



DIAKONIA

News

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

Editorial	2
President Letter	3
Farewell to the Faithful	3

DIAKONIA WORLDWIDE

DIAKONIA World	4
DOTAC	4
DOVE	4
DRAE	5

News Around The World

DAP	6
Prayer for Japan	10
DOTAC	12
DRAE	15

From Ecumenical Partners

WCC	17
EKD Conference	17
New diaconal journal	18
Eurodiaconia	18

Theological Reflections

Diakonia and Churches	19
Diaconal Minister Co	20
Protest in Phillipines	20

Stories

Exploring alternative calls	21
Journeyings	22
Prayer for Japan	23
Prayer for Christchurch	24
Ash Wednesday	24

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FROM YOUR EDITORS

Introducing our new co-editor

Rev Sandy Boyce, Deacon in the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), has been appointed co-editor of DIAKONIA News. Sandy is in a ministry placement in Pilgrim Uniting Church, a large city congregation in Adelaide. She has a particular focus on life in the city, public theology, and connecting the church and the community, as well as sharing in responsibilities for ministry in the church.

Sandy has had a background in education, and ministry with children, youth and young adults, including working in youth ministry for 8 years at a state and national level in the church. In more recent years, Sandy had a role as the National Coordinator for UCA volunteers offering to serve in placements in the Pacific, Asia, and southern Africa. Her role including recruitment, training, preparing resources and programs for people preparing for cross-cultural placements, pastoral and practical support people in placements, debriefing on their return, and assistance to integrate into the life of the church following their placement. In this role, Sandy had the opportunity to travel to UCA partner churches to visit volunteers and meet with partner church personnel in the Pacific, Asia and Africa.

Since 2009 Sandy Boyce has been an alternate member of the Executive

Board of DIAKONIA and Vice President of the DIAKONIA Region Asia – Pacific. Sandy also serves as Convener of DUCA (Deacons in the UCA).

She writes: 'I feel very privileged to be able to serve as co-editor for DIAKONIA News. Already, it has provided opportunities to learn of the breadth and diversity of diaconal ministry represented amongst members, and to be able to celebrate the joys and pray for the challenges faced by the members of DIAKONIA World Federation. I look forward to the growing of relationships and sharing the journey with brothers and sisters serving in diaconal ministry around the world'.

Sandy may be contacted directed by email, english.editor@diakonia-world.org

Sandy Boyce, English Editor

Fortunately, my English co-editor for many years, Jane Martin, is not vanished out sight. Being connected with DIAKONIA for so many years she will continue to work within our ecumenical network and eventually write an article, like former DIAKONIA News editor Sr. Teresa did in this issue. So, no "farewell" to Janie, but a warm "God bless you" and a very happy "Welcome" to my new colleague Sandy!

Ulrike Kellner, German Editor

Important Internet and E-mail Addresses

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Brothers and Sisters in DIAKONIA,
As I am looking out my window I see so much new life: colourful flowers, sunshine, and the joyful voices of birds. I love this awakening of nature after a long, dark winter very much. So many signs of hope that are needed in our lives!

But then, before my inner eye, I see pictures that are full of suffering and fear that seem to be taking my breath away: pictures of destruction through natural disasters in Australia, New Zealand and Japan, pictures of despair, helplessness and violence in more countries like Egypt, Libya, Yemen. The fear of a nuclear disaster is ever present. Into our fear, suffering and despair the risen Christ speaks these words: "I let you know, that I will be with you, every day, until the end of time!" Mt. 28.20

One sister from Indonesia reminded us in view of all the devastation in Japan that in Psalm 46 we read the following consoling and uplifting words: *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

At this time, it is even more important for us to keep our vision that led

to the foundation of DIAKONIA in 1947: We are called as people of God for service and reconciliation in our world through the word of faith and deeds of love.

New life, hope and trust begin, where we depend on God's presence and God's grace. Let us support and encourage our brothers and sisters and each other through prayer, in communication, in sharing our gifts

In this edition of DIAKONIA News we will have a mixture of articles; encouraging, future oriented or some rather sad ones. Some examples: the VDW (Vereinigste Diakonale Werkers) in the Netherlands dissolved, and a new member wants to join DIAKONIA: the Order of Deacons Faraja, Tanzania. In 2011. We will have two regional conferences: DRAE conference in Moshi, Tanzania with the theme: "Help from beyond the mountain) and the DOTAC conference in Oklahoma, USA with the theme: "Chairs at the feet of God".

We welcome the new DIAKONIA News editor, Sandy Boyce (Australia) who is taking over from Deacon Jane Martin, Scotland.

I am greeting you with all my heart, and hope and pray that we will continue to feel God's love and grace around us. Let us celebrate life, as we celebrate the risen Christ!

Doris Horn
DIAKONIA President

Farewell To The Faithful

Sister Steve (Bafut / Cameroon)

Some DIAKONIA members will remember Sister Steve from the DRAE conference in Beni Sueff, Egypt in 2003. She died in her home community on July 11, 2010, after a long and painful battle with tuberculosis.

Sister Elisabeth Schmid (Belgium)

Sr Elisabeth was among the founding members of **KAIRE** and worked as the Secretary for KAIRE for many years. She passed away in February 2011. May the

Lord show her what she believed all her life long.

Oberin i.R. Helga Funk (Germany)

The Frauenhilfs-Diakonieschwesternschaft is mourning the loss of their former leading sister Helga Funk who passed away on December 20, 2010. From 1981-2001 Sr. Helga was leading the large sisterhood within the Zehlendorfer Verband.

DIAKONIA WORLDWIDE

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

DIAKONIA World Executive

At the DIAKONIA Executive Committee meeting held in 2010 in Finland, it was agreed that Migration and Human Trafficking should be given priority for study by the current Committee. A full day will be set aside to discuss the topic at the next Executive meeting in July in Tanzania. The Executive would be particularly interested to learn about how this issue impacts upon countries represented in the DIAKONIA World Federation by members, and what initiatives and responses are emerging or

being considered. Please contact our President, Doris Horn, if you are able to contribute to this banner issue.

DIAKONIA 31st World Assembly

The next DIAKONIA World Assembly will take place in July 2013 (July 1st-8th) in Berlin, Germany. The planning group is already working. A website has been set up to provide information about the Assembly, www.diakonia-2013.de. DIAKONIA member organisations are encouraged to inform their membership early so that plans may be made to attend.

DOTAC 2011 Regional Assembly (see:

www.dotac.diakonia-world.org)

Theme: Chairs – at the Feet of God

Date: July 10-14, 2011

Venue: Oklahoma City University
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

DOTAC Regional Conferences are held every four years, as planned by the Central Committee. They provide opportunities for fellowship, learning, celebration, and decision making. The theme this conference will be framed around 'Chairs' - Worshipping Chair, Listening Chair, Working Chair, Resting Chair and Sending Chair. Deacons, deaconesses and diaconal ministers from the DOTAC region will gather for worship, singing, workshops and reflection on the call to be diaconal people, and will enjoy the experience of community with others who understand and appreciate and nurture a call to diaconal ministry.

conference schedule is available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0wLUcrrXw>)

DOVE -- DOTAC Overcoming Violence Experience

The DOTAC Overcoming Violence Experience (DOVE) is designed to build an international team that will participate in a multicultural, hands-on, action-reflection experience, related to overcoming violence in the world. The first event was held in 2007 in New York City (USA).



DOTAC Executive



DOVE Participants in New York

There will also be visits to local ministry sites. A short promotional video and the

For the next event in 2012, DOTAC will assemble a team of 12 persons, three from Canada, three from the Caribbean, three from Brazil, and three from the United States. The team will gather in Recife, Olinda, and Gravata (site of the Hip Hop DIAKAID Project), Brazil. The event is being hosted by CECOSNE (Centro de Comunicacao Social do Nordeste).

Participants will be expected to:

- Find ways to initiate action / reflection experiences in their own country.
- Write reflections to share with the group, their own community, and DOTAC.
- Seek ways to provide leadership and develop networks to assist others in addressing the Decade to Overcome Violence.

Some important components of this event will include community building, cultural exchange, and Biblical and theological reflection. It will reflect a holistic approach to violence. It will include a balance between the theoretical and the practical as well as enable participants to gain a better understanding of the problems and consequences of violence and to explore some things they can do to overcome violence.

*Deaconess Lisa Scherzer Polito
DOTAC President*

DRAE 2011 Regional Assembly

Theme: Help from beyond the Mountains

Date: July 21-26, 2011

Venue: Moshi, Tanzania, Uhuru Hotel

The sisters of Ushirika Wa Neema and a local planning group have prepared a diverse programme including devotions, keynote speakers, visits to churches and projects, and a 'tourist' visit. **If you have not registered yet – do so now!**

DRAE Executive Meeting

In February, the DRAE Executive Committee met in Wuppertal, Germany. This time, alternates could attend. Two of them took the opportunity: Eliatika Oworu from Kenya and Kathryn Fitzsimons from the UK.

“VEED”, the community of deacons in Germany, will take this place.

Out of the discussions in Atlanta, there have been discussions about the re-organisation of the regions within DIAKONIA and especially their representation in the World Executive. The DRAE Executive has prepared some suggestions that will be discussed at the Regional Assembly in Moshi, Tanzania, in July.



DRAE Executive



At Kaiserswerth

One of the oldest members of DIAKONIA, the Dutch “Vereniging van Diakonale Werkers”, has ceased to exist. As a consequence, their representative, Peter Geene, could no longer be the alternate on the DRAE Executive. Sr Margrit Muther, the representative for Switzerland, France, Austria, Hungary and Netherlands, will search for a new alternate.

On the other hand, there was a vacancy for an alternate in Germany. The

A new member category, a Friend of DRAE exists within DRAE, and a small group of the Executive Committee worked on the details of the membership as a Friend of DRAE including the definition and criteria for a Friend of DRAE, criteria and expectations of DRAE, responsibilities of the Friend and DRAE, as well as logistics such as application, membership, fees and forms. Already, there are four applications of people to be Friends of DRAE.

The meeting ended with a visit to Kaiserswerth, the cradle of motherhouse diaconia. The Executive met with several sisters of the Sisterhood there and visited the historic site.

NEWS AROUND THE WORLD

From the Region DIAKONIA ASIA PACIFIC (DAP)

Australia: The **Australian National Anglican Deacons (AADA)** held their biennial conference in Canberra in October, 2010. About 45 Deacons attended from many dioceses across Australia, and a great time of gathering and fellowship was shared by all. The theme of the conference was "Telling the story", and Deacons were encouraged to tell stories of their ministry and the people they reach out to on the margins. There were also workshops on writing the stories in preparation for a publication on Deacons' ministries in Australia.

The **Uniting Church in Australia (DUCA)** this year celebrates 20 years since the renewal of the diaconate in 1991. Deacons have since been placed in a wide variety of placements including congregational settings with a diaconal focus; aged care facilities; children's, youth and family ministry; community outreach; chaplaincy in hospitals, schools, universities and prisons; working with refugees and asylum seekers; working with homelessness and people with mental health problems; mission placements with partner churches overseas; community or government organisations; pioneering ministries; ecumenical placements; Uniting Church agencies such as Frontier Services (serving remote Australia) and with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

'While Deacons preach and celebrate the sacraments regularly within their placement their ministry is focused on reaching out to people in the general community, especially the poor and oppressed', said Rev Tim Hodgson, Deacon in Brisbane. "In the Uniting Church, Deacons are Ministers of Word, Sacrament and Service, who have a strong emphasis on service".

While a Deacon student at Trinity Theological College in Brisbane, Rev Tanya Richards ran a Band Ministry at Wesley Mission on a part-time basis. Every Saturday night Tanya would see hundreds of youth from the hardcore punk

and gothic scene come into the Lion's Den Café to listen to punk rock bands play.

Rev Ann Hewson has been a church planter in Brisbane's northern suburbs and leads a team developing a unique church approach. "We are so conscious that we need to be where the pulse of the community is and engage at every opportunity. We are an outward focused group and as a Deacon I find this exciting, challenging and invigorating."

Also serving out on the edge is Rev Michelle Cook, who has worked for several years in remote Cape York Peninsula as a Frontier Services Patrol Minister. "I am focused on connecting people from remote stations to other people on the Cape, while at the same time connecting Indigenous with non-Indigenous people," said Michelle who travels around the Cape visiting remote townships and stations as well as ministering with the congregation of St Luke's in Weipa.

Rev Dianne Bos has worked as a counsellor at Lifeline Ipswich in the area of child protection, developing programs to respond to the needs of abused children. "In such situations, I am just so aware that I work with some of the most traumatised and vulnerable people in our community, those children and adults who have not had the single most basic necessity in life – at least one person who has been able to act in a protective and loving way towards them. To offer people the capacity and time to listen to them, to enter into the pain they feel, and to stand with them as they try to regain their lives is to participate in God's healing and restoring work in the lives of others."

Another specialist Deacon, Rev Jan Chalmers, has worked in the area of training aged-care chaplains in a range of areas such as palliative care, spiritual care of people with dementia and Alzheimer's, and the spiritual needs of the ageing. "Statistics indicate that the number of people over 65 years of age will almost double by 2024 so equipping people for ministry with ageing and aged persons is critical for the Church and the wider community," she said.

At a time when the church is struggling to build a bridge between itself and the community, Uniting Church Deacons are reaching out to the general community in many unique ways.

Some recent news from the UCA is on the UCA Deacons [blogsite](http://ucadiakonia.blogspot.com/), <http://ucadiakonia.blogspot.com/>

(adapted from an article *Journey*, <http://www.journeyonline.com.au/showArticle.php?categoryId=1&articleId=309>)

Church thanks community for Flood Relief Help

After the waters subsided, Kenmore Uniting Church offered their premises as a distribution and sorting centre for flood relief.



*Flood damage in the Kenmore District
(The cleanup at Kenny St. Fig Tree Pocket.
Pic. Paul Guy U5822036 – photo from Westside News)*

Congregation members shared their Sunday morning services with ever-growing piles of clothes, small furniture, toys, linen and other needed items. There was also a register of larger items that put people in direct contact with what they needed.

Within two days of a request being advertised on the church sign, over 30 people from the community had offered to staff the centre and help church members with sorting and packing, along with local Rotary members. Trainee minister David

Nix (a deacon candidate), one of the coordinators of the relief effort, said the church was grateful for the support.



*Volunteers pack personal items,
ready for distribution to flood affected areas.
(Photo H den Houting)*

Many areas in the Kenmore district were flooded, including Fig Tree Pocket, Kenmore, Bellbowrie and Moggill. While most volunteers were from the areas surrounding the church, others from flooded regions such as Jindalee and Indooroopilly helped too. Most volunteers said they were grateful for the chance to pitch in and help, but they were unable to do the back breaking work of cleaning up the mess, sludge and devastation caused by the floods.

The church helped those from within the local area, but was also able to send significant supplies of aid to other flood affected areas such as Emerald, Ipswich, Goodna and Grantham.

Rev. Heather den Houting (Deac.) said that requests were still coming in from outlying areas, and good were continuing to be delivered in small trucks, utes and cars. "Sharing our worship space with donated aid has meant Sunday worship has been cosy, but it is a wonderful reminder that congregations are still very much part of their community."

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

Bank account 38 81 759 DIAKONIA World Federation
1081 KL Amsterdam, Netherlands/Niederlande
IBAN: NL92 INGB 0003 8817 59 BIC: INGBNL2A

Or

Konto Nr. 4002199 Stiftung DIAKONIA
Ev. Kreditgenossenschaft, BLZ 520 604 10
IBAN: DE23 5206 0410 0004 0021 99 BIC: GENODEF1EK1

Indonesia: Sisterhood Jubilee

Ristua Sirait from Indonesia and member of the DAP Executive is pleased to announce the date for celebrations of the sisterhood jubilee, to be held on August 27 - 28, 2011.



Jubilee Committee Meeting

She will be planning for the event with Sister Serepina Sitanggang, Director of the Deaconess School (LPD) of the Christian Protestant Batak Church (HKBP) in Indonesia. LPD was started on May 17th, 1971 by the General Synod of the HKBP as a means of training women for diaconal ministry in the community, and to work with the poor, and those who are weak, ill, suffering, isolated, homeless, outcast and hopeless, by providing social services and programs which promote awareness, provide education, work toward righting injustices and providing physical, emotional and spiritual care.



Founding Sisters Nuria Gultom and Bonaria Hutabarat

To date, around 400 have graduated to work as deaconesses in many areas within the church and society including social institutions, orphanages, hospitals,

schools, kindergartens and colleges, each with a special emphasis in women's leadership, promotion of gender balance, overcoming violence against women and teaching English. Some deaconesses work in local villages and rural areas, with programs to promote women's and children's health, education, awareness education in areas such as hygiene, herbal medication, HIV/AIDS prevention and cure, and gender balance, as well as supporting the elderly.



IKADIWA Meeting

Especially pertinent in this time of tragedy and natural disasters is the practical and challenging work deaconesses undertake to support people affected by natural disasters by providing physical, emotional and spiritual care.

Congratulations to the sisterhood on the occasion of the jubilee celebrations this year!

Ristua Sirait



Lunchtime at IKADIWA

Philippines: Diakonia Philippines 14th National Biennial Assembly

Theme: Diakonia – Crossroads of Grace: Revive and Reconcile

104 deaconesses and church women workers attended the Assembly, including some women clergy. The keynote address was presented by Deaconess Emma Cantor-Orate, President of Diakonia Asia Pacific region (DAP). The Bible Study reflection was led by Deaconess Dorcas Grace SP Bringul. She has the honour of being the first Deaconess elected to the highest governing body of the IEMELIF Consistorio of Elders. She is also the Director of Christian Education, and teaches at the IEMELIF Bible School. A concert was held on the last night of the Assembly. The repertoire was touching to the soul, lifting hearts to the Source of Music, none other than our God. The closing worship and installation of newly elected officers was beautifully ethnic, inspired with the Igorotas dancing in celebration with their national costume.

Three women – three songs – three stories ‘...cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary – their lives a stirring testament to God’s sustaining grace...’

Emma Cantor-Orate, President, Diakonia Asia-Pacific (DAP): I am the Ibanag child. I am sure they have given me the song of kindness, of courage, independence and self-reliance. Songs of needing help...of children’s laughter and sighs...of the rich souls of the poor...the faith of the deprived...of the blessings and pure hearts of those who have nothing...of songs of sovereignty. My song is eternal. I want my song to be heard elsewhere in the world. As president of DAP, I will sing my song by giving my best ability to ensure that the life of women are heard, felt and lived. It will inspire women in the whole of Asia and the world.

Dorcas Grace Bringula, President, Diakonia Philippines: We are called to emulate Jesus’ exemplary life and ministry as he lived as a humble servant (Philippians 2.7). He spent his earthly ministry in helping those who are weary,

marginalized, and those who were in need of affection, attention, emotional support and physical care. Men and women are called to serve God embracing the indispensable undertaking of diakonia, for the life of service is a long-lasting and unchanging global mission of all deacons and deaconesses.

Humanity cries for help...diakonia is the instrument of God that wipes the tears of fear and discomfort. Humanity longs for security and love...diakonia is the Lord’s agent of security and love. Humanity needs salvation. Diakonia is the messenger of God’s redemptive act through his son, Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14.6).

Chita R Framo, Executive Director, Diakonia Philippines. ‘O may all who come behind us find us faithful!’

May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe

And the lives we live inspire them to obey.

Whenever the song ‘Faithful’ is sung, I feel it is time to pack up my bags and venture to the next chapter of my journey in life – retirement. I have mixed feelings of joy and sadness, excitement and apprehension to move on. I am happy to enter the life of retirement and excited to do what I have been thinking, of aging gracefully. In the meantime, the desk of the Executive Director of Diakonia Philippines is expectantly waiting for a new occupant. Let us continue to pray that God will send us someone who has the heart, mind and soul to carry on the ministry of the deaconesses and strengthen the Deaconess movement.

The Deaconess/Diaconal Minister in the movement is in full force. It broadens and inspires the ministry of servant leadership in many different ways. We are called to be transforming ministers of service, compassion, care, education, witness and justice. The churches where we are connected need the service of ‘diakonia’ ministry which we are called and committed to do in the name of Christ. We are to bridge the word and the world. This is our sacred partnership with Christ who summons us to be faithful witnesses.

Emma Cantor-Orate

A prayer in response to the earthquake and tsunami in northern Japan.

God we come before you,
longing for words of comfort and hope.
Our heads and hearts are full of images of
devastation,
we feel small and insignificant
in the face of this tragedy.
Of mother earth turning against her
children,
of creation wreaking havoc and
destruction
There are no words for what needs to be
expressed,
life coverage brings us close
and shocks us
as we see the lives of others turned upside
down
in a matter of mere seconds,
and left with knees buckling under the load
of sorrow and grief.

There were people in those cars,
There were people trying to outrun the
waves,
There were people in those buildings
There were people going about their daily
business
Just like us,
suddenly cut short
taken by surprise

We come to lay at your feet what is too big
for us,
what is beyond our comprehension

what our minds refuse to deal with
and we ask for your compassion –
to take what is too big for us
and lift it into your healing presence

God we come before you,
wondering how can we help, what we can
do.
Support us and guide us, load our prayers
with power
Reach out with your hands to those in
need
and give courage and strength at this time,

Help the people who are helping
to bring order in the chaos of destruction
and devastation,
support those who have the skills to make
a difference,
We bring before the insecurity of a
heaving earth
and the terror of loved ones lost,

God we come before you,
we lift our heads to seek your face.
Come to us with your presence,
and calm us with your peace.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Rev Anneke Oppewal, Uniting Church in
Australia*

South Korea: Mother House and House
of Spirituality and Peace in Cheon-An –
2010 highlights
“Throughout the year 2010 we have heard
news of conflicts and wars in Korean
Peninsula and around the world. If we as
Christians want to be the peacemaker –
spreading the Good News and Peace –,
Christians and Churches must, first of all,
give glory to God instead of claiming glory
for ourselves. ‘Glory to God’ precedes
‘Peace on Earth’. Not the other way
around. ‘Peace’ was declared on earth
when ‘Glory’ was attributed to God first.
Only when we give ‘Glory’ to God, we can
achieve Peace on Earth.” This is a quote
out of Rev. Kim Sung Jae’s Advent
sermon December 2010

Sr. Young-Sook Ree and Kyu-Sook
Ahn attended an International Conference
organised by Mission 21 in Basel,
Switzerland from 13th to 20th May.
Participants from different parts of the
world shared stories of their work and
discussed possibilities to form an
international sisterhood. We were
especially moved by the stories shared by
the sisters from Peru and Cameroon. After
this conference, Sr. Ree and Ahn visited
EMS (Evangelisches Missionswerk in
Südwestdeutschland) in Germany which
has supported us from the start. They also
visited individuals, churches, and bodies of
international Diakonia sisterhood such as
Lazarus Mother Centre that have
sponsored us so far. We give glory to God

as we witness the good works of the servants of God in different parts of the world.

Every month on the third and fourth week, we have held Spiritual Leadership Meetings for Diakonia family members and other individuals who wish to lead a diaconal life. Sharing our own experiences in God gives us much encouragement by opening our eyes to the work of the Holy Spirit through different individuals in different places.

We continue to participate in 'Sam Soh Hui' - an interdenominational network Protestant, Catholic, Anglican, Buddhist, and Won Buddhists female monks. We have been raising funds for the UN initiatives helping women and children in Ethiopia and we have held several public activities including music concerts.

The Diakonia Family Community was founded 7 years ago and regular services are held at Dan-Bi every month in addition to special services at Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Dan-Bi means 'Sweet Rain' which symbolizes the downpour of the Holy Spirit that regenerates us as rain sweetly falls to bring new life to barren earth. About 80% of the Dan-Bi Church buildings have been completed. In the meantime, we continue to provide home schooling for the village children and promote organic farming in the village.

At the House of Spirituality and Peace, we have continued to hold prayer sessions every month, where participants are able to meditate and pray in silence to focus on the love of God. This in turn gives us the directions, courage and renewed enthusiasm to carry on our diaconal work.

The Diakonia Sisterhood in Korea continues to respond to the needs of people of all ages in the community through the Social Welfare Corporation in Mok-Po. The Diakonia Elderly Nursing Home helps elderly people regain internal peace and physical health through various programmes.

The Cohabitation Family Program is a facility for patients with chronic illness including tuberculosis, and for elderly persons on their own. There are currently 8 people living in the facility, all with chronic illness. Activities here focus on health care as well as social relationships and leisure, as well as cultural and spiritual needs.

Education - we provided full tuition fees in 2010 for 33 students (including 10 middle school and 23 high school students). Many of them have been labelled as problem students from a young age and have had to move to a number of schools, excluding them from developing normal friendships. But we see unlimited potential in them and when we reach out to them and wait patiently, we from time to time see them able to stand on their own feet.

The Household Support Project aims to provide services for single parents, parentless households, and senior citizens without support, by channelling the goodwill of the community to those who need help. This year, we were particularly concerned about the growing violence against children amongst poor families. With the support of a local community organisation, we travelled the area with puppet performances to raise awareness and to prevent sexual violence against children.

We thank you all for supporting us, through active interests, materials and prayers. All these enabled us to continue to work in the spirit of Diakonia and made us rich in sharing. At this point of the year, we reflect on the message of "Glory to God and Peace on Earth". We hope and pray that our works and our life glorify the name of God rather than our own, so that we can continue to serve our neighbours and work as bringers of peace on earth. The Peace of the Lord be on Earth.

*Sr. Young-Sook Ree, Director
of Diakonia Sisterhood in Korea*

From the Region DIAKONIA of the Americas and the Caribbean. (DOTAC)

Brazil: Annual Conference 2010 of the Sisterhood

In July, 2010 the Brazil sisterhood held their annual conference at Casa Matriz in Sao Leopoldo, with 49 of the 63 sisters in attendance. Discussions and reflections focussed on the future way of living community. The younger sisters depend upon earning an income for their living expenses, and need to make sure they keep their regular jobs. This raises the question about how much time they can dedicate to the community in the future and what may motivate young women to participate in a community.

The sisterhood, which began more than 70 years ago, has had up to 78 members, living in community. But there is now a rising number of elderly sisters, and there is a need to think about ways to open the community to others. We know that some pastors are interested in joining the community, and we are exploring the regulations that will open up membership to them.

(out of the report of leading sister Gisela Beulke, published in KGK News 3, 2010)

On December 20, 2010, the Church Council of the Lutheran Church in Brazil (IECLB) decided that the **Deaconess Ingrid Vogt will be the General Secretary of IECLB** for the next 4 years. Ingrid Vogt is representing DOTAC on the DIAKONIA World Executive. Congratulations, Ingrid!



Deaconess Ingrid Vogt

Canada: Association of Anglican Deacons in Canada (AACDC)

Conference 2011 Theme: Nourishing the Spirit - Mine, Yours and Others

Date: August 11 - 14, 2011

Venue: Huron University College, London, Ontario

<http://www.anglicandeacons.ca/conference%202011.htm>



AADA Conference 2010

Deacon Alisdair Smith is the conference keynote speaker and will speak on 'Nourishing the Spirit; The Power of Narrative'. He will explore in an engaging and provocative way the power of story in our lives and ministries as deacons, and as human beings. French theologian and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin suggested that we were not so much human beings on a spiritual journey, rather, spiritual beings on a human journey. How do the biblical narratives and our own stories weave into and inform our human and spiritual journeys? How can we use and explore the stories from Scripture to inform our ministries and our lives in new and surprising ways? Be prepared to look at your diaconal ministry in new and exciting ways!

Alisdair will also lead a conference workshop entitled, Nourishing the Spirit, Applying Story in Ministry. There are a range of interesting workshops listed on the conference [website](#)

Margret Robertson

Do not forget to send to us your Newsletters, new and stories you want to share with our International Sisters and Brothers – everything is very welcomed!

Deacons of United Church of Canada (DUCC) – Diakonia 2011 National Gathering

Theme: Courageous Engagement:
Forging new friendships

(Exploring ways to build bridges with Aboriginal brothers and sisters in community)

Venue: University of Winnipeg

Date: June 21-24, 2011



a First Nation 'pot' is the symbol on the conference

The conference will explore what it means to build bridges in the variety of communities in which Deacons serve. It will seek to identify and deal with resistance that exists in communities, in order to forge new relationships. Through respectful encounters of cultures and traditions and theological reflection from a First Nation perspective, the conference will deepen understandings of Aboriginal and First Nation culture through storytelling, history and facts. Following these experiences, participants will be encouraged in ways they may integrate their learning and experiences and build bridges and forge new relationships in their local context.

For more information go to <http://www.ducc.ca/via/Membership/NationalGathering/tabid/69/Default.aspx>

“Stormy Weather”

The **Chapter of Deacons for the Diocese** met in December 2010. The Chapter was formed in 2006 in response to recommendations of the Diocesan Commission on the Diaconate. The Chapter's membership is comprised of all the “distinctive” Deacons of the Diocese.

“Distinctive” Deacons follow their vocation to be Deacons. They are not called to become priests. This language may seem confusing when a “transitional” Deacon is ordained to the priesthood not long after they have been ordained to the diaconate. The vocations for those called to the priesthood and those called to the diaconate are complementary but each is unique in their history and ministry.

The Chapter meets three times a year with the Bishop and Archdeacon of the Diocese. We gather for support, education, planning, and discussion of diaconal mission in the diocese and beyond. Discussions have included such topics as the possibility of twinning with Deacons from the Diocese of Olympia on a project for orphans in Haiti, to the work of the newly formed Association for Anglican Deacons in Canada (AADC).

One of the chapter's projects for 2010 was the production and presentation on the Diaconate at our diocesan synod in

March. The positive response has given birth to a new project. A DVD is being developed on the ministry and mission potential of lay and ordained Anglicans. It will be available to be shown in parishes and regions for information and discussion groups.



Nancy Ford

An instrument for Ministry Development and Review which best responds to the unique nature of diaconal ministry and the role of associate clergy was discussed. The decision of the group was to craft our own instrument based in a format developed by The Reverend Doctor Anne Tomlinson, Deacon and Ministry Development Officer for the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway.

Theological reflection is an important part of our time together. This

time the movie *Babette's Feast* provided an opportunity for reflection and discussion. For those who have not seen the film it is painted with a subtle and delicate palette. At times the nuances are shattered by the storms in the lives of the key figures in the story. The movie is based on a short story by Isak Denison (Karen Blixen). She wrote the story as she was dying. Her digestive system had been destroyed by illness; unable to eat she wrote this exquisite story.

Set on the Jutland Peninsula in Denmark the movie begins with an introduction of a charismatic and powerful spiritual leader in the tiny Lutheran community. The Pastor has two beautiful daughters who remain faithful to the style of life worship and service instituted by their father. This continues long after his death. One stormy evening a knock at their door reveals a gaunt, storm-beaten woman (Babette) who comes to them for sanctuary. They know they must offer sanctuary but are perplexed as to how to manage. Babette offers to be their servant in exchange for a place to live. She subtly adds gentleness and artistry to their lives. Many years later as she comes into a great deal of money she decides to thank the sisters by preparing a magnificent feast for them and their dwindling community of the faithful. It is to be done to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of their father.

The movie stimulated a good deal of discussion. Stories and images were shared. One was of bringing two very different faith communities together. One was very conservative similar to the community in the film. The other was quite

exuberant and joyful. It had been decided they would share in a potluck dinner. It was accomplished but was quite uncomfortable for all and was never repeated. The story grew from the scene in the movie where one of the pastor's daughters has a nightmare about the upcoming feast Babette is preparing. She hurriedly meets with the community to share her fears. The upshot is the line from one of the community; "if we eat the food we will not taste it!" The character presents a case for pretence versus giving and receiving generous hospitality.

The sentiment may not be limited to their community. However the question remains for each of us; if we invite people to come in from the storm what sort of hospitality do we offer? What sort of hospitality do we take into the workplace, or onto the street and into the church?

One of the characters in the movie, a general, offers this phrase not only out of his own experience and learning but as recognition of the weaving together of all that he has experienced in the village and beyond: "The only things we can take away from this life are the ones we have given away." This captures the essence of ministries of hospitality.

The time the Chapter spends together is important for nurture, education, and above all for community. We would ask for your prayers for our ministry in this Diocese and request intentional prayers be offered on the 26th of each month for all Deacons and for DIAKONIA of the Americas and Caribbean.

*by Nancy Ford, Director of Deacons,
Diocese of British Columbia*

From the Region Africa-Europe (DRAE)

Madagascar, Mamre Sisters

The year 2010 has passed very quickly and they thank God for his love and mercy guiding them through the past months.

In October two Sisters represented them on an evangelism tour organized by the Head Office of the FJKM's evangelism department. The tour was to a remote northern part of Madagascar and the journey was made partly on foot and included a 1000m mountain and a river crossing. Most people living in this area called Mevarano worship the dead and it is not easy to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. Work was done with children and adults, open meetings with bible study and preaching, and door to door visiting. On the last day 200 people came to the service and fourteen of them were new converts. Continue to pray for these people.



front row from left to right and back to left back row: Chimène, Bertine (Novizin), Sr. Angéline (prioress), Sr. Soa, Pierrette, Sr. Elisabeth, Fara, Razafindrarizy, Mina, Sr. Elienne, Sr. Dani, Sr. Alexandrine, Dina, Sr. Lanto, Sr. Joséphine, Sr. Pelagi

In November there was a visit from Rev. Eleri Edwards, from Wales, the former prioress. Rev. Eleri stayed for three weeks and her teaching, prayers, and worship together revitalized the Community. During that time four sisters celebrated their 10th anniversary and three other sisters celebrated their 5th anniversary.

They have also welcomed their new minister to the Parish, Rev. Eric Christian Rakotoniera.

The sisters thank everyone for their support both financially and prayerfully.

(edited from their 2010 Christmas Newsletter)

Germany

Kaiserswerth in Dusseldorf is the cradle of the motherhouse system, and in 2011, a new museum will be opened to celebrate the jubilee year of Kaiserswerth. Dr. Friedrich, head of the Fliedner-Kulturstiftung, said the concept is a 'museum of the culture of helping others', and will contain history related to motherhouses, diaconal work and the history of nursing, covering the time from 1830 up to today. Visitors are very welcome!

For more information see <http://www.fliedner-kulturstiftung.de>.

On August 13, 2010, Kaiserswerth Diaconal Institute remembered their most famous scholar who received her training in Kaiserswerth: Florence Nightingale, who died 100 years ago in 1910. For 40 years, the hospital at Kaiserswerth has been named in her honour. Born in England, Florence Nightingale visited Kaiserswerth against the will of her parents and learned the basics of nursing there. She graduated from Kaiserswerth and later in her life visited Kaiserswerth again. One of her goals in life was to ensure nursing was done in a professional way, and she is recognized as a pioneer in the training and professionalization of nurses. She maintained a lifelong friendship with the founder and long time leader of the Kaiserswerth motherhouse system, Theodor Fliedner, and his family.

"Resources we live from" was the title of the third workshop organized by the Kaiserswerth sisterhood, together with the sisterhood of United Mission in Wuppertal, Germany and the IKADIWA sisterhood in Indonesia. Together they worked on questions of identity, forms of mutual acceptance, experiences of spiritual life and how to deal with growing older. Speakers (and fabulous translators) enabled an intensive sharing. During the second week, the Indonesian sisters visited various parts of the Kaiserswerth Diaconal Institute, which gave them the opportunity to reflect on their own work and to share insights. They were especially interested in the work among people with handicaps. Afterwards they visited diaconal institutes in Bethel,

Minden and Wuppertal and parishes in North Rhine Westfalia, and made a cultural trip to Germany's capital Berlin.

Kaiserswerther General Conference (KGK) celebrating its **150th anniversary** "In diaconal community – the world for others" will be the theme of the coming 41st General Assembly of the KGK, to be held October 8-12, 2011, which also celebrates the 150th anniversary of the KGK. The association of more than 100 deaconess houses, diaconal communities and social welfare institutions from Europe, North and South America and Asia will meet at their common origin, the motherhouse in Kaiserswerth. The President of the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), Dr. Thomas Wipf from Switzerland, will preach and Dr. Anne Leis, from Uppsala, Sweden, will be the keynote speaker. A seminar will be held and other accompanying activities for various groups will take place.

Zehlendorfer Diakonieverein: The Evangelischer Diakonie-Verein Berlin-Zehlendorf is one of the oldest and most important associations of diaconal sisters in Germany, dedicated to health, child care and aged care and committed to continuing education and training in the nursing profession. It has a new leading sister, Oberin Constanze Schlecht who has taken over from Oberin Ellen Muxfeldt, who served as leading sister for 12 years. Together with CFO Jan Dreher Oberin Constanze Schlecht will guide the community of over 200 sisters.



Sr. Constanze Schlecht among other sisters

Evangelical retreat centres website

Evangelical retreat centres in Germany have a new internet portal. The website is designed to assist those looking for accommodation as well as those able to

provide accommodation. The website will enable parishes and groups to find a suitable place to stay for retreats, conferences, and all kind of hospitality for individuals and groups.

Netherlands: *Due to the termination of membership of the VDW we received the following letter (edited):*

In 1946 the Union of Netherlands Deaconess Hospitals, together with Deaconess Hospitals and Associations in other European countries, at a Conference in Utrecht, took the initiative to found an international federation, DIAKONIA. The Constitution was drawn up in The Netherlands and since then DIAKONIA has been subject to Netherlands law. The first President was Dr. Riemens, Director of the Lutheran Deaconess Hospital in Amsterdam (1946-1956). The first secretaries were also from The Netherlands. From the beginning until 2009 treasurers were for practical reasons Dutch as well. The Union of Netherlands Deaconess Hospitals became a member of DIAKONIA World Federation in 1946. At the beginning of the 1980's the deaconesses in DIAKONIA came under the umbrella of the VDW. As VDW has now terminated membership from the DIAKONIA World Federation, this also ends the relationship of the deaconesses with the DIAKONIA World Federation as well.

The Deaconess groups of Bronovo, The Hague and Utrecht Deaconess Hospital have become very small, as no women have felt the call to be consecrated as deaconess since 1960. As a Deaconess of Bronovo Deaconess Hospital, The Hague, I was member of the Executive Committee of DIAKONIA for several years, sharing the seat with members in France.

It is clear that there always has been a very close relationship between DIAKONIA and The Netherlands. Therefore we very much regret that this has come to an end, which is not without pain in our heart. All those who have been part of the life of DIAKONIA have experienced this as a rich time, in fellowship with sisters and brothers worldwide. We are, of course, happy that the Amerongen Deaconesses are still member of World DIAKONIA and therefore The Netherlands will not disappear out of the sight of World DIAKONIA. On behalf of the few Deaconesses left in The Netherlands I wish you fruitful and blessed years in service of the Lord

Sr. Johanna Dijk

FROM OUR ECUMENICAL PARTNERS

World Council of Churches (WCC): Diakonia, or the diaconal ministry of the church, has been defined as “the responsible service of the gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people”. The 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brazil called for a series of consultations on reorganizing the coordination of service ministries sponsored by churches and church-related agencies. The Utrecht consultation was the second in a series that began in May 2009 at Bucharest, Romania. In that meeting, the diaconal work of the WCC was re-launched, and there was opportunity to reflect on a common understanding of diakonia on the basis of practical experiences at the local level, as well as and further facilitated theological reflection and common action on the diaconal work of the churches.



Dr Reinerio Arce

The discussion in Utrecht in December 2010 was organized in coordination with the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) and Kerk in Actie of the Netherlands. Discussion was informed by presentations on “Prophetic Diakonia in the WCC”, “Theological Reflection on Diakonia” from different perspectives, and ‘Practices and Training on Diakonia’ at the global, regional and local levels. In the presentations and discussions, the notion of prophetic diakonia was reaffirmed, by which we acknowledge that God sends us out in mission to bring the good news to the poor and oppressed, in word and in deed. Faithful to this call, we try to serve human needs, focusing on the marginalized, the “least of these”, not only

by comforting them but also by addressing the root causes of their pain, sorrow and shortages. This ministry of prophetic diakonia seeks to confront the powers of this world that lead to violence, exclusion, death and destruction, and it calls for the transformation of unjust structures and practices into God’s kingdom of justice, with fullness of life for all and for creation.

Considerable time was given to consideration of a “mapping exercise” that had been conducted among the WCC member churches to provide a scientific survey of involvement in service ministries. On the basis of this data, participants discussed strategies for more effective administration and networking to make the best use of available ecumenical resources. A training strategy on prophetic diakonia was designed. Finally, plans were made to follow up the findings of the two consultations.

(from an interview by WCC with Cuban theologian Reinerio Arce, a participant in the Global Consultation on Prophetic Diakonia in Utrecht, 2010).

Conference for members of diaconal and spiritual communities within the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD)

Diaconal communities in Germany face a lot of challenges and therefore have to seek new options and ways. Fortunately, the three big German diaconal associations (KWV, VEDD and Zehlendorfer Verband) are working more closely nowadays, and together hosted a conference for members of diaconal and spiritual communities within the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD). It took place in the Zehlendorfer Verband Heimathaus in Berlin, Germany, in November 2011. For the first time, these related but different forms of Christian communities were able to be in dialogue with each other. They realised that today the diaconal and the spiritual path are no longer strictly separated. There is a lot of “grey space” in between - diaconal communities having a flowering spiritual life and spiritual communities are engaged in diaconal projects. In the presence of EKD Community-Bishop, Dr. Jürgen Johannesdotter, the participants listened

to a lecture by EKD church official C. Coenen-Marx about the importance of communities for the church, and another lecture by Prof P. Zimmerling about the variety of communities within Germany. There was time in the program to share, connect and get to know each other. In the end, all participants wanted to continue this shared approach and wished to acknowledge the other way of serving Christ. A full text of the lecture of C. Coenen-Marx can be provided (in German)



*Participants of Ecumenical Conference
Source: M. Meisel*

Diaconia: Journal for the study of Christian Social Practice

A new international journal, "[Diaconia: Journal for the Study of Christian Social Practice](#)" has been published for the first time in 2010, with 2 editions a year.

The journal aims to:

- * contribute to new research and interpretations of Christian social practice with and among the marginalised
- * to hear, interpret and communicate the voices in the field and to analyse their social and political context
- * feature interdisciplinary research and practice

The journal will include articles in the area of biblical, ethical, dogmatic and contextual theologies, historical, socio-scientific and practical aspects of the diaconia and Christian social practice. Contributions are also welcomed. It will be published in English, making it available to a wide audience.

The Editor is Trygve Wyller (Oslo, Norway) in collaboration with an editorial team from Sweden, Finland and Germany.

If you would like to contribute an article, contact Kaia D. Schultz, Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo, Pb 1023 Blindern, N-0315 Oslo, k.d.schultz@teologi.uio.no

A response to poverty in Europe

EURODIACONIA is a network of organisations, institutions and churches providing social and health services and education in Europe. It is similar to DIAKONIA, with a particular focus on social needs, and aims to influence policies in relation to poverty and social exclusion. The German Deacon Association (VEDD) is a member of EURODIACONIA and has a respected voice within this organisation. VEDD has been working on the theme of poverty and its social impact for several months.

EURODIACONIA held a conference at the European Parliament in Brussels on September 30, 2010. The theme of the conference was poverty and the social impact of the economic crisis and unemployment on people. Christian organisations fighting against poverty in Europe presented their work including research, projects and strategic directions, and demonstrated a commitment to work together with government towards the target set by the European Council to take 20 million out of poverty by 2020.

The fight against poverty is an essential part of our Christian faith. Up to now, the churches of Europe, the Christian organisations Caritas (for the Roman Catholic Church) and Diakonie (for Protestant churches) have been the biggest non-state organisations offering social services within the EU. They offer a wide range of services and are used by people who would otherwise fall through the social security net. They have worked on the theme of poverty and its social impact for the last months.

You may be interested in a theological reflection paper produced by EURODIACONIA with European case studies, To be and to do: Diaconia and the Churches, available to download at <http://www.eurodiaconia.org/diaconia/diaconia-and-the-churches>

THEOLOGY

Diakonia and the churches today

Adapted from an article by Teresa Joan White, this is the entry on diakonia from the revised edition of the Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement published jointly by the World Council of Churches and the Wm. Eerdmans in 2002

From the 1960s to the 1980s, as governments (in the western world) tended to take on more responsibility for social security, some churches left diakonia in the hands of the social services and welfare and saw their diaconal role as one of only "plugging the gaps". A number of churches established "boards of social responsibility" or similar bodies to influence government policy and thus practise prophetic diakonia.

The restored permanent diaconate of the Roman Catholic Church, the distinctive diaconate in Anglican, and the diaconate in some other protestant churches, became more active in advocacy for people in need, working for change which would produce justice for them, as well as continuing to lead in pastoral and emergency care. There was an examination of root causes and efforts to try to influence those in power. In England the Faith in the City report (1985) led to an exciting growth in church-based community work projects. But the question remains - can the church's diakonia keep pace with the changes in the complex societies in which they live and work and whose problems and tensions they themselves share?

By the late 1980s, for reasons of both economic ideology and pragmatism, governmental authorities were increasingly asking voluntary agencies to take on the new tasks, precisely at a time when many churches were facing acute funding difficulties and had fewer staff and less financial resources for diakonia. But government support for church-related diaconal endeavours typically comes with restrictions, conditions and complicated reporting requirements, requiring further professionalization of diakonia.

Meanwhile, old problems continue to increase in scope and new ones arise. What can churches do to ease the plight of the millions of refugees, internally displaced persons and other people living as migrants outside their countries of origin? Ad hoc responses to emergencies vie for money and staff with long-term evaluation and remedying of causes. On the global scale not only catastrophes but also recognized long-term needs seem to be growing more rapidly than the capacity to respond either at the national or international level. Countless questions arise: for example, about the relation of aid to dependency, about reconciling local grassroots people's participation with professionalization, about the allocation of church resources to emergency aid, prevention, rehabilitation, development and advocacy, about diakonia in the face of the special plight of women and children, and so on.

Those involved in diakonia, whether as professionals or volunteers, would view service to the neighbour as half of the church's life, the other half being the worship of God. But in international, national, regional and local church structures diakonia is too often marginalized, and decisions are made by those who give priority to the pastoral care of the gathered church.

"Christian diakonia is not an optional action... but an indispensable expression of that community, which has its source in the eucharistic and liturgical life of the church. It is a 'liturgy after the Liturgy'"(from a 1978 consultation in Crete, which articulated a theological approach linking diakonia with leitourgia).

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

Bank account 38 81 759 DIAKONIA World Federation
1081 KL Amsterdam, Netherlands/Niederlande
IBAN: NL92 INGB 0003 8817 59 BIC: INGBNL2A

Or

Konto Nr. 4002199 Stiftung DIAKONIA
Ev. Kreditgenossenschaft, BLZ 520 604 10
IBAN: DE23 5206 0410 0004 0021 99 BIC: GENODEF1EK1

Diaconal Minister Co--Authors Award--Winning Book
by Amy Blumenshine

Several years ago, Amy felt a call to pastoral and healing ministry with suffering military veterans and their families. Her background was as a social worker, teaching crisis intervention at the university level. She realized that there was no guide for churches and congregations to encourage them to support war veterans, and figured she would have to write one. Imagine her mixed feelings when she discovered that John Sippola, a former military chaplain and parish pastor whom she had never met, was writing such a guide.

She writes: 'A series of dramatic events led to my becoming a co-author with John and two others from four cities and three states who didn't even know each other when the project began. The result, *Welcome Them Home – Help Them Heal: Pastoral care and ministry with service members returning from war* was a synergistic flower in which we authors helped to create something much better than the sum of our parts. Thanks be to God!'

The book drew on the talents of five contributors – Amy Blumenshine and John Sippola, along with Don Tubesing, an early promoter of holistic wellness ministry; Val Yancey, Teacher of the Year at Southern Illinois University and a specialist in parish nursing, and a talented graphic artist Joy Dey. None of the contributors received monetary compensation for their efforts. Rather, their motivation was to make accessible a subject that society prefers to ignore – the suffering of those we send to war.

The book helps highlight the need to raise awareness about the invisible injuries experienced by war veterans, especially moral injury, and to promote pathways to psychological and spiritual healing. "Our congregations have not always done their most exemplary work in welcoming members back from wars. I believe the reason for most of that neglect is that pastors and congregations are not sure what to do for returning veterans. This volume is a wonderful primer for understanding the needs of returning veterans to their communities and communities of faith", writes Bishop Craig E. Johnson.

In May, 2010, the book won the Ben Franklin Religious Book of 2009 award by the Independent Book Publishers' Association. More information is on the website, www.welcomethemhomebook.com, and materials may be found on the Veterans' Ministry site, <http://www.mpls-synod.org/programs/vets>.

Philippines Church Leaders protest continuing detention of 43 health workers
Injustice and oppression continue to dominate the social, political and economic landscape in the Philippines, and provides the context for diaconal ministry - both local and national.

On November 19, a full paid advertisement signed by Christian leaders in the Philippines, legislators and the international community landed in the pages of a national daily paper, urging President Aquino to order the release of 43 health workers who were entering their 10th month in detention.

The ecumenical delegates led by 9 bishops of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) waited patiently for 45 minutes after the appointed time, hoping to have an audience with President Aquino. The meeting was initiated by Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza (General Secretary, UCCP) to appeal to the President to order the release of the health workers.

In the end, the delegation was only able to meet with government officials, and called for an immediate review of the case. They cited an earlier comment of the President who, reacting to the arrest of the health workers said: 'It is a generally accepted principle that what the lawyers call the fruit of the poisoned tree (or) evidence wrongly gotten cannot be used'. However, the President has left the matter to be sorted out by the courts.

Bishop Emeritus Jesse Suarez stated that people should always support the President as long as he does the right thing and oppose him when he treads the wrong path in his leadership.

Mr. Nardy Sabino, General Secretary of the Promotion of Church People's Response stated 'This is the best opportunity to straighten a wrong' and appealed for the release of the workers'. 'We hope to see a speedy resolution of the case if not the unconditional and immediate release of the health workers as their continued detention has become a constant source of embarrassment before the international community', said Fr. Rex Reyes, Jr., General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, who was with the delegation.

Commenting on the meeting, Bishop Marigza welcomed the dialogue as an opportunity for the church people to be heard. 'The ecumenical delegation will monitor and keep an eye on the case as it strongly believes that justice delayed is justice denied. The longer they are in detention, the more the Aquino government is exposed as incapable of dispensing justice', Marigza said.

Information supplied by Emma Cantor, DAP President

PERSONAL AND BIBLICAL STORIES AND PRAYERS

Exploring Alternative Calls – part of my journey

edited from an article by Rebecca H. Kolowé

'As someone who never really felt a call to serve in parish ministry, I became frustrated that this seemed to be where I kept ending up!' writes Rebecca H. Kolowé, a Deacon in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Perhaps a lament others share – those who have an orientation and sense of calling to diaconal ministry but who may be placed in a parish setting with a focus on the internal life of the congregation.

Rebecca is exploring the question of what it means to be bi-vocational. 'The security that the church used to offer its professionals is really no longer available to us in the same way that it has been for previous generations of leaders. The challenge is not unique to diaconal ministers, but I believe that we bring a unique perspective to the table. Diaconal Ministers could become leaders in helping the church formulate creative calls, simply by nature of who we are called to be through the historic diaconate'.

For Rebecca, the integrity of diaconal ministry on the fringes remains her key focus, irrespective of ministry placement or remuneration.

'I am still called by God to be in ministry at the fringes, and that is where I continue to find myself. I know that we all find our own answers to the question of official 'call', but my answer recently has been that sometimes God calls us in ways that the church may not, and this puts us on the fringes as well. Until the church reaches a point where it can be more creative concerning calls, I, at least, have come to believe that this may be part of the burden of engaging in diaconal ministry. It may also mean a greater understanding (a gift?) for us as to what 'being on the fringes' is really all about'.

Rebecca's reflections resonate with many who are seeking to explore what an alternative call may look like, and what diaconal ministry may look like in new expressions of church through ministry practice, and mission and service.

JOURNEYINGS

by Kay Ramsay, Scotland

I am a man whom the Lord has blessed most bountifully. In latter years all that I have done has prospered and I have risen to great heights. Next to Pharaoh the king I am the greatest in the land and all the powers of government are in my hands. But I do not fully understand how all this came about. Somewhere there is a block in my memory. I remember clearly Jacob my father and how he loved me and I remember Benjamin, my little brother, but beyond that nothing until I found myself in Egypt.

I am a great dreamer and can interpret dreams. Sometimes I have seen myself at the bottom of a deep pit looking up. I have seen myself living with shepherds, tending sheep. These dreams I do not understand. I owe a great deal to my dreams. I was in prison, falsely accused by an evil woman. When I was able to interpret the dreams of my friends then came the great change. Pharaoh dreamed a dream of five lean cattle and five fat ones.

This haunted and troubles him greatly. Then someone told him there was a man in the prison who understood dreams and I was sent for. Immediately I saw the meaning. The country would have five years of plenty and five years of famine. The Lord showed me also what must be done. During the years of plenty great storehouses must be built and tremendous stocks of supplies built up so that in later years no one need go hungry.

The years of famine had now arrived and many were the supplicants from near and far who came to beg us for food. We never sent them empty away. As I sat in the audience chamber I saw a group entering, gaunt, pitiful and abject and my heart warmed to them.

They came nearer and my heart froze, as the block in my memory crumbled away. I remembered everything. These ten men were my brothers. I could name then every one. I remembered their hate-filled faces. They had always hated me, jealous of my father's love. In the end they planned to kill me and I would not be here today if Reuben had not pleaded for my life.

Shock and revulsion overwhelmed me but I was in no mood to make myself known. I gave vent to my feelings by speaking harshly to them, accusing them again and again of being spies. They pleaded that they had come from Canaan only to buy food. They were all sons of the one father. One son was dead and the youngest son was still with his father.

I insisted that I could not believe them. They must return home, leaving one behind as surety and then come back, bringing the youngest, Benjamin, with them. How his name lingered on my tongue! They did not look happy about this but went off, laden with supplies and left Simeon behind.

I did indeed long to see Benjamin, but the thought of my father believing me dead hurt immeasurably. My brothers must surely pay for that. I waited impatiently for them to return.

In the end, because the famine continued the brothers were compelled to return. They must have remembered my words: "You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you." I knew Jacob would be in an agony and grief and foreboding but he would have no option. Benjamin must go.

So, once again, ten brothers appeared before me. When I saw Benjamin I gave orders for a feast to be prepared and the men to be offered lodgings in my own house. I greeted them pleasantly and asked them: "Is this your youngest brother?" Then I laid my hands on Benjamin's head and blessed him. But as I touched him I was overcome with emotion and excused myself, saying I was unwell. In my own apartments I wept my heart out with the joy of it. Then I calmed down and went to preside over the feast and the following day the brothers set off for home with their supplies, little knowing that their punishment was about to begin.

I had a trick up my sleeve, a mean trick, I must confess, but I cared nothing about that where they were concerned. My own valuable drinking cup would be planted in the luggage of Benjamin. There would be a hue and cry, a great searching of luggage, and the cup would be discovered, to their horror and dismay, not least of that of the innocent Benjamin. But I would make it up to him.

Again they cowered in front of me in a most pitiable state, which I relished, you may be sure. My aim was to keep Benjamin with me, but I found I could not look him in the face,

stunned and bewildered as he was. The brothers pleaded that they would all stay and be my slaves if only Benjamin were allowed to go home to his father. Naturally, I refused.

Then Judah spoke up, freely and fearlessly, and began to talk of his father. He said he was a very old man who had already known much grief in the death of Joseph and if Benjamin were to be taken from him it would surely bring his white head down to the grave. I was speechless. The Lord spoke to me in my ear. "Enough! Have mercy Joseph. Now is your moment of truth. Now!"

In a choked and broken voice I said: "Listen to me. I am Joseph your brother." I could see their confusion and disbelief. I said: "I was the boy with the many coloured coat which you envied so much." Now I saw them afraid of me as never before. "Be not afraid," I said. "It happened that all things turned out well, for the Lord blessed all that I understood and because of that Egypt has the stores that have saved your lives. Let us rejoice together." Then I embraced each one, tears streaming down all our cheeks.

I sent them all to hasten home laden with goods and presents to break the news to my father that I was alive. They were to tell him that I wanted them all, along with their womenfolk, relatives, servants and possessions, herds and flocks to come to Egypt, the land of plenty. Pharaoh, our king, would welcome them warmly and a generous piece of land would be theirs to dwell in. So it was done and the multitude journeyed south from Canaan to Egypt.

My father and Benjamin would be with me in my own house. Once the first unforgettable moments were over and all were rested and refreshed, I found myself for the first time alone with my father. I knelt at his feet. He laid his hands on my head and blessed me, saying "My son, who was dead and is alive again!" Then both of us blessed and praised the Lord for his bountiful goodness in bringing us together at last.

A Prayer for Japan

Hear our prayers, O Christ our God.

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

For all who have died in the earthquake and tsunami striking Japan that they may be given entrance into the land of light and joy, in the fellowship of all your saints,

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

For all who grieve the death of family, friends, and fellow citizens that they may not be overwhelmed by their loss, but have confidence in your goodness, and strength to meet the days to come,

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

For all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit that they may be comforted, healed, and given courage and hope,

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

For all aid workers, that they may be filled with strength, generosity, and compassion

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

For the wisdom, resources, and technological skill that a nuclear disaster might be averted,

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

For eyes to see that you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth and linked our lives one to another that we may never forget our common life depends on each other's toil and that we will always work for the common good,

Arise, O Christ, and help us.

Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: Let the cry of those in misery and need come to you, that they may find your mercy present with them in all their afflictions; and give us, we pray, the strength to serve them for the sake of him who suffered for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Source: <http://interruptingthesilence.com/2011/03/15/a-litany-for-japan/>

Prayer for Christchurch

Present in the earthquake, as in the fire and the flood,
not as cause but as companion,
God of life and love be with those who are suffering
in and around Christchurch.
Wrap them around with hope
and fill them with courage for the days ahead.

Give comfort to the grieving,
and strengthen those who are waiting,
searching, hoping and helping.

Show us how to be agents of healing,
bringing rebuilding and restoration
where there is brokenness,
when the time is right.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

(Feb '11, Rev Jennie Gordon, Uniting Church in Australia)

Ash Wednesday

By Tara L Ulrich

My hands mark the sign of the cross on the foreheads of those near and dear to me, tears begin to trickle down my face as I look into each of their eyes and say the words: 'Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust'.

And as the ashes trace the sign of the cross on their foreheads, I am reminded of the mortality of each of them. Reminded that death does and will come.

But also reminded of the love and mercy of the One who promises he will never leave us or forsake us. Christ hung on the cross as he too was faced with his own mortality:

Giving the ultimate sacrifice;

Dying on the cross for each of us;

Again reminding us that God will never leave us or forsake us.

And so as we leave with the signs of the cross traced on our foreheads, we again are reminded of our mortality:

'Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust. From Dust you came, to Dust you shall return'.

*(source DiacoNews Vol 7 Issue 2, March 2011,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ELCA)*

Important Internet and E-mail Addresses

WEBSITES

DIAKONIA World Federation

DAP

DRAE

DOTAC

<http://www.diakonia-world.org>

<http://www.dap.info>

<http://www.drae.info>

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