

REPORT FROM DRAE REGION 6.

GENERAL OVERVIEW: This region would appear to cover the area from Tanzania going southwards to the Republic of South Africa. Membership of DRAE is however limited to very few countries. Currently this would include, Malawi, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia. The denominations appear to be Methodist, Evangelical Lutheran, Anglican, United Church of Zambia and Churches of Christ (Malawi). At this stage there is still much to learn about this region and about the diaconal organizations in this region registered as members of DRAE and DIAKONIA. Response to requests for contact details and reports has been disappointing.

CELEBRATIONS:

Tanzania: Evangelical Lutheran Church

Ushirika wa Diakonia Faraja reports have 30 deacons with 22 in training, and another 12 applicants for training. They are very involved with deacon training (6 years).

Southern Africa: Methodist and Anglican

Establishment of two new Anglican diaconal orders: one in the Anglican Diocese of Pretoria, South Africa, and one in the Anglican Diocese of False Bay, South Africa.

Invitation to Anglican Deacons by Archbishop Thabo Makgoba of the Anglican Communion of Southern Africa (ACSA) to send two representatives to ACSA Provincial Steering Committee in November 2017.

This has not happened for over thirty years. Resolutions of permanent force recognizing distinctive diaconate in both Highveld and Pretoria Anglican dioceses have been passed.

Ordination of new Methodist deacons, Ordination of 3 new Anglican deacons has occurred in 2017.

CONFERENCES AND IMPORTANT MEETINGS:

Southern Africa: Anglican & Methodist:

Apart from attendance by various members of DRAE Region 6 at the Assembly in Norway in 2015, and also at the DIAKONIA Convention in Chicago, and reports submitted there, the following was reported:

- December 2016 2nd ACSA Conference of Deacons to which Methodist, Greek Orthodox and Catholic deacons were invited. ACSA Deacon Regions established: Region 1 South Region (9 Diocese, including St Helena), Region 2 East Coast Region (6 Dioceses including Transkei), Region 3 North Region (7 Anglican Dioceses including Swaziland), Region 4 Central Region (6 Dioceses including Angola, Namibia, and Lesotho).
- Convocation of Methodist Deacons at eMseni Retreat Centre in Benoni, South Africa, May 2017, to which the Convenor of Anglican Deacons was invited.
- First Regional Meeting of representatives of Highveld deacons with representatives of Mpumalanga deacons and Pretoria deacons (Anglican Church), attended also by new Warden of Methodist Deacons. November 2017.
- 2nd ACSA Conference of Deacons at Lumko Institute in Benoni, South Africa, Nov-Dec 2016.

CHANGE IN PERSONNEL:

- From September 2017, Deacon Gwynne Lawlor took over as representative of DRAE Region 6 from Sister Elly Urio. Contact has been made but handover is as yet incomplete.
- A new Warden of Deacons for the Methodists in South Africa was appointed: Warden Douw Grobler

NEW APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP OF DRAE:

Applications for new membership are being considered by the following 3 Anglican Diocesan Orders: Deacons of Grahamstown Diocese, Deacons of Pretoria Diocese, Deacons of False Bay Diocese. They may be encouraged to join as Regional entities, rather than individual dioceses.

CHALLENGES OF THE REGION:

Challenges can be positive or negative. A **positive** challenge is the enormous potential for growth in DRAE membership in this region. Changing of mindsets among clergy regarding the distinctive diaconate in the Methodist and Anglican churches in Southern Africa has led to dialogue and changes have been implemented to the training of deacons in at least one Anglican diocese as a result of this ongoing conversation and a growing recognition of service calling of the deacon.

The greatest **negative** challenge is distance in an area which covers 5111km x 2500km, and lack of response to requests for information. E-mail and internet connections are available, but e-mail addresses are not always kept up to date. In the Anglican Communion there is need to re-build the image of the distinctive diaconate and re-gain credibility for the order and its service orientation.

WHAT DO WE SEE AHEAD?

We expect to make inroads into correcting erroneous perceptions of the distinctive diaconate. We hope for ongoing growth of the diaconate in the various denominations in this region, with encouragement to the new diaconal orders to join DIAKONIA & DRAE. We intend to work on promoting the visibility and service orientation of the diaconate. We hope for increased communication between the different diaconates within the individual countries and between the countries within this region. Negotiations to work interdenominationally in shared geographical areas on common social issues, e.g. women and child abuse will be pursued.

CONTACTS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS.

Tanzania: Reports full integration of deacons in every sphere of outreach in their society (Church and secular institutions as accountants, teachers, medical officers, administrators and leaders, as well as serving on diaconic committees in parishes and church districts.) They are involved in kindergartens, schools, care of mentally and physically challenged and in training in rural and farming practices, assisting with income generating projects.

Southern Africa: *Interdenominational links.* *Methodist and Anglican deacons* have connected at management level, and will be encouraging deacons of both denominations to be in touch with one another. The Highveld deacons are already working interdenominationally. The Highveld deacons extended invitations to Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox deacons to attend and present at the ACSA Conference they hosted in 2016.

Links with NPO's: The *Methodist deacons* in South Africa work closely with Government through their outreach program AMCARE, which covers a wide range of social needs projects (safe houses, skills training, clinics, HIV/Aids counselling and support, hospice etc.). Parish based outreach is also conducted. The *Anglican Highveld deacons* have assisted the Highveld Board of Social Responsibility (Diocesan body) with the oversight of Non Profit Organizations on church property (Kwasa School and Food Garden Project, Nursery Schools, Aftercare Centres, Home-based Care initiatives) and they give ongoing support to these. They are also involved in local social needs (e.g. Oliver Tambo Hospital Baby Project, Winter Warmth, etc.).

Much work still needs to be done, both in building up the diaconal organizations, gaining support from church hierarchical structures, standardizing formation of deacons, connecting interdenominationally for mutual support and service to the community, and also in regaining the service role of the deacon in the church and in the societies in which the deacons are embedded.

The deacons of Southern Africa concur with the leitmotif of the Brothers of Ushirika wa Diakonia Faraja from Tanzania: ".....just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me. (Matt: 25:40).