

# **DIAKONIA** **News**



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

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## FROM YOUR EDITORS

In the Newsletter of December 2006 both editors apologised for the time it had taken to get it ready, printed and distributed.

Again we apologise because it has taken even longer this time. When it is not your job but something extra it always gets put at the bottom of the pile of work to be done. As well as that, I had problems with my computer; router modem and internet connections which took about four months or so to get sorted out. It caused great stress and even anger at times as much time was spent on telephone calls and trying all sorts of things that didn't work. In the middle of that I developed what has been diagnosed as Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome and didn't therefore have the energy or the inclination to get moving. There is no medication for such a thing and it takes its own time to wear out. Thankfully I think it is beginning to do that.

So here we are with an edition. Like always there are never too many people willing to send articles but we hope you enjoy what is included and if you don't maybe it will inspire you to write something for us. If someone did send me something and it is not included I sincerely apologise. It could be at the bottom of my pile.

It is good to share what we have so others around the world can get a taste of our life and work for the Lord in our own Association or Community.

As I write this we are in the Season of Lent, pondering over the events of Jesus life and looking forward to Celebrating the Risen Lord. May you have a joyous Easter and be refreshed in your life and work.

*Jane Martin*  
English editor

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Not much more is to add from my side. I also apologize for the late issue and hope that you still will enjoy reading it. When I send out the newspaper, several items come back because people moved and didn't tell us the new address. So, please inform us if you have changed your address! From time to time I hear that people would like to have the DIAKONIA News not printed, but electronically. **If you want to**

**receive DIAKONIA News electronically, please give me a short note:**

**deutsch.editor@diakonia-world.org**

May all of you celebrate a happy Easter, hear and come to know again what is said in Revelation 1,18: I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

*Ulrike Kellner*  
German editor

### Important Internet and E-mail Adresses

#### WEBSITES

DIAKONIA World Federation  
DAP  
DRAE  
DOTAC

<http://www.diakonia-world.org>  
<http://www.dap.info>  
<http://www.drae.info>  
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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*This is excerpted from the greetings Louise Williams gave at the DRAE conference in Basel Switzerland, June 22, 2007."*

Through DIAKONIA World Federation, we share a special friendship — a gift from God to encourage and inspire us all in the work we do and the lives we lead. As a young person growing up in the middle of the United States of America, I never could have imagined this gift — to have friends I can call by name from every corner of the globe and to know that my friends around the world are praying for me even as I pray for them.

After Jesus took the role of a servant and washed the disciples' feet, later that same evening, he said, "I no longer call you servants but friends." — friends of Jesus and friends of one another. Friendship means that there is no longer a hierarchical relationship but a mutual one. In that mutuality, friends give to one another and receive from one another.

In DIAKONIA World Federation, there may be many differences — language, lifestyle, nationality, mode of dress, manner of organization, types of ministries, and the like. And there may be disparity economically, in terms of education, in the way we relate to our churches or in the courage it takes to do ministry in our settings. Friendship says we do not see those differences in terms of better or worse but in terms of differing gifts. Each has a gift to bring and each has gifts to receive from the others. This is the friendship we share in DIAKONIA.

As we share this gift of friendship among ourselves, we can be like a leaven in the churches — and even in the whole society.

In her book, *The Strength of the Weak*, Dorothe Sölle recounts the story of a rabbi who asked his students how one could recognize the time when night ends and day begins.

"Is it when, from a great distance, you can tell a dog from a sheep?" one student asked.

"No," said the rabbi.

"Is it when, from a great distance, you can tell a date palm from a fig tree?" another student asked.

"No," said the rabbi.

"Then when is it?" the students asked.

"Is it when you look into the face of any human creature and see your brother or your sister there. Until then, night is still with us."<sup>1</sup>

We might say until we look into the face of any human creature and see a friend there, night is with us still. Maybe this is the gift we share with the church and world — to see others with the eyes of Christ who sees no longer servants but friends.

And I am pleased to invite you to the next DIAKONIA World Assembly which will be in July 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The planning team is already working hard to prepare a welcome to you — to receive you as friends. More details will be available after the next DIAKONIA Executive Committee meeting. If you have access to the internet, check the DIAKONIA web site for the most recent information. Please help us spread the word to others in your sisterhoods and communities, and plan to join your friends from around the world in the USA in 2009.

*Louise Williams*  
*DIAKONIA World President*

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<sup>1</sup> Soelle, Dorothee. *The Strength of the Weak: Toward a Christian Feminist Identity*. Translated by Robert and Rita Kimber. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984. P. 41.

# DIAKONIA WORLDWIDE

DIAKONIA's main web address: [www.diakonia-world.org](http://www.diakonia-world.org)

## From the Executive Committee

### **DIAKONIA Executive Committee Meeting, Riehen, Switzerland June 27 - July 3, 2007**

This meeting followed the very good and happy DRAE Conference to which many of the Executive were able to attend. We were hosted by the Motherhouse in Riehen and it was good to have that fellowship and friendship renewed.



*Executive Committee at Riehen/Switzerland*

### **NEW MEMBER GROUPS**

There were no new member groups admitted this year but contacts have been made with other groups and it is hoped that in time to come others will join us.

### **DIAKONIA NEWS**

Most people enjoy getting the Newsletter but unfortunately not many people like to contribute. We continue to live in hope that one day we will be overwhelmed by the number of articles we receive. Financial contributions towards the cost of the Newsletter would also be welcome.

**As indicated in the past individual copies would cost £2 or 6 Euro**

### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Treasurer presented a draft annual report. The final accounts would be presented when agreed by the Auditors.

These would then be signed by all Executive members as a true record.

**Membership fees:** As the letter requesting membership fees had been late in going out not all member groups had paid. A new way of agreeing what the membership fee would be for each association was discussed and decided upon and the Treasurer will outline this in his next letter. The Budget for 2008 was presented and agreed.

### **DIAKAID**

It was agreed that there would be no separate of funds for DIAKAID and Emergency Fund for the years 2007 and 2008. All donations would go into DIAKAID. This will be reviewed at the 2009 Executive Meeting.

We are reminded that all requests for DIAKAID Projects should be submitted to the Regional President who will present it to the Executive Committee. Any request for Emergency should be made direct to the Treasurer.

New guidelines for DIAKAID were agreed and would be sent out with the Minutes and will also be available on the website.



*Cooking with Biogas*

### **Completed and on going projects**

Tanzania/Namalira – to receive a further instalment for their education programme and a report had been submitted.



*Sisters in Bukoba, Namalira*

Belem/Brazil – also gave a report and receives the second instalment for their “kids at risk” project.

South Africa/Hibberdene – has completed their three year funding for the day care centre.

Uniting Church in Australia – working in Thailand on an after Tsunami programme has now finished their work.

### **New Projects**

Caribbean, Wesley Diaconal Community – was granted 5,000 Euro to provide a programme for unemployed youth to be trained in basic survival skills.

Indonesia – the Deaconess School of the HKBP to be granted 4,000 Euro towards a new student bus on the proviso that they could find further funding.



*Regional meeting of IKADIWA, Indonesia*

Malawi – to be given 5,000 Euro over a period of three years for self help projects for deaconesses and orphans.

Egypt – The Community Daughters of St. Mary to receive 2,000 Euro to buy Montessori material and for music lessons at the school for the mentally and bodily handicapped people.

### **Other work of the Executive Committee**

included many of the themes identified out of the hopes-and-challenges-list from the World Assembly in Durham. We worked in small groups looking at how we can promote DIAKONIA in a better way:

- Update our website more often and include more information
- Try to produce a CD that could be circulated for the use of member groups.
- To make DIAKONIA a more up to date newsletter to include diaconal stories, biblical reflection, more pictures, book reviews and so on.
- A new leaflet to be ready for the next World Assembly
- A new book on the History of DIAKONIA and its member associations.
- Encourage local gatherings
- Encourage Exchange programmes within member communities.
- Continue our Theological reflection
- Bring matters of justice and peace to our attention
- To begin a group to support DIAKONIA called “Friends of DIAKONIA”

These were just some of the areas and issues that were discussed and worked upon, and it is hoped that we will continue to progress the work of DIAKONIA for the benefit of member groups and Churches.

Sister Sabine Köbele has now left the Motherhouse at Riehen and is therefore no longer a member of the DRAE and World Executive Committees. Her alternate, Peter Geene from the Netherlands, will replace her at meetings until 2009. **As a DRAE and World Executive we wish Sr. Sabine well in her life outside the Community and thank her for all her work, especially with the DRAE Conference in Basel 2007.**



*Sabine Koebele with Sr Sabitha Swaraj, India*

## FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### *From Region Africa-Europe (DRAE)*

**Egypt:** The political situation for the Coptic Church and the sisters is getting more difficult. They need our prayers and support.

The sisters have made an application for DIAKAID (see under DIAKAID heading)

**Nigeria:** It was hoped that Sr. Ronke Owuru would attend the Conference at Basel but again there was a difficulty with her visa.

**Kenya:** 5000 Euro was given from the emergency fund to help get crops and farms going again after a severe drought.



*Children in Kenya*

**South Africa:** Methodist Diaconal Order has ordained new deacons at their annual Convocation. Kathy Marsden attended the Basel Conference and led a workshop.

**Cameroon:** New sisters have been consecrated. Their guesthouse is in great demand and their bakery now has a new roof.

**Ruanda:** The work at the orphanage is developing well as is their dairy cow project. New sisters have been admitted and others have completed their professional training.

**Malawi:** Churches of Christ in Malawi has its head office in Llongwe where their General Secretary is situated but the main work is that of the Gowa Mission which is in a very rural and remote area where there is no electricity and no lines of communication. There is no official training for diaconal workers but the women are keen to have training and set up project work within the church.

**Zambia:** The deaconesses work within the 10 Presbyteries of UCZ serving in congregations, social and community work, school chaplains and leading women's fellowship groups. Zambia is a very poor country and sometimes the deaconesses do not receive their salary (stipend) for months at a time. The rainy season in 2007 was too much and crops, houses, bridges and roads were devastated. The chicken project has its ups and downs due to their changing weather but it does bring an income and helps some of the children in school with books, pencils and school fees.

**Ethiopia:** The church is very eager in moving forward to establish diaconal work. EECMY was accepted to be an associate member of DRAE

**Madagascar:** the news from the sisters is encouraging. Although a very small community they are very active in the community where they live, in the church, and in a variety of other places. The hurricanes at the beginning of 2007 devastated their rice crop leaving them without rice for the rest of the year. They continue their education, for some to learn English and others French, as well as theology and spirituality. They are helped by ministers within their own church and by friends from other communities in Europe. They have had many visitors which has brought great blessings.

**Sr. Doris Horn, DRAE President visited Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania at the beginning of 2007. A summary of her visit is following below.**

**Switzerland:** The Swiss Motherhouses worked hard to organise the DRAE Conference and it went well. They are to be congratulated for their work and hospitality.

**France:** Two Motherhouses in France have withdrawn membership from DIAKONIA due to their small numbers. They are Congregation of Diaconesses, Bethesda, Stassburg, and Etablissement des Diaconesses, Strassburg

**Germany:** The *Kaiserswerther Verband* has a new Chairperson, Dr. Ruth Muller – see separate article of introduction. Her installation took place in the Berlin Dome on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

The Kaiserswerth Foundation office in Kassel has now closed and everything is in the one office in Berlin. Email address is [verband@kaiserswerther-verband.de](mailto:verband@kaiserswerther-verband.de).

Around 100 Brothers and sisters from 10 different motherhouses and communities from Northern Germany came together in Henriettenstift Hannover for the *first DIAKONIA North Regional meeting*. They heard about DIAKONIA today and plans for the future. The inviting sister Helga

Darenberg hopes that this kind of meeting will become a regular event in the northern part of Germany. A similar meeting is planned in the Eastern Region.

The *General Conference of Kaiserswerth (Kaiserswerther Generalkonferenz)* has elected a new Executive Committee. New President is Pfarrer Christof Naef (Switzerland). Vice Presidents are Deaconess Terttu Pohjolainen (Finland) and Schwester Roswitha Buff (Neuendettelsau, Germany).



*Dr. Terttu Pohjolainen and Dr. Louise Williams*

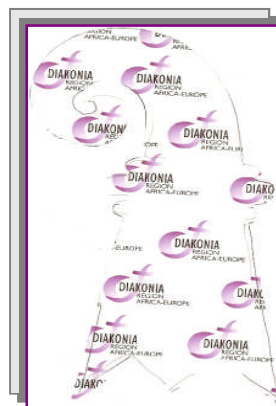
After 12 years of service the director of the motherhouse in Stuttgart (Diakonissenhaus, Stuttgart) is retiring and his successor is Pfarrer Dr. Gottfried Class, a theologian who did his thesis on Dietrich Bonhoeffer and has a Master in diaconal management. He took up his position of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007

**Netherlands:** Zending-Diaconessenhuis Amerongen founded a new community to help the deaconesses in their work (mission deaconate, worship and evangelism) with the name "De Akker". Until now there are 12 people from all over the Netherlands who live together in a house near the Motherhouse. The money for their living is raised by two activities 1) a second hand shop is already installed and is well used, and 2) a funeral home named "DIAKONOS" which provides services around the death of a loved one on a personal and Christian founded level. As some facilities needed are already available at the motherhouse the fees can be kept low.

# D R A E - K O N F E R E N Z 0 7

**Basel, Switzerland  
22-27<sup>th</sup> June 2006**

**Theme: Friendship – a gift to share**



Around 150 delegates gathered in the city of Basel from Europe, Africa and even beyond as some of the World Executive also joined us. We were here at the invitation of the deaconess communities in Switzerland.

We met in the Matthäus Church for worship, key speakers, business sessions and small groups but also enjoyed the hospitality of nearby St. Joseph's Church for both a DRAE night and Swiss night.



*Matthäus Church, Basel/Switzerland*

Sunday worship was at the magnificent Cathedral where we also enjoyed a tour and our lunch time meal.



*At the Basel Cathedral*

**Key Addresses** – As it would take up too many pages to give a full script here is a summary of what the speakers gave as an introduction to what they would say.

**Prof. Ralph Kunz: You are My friends! – Friendship, a Gift of Grace in Charity (John 15.15)**

Christian charity (Diakonia) uses ideal conceptions of love of one another, service and devotion to community.

The love of Christ is the model! A social charity, enlightened and well informed, has learned to deal are fully with this ideal. It is understood. Everyone who gives professional care has to keep his distance from the client and still allow closeness in the relationship. The question is, should the tension between social work and Christian service be dealt with as a contradiction between an ideal theology and a realistic psychology? I want to show that within biblical sources of charity there exists a helpful disposition indeed to reflect this tension in a productive way.



*Discussion on the theme*

We want to speak about the charm of friendship. Under theological perspective it is naturally a gift of the Spirit, and spiritual-

ity a gift of nature – for charity. It helps to overcome the paralyzing idealizations without groping into new (or old) traps of professionalism.



*DRAE Regional President Doris Horn and Irmelin Kradolfer, Planning Group Basel*

### **Prof. Christof Sigrist: Friendship as a creative Power for Charity (Diakonia)**

Charity is social action which has its roots in the Gospel and happens in context with the church and with society. The subject of charity are individual people in connection and relationship with others: Friendships, institutions, communities and church congregations. I want to start with the principle of mutuality in diaconal actions, which unfolds in Johannine and Pauline texts. By tracing some outstanding points in the history of charity I want to show from there, how much friendship always was found in connection with fundamental changes and initiatives in relief-actions of Christian charity.



We want to speak about communities of brothers and sisters, about Begines and foundational communities of charity, about communities of deaconesses and deacons, even protestant monasteries and convents, which are current centres of attraction for alternative designs of life and faith. From a social point of view love as friendship is the creative power for charity. And so charity happens in mutual reference of taking and giving. Subject of charity is the congregation, the community of people, who support each other as friends. So friendship helps to overcome the danger of exhaustion and the wearing out of dependences in charity.

### **Among the participants there are two that are worth a mention:**

Firstly there is **Kenni Kumwenda**, the husband of Sylvia, the African Executive member of DRAE as well as the World Executive. Kenni came to the Conference as the guest of a Swiss Motherhouse. In Zambia he is a teacher and for him this



was a real life experience. To see the river, the mountains and the lakes that he teaches about in his geography classes, to hear so many languages being spoken, the friendship and fellowship of these people was something he cherished, he was proud to call

everyone friends and everyone was proud to have him as a friend.

Secondly there is **Niels van Donselaar** who won a competition in the Netherlands with the prize being a participant at the Conference:

He wrote after the Conference: "I was there at the DRAE Conference Basel 2007, and it was a pleasure to me! I'm from Holland, 22 years old and studying Pastoral work. I really enjoyed my time in Basel. This was the first time ever I saw so many deaconesses in one place together.



What I'll remember most from the conference, are the loving happy eyes of some of the older sisters, especially sister Judith (Cameroon) and one of the sisters from Egypt. I'll also remember conversations with sister Jelena from Lithuania and of course Adri from Holland. It was encouraging to see people from all over the world working in the Kingdom of God. I was impressed by the love and compassion for people in need

The theme 'Friendship' was amazing to think and talk about. The line 'to make a friends is first to be a friend' touched and inspired me to renew my thoughts about making friends. Now I am trying more to be a friend instead of seeking one. I hope you will do the same. May God bless you in your work. He's the one who comforts you and wants to be your closest friend. Bring the kingdom of heaven on earth in the name of Jesus Christ."

**Note:** Sr. Ulrike Kueppers is offering bookmarks she gave to the brothers and sisters who attended the DRAE Conference in Basel to everyone on request. She asks for a donation for DIAKID in return.

## Journey through Malawi, Tanzania and Kenya

*During January/February 2007 Sister Doris Horn, President of DIAKONIA Africa Europe travelled with Sister Sieglinde Hornke through the above countries. This was a journey of learning, listening, sharing, strengthening and praying together.*

### Malawi

Malawi – is one of the 10 poorest countries in the world. The Churches of Christ has their General Secretary's Office in Lilongwe but their main work is at the **Gowa Mission** some two and a half hours drive away, along dirt roads. There is no electricity and no telephone communication but there is a lively hospital, school and a farming project which DIAKONIA financed some years ago.

On the one hand the hospital is impressive, clean and tidy. Power for the radio is by means of a small solar plant, so they can call the emergency car if necessary. There is disinfectant solution at hand and a poster for sex education on the wall. There is a professional maternity table but the instruments are blunt and some of them out of order. The baby scales are

broken and there is hardly any medicine. It is a very hard situation for the workers who are educated midwives, nurses and health care assistants. They all need a lot of enthusiasm, flexibility and creativity to do their work.



*Deacons Tmshibire, Karagwe*

We then stayed at **Chilema** – an ecumenical conference and training centre and from here we could visit a number of mission stations, parishes and school. Chilema has a school for women's education. The training lasts 6 months. They are offered lectures in farming, child educa-

tion, health education, sewing and cooking as well as book-keeping. Some of these women find jobs in the local health centre, or work in small guest houses or restaurants. The women and the centre are very poor financially and so are limited in what can be offered and learned. HIV/AIDS is always a talking topic and the church tries to struggle to educate.



*Sister Dinah and DRAE President Doris Horn*

We visit **Namirawawa Primary School** which has 1,080 pupils, 14 teachers, 12 of them qualified and the other two are assistants. They have 14 classrooms. It is a very desolate looking place but there are achievements when some pupils can go on to higher education. The Church tries to build up a health centre, a mill, a child day care centre and a boarding school for girls.

We move on to **Blantyre** and I preach at the small church service and have an opportunity to speak to the young people. This is an area where there are few jobs, but the people are happy in their worship. Because it is the rainy season there were thunderstorms and rains which caused flooding and destroyed most of the harvest and the downward spiral of poverty continues.



*Mount Kilimanscharo*

## **Tanzania**

### ***Moshi, Kilimanjaro, Motherhouse Ushireka Wa Neem (Community of Grace)***

We were met at the airport by Sister Elli Urio, a deaconess (DIAKONIA Executive Committee Alternate) and one of the first ordained women in the ELCT. She leads a guesthouse, Lyamungo, our first stop. Here everything is prepared well: visits to parishes, at the diocese and in projects of the church. At the central office of the Church we meet the Bishop and a German priest from Augsburg, who is responsible for projects connected with HIV/AIDS.

On a visit to a parish we travel for about an hour on dirt roads through banana plantations and are welcomed by the priest, teachers and pupils at the school. The children sing a song for us and we are deeply touched. A lot of the small faces are serious as they have already experience so much hardship but they know that at school they are safe and get all they need. Without the help of the church there would be no education, no food, no possibility to learn. A church in the USA helps to build a residence hall for girls.



*Orphanage*

**Orphanage Neema:** This house is newly opened by the sisterhood. Pastor Urio, director of the sisterhood and Sister Agnes, the leading sister of the Motherhouse welcome us. Pastor Urio helped to build the sisterhood, which is now 25 years old. This orphanage takes care of the very young babies as NGO's and the Government only help those over a year old. Two special trained sisters look after the babies and everything is clean and well equipped. Many of the babies were either premature or are infected by the HIV virus. Twice a week a special trained sister does physiotherapy with them.

**Agape Junior Seminary:** this secondary school teaches Christian Ethics and that makes it special to government schools. There are 420 pupils and it is lead by one of the deaconesses. Again it is well equipped.



*With Sister Elly Urio at the boarding school*

The **Motherhouse Ushirika Wa Neema** has a number of houses built in the traditional round way. 40 sisters live here and another 41 are working in various church institutions, 42 of the sisters are ordained. They have many novices. They have their own farm and gardens which give them most of their supplies and also have a Montessori school where they train teachers.

**Faraja diaconal centre** (Ushirika Wa Dia-konia). They have a 3 year programme to educate deacons. They also have a second practical training so they can work in various jobs afterwards. There are 18 ordained deacons and 12 in training. Connected with the school is an elementary school for disabled children.



*Bethany Group, Bukoba*

We fly over Lake Victoria to **Bukoba** to visit with the sisters of **Namalira, Ntoma**. Some of the sisters are employees of the church and they give 5% of their salary to the motherhouse. At the motherhouse they also have a tailor shop for clerical clothing and a wafer bakery. They train deaconesses and one deacon at the moment and DIAKAID funds those deaconesses who need to finish their school education. There is also an orphanage. There is also a small health centre with an ambulance and a maternity ward. We also make visits to other projects.

Back in the town of Bukoba we visit the centre for the Diocese and learn of their activities and programmes and the support that is given for one large project from the Church of Denmark.



*Karagwe, Florence Gatege*

We now leave for **Karagwe** which is situated in the northwest of Tanzania, near the border to Ruanda and Uganda. Our first visit is to **Nyakahahanga Hospital**, which is run by the church and the government. Some Swedish people founded the first ward in 1912. In 1953 there were 60 beds, today there are 300 beds, 10 doctors, 250 other employees and 400 patients and they serve an area of 450,000 inhabitants. Most common diseases are malaria, pneumonia and several diseases caused by AIDS. Like many other places we saw the equipment is poor.

**Tumshubrie (hope)** is our next place, a centre of the female deacons of the Karagwe Diocese. The community was founded in 1992. The centre is planned for training and recreation of the sisters, unfortunately the training has presently stopped. Eight of the ten sisters gather in the house of Florence Gatege who is leading the training centre for teachers. A few of the sisters are employed by the church and receive a small salary. The role of the deacon in the church is not a high priority and their future does not look encouraging.



*Tumshubire, "Hope"*

### **Kenya**

At Nairobi we are met by the General Secretary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya (ELCK) Mr. John Kalakke, and three female deacons. We were in the hands of Elizabeth and Mary, both deacons with whom we had previous contact. The diaconal training lasts two years but there is no guarantee of a job within the church afterwards. Both these deacons do their job voluntarily and only receive a very small salary from the Church. They both work in two of the largest slum areas of Nairobi. It was an adventure to visit these places, to meet people and hear their stories of such extreme poverty, criminal ac-

tivity, drugs and disease, orphans and street kids.

We were overwhelmed by the size of misery and poverty. There are little signs of hope but this is through organisations outside of the church. We had the opportunity to speak with the church government and share something about DIAKONIA. We were also able to visit the Ecumenical Women Centre Kigari and hear more of their story. We attended a church service some two and a half hours from Nairobi where the Bishop was conducting and a new priest being introduced. It was exciting.



The trip came to an end and we were exhausted, but happy. We realised on that journey how Christian faith can be lived in various ways. Even under extremely bad circumstances Christ is able to give us love and hope.

We often sensed how the love of Christ is connecting us. We returned home very enriched.

*Edited from a Report given by Doris Horn to the Executive Committee*

**Fees, donations and contributions you may send to the following account:**

**Bank account 38 81 759**

**Stichting DIAKONIA**

**Amsterdam, Netherlands/Niederlande**

**IBAN: NL44 PSTB 0003881759**

**BIC: PSTBNL2**

## **New Chief Executive Officer of the Kaiserswerth Association introduces herself to DIAKONIA News:**

On the 23.10.2006 I was elected by the Executive Committee of the Kaiserswerth Association to be the new CEO and since 1.1.2007 I took over the responsibility from my two predecessors, Pfarrer Dr. Reinhold Lanz and Sr. Käte Roos. To change the long lived model Pfarrer/Vorsteher – Sister/Oberin into a system lead by a single person means a new chapter in the history of the association, which is over 90 years old. The idea is to make the management lean so that it can face future responsibilities better. What has been proven over the years shall be preserved, the cooperation between the associations shall become more intensive and new challenges shall be taken – and I love to take part in these efforts!



*Inauguration Berlin Cathedral  
Resource: [ecumenix.com/Flügge](http://ecumenix.com/Flügge)*

On the 12.10.2007, I was inaugurated in my office by the President of the Diaconal Institutions in Germany, Klaus-Dieter K. Kottnik. The ceremony took place in a festive service at the cathedral of Berlin. I was very happy that DIAKONIA President Louise Williams wrote a greeting which was read by Ulrike Kellner. She pointed out that the Kaiserswerth Association is an integral part of DIAKONIA. Many members of DIAKONIA also trace their roots to Kaiserswerth, and there are historical and theological connections between DIAKONIA and the Kaiserswerth Association. It underlines these connections that DRAE Regional President Sr. Doris Horn was also present.

When I think which challenge of my new job attracted me most, it was the variety of those challenges. There are those diaconal-theological questions over 70 communities and institutions within the Kaiserswerth Association face in the 21st century. But beside that I am

interested to represent the special profile of diaconal communities within the church body of the Evangelical Church of Germany, within the Diaconal Institution of the EKD and also in policy and society. I want to nourish the network within our members, strengthen the flow of information among themselves and public relations. I hope that speaking face to face still remains an important issue, because personal contacts and relations make the network alive and reliable. Here I am looking forward to many encounters and talks within DIAKONIA.

I am an ordained minister (Pfarrer) of the Evangelical Bavarian Church. Beside my theology degree I studied diaconal sciences in Heidelberg where I was focussed in church history and diaconal history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century especially social ethics like they were shown in the protestant profile of German resistance fighters at the time of the Nationalsozialism. My PhD thesis was on the fight of Dietrich Bonhoeffer against the program against Jews within the Nationalsozialism. I also worked on questions of Euthanasie (= murdering handicapped people. Remark of the Editor) in the Third Empire. After being assistant pastor in Munich, I worked at a theological seminar in Nuremberg, training future ministers. After that I joined the Berlin office of the Evangelical Church of Germany and from 1991 – 2006 within the office of the Community of Evangelical Churches in Europe (GEKE). The 105 protestant churches all over Europe and South America, connected within this community, former known as "Leuenberg Community", practice community at pulpit and altar, based on the Leuenberg Konkordie of 1973.

I am very happy that I can use this experience in working for associations and ecumenical environments within my new work as CEO of the Kaiserswerth Association. I am especially happy that this includes the international work with the additional 26 motherhouses outside Germany, who are organized in the Kaiserswerth General Conference and, of course, with DIAKONIA World Federation. I am looking forward to many encounters and discussion with you all.

*Dr. Christine-Ruth Müller*

## From the Region of The Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC)

### **DOTAC Trinidad Conference**

There were about 100 people in attendance mainly from the Caribbean and the US and about 6 from Canada. **The theme was to Act Justly, Love Kindness and To Walk Humbly with God.**

There were theme presenters with an opportunity for small group reflection after each presentation. One day was spent at mission and cultural projects on the two islands of Trinidad and Tobago ending in the evening with a time of theological reflection on the day's activities. Each day began and ended with worship.



*Brazilian delegation at DOTAC Conference*

The cultural evening was composed of story tellers, dancers, steel drums, singing and there was a representation of the many cultures that make up Trinidad and Tobago – Chinese, Indian from India, Caucasian and Black (who had been slaves on the Island coming from Africa).



*Worship table at DOTAC conference*

At night people went to the beach to see the Letherback Turtles and their babies. A baby turtle was adopted and given the name DOTAC! These turtles swim all around the DOTAC area and sometimes also to Europe so we saw DOTAC as a great symbol of connecting Diaconals all over the world. If you happen to see DOTAC let us know, we are trying to keep track of DOTAC's journey.

### **Potential new member groups:**

While in Trinidad two people from the Presbyterian Deaconess Association attended the Conference and expressed interest in being DOTAC members. They are a very small group. We are hoping that later in the year they will become full members. We have also received enquiries from Honduras, Cuba, Mexico and a Methodist group in Brazil and we are following these up. Our Web site is proving to be a useful place for people to make contact.

### **New Member Group:**

The Anglican Deacon Association of Canada. Previously they had been members through NAAD but now they want to stand on their own as members.



*DOTAC President Linda Ervin and Vice president Lisa Polito welcoming new members*

The **DOVE Programme** was scheduled for late 2007. DOVE is Diakonia Overcoming Violence Education. 12 people planned to attend. Three from Canada, three from UA, three from Brazil and three from the Caribbean.



*DOVE group at United Nations*

The programme was developed by a group in New York who provide learning and action programmes. The group had a facilitator who did theological and social systems reflection helping the group make connections and develop programmes that they could take home with them. The participants were expected to share the information with their home country groups and assist in developing anti violence programmes and awareness of violence.



*Sharylynn Upsdell*

Part of the programme explored how Trade Deals like Free Trade often contributes violence because of the unfairness of the trade deals, usually the northern countries exploiting countries to the south.

**Diakonia of the United Church of Canada** held their biennial Conference in April 2007 in Alberta, Canada when 72 Diaconal Ministers attended. This was the largest since DUCC was founded 23 years ago. "Shift Work" was the theme and the story of Ruth gave the biblical framework for theological reflection on life's changes. The theme invited us to consider times of change – both chosen and forced – and to examine what we can learn from those experiences. Also to recognise where shifts are happening now.



*"Walk the Talk" group*

In March 2008 a group of young people had a retreat called "Walk the Talk". They walked 5.6 km one day with all their personal gear in shopping carts. Then they also made two meals for the homeless and took it to one of the high risk shelters for drug and alcohol connected homeless people.



*Youth filling the bags for the homeless*

### **Lutheran Deaconess Association**

At the end of December 2007 Louise Williams retired after serving as Executive Director of LDA for 33 years.



*Louise Williams at Basel/Switzerland*

During her time as Director the LDA underwent significant revisions of its education and formation process. She helped establish an endowed scholarship fund to assist students with financial need. Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, one of

eight ELCA seminaries, awarded Louise an honorary doctor of divinity. She also received the Alumni Achievement Award from Valparaiso University.

Although retiring as Executive Director, Louise plans to continue with some teaching, writing, retreat leading and giving a little more time to her 94 year old mother. She also hopes to devote more time to World DIAKONIA in the remaining 2 years of her Presidency.

The position of Executive Director has been taken over by Deaconess Lisa Polito. Lisa is a graduate of Valparaiso University and for the past seven years was director of development and public relations. She is a well experienced conference speaker and retreat facilitator and is Vice President of DOTAC.

## **DIAKONIA PRAYER DAY** **26<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF EACH MONTH**

For many who have email, Sr. Doris Horn, DRAE President, sends out words of encouragement from Scripture, small news items from the Region and beyond, points for prayer, and words of appreciation from others.

This 26<sup>th</sup> Day of the Month is very important to many of us. You may not have email to receive Sr. Doris' greetings and prayers, but we can all remember one another on that day and in so doing let it be an encouragement to know we are all being prayed for.



*Church in Riehen/Switzerland*

## From the Region of DIAKONIA Asia Pacific (DAP)

Deaconess Sala Naveata, President of the Region started her report to the Executive by saying "So near yet so far" is how I describe DAP today. Communication is still a problem within the Region.

**Deacons of the Uniting Church of Australia** will be holding their National Conference in February 2008 together with the Deacons' pre-seasonal training and continuing education.

**Australian Anglican Diaconal Association (AADA)** Heather Toon has completed her term as President of the Association and is replaced by Archdeacon Anne Ranse of Canberra. Heather has been a tower of strength to all deacons and has invested a lot of her energy and time in keeping the AADA on track and moving forward

The deacons will be meeting in Melbourne in 2008 with John Collins as the main presenter and Alison McRae (who responded in Durham) and Peter Pocock from Canberra will be responding to Collins' papers.

**Korea:** The sisters continue to offer their services to those threatened by war and new diseases. Although small in number the hearts to serve have never grown cold. Their retreat house, situated halfway up a hill (400m above sea level) with 700m long winding mountain trail continues to receive numerous visitors who look for a quiet place for mediation.

**Indonesia:** Two of the three founders of the deaconess community IKADIWA in Indonesia could celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their consecration. Sr. Nuria Gultom, Sister Bonaria Hutabarat and a third woman who left the community afterwards were sent to Germany in the 1950's by their church (HKBP) to be educated as deaconesses. After their consecration in Kaiserswerth/Germany they returned to

Balige/Indonesia and founded the deaconess community. Today they run a hospital, a deaconess school and several local projects. Sister Nuria still is the leading sister of the community.



*Nuria Gultom and Bonaria Hutabarat*

**Fiji:** it has been a turbulent year of political turmoil, racial conflict and an interim administration. There has been a financial crisis, a rise in unemployment and foreign business being withdrawn. It is a challenge for the Christian community as people search for God and to find again an inner peace.

**Fiji are hoping to host a DAP meeting in 2008 .**

**Philippines:** Diakonia Philippines Biennial Assembly took place in October 2007. It had the theme "The Wounded Healer - Diakonia Ministry in a Diverse Society". 120 deaconesses from all over the Philippines attended this conference.

## REPORTS FROM ECUMENICAL MEETINGS

### **Permanent International Ecumenical Consultation of Religious (PIECR)**

#### **Brief Historical background**

The PIECR was launched in 1977 by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ and Br. Michael Fisher, SSF, Provincial of the Anglican Society of St. Francis as a way of promoting ecumenical dialogue and mutual assistance between consecrated persons in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Communions. In 1980, an ecumenical consultation of religious, consisting of representatives of Roman Catholic and Anglican Religious communities was formally constituted by the USG, the UISG and two Conferences of the Leaders of Religious Communities of the Anglican Communion (CLARC and CAROA). Members of other Christian communions could also participate in this group. In 1983, the Consultation was expanded to include representatives of all other denominations interested in attending the meeting (Lutherans, Reformed Church, Methodists, Orthodox).

#### **2007 Meeting at the Ecumenical Fraternity of Bose at Ostuni, Italy was held 24-29<sup>th</sup> April.**

This Institute was opened in 1998 after a long search in that area which is an ancient bridge between Eastern and Western Churches due to the sanctuary in Bari containing the relics of St. Nicholas of Myra. The invitation of the local Bishop to locate the Fraternita at Ostuni and the gift of land to the monastery made by a priest were considered a blessing for its establishment in the present location. Currently there are five brothers of the Community living at the Fraternity following the rule of life of the Monastery of Bose. Common prayer takes place in three daily offices is complemented in the life of each brother by personal prayer, and especially by *lectio divina*, on Saturday evening. They listen to the Sunday biblical readings, and a brother helps the community to perceive the spiritual unity in the passages of Scripture indicated by the lectionary. To help support their lives together the brothers of the Fraternita care for a large olive orchard and run an apiary.

The members of the PIECR were able to participate in the daily offices of the brothers each day at noon and in the evening. Each morning we held our own prayer prepared by members of the group in their particular tradition. We also had the joy to take our meals with the brothers every day.

#### **Theme of the consultation: “Welcoming New Faces to the Table”**

We began our discussions by reacting to a chapter of Sean Sammon’s book *Religious Life in America*, entitled “Fresh Faces at the Breakfast table” led by Jim Puglisi from Rome. The problem discussed was that of inviting and welcoming new people to religious life today – especially in Europe and North America – as our brothers and sisters age and have limited contact with the younger generation.

During the course of our exchanges we were surprised by the degree that we shared common issues. The importance of presenting a religious life to the world that is relevant and which is grounded in “being” rather than just in “doing” was a common concern. One of the key issues – that was evoked in the reading was the real need to take new people seriously and not treat them as a kind of tabula rasa on which to write the characteristics of the present members of the community. At the same time there was a concern regarding the extent to which our communities can change without losing our purpose and charism.

We touched on the way in which our various institutes are dealing with declining numbers. Amalgamation and alliances between groups were discussed. The problem of on-going tensions were raised – the linking of celibacy to priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church; the ordination of women – those who oppose and those who defend.

It is somewhat difficult to distil the rich exchanges we had over four days of meeting, but we all affirmed the importance of the consecrated life as a valid option for

the Christian life necessary for the good of our churches.

The next meeting will be May 1-6, 2008 and the venue is still to be determined.

*Edited from a report by Mark Francis, CSV who is the Convener of PIECR.*

Sr. Anke Frickman attended this meeting on behalf of World DIAKONIA but because of other commitments will be unable to do so in the future. Dc. Jackie Fowler, Methodist Diaconal Order, England, will take the position and Dr. Doris Horn will be the alternate.

## **KAIRE**

The last gathering of KAIRE was reported in our previous DIAKONIA News. Sr. Sabine Koebele, who has been part of the core group on behalf of DIAKONIA, was thanked for her work and support. In discussing a replacement, the Executive

Committee came to the conclusion that contacts to KAIRE meet our criteria for ecumenical contacts but as it focussed on communities within Europe the contacts should be maintained by DRAE Region. KAIRE core group will be informed of this.

## **WCC**

A report on the WCC World Assembly in Porto Alegre was also given in our previous Newsletter. Our representative on the Central Committee, Dc. Terttu Pohjolainen

will continue in this position and attend further Central Committee Meetings in Geneva.

## **IDC/IDZ**

*(International Deacon Center/Internationales Diakonat Zentrum)*

The President and Secretary reported on a visit they had made to the International Deaconate Centre. It is the international organisation of Roman Catholic Deacons and their wives. The General Secretary, Deacon Kauss gave them a general overview of the organisation and their projects. They would like to strengthen their links with DIAKONIA and have offered a place

on their advisory board for us to send a delegate. The Executive Committee nominated Ulrike Kellner as our delegate, and Louise Williams as alternate, to be reviewed at our next Executive meeting. A delegate from IDZ shall be invited to our next Executive meeting and they shall also be invited to our next DIAKONIA World Assembly.

**Fees, donations and contributions you may send to the following account:**

**Bank account 38 81 759      Stichting DIAKONIA**  
**Amsterdam, Netherlands/Niederlande**  
**IBAN: NL44 PSTB 0003881759      BIC: PSTBNL2**

## The Elder Brother

***The Parable of the Prodigal Son is familiar to all of us – so familiar that we probably don't really stop to consider the Elder Brother's feelings about the whole situation***

What is our father, our beloved father, doing, running down the road as if he were mad? What is wrong with him? And with a trail of servants chasing after him? I am high above them on the hillside, sitting breathing the cool, fragrant evening air, after my long day in the olive groves and our rich orchards. Look, someone is coming up the road towards them, stumbling. Drunk? A tramp certainly, in grey rags. Now what is happening? The tramp has fallen at father's feet, clasping his knees, looking up at him. Father is wrapping him in his arms shouting to the four winds, "Joseph, Joseph. My son, my son!"

I say softly to myself in amazement, "Joseph, my lost brother!" By now my legs should be taking me bounding down the hill towards them. But they do not. I can hardly breathe. This is Joseph, my brother whom I have loved since he was a little boy, forever falling out of apple trees. We were great companions.



Then he grew up...and changed. Head full of dreams of going to the city, becoming a great man like our father, living in a great house full of servants. I saw him despising me, a dullard, content to be at home. I cannot tell you how much this hurt. Then he made his move, demanded his share and was blithely off down the road, laughing and jeering at me as he passed. Our father was wounded and it went deep. I felt his pain and was angry as I had never been in my life before. Tales about him seeped back to us. He was leading a wild and scandalous life, playing the rich man and surrounded by scoundrels who robbed him and sucked him dry. Then, no more news. He seemed to have gone into a void.

None of his associates could help. We went ourselves into the city to search for him. Nothing. Could he be dead? Our father believed it, went into mourning, ageing and bleeding inwardly. In my heart there was a flickering candle of hope. I felt that somewhere, somehow he was alive and I prayed to our Heavenly Father that it might be so!

Now, here up the road he has come, a living Joseph, almost a skeleton, and our father is embracing him with weeping and joy. Even with his eyes, which had been forever straining down the road, how could he have known him? I did not. But he knew! We have a father beyond all fathers, great hearted, radiating goodness and warmth. Moreover, he is boundlessly forgiving. As I am not. You see, I felt his pain so keenly. I cannot wipe away the months of anguish and mourning when we believed him dead. On his behalf I cannot forgive Joseph.

To tell the truth I am inwardly raging at him. Longing to thrash him black and blue, But I realise that one finger on him and he would collapse in a heap of bones. I sit with my head in my hands for a long time, overmastered with emotion, while the evening darkens and chills around me and within me. Slowly, I come down at last to a place of great rejoicing, lights on in every room, bustle, laughter, music, the rich

aromas of roasting meat. But I have no heart to slink inside. I have no place here. I am neither missed nor am I wanted. I am cold and miserable and the anger is draining out of me as though it had never been.

Now father's warm, gentle hand is on my arm. I am a child again, being comforted and child-like, I whine, "You never gave me a feast!" A great roar of laughter. I am affronted and then begin despite myself to smile. He speaks earnestly to me, "You are my beloved son, the apple of my eye, but Joseph," and he catches his breathe

"was dead and is alive again." I breathed. "I know. I know. I know." "Come," he said, but then a gaunt and timid form appeared at the door, came to me and looked beseechingly up into my face. In an instant I yielded. Loudly I cried, "Joseph my brother, you have come home." Then, indissolubly linked, we followed our radiant father into the feast and rejoicing that awaited us. Our hearts were full of praise to the Lord, the Father of all.

*Written by Kay Ramsay DCS, Scotland, and a former editor of DIAKONIA News.*

### **Pfarrer Dr. Reinhard Neubauer**

*1926 – 10.10.2007*

Dr. Neubauer studied theology in Marburg, Bethel, Heidelberg (all in Germany), Chateau de Bossey/Switzerland and Princeton/USA. After serving in various parishes in Germany and England he started in 1963 working for the Ev. Diakonieverein (Evangelical Diaconal Association) and became their leader in 1969 - 1991.

He was member of the DIAKONIA Executive Committee for several years, where his language skills and experience with committees was very welcomed. He worked very closely with others in writing the DIAKONIA Constitution and edited the German version of DIAKONIA NEWS.

The last year of his life was dominated by a chronic disease from which death has freed him. The thoughts and prayers of the Fellowship of World DIAKONIA are extended to his family.

### **Sister Ingeborg Pungs**

*25.05.1938 - 06.01.2008*

Sister Ingeborg Pungs was a member of the motherhouse Bleibergquelle in Velbert/Germany. As a nurse she was the leading Sister of the large Augusta-Hospital in Bochum/Germany and the nursing school attached to it. She then on went to Marburg to lead the nursing college of the Deutscher Gemeinschafts Diakonieverband (German Evangelical Deaconess Association).

From 1995 until 2003 Sister Ingeborg was leading sister of the DGD. During this time the DGD became a member of DIAKONIA World Federation. Sister Ingeborg belonged to the DIAKONIA Executive Committee as an alternate during the years 2001 – 2005. There she gave voice to the traditional motherhouses. We will miss her competent, involved and humorous voice in the worldwide DIAKONIA concert.

## A Devotional Page

### Isaiah 40: 28-31

“Have you not known?  
Have you not heard?  
The everlasting God, the LORD,  
The Creator of the ends of the earth,  
Neither faints nor is weary.  
His understanding is unsearchable.  
He gives power to the weak,  
And to those who have no might He  
increases strength.  
Even the youth men shall faint and be  
weary,,  
And the young men shall utterly fall,  
But those who wait on the LORD  
Shall renew their strength;  
They shall mount up with wings like  
eagles,  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and not faint.”

I find these encouraging verses when I, as we all do at times, feel a bit bogged down or discouraged. Let me share a story. Going for a walk one wintry day in just such a mood I was asking God to speak to me out of something I might see or encounter as I went.

I stood, pausing for a few moments on my way on the bank of a turbulent river, swollen with melting snow. As I watched the surging current welling up where it met with the rocks swirling round trees too close to the edge, a bird, some sort of large duck came into view. It was half swimming, half swept down-river and out of sight.

I continued my walk.

The path led to a bridge over the river and I paused again, my eye caught by a movement in the water. It was the bird again, but this time struggling to swim back upriver against the current. Time after time it tried, making some progress where the force of the water was less only to be swept back as it met the rougher parts of the stream.

Suddenly, just as the bird's efforts seemed in vain, its intent hopeless, it spread its wings, rose above the waters and flew

back upstream. In that moment I felt a parable had been enacted before me, the word I was seeking, a truth from God made visible. My heart lightened and lifted.

Sometimes, as Christians, we find ourselves in situations where we feel we are struggling against the flow, looking at life differently from others, making a stand for justice where others accept the way things are or being swept along with the prevailing way of thinking. It is all too easy to forget, as it almost seemed the bird had, that we can spread our God given wings, for us the wings of the Spirit, giving us the lift we need to hold to Christ's values and His ways, being and becoming all God has intended us to be.



We each find those wings in different ways, as I did through an image in nature, through music or words of a song, in Scripture, or retreat or in fellowship with others. What matters is to know that we can.

I came across some quotations I'd noted from the little book *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and feel they are worth sharing in this context. "Don't believe what your eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation. Look with understanding, find what you already know and you'll see the way to fly". You can find the freedom to be yourself, your true self, here and now and nothing can stand in your way.

Joyce Mitchell DCS  
Scotland

# **Diakonia – Crossroads of Grace... Revive and Reconcile**

DIAKONIA of the Americas and Caribbean (DOTAC)  
Cordially invites you to the  
20<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of the DIAKONIA World Federation

This World Assembly will convene on  
Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> July and adjourn Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009  
At the campus of Georgia Institute of Technology  
(GA Tech) in Atlanta, GA, U.S.A.

Additional information on the 2009 World Assembly may be  
found at the DIAKONIA World Federation website  
(<http://diakonia-world.org>)

Registration June 2008 through early 2009

This is your invitation to the next World Assembly – put it in your diary and start your saving and planning now.

No sooner is one World Assembly over and the plans for the next one begin DOTAC are our hosts and initially it had been thought to have it in South America but that was not going to be possible and so it is now in Atlanta. Everyone will stay on Campus and there is no limitation for numbers. The planning committee are planning for around 650 participants.

If you want to see the campus go to [www.conference.gotech.com](http://www.conference.gotech.com).

It is planned that there will be translation in English, German, Spanish and Portuguese. Written materials will be in English and German but maybe the other two languages also. Small language groups are asked to arrange their own interpretation.

Given the difficulties we experienced at Durham and also at Basel we realise there may be visa problems. Those requiring a visa should begin to make their enquiries as soon as possible. Letters of invitation and anything else needed should be asked for in good time so that you will not be disappointed. An extra visa committee has already started work to help with those requiring visas.

**Consultation for diaconal leaders** – it is proposed to hold a small seminar/consultation for those in leadership of diaconal groups. It will be limited to 20-30 people and will last from the Sunday afternoon to Monday noon prior to the Assembly. It will only be in English and registration will be required. There will be additional cost for those attending. Further information will be available later.

**Although the buildings will be air conditioned remember it will be very hot in Atlanta at that time of year.**