



# DiacoNews

A bi-monthly publication for Diaconal Ministers of the ELCA

Volume 5, Issue 4

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August, 2009

## Leadership Team

Terri Endres

Rebecca Kolowe

Terry Moore

Joanne Otte

Rev. D. Jensen Seyenkulo

Director for Rostered & Authorized  
Leadership, V & E Unit

Rev. Ralph E. Jones

Bishop, NW Pennsylvania Synod  
Bishop Liaison to DM Community

## Community Leaders

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Kris Perry and Rebecca Mastalerz

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Jan Cherry / Kathy Bonn

### DMFE and NAAD

Margy Schmitt Ajer

### Lutheran Deaconess

Association Nancy Gable

## Gathering Thoughts by Tara Ulrich

My cup runneth over! As I reflect on the last couple of days in Atlanta, I find myself returning to this phrase. Being with individuals who love me for me and whom I don't have to explain myself to is such a blessing. I found myself rejoicing as I realized how each one of them is "blessed to be a blessing" amongst our community and beyond.

I love that our time together began with a beautiful foot washing service in which Pastor Elaine Olson preached about the beauty of towels and how we use them in our ministry; towels to dry tears, towels to comfort, and towels for so many other purposes. As we washed each others feet, I found myself again very thankful and blessed to be a part of a community that is "awe"-some and awesome!

Another joy was getting to worship with the Deaconess community of the ELCA as they celebrated their 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I can't even begin to describe how amazing it was to be gathered together in a room with such wonderful people from around the world. (*continued on p. 3*)



DM Gathering Participants from top to bottom: L to R: Eva Schulte, Sandra Braasch; JoAnne Otte, Martha Baker; Shari O'Brien, Pastor Elaine Olson, Sue Setzer, Lois Richardson, Michael Troutman, Tammy Devine, Rebecca Mastalerz; Kris Perry, Kirsten Kessel, Kathy Bonn, Fran Victor, Susan Lindberg Haley; Rebecca Kolowe, Jessica Nipp, Pat Gerber Bornhort, Kelly Howard, Mindy Holland, Tara Ulrich, Judy Bergeson, and Bishop Jones, Jan Cherry, Terri Endres, Amy Blumenshine, Kim Winchell, Jennifer Vasquez, Linda Sprick Kruse and Margaret Howell

## New Leadership Team Members Elected

By Kris Perry

It is with great joy and thanksgiving that I share the good news with you of the newly-elected Leadership Team. **Terri Endres and Rebecca Kolowe** were elected to a three-year term, replacing Tim Freund and Kris Perry. **Terry Moore and Joanne Otte** were elected to an 18-month term (or until the next gathering) to fulfill the remaining terms for Jessica Nipp and Kim Winchell. These four people will communicate soon via a conference call to identify their gifts and to determine how best they might order themselves in order to serve the community most fruitfully. Please welcome them!

The 7<sup>th</sup> gathering of our community was a wonderful success, thanks to the efforts of many. We give thanks to Linda Sprick Kruse for coordinating a seamless event, to Rev. Elaine Olson for her gifts of leading our discussions, and to Bishop Ralph Jones for being a supportive presence and for advocating for our roster and our community. There is much to report, but I will leave that to the many who attended, in hopes that some will share stories and photos in the next issue of DiacoNews.

In the meantime, the group gathered agreed that our next gathering will be held in the fall of 2010. A specific date and place has not been decided just yet. I have volunteered to chair the gathering planning team along with Judy Bergeson, Kathy Bonn, Pat Gerber Bornhort, Kelly Howard, Kirsten Kessel, Linda Kruse, Rebecca Mastalerz, Lois Richardson, Charlie Smith and Kim Winchell. Before a date is set, we would like to know from you if there are **major conferences or events planned between September and November of 2010** that might affect members of our community (e.g. national youth gatherings, WELCA events, etc.). *(continued on p. 10)*



L to R: Rebecca Kolowe, Joanne Otte, Terri Endres

## Thoughts on our recent gathering by Mindy Holland

Our recent gathering in Atlanta was the sixth I have attended, and I feel bold to say that it held the strongest spirit of hope, cooperation, and a sense of momentum toward the future. Though there will be challenges for our new Leadership Team members, without overlap from previous teams, at the same time this fresh set of leaders comes to our community at an opportune time. As we grow in numbers and address new questions and goals, we are blessed to have a team comprised of community organizers and strategic thinkers, people with international experience and great depth from their serving in other contexts. I feel eager to see what the Holy Spirit will accomplish through their shared ministry and service.

Another highlight of our time together was seeing the new cooperation and mutual support between our Diaconal Ministry Community and the ELCA Deaconess Community. Being able to gather for conversation, to share laughter and song, and especially to gather for our worship service on Sunday morning were sources of joy to me. It was also a treat that a number of folks from World Diakonia had arrived in time to join us for worship. Singing "...And we, though many throughout the earth, we are one body in this one Lord," held a new and poignant depth as I watched diaconal sisters and brothers from the US, Canada, England, New Zealand, Cameroon, and other countries file forward to receive from one table. It offered a little glimpse of heaven!

Our gracious Lord continues to be faithful in, among, and through us. Gathering together helped to renew my heart's call to joyful service in Christ's name. Thanks be to God!

*(cont. from page 1)* And it was even more special after our wonderful discussion the night before. We left our time together feeling extremely empowered to make a difference especially when we work together.

When election time came around, it was such a neat experience in which the Holy Spirit led. It was amazing to watch as so many names came onto the ballot and then were slowly taken off. And the sense in the room it seemed to me is that many were honored to have their name on the ballot. I was in an interesting position in which my name came up several times which led to an emotional roller-coaster. But in the end, I truly DO believe that the Holy Spirit was working amongst us and I definitely feel honored to even have had my name come up. In the end, I've come to realize that God has so many things in store for me and the rest of this community.

I left Atlanta feeling truly loved and blessed to be a part of a community that is such a blessing in my life. All I can say now is, I came feeling a little dry and today my cup is still running over; running over with joy, love, acceptance and appreciation for each other!

#### World Diakonia by Jan Cherry

Where does one begin to report on what it was like to attend the DIAKONIA World Federation gathering in Atlanta? I really don't know how to tell you about how it feels to sit in a cafeteria with 339 people from 30 countries who all understand what it means to be a Diaconal Minister. They may be called Deaconess or Sister, Deacon, Diaconal Minister or Home Missioner, but they all understand what we mean when we say our call is to serve!

Then there was the experience of getting to know six other ELCA Diaconal Ministers better. We had a total of seven in attendance, and Sandra Braasch and Tammy Devine both did workshops also. You can be very proud of the Diaconal Ministers who you had representing you at this event. After both workshops, I hear people talking about the wonderful information they received. Bear in mind that they had to present these workshops to a number of non-English speaking people. There were people who could help with translation, but that means you need to slow down your speech pattern, and wait for the translation to occur. Try doing that while you're sharing your passion for your work.

The plenary sessions were wonderful, and the regional meetings were helpful in making connections with others who share in your calling. My favorite time, though, was the time spent in the Dining Hall. We purposefully did not sit with people we knew, but sat with those from other countries. We spent that time speaking about simple things like what they like to eat, and where they serve, and how long their journey to Atlanta took. Sometimes I would find myself just sitting quietly with someone at the table, content to be in their presence. I think it must be what sitting in the presence of God is like. Surrounded by the babble of other tongues, but not quite able to differentiate between them, there was a wonderful sense of peace and fulfillment in that Dining Hall. Laughter sprang up often, and smiles abounded.

I have been home just two days. After the World event was finished, I represented our community for the 75<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Lutheran Deaconess' Conference, which was an honor. I learned things from them that we can use in our quest to develop community. But I'll report on that later. Right now, I sit at home and hear the voices of my sisters and brothers from around the world. I pray that they have had safe journeys home, and look forward to seeing them at DIAKONIA World Federation in Berlin, Germany in July 2013.

Want to see the gathering news on YouTube? Go to the following link (thanks to Sue Setzer for pointing this one out. <http://www.youtube.com/user/diaconalspirit>

Dear Diaconal Friends,

I'm sure that our list-serve and our newsletter will soon be "popping" with conversation about our gathering in Atlanta this past weekend. Here's my contribution. I've been serving as the Secretary for the Leadership Team, and part of my job is to take notes at the gathering. Some of the assembled folks asked me to share with the whole DM community a part of my notes that I read aloud during one of our discussions.

Our facilitator, Pastor Elaine Olson, had asked us to envision our "miracle community": what the Diaconal Ministry Community of the ELCA could be, in our wildest dreams. As we described this ideal community, it dawned on us that we were describing ourselves -- the body of diaconal sisters and brothers gathered in that place, at that time, and all those who were with us in spirit. We *were* the miracle community! We *are* the miracle community.

*Our "miracle community": We are together rather than alone. We are committed. We are called as the body of Christ. Our deep passions and the world's deep hunger come together. We can "just be," because everybody "gets it". Our diversity connects us. Our cups are filled, and they overflow. No one is emptied. We are the drops that fill the cup. We are empowered. We forgive one another. We have ecumenical and global ties. We are the branches, and God is the vine. We are growing. We are catalysts for change. Together, we are stronger.*

Peace,  
Jessica Nipp

#### A Letter from the New Leadership Team

August 6, 2009

Dear Diaconal Ministry Community,

The members of the new leadership team had our first conference call on August 4. We are in the process of getting to know each other and dwelling in the Word to answer the question: Where is God calling our community to be in the midst of the mission of our church? Our focus now is determining what each of our passions and strengths are and how we will use our passion and strengths to help our community move forward in mission.

Our plan is to talk to each of the chairs of our working teams to hear about their strengths and the direction of their teams, review all of the material that has been provided from the previous leadership team, and then meet in Chicago at the Churchwide offices October 5-7 to develop a mission statement and mission plan for our leadership team. We will send an update to all of you after we gather in Chicago.

We express our deep gratitude to Kris Perry, Tim Freund, Kim Winchell, and Jessica Nipp for their exemplary commitment and work for and on behalf of our community. We feel humbled and privileged to serve our Diaconal Ministry community and church in this capacity.

Your sisters and brother in Christ,

Rebecca Kolowé  
Diaconal Minister, Trinity Lutheran church  
Lansdale, PA  
Consecrated 2007

Joanne Otte  
Program Director, Lutheran Volunteer Corps  
Chicago, IL  
Consecrated 2002

Terry Moore  
Director of Evangelical Mission for the  
Central/ Southern Illinois Synod (effective August  
24, 2009)  
Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission  
Unit, ELCA  
St. Louis, MO  
Consecrated 1999

Terri Endres  
Director, Synod Strategic Mission Initiative  
Minneapolis Area Synod  
Eden Prairie, MN  
Consecrated 2005

## Some Reflections on Our Diaconal Ministry Gathering and Diakonia World

By Rebecca H. Kolowé

The most surprising thing for me about both our Diaconal Ministry Community Gathering and the Diakonia World Gathering was that there are many more people in this world with diaconal hearts than I realized. Our community is still small compared to some of the diaconal communities from other parts of the world that I encountered at World Diakonia. To be with over 330 deacons, deaconesses, and diaconal ministers from over 20 countries (representing over 20,000 in 33 countries) was very humbling and awe-inspiring. To see how our own ELCA Diaconal Ministry Community is one piece of a larger whole, really confirmed the realities of the Body of Christ for me.

Concerning "our" gathering, this was my first experience in community with the ELCA Diaconal Ministry Community since my DMFE. I think one of the most exciting parts of this gathering for me was getting to know all of YOU! There are so many people in our community with different gifts and calls and personalities and passions, and I felt humbled and honored to be in community with you. For those who were unable to attend, I MISSED YOU! I look forward to many more years in community with you.

There are many things that I will remember about Diakonia World. Among them is this reminder: It is the call of diaconal people to be the pebble in the shoe of the church. As someone who serves in a congregation, I was reaffirmed in my own call to continually work to bring the needs of the world to the church. To hear that others from different countries and cultures have similar joys and struggles in ministry as I do, and a similar call, was affirming and life-giving. The Holy Spirit was truly present in that place. I am returning to my ministry refreshed, renewed, and equipped knowing that I am an important part of the mission of God, which is much larger than my own ministry setting

*Rebecca writes: These were the participants of Diakonia World under the age of 35. They made a big deal out of this because some of the older deaconess houses in Europe are aging and no longer taking on new members. Many of these younger ladies are LDA deaconesses. That's me, in the center back row. I am including this photo in particular because of Shari Trotter (center front, in the shorts), who was just entranced as a candidate for ELCA Diaconal Ministry in the Southeastern Synod. She saw an ad in her church bulletin about the event and took the initiative to volunteer so she could attend. She will be starting at the Philadelphia Seminary in the fall and hopes to attend DMFE in January, 2010. It was great to connect with her!*



## The DMC -- Together for Ministry

Water images flooded the Diaconal Ministry Community (DMC) of the ELCA Gathering in Atlanta. "We have stepped into this stream at different places and see things differently" was often repeated. Since I've been splashing with others in the diaconal waters of the ELCA since the Study of Ministry began in 1988, I was not eager to re-examine the nature and mission of the diaconal ministry community yet again. Still, I understand it must be done from time to time. I left Georgia with hope that the future of the DMC is grounded in its foundational mission and six marks.

The remnant of thirty at Georgia Tech discussed the relationship between the ELCA roster and the Diaconal Ministry Community of the ELCA now and in the future. By God's grace and the faithful facilitation of Pastor Elaine Olson, a former diaconal ministry candidate, we came to a consensus that we do not need to change the identity or form of the DMC for now to achieve our purpose "to encourage and empower one another as servants of God and partner with others to bridge church and world."

The identity and mission of diaconal ministers continues to be defined by the church that formed the Lutheran adaptation of *diaconia* and that prepares, calls, and consecrates people to serve on behalf of Christ's mission. Everyone consecrated to the roster is part of the Diaconal Ministry Community. No one is excluded for lack of visible leadership or financial contributions, which may vary in individual's lives at different times. As in the past, the community will shape itself through the leadership of four diaconal ministers selected to guide working teams to fulfill our purpose. The stream continues to flow like baptismal waters. I am grateful to be together in ministry with this community.

Sue M. Setzer, ELCA Diaconal Minister

*Sue, pictured in the bottom row left along with (L-R) Rebecca Kolowe, Jan Cherry, Kathy Bonn. Top row: L-R Fran Victor, Tammy Devine, Sandra Braasch: the seven ELCA Diaconal Ministers who attended World Diakonia. Thanks to Jan Cherry for the picture.*



## Kelly Howard's Gathering Experience

We all came to Atlanta with our suitcases filled with items needed for the gathering; clothes, notes, paper, reports, snacks, basins. And me, with my towels. It was a long trip by plane and I could not bring my basin, so I brought my towels, new towels, bright green towels. I laid them on the table as we gathered on Saturday, assuming that they would be placed where needed for the Footwashing service to happen later that evening. Little did I know that they would lay on the edge of the basin in the center of the room where we gathered. This was my first gathering. I planned to come to Atlanta for a year and half, determined, one might say. Despite the fact I am getting married at the end of September, I wanted to be there. It was a time to place faces with names and connect with the community at least that is what I said on the first day. But I came to understand so much more. Those towels are not my towels but our towels. Towels that we carry together. That somehow, miles apart, we know each other and support each other in so many ways. I came to connect with a community that while I was there I realized I was already connected with. We discussed and heard each other. We dreamed of the miracle of what Diaconal Ministry in the ELCA could look like. Sometimes we think we already live the dream, sometimes we think we have work to do, but we do it together. We look to define our community in faithfilled terms. We shared tears and many laughs. And on the last day, we were sent out to seek out those places from which we came, two by two. I can not miss another gathering, another time to share towels together. Amen.



## Eighth Community Gathering

Following a meaningful and fun gathering of diaconal ministers at Georgia Tech University in Atlanta, Georgia July 18-20, the group assembled agreed they would like the next gathering to occur in the fall of 2010 at a retreat center in or near the Chicago area. When asked why the number of attendees was so low at this gathering, it was shared that there were a number of reasons, some being:

- Our event interfered with the National Youth Gathering

- It was too expensive to travel to Atlanta

- Many DMs do not have continuing education dollars

- Many DMs can only attend one continuing education event per year and they had already used their allotment

- Many DMs simply do not have the funds for these types of events

Discussion ensued and the group agreed that since a large percentage of our DMs live in the upper Midwest area of the country, perhaps choosing a location near a major hub airport like Chicago would be a good idea. That way, those from Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio could likely drive to the event, saving air travel dollars. It was also suggested that all those in the upper Midwest could then be invited to donate extra dollars to a travel fund that would help some of our DMs coming from a great distance (like Fran Victor in Alaska) to offset airline fares.

Kris Perry and Rebecca Mastalerz have volunteered to co-chair the next gathering planning team, with subcommittees chaired by:

- Facilities: Kris Perry ([dmkrisperry@yahoo.com](mailto:dmkrisperry@yahoo.com))

- Program: Rebecca Mastalerz ([gracergm@hotmail.com](mailto:gracergm@hotmail.com))

- Worship: Lois Richardson ([rivers.bend@earthlink.net](mailto:rivers.bend@earthlink.net))

Hospitality: Judy Bergeson and Pat Gerber-Bornholt ([judybergeson@aol.com](mailto:judybergeson@aol.com) or [patricia-gerber@sbcglobal.net](mailto:patricia-gerber@sbcglobal.net))

- Transportation: Kirsten Kessel ([kirstenkessel@mtolivet-plymouth.org](mailto:kirstenkessel@mtolivet-plymouth.org)) (*more on p. 10*)

## DIAKONIA Transcends Language and Location by Sue Setzer

Katie and Martin Luther would have felt right at home at the *Diakonia* World Federation Assembly in Atlanta this July, although they might have been uncomfortable wearing headsets. Since German and English are the primary languages of this ecumenical network, simultaneous translations were available for all presentations. Founded in the Netherlands in 1947 as a symbol of reconciliation after the experience of World War II, the association now includes deaconesses, deacons, diaconal ministers and other church workers from all over the world.

The small group I led had women from Scotland, the Philippines, Norway, Costa Rica, Malawi, Chicago, Atlanta, Seattle, and of course Charlotte. Fortunately, all spoke English and could understand my Southern drawl. Men were a minority at the *diakonia* assembly as seems to be the case worldwide. The variety of call, formation processes, ministry settings, garb and pins, and church structures was mind-boggling. Yet with all the differences among the three hundred-plus at Georgia Tech, the ministry of *diakonia* in church and world was a common vision.

A workshop on formation and education for the diaconate that I attended brought flashbacks of the Study of Ministry Task Force in 1988 – 1993. What we learned about the multiple forms of world *diakonia* from books and presenters then, I experienced in the multihued faces and voices of people with long green dresses and white scarves, short gray dresses and sharply starched caps, and everyday international clothes. A creative tension continues between the need for academic and practical preparation and education. More than in some church bodies, the ELCA has combined the two poles with care in faithfulness to the church's mission. We have much to learn from others and much to teach in this worldwide call to *diakonia*.

## Invitation from DMFE Planning Team

The DMFE planning team, comprised of Rich Carlson (LTSG Faculty), Mark Oldenburg (LTSG Faculty), Katie Dodds (LTSG Administrator), Sue Setzer (Diaconal Minister), Nancy Gable (Vocation and Education Staff) and Margy Schmitt-Ajer (Vocation and Education Staff), invite you to consider applying or to encourage others to apply to serve as a Formation Group Leaders this January. In October, the DMFE Planning Team will review the applications and will select four to six rostered diaconal ministers with complementary gifts, specializations, interests, and geographic locations.

Formation Group Leaders will have these primary responsibilities:

- Participate in at least one conference call during the spring to prepare for the event;
- arrive at LTS-G in time for the first staff meeting the evening of January 2 and leave LTS-G no earlier than 2 pm on Friday, January 15, 2010;
- facilitate eight formation sessions with a small group of candidates, using materials provided in "Bread for the Journey;"
- participate in all worship services and most sessions and activities;
- share leadership responsibilities in worship, hospitality, house-keeping, technology, and other areas as needed;
- be available for conversations with individual candidates;
- attend nightly staff meetings;
- model the marks of diaconal ministry.

The DMFE will pay all travel, room, and board expenses for the Formation Group Leaders selected. Leaders will have free time for Friday, January 8, until 4 pm, all day Saturday, January 9, and Sunday, January 10 until 4:00 p.m.

To apply, please supply the following information an e-mail to Margy Schmitt-Ajer, at [Margaret.Schmitt-Ajer@elca.org](mailto:Margaret.Schmitt-Ajer@elca.org) no later than **October 1, 2009**

- **NAME**
- **E-MAIL ADDRESS**
- **SYNOD**
- **DATE OF CONSECRATION**
- **POSITION TITLE**
- **MINISTRY SETTING (e.g., churchwide, agency, institution, congregation, other-specify)**
- **PLEASE INDICATE SPECIFIC GIFTS AND INTERESTS YOU CAN BRING TO THE DIACONAL MINISTRY FORMATION EVENT(e.g., small group facilitation, worship leadership, hospitality, technology expertise, teaching, other)**

DiacoNews welcomes all articles, essays, prayer requests, information and pictures you would like to share regarding the diaconal community of the ELCA. Please send files (in Word, PDF or JPG for pictures when possible) to editor Lynn Bullock at [lbullock@hotmail.com](mailto:lbullock@hotmail.com). Deadline for the next issue is October 15.

*(continued from p. 8)* More information will be forthcoming, but as of this printing, the following dates are under consideration for the next gathering based on the churchwide calendar and availability of our new leadership team as well as the gathering planning team.

October 15-18, 2010

October 29-November 1, 2010

November 5-8, 2010

November 12-15, 2010

However, we are receiving feedback from some of the retreat centers that they are already booked for weekend events, so we may move the gathering to the spring of 2011 OR we may have the event during the week rather than over a weekend.

We realize that any dates chosen will have conflicts. Your gathering planning team is already hard at work and will keep you posted of new developments, especially once we secure dates and a place.

*(continued from p. 5)* We will do our best to choose a date that least interferes with major ELCA events. There was also brief discussion about choosing a place to gather. To make a long story short, those assembled agreed there was benefit to choosing a place in the upper Midwest (where the majority of our DMs serve) that would save travel dollars, and then invite those who are saving travel dollars to donate towards a travel fund for those who come from a greater distance. Again, we will make every effort to take many factors into consideration and to plan an event that accommodates as many as possible. Our goal is to gather as many of us as possible.

As I now move into a new role with our community, I want to thank you for your support and help over these past 5+ years. It truly has been a joy to serve this community. Each of the five gatherings I have attended have been special in their own way. Yet this gathering for me was very special as I connected so many names with faces of first-time attendees and was reminded yet again of the rich diversity of gifts and personalities among us. I think that was what led me to volunteer to chair the next gathering, as my "plan" was to volunteer for nothing. The Spirit moved yet again. The Spirit was very evident at this gathering, and I give God profound thanks for the many blessings I have experienced since discerning my call to diaconal ministry. I can't wait to see what the future holds.

**Think this is the same photo as on the front page? Look closer, then, read the rest of the story from Kim**

**Winchell:** As we were lining up on these steps for our photo ... some poor fellow (the "Mystery Man from Utah" -- his T-shirt had "Utah" on it) was trying to navigate through our crowd, to get to his room in that building. You see, while we were holding our Gathering, there was some kind of national puppeteers and marionettes convention going on (and using rooms in the same campus building that we were). The Man was packing his car to leave, but at our invitation (accompanied by MUCH laughter), he joined our photo, but got this special "puppet" back out of the car, with a reminder to us all to wash our hands. We decided the puppet was a good "wellness" reminder to go along with our basin and towel ministry. :-)

There, the secret's out. It was really much funnier in person. And that's a hint for others to be sure to come to the next Gathering!

