

Report at the DRAE Executive Meeting 2015

Germany, Kaiserswerther Verband (KWV)

The year 2014 again showed the wave of motherhouse founding in the 19th century. Many of the 70 motherhouses could celebrate impressive jubilees up to 160 years. One jubilee was outstanding nevertheless, although not by the sheer number: the Kaiserswerth Diaconal Sisterhoods (Kaiserswerther Verbandsschwesternschaft) celebrated their 75th anniversary. They were founded in 1939 as an answer to the campaign of the Nazi regime, to force every nurse into the brown Nazi sisterhood. To protect those nurses, who worked alongside with deaconesses, but did not want to become part of the sisterhood, the KWV founded the community. Up to now, Diaconal Communities – as they are named today – are the second pillar in the KWV. The jubilee was celebrated in combination with the 160th anniversary of Diakonie Neuendettelsau on October 3-5, 2014. With regard to content the meeting circled around the question: *resilience – the art, to stay solid despite head wind*. Key note speaker Schenk spoke about the possibility to train resilience, as a kind of immune system of the soul. There is a sense in crisis.

In January, the directors of the various institutions in Germany met in Berlin for their annual conference with the theme: *Protestantism in our present days – the spirit of the time as a challenge for church and diakonia*.

In March, the members of the KWV met for their annual regional conferences. As it is tradition, all four regions met with the same theme. In 2014 they reflected assumptions for business culture of the association and their meaning for the 70 institutions and communities. The most important slogan that came out of the discussion: *diakonia happens in daily life!* In 2014, the regional conferences took place in Speyer, Duesseldorf, Flensburg and Dresden.

The leading sisters of the KWV communities met July 2-4, 2014 at the Flensburg motherhouse with the theme: *stay away with your solution – how to find ways together*. The 35 leading sisters reflected the self-conception of diaconal communities on their way from tradition into the future.

„We encourage diaconal education, we make people experience spirituality, we practice prophetic voice and we build a network – this is what characterizes the KWV since 100 years” stated the president of KWV, Sr. Esther Selle at the membership meeting of KWV, September 19, 2014. Again the delegates discussed the way a modern diaconal institution should look like. Patients and visitors alike feel the positive attitude that comes out of a Christian profile, both key note speaker pointed out. *Caring, serving, shaping community*: this is a strong mission statement for the future.

On October 4, 2014 the death of Theodor Fliedner was 150 years ago. To honor him and his work, the Fliedner Kulturstiftung – where the DIAKONIA archives are – published two important documents: his first sermon as parish pastor in Kaiserswerth (Januar 27, 1822) and a long letter to Amalie Sieveking / Hamburg (February 8, 1837), where he described the Kaiserswerth motherhouse system in detail.

Another important anniversary in Germany was the remembering of the downfall of the Berlin wall 25 years ago. On November 9, 2014 starting at 7 pm lightened balloons ascended along the previous line of the wall. In the end, the wall was visible in Berlin again, as a line of shining balloons. A very impressive sight. Members of Berlin motherhouses were involved by being sponsor of some balloons. They could watch the spectacle from the roof of the motherhouse Lazarus, right in the middle of Berlin.

The first binational local medical conference took place in Naemi-Wilke-Stift in December 2014 at Guben, near the Polish border. More than 70 participants from Guben (Germany) and Gubin (Poland) exchanged possibilities and challenges of the different medical systems in Germany and Poland and explored ways to collaborate. As the response to this meeting was throughout positive, there will be a similar event in 2015.

Austria, Evangelisches Diakoniewerk Gallneukirchen (EDG)

Since over 140 years the EDG develops and runs social and medical projects. Main area is the work with handicapped people and seniors, education and medical services. At present they employ around 3.200 people in over 100 institutions in various parts of Austria and internationally.

In 2014, they received several awards for projects. In September 2014 they received the Intercultural Achievement Award by the Austrian Secretary of State Sebastian Kurz. It was the first time that this award was given. On place 2 and 3 have been projects from China and Kenia. Since 2002, the EDG is involved with the kindergarten „Sunčani most“ (translated: sunshine bridge) in Mostar/Serbia. More than 400 children of all ethnical groups, with or without handicap and coming from all social groups have been educated here over the time.

Another award the Salzburg institution of EDG received was the diakonia prize for the project *“financial support for organizing and coordinating volunteers at a shelter for beggars”*. The award was given at the reformation reception at the academy of sciences Vienna on October 29, 2014.

The EDG is expanding their engagement in Rumania, especially in the area of Sebeş (Mühlbach) and Dumbrăven (Elisabethstadt) north of Sibiu. They plan day care facilities to promote people who are suffering from poverty since generations. Besides that they visit families in their homes and support them in many ways.

Effective on January 1, 2015 the Klinik Diakonissen Salzburg (a hospital belonging to EDG) is merging with another private hospital, Privatklinik Wehrle.

Hungary, Motherhouse Fébé

The remaining 6 sisters of the motherhouse are supported by other motherhouses of the Kaiserswerth Association. In February students and teacher of the Ev. High School “Sztehlo” gave a concert for the sisters. At events like that, guests are always welcome.

On October 18, 2014, the motherhouse Fébé celebrated their 90th anniversary. At the ceremony they welcomed international guests and Bishop Dr. Tamás Fabiny of the Ev. Luth. Church of Hungary. The registered deaconess society Fébé was founded on October 1, 1924. The blessed work of the sisters was interrupted by the forced dissolvment in 1951. During the time afterwards, many sisters were left on their own. After 1989 a renewal succeeded, with a lot of help from the “Kaiserswerth Family”. KWV General Secretary Dr. Christine-Ruth Müller brought greetings of the 70 German and 23 international motherhouses and institutions. She especially thanked Prioress Hajnalka Görög and director Pfarrer András Sztojanovics for their work and remembered the close and various links between houses and institutions of the Kaiserswerth General Conference across all boundaries.

France, Communauté des Diaconesses de Reully

It is extremely difficult to gain information from this DIAKONIA member group. Sometimes it is possible via the news of the Kaiserswerth General Conference.

During 2014, the only information I received was, that they elected a new prioress.

The language problem is a big one, although the community has sisters not only in France.

At the end of January, Sr. Traude Leitenberger is attending a meeting in Reully (annual meeting of the friends of the sisterhood in Bafut, Cameroon). She agreed to talk to the new prioress and discuss their feelings towards DIAKONIA and DRAE and to seek ways for cooperation. I hope to have some results at our meeting in February.

Munich, January 17, 2015

Dc. Ulrike Ullmer