security but fear – a reminder again of the difficult situations that many had come from.

Downsides: In some ways the conference was too big and tried to cover too wide an area of subjects. It was difficult trying to remember the people met and their background and traditions. The choice of subjects was too big and some direction to study certain areas may have been more productive.

Highlights: Both the opening and closing ceremonies were very moving as was worship but found it somewhat disconcerting that others walked in and out during worship as well as talking, taking pictures etc. Home groups were good as you studied with the same people every day and therefore there was continuity. The diversity of people – different traditions and cultures – the comparative wealth and poverty – yet it all led to a common bond. To see women wearing brightly coloured saris eat breakfast with bearded men in flowing black robes. To compare ideas with Lutherans and Orthodox and listen as Roman Catholics and Evangelicals exchange greetings. To see people from 100 countries and almost every Christian tradition live together in community for a week, share their stores and provide a working example of tolerance and peace. – it gave me hope for the future of the Church and therefore the world.

I would like to finish with quoting Heather Chapel, a writer from Toronto Canada.

“In a diverse and increasingly violent world, the need for community is great, and lack of close relationships can lead to intolerance, discrimination, isolation and fear.

In just one week, conference participants have come together in community, creating a space where cultural, denominational, and spiritual differences unite rather than divide. In this way, they provide an important model to churches world-wide, and confirm that it is possible to live together as one people – a diverse family centred in the community of God’s love.”

Deacon Ann Lyall, Scotland (edited)

Remember the 26th of each month is the day that as members of DIAKONIA we pray for one another. If you have something you want us to pray for or to share something with us please email this to Sr. Doris Horn we will pass it on.