

# Characteristics of Diaconal Culture

Strengthening the  
diaconal profile

January 2008

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## Preface

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‘Being distinctively diaconal’ – these words outline what is described and presented in the ‘Characteristics of Diaconal Culture’. What is a diaconal culture? How can we develop and nurture it? Is a diaconal culture a specific entrepreneurial culture? This documentation will attempt to answer these questions. Its main starting point is the attentive care and sensitive compassion towards others. Diaconia<sup>1</sup> claims to shape and respond to the Christian faith in social and public sphere, with word and deed building a unity. This dedication and commitment to others involves the whole person. For this reason, confession of faith and social assistance are inseparable.

Economisation of social concerns, legal differentiation of relief and support systems and secularisation of society have considerably changed the landscape of diaconal work. Tightly set regulations regarding time and financial constraints make its streamlining unavoidable, thus leaving little room for interpersonal encounters. In the fields of the diakonie in which social services are refunded under a socio-legal scheme, the socio-legal regulations often interfere to such an extent that restrictions become unavoidable. Such restraints and changes must be coped with by dedicated social work by Christian charity responding to the needs of those seeking help.

The changes in the manners of exercising Christian faith have an impact on diaconal work. It should not be assumed that employees of the diakonie have a witnessing faith or live a Christian life. The link between diaconal work in its church context and the search for common forms of expressing Christian faith in a diaconal context should be consciously perceived and shaped. We live a diaconal culture

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<sup>1</sup> Translator’s note: ‘Diakonie’ is the social service arm of German Protestant churches, and as such is left untranslated in this text. Wherever a more general sense of Christian social work is applicable, however, it is translated with diaconia.

in the image-building process and wide-ranging endeavours of diaconal education, in the community-building process and issues concerning the quality of diaconal work. First and foremost, however, diaconal culture as described in this documentation takes its concrete form in the consciously organised diaconal practice in which the search for the meaning of life is not left out and answers based on Christian faith are sought.

The diaconal reality shows that shaping a diaconal culture is a task which requires more attention and effort, now more than ever. In order to describe the diaconal culture in a more systematic way and keep nurturing it, and also to correlate various aspects more intensively, the EKD Diakonisches Werk carried out a project called ‘Characteristics of Diaconal Culture’. Its aim was to elaborate and publicise an encouraging set of examples and a description of diaconal culture. The examples offered here are a random selection and snapshots of reality.

Diaconal culture does not consist in its correct description, but in diaconal practices witnessing to Christian faith. In this sense, it is not this documentation but an in-depth examination of the recorded characteristics that leads to the evolution of diaconal culture. Describable and provable characteristics must leave room for living faith. “The letter kills, the Spirit gives life,” as Paul writes in 2 Cor 3:6. By asking how the work of the Holy Spirit becomes reality in the diaconal context, this publication intends to serve as a provocation triggering the building of culture. Its practical remarks and supports ought to be taken as suggestions which should be further pursued and complemented.

Diaconia came into existence in Judeo-Christian tradition, and it is an integral part of Christian culture and identity. It follows that the shaping of a diaconal culture cannot be reduced to mere organisational or entrepreneurial issues. Diaconal culture also addresses the question of human nature and

## ■ Preface

image. Diaconia stands up for a society in which the dignity of all men and women is safeguarded regardless of their imperfection. Solidarity should prove valuable in the company of the weak, the helpless, the marginalised and the suffering. Transcending its specific working fields, diaconia is committed to a culture of compassion, mercy, and care. Diaconal institutions and services are in demand for their public communication as well as for their exemplary influence.

The length of this documentation is due to the fact that the building of diaconal culture cannot be limited to specific areas. Events and recognisable forms of the practice of faith constitute its inherent con-

tents, but diaconal action also comes from the conviction that faith finds its expression above all in the practice of helping people in need. Diaconia is hence a practised longing for salvation and justice. This has a mirroring effect on the economic, organisational, and professional logics with which diaconal work ought to be done.

In order for the distinctive mark of diaconia to be brought to bear more clearly, this documentation encourages us to shape and live a diaconal culture.

*Klaus-Dieter K. Kottnik*  
*President, Diakonisches Werk der EKD e. V.*

# 1 Culture-determining aspects of Protestant faith

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Diaconia is an expression of faith in Jesus Christ. Diaconia takes place in the deeds of Christian charity. Diaconia becomes manifest in the attitude of seeing everybody as God's creation. This attitude is interwoven in the manners of relating to people and organising help and support, and shaping matters. Diaconia is therefore dependent on two things: on the inner attitude seeking God's nearness and the outer attitude showing respect towards others and open to community. Diaconia cannot be reduced to either of these two aspects. The close interaction of faith and deed is the starting point of diaconal culture.

Faith is trust in God's creative and liberating nearness. This trust in God's grace develops a cultural formative force and proves valuable in changing life situations and circumstances. Trust in God's creative and redeeming nearness sets us free from stressful worries about ourselves. Trust in God's grace is ever-renewing even at moments of doubts and backlashes, errors and faults, if we keep on trusting that God will comfort and justify us. The knowledge that God's grace cannot and may not be earned keeps us from erroneously assuming that human beings are worthy of God on account of their deeds or Christian commitment.

Trust in God's nearness is liberating. When the diaconal culture is anchored on this trust, it is marked by the hope of recognising God's wealth in others. Diaconal culture does not consist therefore primarily in rules and commandments, but in the realised hope for God's nearness. Charitable deeds come from this hope as practising kindness towards others.

Faith based on the trust in God's nearness consists in voluntary commitment to God's Word. A conscious decision is made as to what a person is committed to. Certitude of faith frees the conscience. This freedom of conscience gives rise to the inner freedom from outer constraints, and inner commitment to God and our neighbour. Trust and responsibility are core driving forces in a diaconal culture built upon such an experienced and practised freedom.

Sensitivity for ethical issues is one of the characteristics of diaconia. Moral decisions are sought and responsibilities are assumed regarding many social issues from counselling to terminal care in the medical and nursing professions.

Diaconal culture constantly evolves. Descriptions of diaconal culture are therefore only snapshots. Diaconal culture is not basically different from other forms of practice of life exercised in responsibility. It is different, however, partially with regard to the self-imposed premises, and also with regard to their consequences. Even in its individual and increasingly pluralistic opinion building and despite its tolerance, the cultural open-mindedness of diaconia has its limits in the face of the attitudes and decisions which deny human dignity and are hostile towards life.

Diaconal culture is a living practice and a work in progress on the horizon of the coming Kingdom of God. God's all-embracing concern for humans should continue in all its dimensions – physical, psychological, social, political, and religious.

## 2 Action processes in diaconal life and works

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Diaconia as the proclamation of the Gospel through acting is geared to practical assistance. In the diaconal living and working fields, therefore, questions of faith and inner attitude are closely linked with questions about professionalism and practical skills. For this reason, the diaconal spirituality cannot draw upon pre-formulated mission statements or a formal churchdom. The Christian human image lays claims on the fulfilment of tasks. In this process, questions about spirituality and human image should be transmitted from the level of overall organisation to the living and working fields of individual persons. Their orientation force will then reach the diaconal workers. They must be seen in concrete actions and incorporated in day-to-day implementation of tasks.

An inviting description of diaconal culture does not consist in defining special spiritual forms and dictions. The question about diaconal culture concerns a close connection of faith and action. Diaconal culture is a challenge. Diaconal culture finds its perceptible and recognisable expression in the fact that all its action processes are marked by Christian faith and the hope that everybody will be given God's salvation.

Another challenge of the task of building a diaconal culture is to make it so appealing and encouraging that even the employees who do not relate their actions to faith can be attracted to and involved in it. The way cooperation in diaconia works, how the service or institution is structured, what objectives are set and how they are achieved – all these have a cultural impact.

In the following chapter, day-to-day action processes of diaconia will be described under the aspect of experiencing God's nearness in diaconal actions. Those whose living sphere is diaconia, who seek work or help in it, attach importance to the linkage of basic spiritual aspects to concrete actions and assistance. The description of an exemplary practice is to show how this linkage can successfully be established. The methods and instruments shown are expected to encourage imitations.

The action processes described in the following complement one another in their extent and diversity. Against the background of already existing endeavours and specific entrepreneurial cultures, the description of diaconal services and institutions do not wish to impose, but invite the diaconal culture as a common task to be discovered.

## 2.1 Helping – approaching people in their living situations

The motivation to help is deeply rooted in Christian faith and our culture. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25ff.) shows a sovereign attitude which saves one's own humanity and that of the other. Helping responds to the inalienable dignity of each human being. Helping goes therefore beyond social or psychological services.

The help motivated by Christian love shares the dignity of each helping action. It lives along with the hope of God's nearness and the new creation which begins amidst the world. In our limited world, need is often felt as a burdensome deficit, and support is insufficiently provided, too. However, this world is not left irredeemable. Whenever help is rendered, God's image shines through in a person. By approaching people with willingness to help, we become their neighbours. Caring encounters and helpful acts make ourselves neighbours to one another. A Christian attitude stands open and demonstrative in a limited world for a 'culture of help' which does not regard an act of help as a mere altruistic act or concealed dominance, but as a humanity lived before God.

The question as to how a diaconal culture may be lived and organised has bearing on the way this basic openness for help may be maintained even where help is offered in the form of a paid service. The relationship to God as sought in faith opposes to the use of help and human life as a function or means to some end. A close relationship between spirituality and act of help contributes to keeping the elementary humaneness in the act of help.

Even where help is not understood as something reduced to a functional operation, it is often taken as condescending. This demonstrates the danger of seeing the object of action in others. This danger increases when help is organised not as a relationship-based action, but as an object-based process of businesslike service. 'Neighbour' is a relationship-based term. When the person who helps and the person who is helped face each other in a human relationship, even a helpless person keeps his or her

dignity as the subject of the event instead of becoming its object. This relationship sets in with the attitude of attentiveness, and is implemented in the commitment with and for others.

### 2.1.1 Caring encounter and support

#### Characteristic

According to Christian testimony, God makes the weak strong, looks for the lost, brings back the stray, and bandages the wounded. This respect for an incomplete and vulnerable humanity shown by God shapes the Christian human image. Diaconia, in practising charity and love of one's neighbour, holds the claim to reveal God's kindness towards humans.

Practical action makes God's nearness perceptible and concrete. To ensure the helping acts take a purposeful and effective form, diaconia uses scientific disciplines while giving them a specific orientation. In order to be of help in many life and emergency situations, diaconia mobilises social resources.

Professional knowledge, financial means and social partners take their functions for a committed caring which prioritises individual persons. Faith in God's creation and the conviction that every human being is created in God's image gives rise to a sensibility for individuality. The faith in Christ's redemption embraces the hope of salvation and healing for everybody. Diaconal help wishes to and has to point to a direction going beyond itself, for it lives on the conviction that God's power is strongest in the weak (2 Cor 12:9).

#### Practice

In the Bible, relationship with Christ and attentiveness and care for neighbour are related to each other. Rendering help to underprivileged and suffering persons is bearing witness to Christ.

This signifies that diaconia also regards professionalized and technically qualified assistance as a spiritual expression. Attentiveness and care for



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one's neighbour is concretised through knowledge, responsibility and respect as well as through assistance and accompaniment. As the concept of love of neighbour implicates, it is a matter of consciously rendering reciprocity and directing attention towards others.

The Diakonie.Kolleg.Bayern offers seminar days to learn, among others things, how to draw strength from faith and how to progress in caring.

[www.diakoniekolleg.de](http://www.diakoniekolleg.de)

Social commitment in keeping with Christian faith is an expression of Christian freedom. At the same time, faith is the source of free self commitment. Klaus Dörner characterised this committing liberation to humanity as a 'diaconal imperative'. Analogous to Kantesian imperative, it is a maxim applied to examining courses of action. In diaconal practice, this maxim is likely to lead to excessive demands if understood as a requirement. However, God's caring attention to humans is at its core.

This imperative is a concrete implementation of 'option for the poor'. Once we have sufficient strength, time, and willingness, we are challenged to follow this option. If we feel obliged to follow diaconal imperative, it is the verification of the fact that God carries their weakness and faith, too. Diaconal imperative is no criterion of measuring performance as a means to put pressure on people, but God's criterion for humanity.

"You should act in your field of responsibility in such a way that in dedicating all your resources in time, strength, workforce, attention and love, you always begin with the last person who would reward you least of all."

Klaus Dörner: *Zukunftsfähige Formen des Lebens und Wohnens im Alter*. In: Jürgen Gohde (ed.): *Nachhaltig solidarisch leben (Jahrbuch Diakonie 2003)*, 154-162, 156

Behaviours and inner attitudes are closely inter-related. Behaviours, however, can be trained. The capability to support and strengthen others is an important dimension of diaconal relations which

can be practised and trained. Essential elements of a pastoral care training aim at working out practical situations and capability to feel genuine empathy.

Further reading: *Seelsorge-Ausbildung Ehrenamtlicher SAVe, Leitlinien, Materialien – Drafts*. Pastoral Care and Counselling Centre of the Protestant Church in Hess and Nassau, Friedberg 2007

### Further work

Attentive encounters and support which come from self-confident life expressions can turn out to be compulsive actions under certain circumstances. Imposed helping acts can undermine the helper's self-image. Help becomes then an instrumental action which falls short of the subject of both helping and help-seeking persons. If helping acts are deprived of their freedom due to an inner constraint, a helper's syndrome supersedes a self-confident action.

The practice of love of neighbour, especially when conceived as a maxim of conduct, is limited by the fact that we are created beings. Help is rendered by finite human beings incapable of perfection. Care for others happens with limited information and availability of time, competence, resources, and also with limited motivation. Furthermore, in fostering a 'culture of help', we should keep in mind that we have to cope with these limits and deficits. This prevents excessive demands on the one hand, and points to the horizon of faith on the other.

### 2.1.2 Detecting needs and intervening politically

#### Characteristic

Detecting needs and acting accordingly is a diaconal worker's right and duty. Diaconal culture combines services for people in need with advocacy. When people suffer from the lack of basic means of survival, care has to be taken on two levels. On the one hand, direct help should be initiated and organised, e.g. clothes depots and soup kitchens. On the other hand, the situations leading to such destitute conditions should be analysed and changed. Examinations of life situations and other analyses of social

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data help to detect the needs and give weight to the political voice of the diakonie. Socio-political intervention is an integral and statutory part of diaconal associations provided for by statute. This intervention has an accepted political function.

For the diaconal work, this means that direct support and commitment for all people to live together in human dignity are interconnected. The question of what people need for a decent life is answered on both practical and political levels.

The endeavours for fighting concrete needs are directed towards strengthening the resources and capabilities of those affected. This insight is important not only for the acceptance of support, but also for its sustenance. A diaconal action is subsidiary and aims at an independent participation in social life. Diaconia happens relying upon strengthening the persons affected. In social and political discussions, too, advocacy should not go past them according to the diaconal self-image.

The experiences of persons affected are important for the work in the National Poverty Conference in Germany or self-help groups, and determining both for the objective setting and the ways and means of political intervention.

### **Practice**

The close interrelationship between practical relief and political intervention of the diakonie must take a form of reciprocal process. By setting the target of “Seek the prosperity of the city” (Jer 29:4-14a), it is included to the options of community-oriented diaconia to be involved and intervene consistently in civil society as well as in Christian community.

In its conception on welfare work, the diakonie puts emphasis on exploring on-site competences in addition to active supports. Opportunities of participation are given and guaranteed to citizens, which includes the empowerment to political participation in civil society.

Monitoring processes are diaconal initiatives through which the granting and organisation of social assistance are systematically observed and

evaluated. The collected data are evaluated, violations or insufficient aid systems publicly criticised, and political interventions made under the participation of those affected.

The federal monitoring project of the Protestant Homeless Association discloses the systematic denial of right of the homeless. In order to attract public attention to the growing denial of help, the ‘Gebogene Paragraf’ (bent paragraph), a symbolic prize for especially problematic social aid organisations, was awarded in 2006, which received broad media attention.

[www.evangelische-obdachlosenhilfe.de/downloads/berichtrechtsverwirklichung2006.pdf](http://www.evangelische-obdachlosenhilfe.de/downloads/berichtrechtsverwirklichung2006.pdf)

Systematic examinations provide differentiated overviews of the effectiveness of aid and support systems. For further development, it is important to inspect the practice in institutions and services so that targeted and effective requests may be elaborated and officially communicated to social policy makers.

In 2000, the EKD Diakonisches Werk and the German Caritas Association initiated systematic socio-political changing processes by presenting the results of a family study and submitting proposals for a social basic protection as well as a low-threshold aid structure.

[www.Diakonie.de/downloads/Familienstudie-Ergebnisse.pdf](http://www.Diakonie.de/downloads/Familienstudie-Ergebnisse.pdf)

### **Further work**

Detecting needs and intervening with political measures are interlaced processes which mark the character of diaconal actions. It is not a political activism, but a structured aid and political interventions based on analyses and well-grounded appraisal of needs. Help, analyses and interventions of the diakonie thus become targeted and effective only when they are organised and taken in charge together with the affected and help-seeking persons.

### **2.1.3 Involving those affected**

#### **Characteristic**

Acknowledging an imperfect and vulnerable human condition goes hand in hand with the diaconal prac-

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tice of care for human beings. The purpose of care is to make God's kindness to humans tangible. It has multiple dimensions to realise human vulnerability and relate it to diaconal action. In identifying needy situations and selecting the options of action, diaconia uses differentiated tools of social work. It belongs to the diaconal culture to place people in need in the centre of action and take them seriously in their respective competence. In diaconia, a help-seeking people are more than clients. They are not the objects of helping action. This changes the role of those who give the caring attention, too: they become dialogue partners.

### Practice

Diaconal institutions systematically query the expectations, wishes, and demands of the interest partners of elderly care facilities. This analysis involves not only the residents and patients, but also their family members, colleagues and further interest partners.

Besides the general assessment of services and customer relations, the Samariterstiftung Nürtingen has set further indicators assessing the degree of satisfaction of people in a diaconal culture. The purpose of the foundation 'Time for People' is promoting decent care in the institutions and services of the Samariterstiftung.

[www.samariterstiftung.de/Stiftung/Leitbild](http://www.samariterstiftung.de/Stiftung/Leitbild)  
[www.zeit-fuer-menschen.de](http://www.zeit-fuer-menschen.de)

The diaconal culture presupposes a holistic way of regarding a human being. For the purpose of finding out the resources and vulnerability of a person, mental conditions and social status are examined and taken into consideration besides symptoms or physical states.

When making a treatment plan, the Diakonie Hospital Elbingerode conducts a comprehensive set of examinations including physical, psychological, and social states of each patient. Expectations are asked and, if necessary, family members are involved.

[www.procum-cert.de/1024/Qualitaetsberichte/QB\\_PDF\\_Elbingerode\\_neu.pdf](http://www.procum-cert.de/1024/Qualitaetsberichte/QB_PDF_Elbingerode_neu.pdf)

People live in a community. A holistic view of man must go beyond the observation of individual persons. Where are hurtful or healing factors in a community?

'Casting Rubber Island' has built up an aid system on the basis of a community approach. In this system, young people are involved in a biography-oriented help. This includes child minding, working in a day-care facility for children, homework coaching, vocational training, and job opportunities.

[www.Diakonie-giessen.de/beratung/index.html?giessenwest.html](http://www.Diakonie-giessen.de/beratung/index.html?giessenwest.html)

An individual support scheme means that those seeking help define and meet their own needs together with their service providers and sponsors. The support scheme and related commitments are laid out in a joint negotiation process. The method of an individual support scheme may find application in many different fields to cope with the problems of housing, caring, integration and other sorts of existential help.

Social traits in a community have a particular significance which should be taken into consideration in the analysis of the situation requiring help. In this regard, the diakonie uses certain analysis tools such as social space analysis. For instance, the EKD Diakonisches Werk conducted a series of social space analyses in combating violence together with local diaconal institutions, among others in Dresden, Chemnitz and Hoyerswerda. It was on the basis of these analyses that action plans of social work were set up and carried out.

When the affected and needy people play an active role, their helpers receive attention and concern, too. Salaried or volunteer hospice workers exercise a special sensitivity for borderline situations and transitions of life. They receive very intensive training and accompaniment for their work. In the care of the dying, a relationship of dialogue, mutual listening and appreciation develops.

### Further work

The approach of involving the persons affected in

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the planning of supports and services requires a variety of implementations which depend on individual premises and situations.

It is in local churches that the precariousness of people is first recognised whereas the wide-ranging diaconal services and establishments represent time-proven instruments to heal the 'wounds'.

The networking of these two areas should be made the starting point of joint diaconal work in a more intensive manner in the future, both with regard to detecting and combating social miseries and to political commitment for those affected.

### 2.1.4 Giving professional concepts a diaconal accent

#### Characteristic

The concepts and principal texts of diaconal institutions and services must bear reference to their value orientation. It is of vital importance that this reference should not be abstract, but worded as concretely as possible in order for the diaconal self-understanding to be clearly shown in day-to-day situations. The diaconal self-concept is there where professionalism unfolds in close reference to the questions of spirituality. This also includes constant awareness of the discrepancy between prospect and reality with regard to the diaconal groundwork in implementing the concepts, and taking measures to minimise this discrepancy.

#### Practice

The concepts of diaconal institutions and services should clearly show the connection of spirituality and pedagogy, therapy and care. This connection finds expression in a holistic approach of attaching equal importance to the pastoral care and the physical and psychological health care. Specifications, which serve as the basis of fee agreements, should include pastoral care activities just as they should include health promotion, for instance. It follows that pastoral care and spiritual consolidation should be provided and experienced in a pedagogically accompanied life situation. This includes the obligation of the employees to keep records of these activities, too.

In addition to the question of how health, social competence or working relations should be assessed, such records should also treat the questions of the religious background of the help-seeking persons as well as their hopes or doubts concerning religious beliefs, and their interests in religious matters.

In youth help agencies, besides other consequences, the offer of forgiveness should be formally included in the reaction options, i.e. the lists of rule violations and their expected consequences.

The records of introductory talks, pre-printed forms for probationary period appraisal report and other texts of personal management should also take account of the question to what extent professional workers are grounded in Christian faith, or take the offers of value orientation or even develop them on their own.

Herzogsägmühle is committed to the mission of bearing testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. This commitment is underpinned for example by the "efforts to integrate each and everyone in the community..."

One of its corporate objectives in dealings with the disadvantaged is the "improvement of their relationship to themselves, to others and to God." ... "This last dimension of holistic assistance is put into practice by our employees who keep a sustainable relationship to God themselves, through proclamation and pastoral care, and also through appropriate forms of church life and the code of conduct of the house or company."

[www.herzogsaegmuehle.de/137.html](http://www.herzogsaegmuehle.de/137.html)

A distinctive feature of Protestant kindergartens is the fact that religious dimension of life is perceived and accepted in them. The learning opportunities of a Protestant kindergarten should offer the answers based on Christian faith to the primary questions of life. This can be offered for example through biblical stories, songs and prayers, through the introduction to important festivals in the church calendar, through a preliminary education appropriate for children. A Protestant kindergarten is a part of

the church. Given the fact that this faith community is successful only to some extent, however, this statement is rather a task description than an actual situation.

The federal reference guide for Protestant day-care facilities for children – a guideline on quality development – describes the practice of religious education with the following words: To take children seriously as ‘God seekers’ and to provide them with religious experiences in a trustworthy manner remains a decisive mission of Protestant day-care facilities for children. In doing so, an essential task consists in linking typical life situations of children with religious processes such as quiet times, praying, reconciling, mourning, and forgiving.

[www.beta-Diakonie.de/cms/QM\\_handbuch\\_Flyer.pdf](http://www.beta-Diakonie.de/cms/QM_handbuch_Flyer.pdf)

#### Further work

As we know from experience, not all diaconal workers keep such a sustainable relationship to Christian faith that they are prepared to talk about it or show it by living an exemplary life. Yet it is expected of all diaconal workers to respect and encourage other colleagues’ works as regards value orientation and pastoral care. In particular, employees who commit themselves in the Christian sense rely on the solidarity and esteem of their team colleagues and superiors.

Furthermore, all diaconal workers should be able to spot religious resources in their social settings and facilitate access to them for those under their care. This holds true even in the event that the workers do not choose these accesses for themselves. This can be done for instance through regular contacts with parish pastors or by integrating the help receivers in church-based activities (youth groups, senior citizens clubs, church festivals and excursions, etc.).

From the diaconal point of view, questions about pastoral care and theological reflections are part of diaconal activities. It follows that the pastoral care elements – for example during counselling – must be regarded and shaped as belonging to the general description of services.

### 2.1.5 Relating carefully to ethical issues

#### Characteristic

The ‘option for the poor’ is a key concept in dealings with ethical issues in the diaconia. In this option, the subject entity and dignity of the poor are the starting point of reflection and action. This option concerns both the disadvantaged and marginalised due to economic and social imbalance and those who are physically frail or suffering from constraints caused by diseases. It refuses, especially in the context of biomedical development, any discrimination of chronically ill and handicapped persons in society. The establishment of medical practices prohibiting the birth of handicapped babies make us worry about the increasing tendency of such discriminatory acts. The diakonie opposes all desolidarisation of people who have to cope with diseases and handicaps. Especially in the social commitment of the diakonie, the yardstick for just action should be the human dignity understood as self-empowerment, and justice represented by participation.

Responsible dealings with borderline situations of life and a high sensitivity in making medical, nursing and therapeutic decisions find expression first and foremost in health and geriatric care facilities of the diakonie.

#### Practice

Church and diakonie try to sharpen the public and professional awareness relating to ethical challenges by carrying out the ‘Week for Life’ every year as an ecumenical initiative.

The ‘Week for Life’, initiated by the German Bishops’ Conference, has taken place every year since 1994 together with the EKD. In 2008, it will take place under the slogan of ‘Healthy or ill – loved by God’.

[www.woche-fuer-das-leben.de/2008](http://www.woche-fuer-das-leben.de/2008)

In its counselling service points for pregnant women and pregnancy-related conflicts, the diakonie offers women with unwanted pregnancy advisory and accompanying services. This counselling is a counselling on life. This involves both the life of

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the unborn child and that of the pregnant woman, which are sometimes in conflict. This conflict should be accepted and tolerated during counselling care. Its main concern is to support the pregnant woman in making her own sustainable decision of conscience.

Directory of the counsel service points for the pregnancy-related conflicts of the diakonie at:  
[www.evangelische-beratung.info](http://www.evangelische-beratung.info)

Clinical ethics committees are an important feature of diaconal hospitals. In conflict situations of ethical problems, they offer assistance with a view to enabling transparent ethical decision-making. In concrete individual cases, their judgements provide help with decision-making for physicians. Those who get into conflict situations may turn to appropriate committees in charge.

The manual 'Ethisch Handeln im Krankenhaus' (ethical action in hospitals) provides support in difficult ethical situations with which hospital personnel are confronted, above all in medical and nursing care.

A manual for everyday life by Ulrike Sehring, Franz Segbers, ed. by the Federation of Protestant Hospitals and Rehabilitation Clinics in Hessen, 2005

Accompanying the dying and their families is one of the core aspects of diaconal service up to its self-image. The fears and needs of the dying may be coped with by hospice work and palliative care. The latter is a concept designed to improve the quality of life and of supply for the terminally ill.

For the hospice work, the service of voluntary workers is indispensable and characteristic element of its support. Hospices offer trainings for voluntary workers in the accompaniment of the dying and the mourning.

Personality, justice, and solidarity constitute the core of socio-ethical positions of the diakonie. Justice is understood first and foremost as that of equal capability and participation. Existence-securing is an essential momentum of solidarity and diaconal commitment. One of the fundamental statements of a Christian work ethics says: poverty in spite of work is a violation of human dignity.

People with a migration background are confronted with various forms of discrimination. In this problem field, the diaconal commitment focuses on issues of equality of participation and opportunities.

In the 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All' (2007), the conceptual framework 'Diaconia in the Immigration Society' was presented.

[www.diakonie.de/1519\\_2684.htm](http://www.diakonie.de/1519_2684.htm)

### Further work

Working on ethical issues is a challenging process. Amidst biomedical progresses and the dynamics of social and economical changes, positions and answers must be reached ever anew in diaconia. In many fields, ethical conflicts are on the agenda. In diaconia, decisions can be made and implemented only in dialogue with these sciences. Diaconia is challenged to consistently stand by the 'option for the poor' in the relevant debates.

In the diakonie, there is a broad spectrum of offers of diaconal continuing and life-long education on ethical issues.

[www.diakonie.de/print/fachforum/1382.php](http://www.diakonie.de/print/fachforum/1382.php)

## 2.2 Imparting diaconal knowledge – learning responsible dealings

### 2.2.1 Learning, educating, and fostering new ideas

#### Characteristic

The education of a human being begins at an early age. It involves learning the meaning of the family, family upbringing and pre-school education (kindergarten and day-care centres), and school and vocational education. Experiences throughout these stages play a formative role in setting the course, and therefore should be considered and examined cautiously in terms of opportunities and risks.

Society needs educational institutions which uphold the culture of mutual recognition which ensures the right conduct in dealings with its weak members, children, elderly people, and the disabled.

- Education is more than knowing and learning. It seeks answers to the human question about what human beings are and how they understand the world. It also addresses the religious dimension. The question about God is an integral part of contemporary education.
- Education implies the interrelation of learning, knowledge, capability, awareness building, attitudes and actions on the horizon of interpretation which makes life meaningful.
- Education involves an individual human being as a person, promoting and unfolding him/her as a 'whole person' and fostering his/her social responsibility.
- Education is a socio-ethic challenge and contributes to establishing respectful relationships in a solidarity society.

#### Practice

Diaconia and education (or pedagogy) are closely interdependent, admittedly not in a functional sense (education as a working field of diaconia), but in a categorical sense (education as a dimension of dia-

conia). It is important to establish a competent relationship between theory and practice in the socio-diaconal learning processes. Experts are not only those who have acquired theoretical knowledge and teach it. Comprehensive expert knowledge can also be brought in educational processes by those who have become experts thanks to their own experiences and individual living situations.

The Diakonisches Werk in Hessen and Nassau carries out the training 'Volunteering in the drug rehabilitation' in three places, in line with the syllabus of the federation for drug rehabilitation (GVS), for the purpose of enabling drug addicts living in abstinence, affected family members, and interested persons for professional reasons to exercise voluntary or occupational activities in the field of drug rehabilitation.

[www.elas-dwhn.de/fortbildung.htm](http://www.elas-dwhn.de/fortbildung.htm)

Community work has become an opportunity for church and diaconie to work together. In the eighties, concepts of a diaconal church were developed in Protestant and Catholic churches. The starting point of those concepts was the necessity for the church to 'learn diaconia' in its social settings. Impetus came then from the liberation theology, Christian grassroots groups and ecumenism. In the church as 'ensemble of temporary victims' (Ernst Lange), three tasks were determined: supporting the weak, liberating the captive, reconciling enemies. This church pedagogical impetus gives rise to a socio-spatial localisation and expansion of the horizon.

One of the results of the church educational processes is the emergence of multigenerational houses.

In the 'Haus der Zukunft' (future house) in Bremen-Lüssum, communal, social, church-based and sports institutions work along with committed citizens in order to strengthen self-responsibility and self-help activities.

[www.haus-der-zukunft-bremen.de](http://www.haus-der-zukunft-bremen.de)

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People commit themselves and undertake further education after retirement. In order to learn to act ecumenically in a globalised world, they choose to work abroad for some time. They apply their professional know-how and experiences of life to diaconal projects and acquire new experiences. They participate in projects for the Third World. As retired doctors they provide assistance in questions of faith and life, as retired teachers they seek contacts with mentally ill adolescents and young adults, as 'Grüne Damen und Herren'<sup>2</sup> in the Association of Protestant Hospital Help they accompany patients, take on trainings as voluntary hospice helpers, and many other things.

The Christian Forum on Information, Training, and Counselling of Senior Citizens (CSF) maintained by the Protestant Senior Citizens Association (ESW), promotes the pedagogical competence of senior citizens. By means of pastoral care, involvement in a living Christian community, and reconnection to church and congregations, CSF helps to recognise and use one's own potential, and rely on the wealth of experience of others. Its projects: bread time, teaching time, talking time, relaxing time.

[www.evangelisches-seniorenwerk.de](http://www.evangelisches-seniorenwerk.de)

### Further work

Mutual learning in partnership, respect, acceptance, appreciation – in the context of self-help work and intergenerational, intercultural, interreligious, networked learning within church, diaconia and community – seems to be a ground-breaking example of diaconal education in the face of current individual and social situations of life and shortfalls.

### 2.2.2 Diaconal social learning

#### Characteristic

Diaconal social learning happens in context. It is rooted in the awareness that humans are created in the image of God, and they are able to maintain a relationship with God, to others and themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Translator's note: the 'green ladies and gentlemen' are voluntary hospital workers of German Protestant churches – the name refers to the green gown they wear to distinguish them from professional personnel.

Diaconal social learning is a character-building process which spans the whole spectrum of education: pedagogical work in children's day-care facilities, vocational education, continuing and life-long education in schools, colleges and universities, academies, and in the adult education (family education, developmental educational work, and background-based educational measures). Voluntary social year and alternative civilian service are also important learning settings.

- Diaconal education enables to grasp social situations in light of their legal, economic and moral structures, normative examples and traditional backgrounds.
- Diaconal education consists in a meaning and value pursuing reflective interpenetration of action fields and social challenges. This includes independent dealings with the motives and life stories of help providing and help receiving persons with their memories, successes, failures, positive and negative role models.
- Diaconal social learning is a practice geared to reducing ignorance, reservations and prejudices among generations, people in different life situations and social settings. Subjects like 'ethical questions at the beginning or end of life', 'basic health care' and many others take shape in concrete encounters with people. Diaconal social learning takes place when a common practice is the object of thoughts and talks.

#### Practice

Model experiments are being conducted at regional and supra-regional levels. They explore the importance of Protestant day-care centres for children as social centres for children and families, and churches' neighbourhood centres as communicational and educational institutions. Objective: the model institutions should, with their lifeworld-oriented approach, be integrated into the network of local churches and communities, with the elementary and religious-pedagogical functions of education, transmission of values and religious education involved.



Between 2003 and 2007, the Rhine Association of Protestant children's day-care facilities, the Protestant Church and the Diakonisches Werk in the Rhineland, the Diakonisches Werk on the Saar, conducted, in cooperation with the Heidelberg Institute of Diaconal Sciences, a pilot project called 'the Protestant children's day-care facilities as communicational and educational centres for children and their families'.

Arnd Götzemann, *Zukunftsfähige Bildung von Kindern. Zur diakonischen Bildungsverantwortung im Bereich der Elementarpädagogik (Future education of children. On educational responsibility of the diakonie in pre-school education)* in: Helmut Hanisch / Heinz Schmidt, *Diakonische Bildung*, Heidelberg 2004, 184f.

Lifeworlds and organisational development are closely related to each other in learning institutions. Decisive impetus for the shaping of structures and processes come from the day-to-day life of residents. Organisations and residents build a learning partnership.

Although the alternative civilian service does not pursue an independent socio-political aim, the diakonie understands and organises this social work as a learning service. Through suitable learning places and learning days, those who render the alternative civilian service receive impetuses of peace ethic, career-assorted information, offers of political education, and support for the transmission of experiences in the post-service time.

The voluntary social year (FSJ: Freiwilliges Soziales Jahr) is a chance for young people between 16 and 26 years to expand their horizon of knowledge and experience.

The project 'Seitenwechsel' (changeover) offers people in leading positions of business companies the opportunity of social learning. From a diaconal institution, for example, they take over the duties of looking after handicapped persons, accompanying the homeless to the welfare office, helping underage refugees with homework, and meeting the world of adolescents living in deprived areas. The focal point of this 'temporary social work' is the direct contact with the clients.

[www.seitenwechsel.com](http://www.seitenwechsel.com)

The FSJ offers the opportunity to render service in social institutions, projects and local churches. It is a chance to examine one's faith in the reality of social tasks or to rediscover it.

### Further work

The implementation and development of didactical categories and pedagogical methods in the diaconal education is a process which should be accompanied and initiated. Some currently available teaching materials have adopted the stimuli suggested in the didactics and methodology of religious or ethical education: biblical didactics including narrative methods, problem and experience orientation, elementarisation, symbol didactics, dilemma discussions, Socratic didactics, and verbal argumentation. The manuals of diaconal trainings have included experience pedagogical approaches. A project group of the EKD Diakonisches Werk is working on the further development and new concepts of diaconal learning materials at the Communication Centre.

### 2.2.3 Acquiring basic diaconal-theological knowledge and professional qualifications

#### Characteristic

In 1856, Johann Hinrich Wichern, the founding father of modern diakonie in Germany, expressed in his 'Survey Report on Diaconia and Deaconate': we must be redirected to the "depth of divinity in order to get into the depth of humans in their hardships and the depths of necessary help". The search for appropriate answers to the hardships and precarious life situations of respective times goes hand in hand with the search for spiritual sources of diaconia and reference to the Bible as the record of the Judeo-Christian faith. Diaconia on the horizon of God's Kingdom needs a lively, lived spirituality. To the new and long-time diaconal workers, the source and horizon of meaning of diaconal actions are not always recognised at first sight. Especially when changing from a non-confessional institution to a confessional one, employees ask about the proprium, tradition, orientation of their new institution, wishing to understand it and be able to identify themselves with it. The demand for diaconal-theological education comes from those – mostly

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younger people – who begin their career in diaconal activity fields and/or church-related services. It is a big gain for people working in the diakonie and major future investigations for diaconal institution to take vocational trainings and further educations to acquire diaconal-theological basic knowledge or in-depth knowledge in interdisciplinary dialog, with the freedom of religion respected.

### Practice

In carrying out diaconal-theological continuing education programmes, it is important for the funding authorities of diaconal institutions to provide systematic and regular supports (non-material support, financial grant, temporary leave of absence).

“Work should talk, talk should work.” The professional requirements qualifying a person to become a deacon or deaconess are acquired through a double qualification in a state-recognised social or nursing profession and in a theological-diaconal education in a professional school or college of higher education.

Most German educational institutions for deacons and deaconesses are imbedded in the Association of Protestant Deacon and Deaconess Communities.

[www.vedd.de/obj/Bilder\\_und\\_Dokumente/pdf-Daten/Impulse/Impuls200404.pdf](http://www.vedd.de/obj/Bilder_und_Dokumente/pdf-Daten/Impulse/Impuls200404.pdf)

By acquiring job proficiency both for the cross-generational work and for the work with the elderly and very old people, professional workers in the fields of deaconate, life-long education, social work, pastoral ministry, and health care can specialise their activities, oriented towards Christian human image and diaconal spirituality.

The Denkendorf, Monastery a further education institute for church and diaconia, offers an in-service two-year qualification course for consultants for cross-generational work and geriatric care management.

[www.kloster-denkendorf.de](http://www.kloster-denkendorf.de)

Introduction days for new employees, diaconal study block weeks, moderation course for employees of regional diaconal institutions and foundations as well as local churches make it possible to get acquainted with spiritual and religious sources which the diakonie lives on, to become conscious of biblical-theological fundamentals of diaconia, confront the present social challenges and individual emergency situations, and to find networks of help at informal, municipal and institutional levels.

Here are some examples of various course offers:

[www.diakonie-sachsen.de/arbeitsbereiche/theologie/kursangebote](http://www.diakonie-sachsen.de/arbeitsbereiche/theologie/kursangebote)

<http://www.daek.de/grundkurs/index.html>

[www.elisabethenstift.de/weiterbildung](http://www.elisabethenstift.de/weiterbildung)

Diaconal culture receives more contours through personal presence, impression, external frame in which, for instance, the domestic management of an institution or a company presents itself.

‘Outfit in the domestic management’ – domestic managers from the professional subgroup, domestic management, of the trade association for disability services in the Diakonisches Werk of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thüringen, attend the courses for shaping the ecclesiastical year.

Contact: [g.jalowski@freenet.de](mailto:g.jalowski@freenet.de)

### Further work

It is essential to conduct a nationwide survey on the course offers in diaconal trainings and further education. Curricula should be compared, discussed, and optimised. A trainings guide for deaconesses and deacons should be made easily accessible on the Internet. Diaconal-theological course offers should also be designed for senior managements and supervisory boards in diaconal institutions and for church leaders.

## 2.3 Awakening and spreading faith

Diaconia is rooted in Jesus Christ's call to service, and thus is a form of mission. According to the biblical witness, it is this mandate to service that establishes the call to awaken and spread faith (Mt 28:18ff, Jn 20:21). Under the present-day general conditions of diaconia, this instruction gains topicality for the fact that the breaking-off from tradition regarding the existential processes of faith as well as biblical knowledge has as drastic an impact on the diaconal workers as on society in general. That's why the missionary mandate must also be directed inwards so that diaconia may keep its profile and remain faithful to its mission.

In doing so, two things must be kept in mind: Diaconia carries out its mission together with the employees who are non-believers or distanced from the church. It deserves respect and appreciation that the employees commit their talents and life-time achievements to those under their care.

A clear differentiation between 'belonging' and 'not belonging' to the church can be formally made, but not necessary with regard to world view, inner relationship to the church, convictions of faith or genuine humanity. Just as in other fields of society, there are new mixed conditions of inner commitment even with outer distance and distanced commitment despite church connection.

Missionary convincing force does not lie first and foremost in the pronounced truths of faith or forms of piety, but in the ability to take up a stance for faith in personal, honest and devotional manners, and talk about it.

Despite their differences, all diaconal movements and endeavours draw on the experience that diaconal actions depend on community. This insight describes the reality of diaconal action, and at the same time it is the expression of the hope that God keeps feeding the community with Christian faith.

The culture of an institution always has its say. The atmosphere of a house has more impact than its words. Appreciation and clear communication are prior conditions of all transmission of faith matters. Only that which gives room for spaces and times in which spiritual experiences may occur and new insights may be absorbed.

In an institution, it must be seen that its board of directors intends to maintain the spiritual makeup of the diaconal mission. It assumes the responsibility for building necessary structures, providing resources, and surveying the quality of processes. The necessary credibility can only be gained through spiritual offers and the care taken in the management of personal resources.

### 2.3.1 Religious communication in diaconal everyday life

#### Characteristic

The experiences of death and life, pain and suffering, power and powerlessness, success and failure which are common in daily life of diaconal practice urge us to question the meaning of life and the uplifting power of faith. Inasmuch as they are not suppressed, they may serve as the starting point for talks and 'small confessions' of everyday life. Their fragmental character opens up to the larger context of Christian meaning-horizon.

#### Practice

Lothar Zenettis' poems depict the challenges posed by the diaconal daily life. They show the necessity of a Christian responsibility for the power of language while saying blessings, accompanying, giving medical care, and taking leave. In short: saying the right words and keeping silent at the right moments. A culture of communication of faith needs self explanation, practice of talks among one another, even risky attempts. Personal faith hence becomes part of professional commitment and belongs to the quality marks of a culture of holistic help.

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“What do I say to someone who is at the end of his life?  
What do I say to him face to face in his worries  
in the tomb of love in his loneliness  
in his pains on the sickbed  
in his fear in his death agony?  
I even say:  
Nothing can be done,  
it befalls everybody  
you shouldn't be discouraged  
do not take it so hard...  
Is that all I say?  
But I should know  
the one and only name  
that is given to us under the heaven...”

*Lothar Zenetti*

It is an enriching experience to address the dimension of faith-based management of diaconal everyday life in ‘interspaces’ (e.g. casual meetings) at the workplace or regular briefings. It aims to improve a religious language competence vis-à-vis those seeking help and to train the ability of the personnel to detect their spiritual needs. The language competence of the employees who know about faith and live in it should be fostered and encouraged. The Bible invites Christians: “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

Talking freely and naturally about our faith is often not easy. However, we can learn to gain more confidence in it. It is useful to make clear our own fears and mental blocks.

Reinhold Krebs, chief of youth desk of the Protestant Youth Association in Württemberg, served many years in public youth work and shares his experiences in talks about faith in everyday life:

[www.a-m-d.de/cafes/grundlagen/glauben/kommunikation/10tipps.pdf](http://www.a-m-d.de/cafes/grundlagen/glauben/kommunikation/10tipps.pdf)

In order to get rid of inhibitions, it is also useful to attend courses and communication training in faith matters.

The course offer ‘Being Christian with Competence’ of the Protestant Deaconess Foundation Speyer addressing the issues of life, faith and individual spirituality contains six modules ranging from practised pastoral care to lived proclamation.

[diakonissen-speyer.de](http://diakonissen-speyer.de) | Über uns | Diakonische Gemeinschaften | CMK Kurs

### **Further work**

How can an act of help in faith become an act of help in life? This question is a fundamental one in the diaconal continuing education. Answers drawing on faith and a successful communication about faith require appropriate places and opportunities. This includes the offers of further education which train the ‘communication of faith in diaconal everyday life’.

Learning fields for this communication are designed to make Christians more aware of their faith and capable of talking about it. What is intended is not to say something ‘right’ in dogmatic terms (whereas it should not be ‘wrong’ either), but rather to talk about the consolation and the uplifting power the Gospel of Jesus Christ in an honest and caring way. Communicating faith involves an understanding for different layers of our soul: behind knee-jerk catchphrases and various defensive attitudes, there are often certain preconceived understandings or misunderstandings about Christians, injuries incurred in connection with life histories, unhealthy images of God, deep-rooted deceptions and shattered confidence in life.

Klaus Jürgen Diehl: Vom Glauben leise reden [Talking quietly about faith], Gießen 2001, is a 64-page booklet designed as a course book containing many texts and didactic materials drawn from life.

Burghard Krause: Vom Mündigwerden der Christen – und wie unser Glaube zur Sprache findet [Christians' coming of age – and how our faith finds expression], in: Auszug aus dem Schneckenhaus. Praxis-Impulse für eine verheißungsvolle Gemeindeentwicklung, Neukirchen 1996, 146-181.

EREV-Toolbox, ed. EREV-Projektgruppe 'Diakonisches Profil in der Jugendhilfe' [diaconal profile in youth aid] of the Protestant Education Association. It provides a playful access to basic questions about faith in interchange of experience and knowledge about God and the Bible.

[www.erev.de/fileadmin/service/toolbox/toolbox\\_falter\\_web.pdf](http://www.erev.de/fileadmin/service/toolbox/toolbox_falter_web.pdf)

### 2.3.2 Strengthening faith

#### Characteristic

One of the attributes of church social work is the fact that those in its care receive more than a professional service or help. For this reason, it needs personnel who meet this requirement. The gap between this requirement and reality can become narrower if diaconia copes with this lack of elementary knowledge and exercise of Christian faith with credible offers. Its purpose is to awaken faith. Its intention is the transmission of Christian knowledge, enabling mental digestion of and adaptation to spiritual experiences. The diaconal living space proves to be an appropriate learning space for believers.

#### Practice

Retreats, sabbaticals: the everyday life of diaconia is experienced by many as energy-depleting and exhausting. Physical exertion is aggravated by psychological strain. It is therefore one of the responsibilities of the managing bodies to look after the mental well-being of all diaconal workers in addition to concern for professional support and life-long education. When diaconal institutions offer spiritual exercises or retreats, it is more than a mere strategy against burnout. It also contains the possi-

bility of exercising forms of Christian spirituality. Annual offers, adapted for example to the time and theme on the church calendar, may contribute to the strengthening of faith.

In the complex of diaconal institutions of the Stiftung Rauhes Haus in Hamburg, the so-called 'Oasis Days' are a gift of the employers to their employees. On one day every year, retreats are held away from everyday life. Body work, creative approach to biblical texts, and pastoral care and blessings are the constituent elements (cf. Frank Puckerwald, "Auf dem Weg durch die Alltagswüste nicht ins Gras beißen! Darum: Oasen-Tage" [On the way along the everyday desert, don't bite the dust! That's why we have Oasis Days], mi-di 4, p. 12ff).

The Education Association Neukirchen holds an annual thematic weekend meeting away from the workplace, which combines convivial, pastoral and spiritual offers in one. At the same time it is an expression of acknowledgement and appreciation towards the employees.

Continuing education and development of diaconal identity: seminars, which shed light on the diaconal everyday life from the angle of faith, belong to the standard offers of continuing education of diaconal institutions in many places. They serve to enhance Christian identity at work.

The Rummelsberger Diakonie has built a network called 'Spiritual life – the Rummelsberger' with the theme groups 'spirituality', 'pastoral care', 'ethic forum', and 'safeguarding the creation'. It intends to help to meet diaconal challenges of strengthening diaconal identity and competence.

Programme of the 'Rummelsberg Seminars' on life-long education, especially on 'network of spiritual life':

[www.rummelsberg.de](http://www.rummelsberg.de)

The format 'spiritual courses' is an offer of courses with comprehensive, i.e. systematic approach to Christian faith and its contents. Many of these courses have been established for many years and

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enjoy time-tested acceptance especially among local churches. They have also been conducted in the field of diaconia or with participants open to both fields.

The faith seminar 'Becoming Christ – Remaining Christ' intends, as a kind of adult catechuminate, to induce the experience of faith besides presenting cognitive contents. Main subjects and actions of faith are interpreted in an elementarised form, combined with practical helps in beginning or re-beginning to live as a Christian. The seminar is informative in the subject matter, pastoral in dealing with people, and up-to-date in language and the culture of meeting.

Burghard Krause, Studienbrief zu 'Christ werden – Christ bleiben' (A 45), ed. Association of Missionary Services, Berlin

Faith courses, which serve to boost the diaconal work profile, designed by the diakonie for its employees, are not 'on the market' yet. But they are planned and run in many institutions for internal use.

### Further work

The development of a low-threshold and elementary course appears to be urgently necessary, not only for many diaconal workers without any denominational affiliation, but also for those with church background but with unstable fundamentals of faith or without them. For the success and acceptance of such a course, attractive general conditions are not less decisive than its contents and the competence of responsible persons. General conditions involve the costs, accreditation as continuing education, and work-time friendly scheduling. These conditions must be set and presented convincingly by the management.

### 2.3.3 Imparting Bible knowledge

#### Characteristic

"It contains not just words for reading, but a whole lot of words for living, written not for speculation and lofty commentaries, but for living and doing." This famous comment of Martin Luther's sets the direction of the aim of imparting Bible knowledge in diaconal settings: the practical life. The Bible

texts with their promising and hoping characters present themselves as many kinds of 'practical texts'. They convey life and faith experiences (e.g. numerous Psalms, Jesus' parables), and texts defying fear and hopelessness (e.g. texts from Paul's epistles), clarifying situations of life (e.g. conflicts such as 'Abraham and Lot', 'Joseph and his brothers'), giving moral orientation and speaking of the benefits of new perspectives of life (e.g. forgiveness and reconciliation, hope beyond death). This 'worldliness' makes the Bible applicable to real life and work of today. The discovery of this reference to life often evokes surprise, even the thrill of discovery.

Since the transmission of faith is impossible without that of Bible knowledge, it is essential to seek and create places and methods to make it possible.

#### Practice

Many diaconal workers expect that the biblical promises become audible – in Christmas festivities, initiation briefings with new employees or blessings, also as personal acceptance. When they encounter this longing, they feel encouraged to use such opportunities of transmitting biblical words of promise and to seek appropriate forms.

Diaconal workers and help-seeking persons are often touched when the words of promise and consolation are spoken to them (Psalm 23 'The Lord is my shepherd', Psalm 103 'Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being...' or Bonhoeffer's 'With every power for good'). They are often heard and experienced as personally addressed words of God. They embrace the strength of new views and possibilities of life which open up to those who are thus talked to.

Furthermore, the Bible is marked by interconnected stories such as the story about Abraham or Joseph, wanderings in the desert, Elijah's circle, Gospel narratives about Jesus and his parables, his passion and ascension. Its main concern is to tell the stories testifying to God's work realistically, imaginatively, and colourfully. To proclaim them – apart from the aspect of belief – is also an educational task. This

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can be conveyed in sermons and speeches, in plays or through motifs of art.

Biblical texts may be presented whenever official occasions offer the opportunity, e.g. farewells, birthdays, jubilees, feasts. The Bible, as a 'book of life', offers abundant points of reference which add a dimension to such an occasion which transcends a mere exercise of pious duties. Tokens of appreciation towards co-workers – greetings on the occasion of baptism or confirmation of a child, wedding or expression of condolence to dependents – are invitations to listen to biblical texts.

Here is a promising report of an employee of the Johannesstift in Spandau, Berlin: The continuing education of the personnel aroused a keen interest in the Bible, which resulted in monthly meetings in which employees share their opinions on Bible texts. 'Life-related Bible Study' relates the texts to life, experiences and knowledge, and takes God's word from the texts in hoping, transforming and liberating senses.

It is worthwhile to provide co-workers, patients and residents with an easy access to the daily Watchwords of the Moravian Church, the calendars of Neukirche or Constance or other Bible-related literature such as verse cards and meditative texts. Book tables (including mobile ones) are one of the options incurring reasonable operating expense. In many companies, the Watchwords of the Moravian Church are sent to all employees at the end of each year.

### Further work

Transmitting Bible knowledge is a necessary aspect of faith in diaconia. A vivid knowledge of the Bible requires reflected forms. It transcends a pure and simple teaching (Bible studies) and encourages discoveries during talks. The concept of a 'life-related Bible study' as developed by Annegret and Detlef Puttkammer, is inspiring in this sense. The editors understand a 'life-related Bible study' as 'a form of shared Bible reading in which the readers meet the Bible as a whole, interrogate it interactively in light of life experiences and perspectives. It is during the talks among one another and with the Bible that the

old words bear fruit for life. Understandings and interpretations set in, norms and hopes are acquired, changes and renewals take place' (Annegret and Detlef Puttkammer, *Lebensbezogene Bibelarbeit*, No. 1, AMD study module 13, p. 5).

### 2.3.4 Learning by the church calendar – staging spirituality

#### Characteristic

Even in predominantly secular Europe, the seasonal feelings of our culture are still tuned to the rhythm of the church calendar. It tells the story of Jesus Christ from Christmas to Ascension, coupled with stories of faith. All this is crystallised in celebrations in worship services. All personnel, especially those who feel alienated from the church and faith, should be invited to participate in the preparation and organisation of feasts and worships – inasmuch as they let themselves be asked.

Feasts following the church calendar are public events – often with public personalities, appealing atmosphere and an extensive corporate commitment. They contribute to the identification of a diaconal institution with the church and its message on the one hand, and promote the identification of the co-workers with the diaconia understood as Christian service on the other hand.

#### Practice

Firm corporate traditions, for instance a thanksgiving celebration followed by a day of open door or the organisation of a feast period together with related customs are effective in promoting feelings of belonging to a community. Symbols such as Advent wreath, Christmas star, and Nativity scene nurture feelings of identity. They may serve as departing points to give biblical information and spiritual impetus to all those concerned in connection with story reading and sing-along in hospital wards and care stations.

Imaginative and informative verse cards or letter of the managing board to the employees at Easter or Christmas are part of an appreciative diaconal culture transmitting Christian knowledge and spiritual concerns.

## ■ Action processes in diaconal life and works

Something extraordinary and surprising can be especially touching. In many institutions, installations are set up during Holy Week which invite the viewers – patients, residents or visitors – to reflection or motivate them to write a request, lament, or thanksgiving on a piece of paper to be affixed to a wooden cross.

In 'Werkwinkeln' (work corners) rooms are arranged with biblical texts in such a way that visitors approach the themes in their own individual ways. A Werkwinkel project is carried out by small teams which take time and space for the work on a certain biblical text. This opens up a particular access and gives incentives to express one's own faith or doubt. Furthermore, the team members are sensitised to transmit their insights to others, thus giving a clear expression to their faith.

[www.ekir.de/gmd/projekte/projektww.htm](http://www.ekir.de/gmd/projekte/projektww.htm)

For people who live on and in diaconia, it is important that church feasts are organised in such a way that they provide them with access to spiritual ways.

Under the year's subject 'recurring spiritual impetuses and everyday rituals of residents and patients', students of Protestant Nursing Schools in Wurttemberg examined the needs of dementia patients and sought the ways how they, too, may live their faith and spirituality.

### **Further work**

In diaconal services and institutions, it is becoming increasingly important, especially against the backdrop of the growing secularisation and persisting pressure of rationalisation, to address the issue of scheduling (phases of life) and rhythms. Instructions and explanations may help with event managements.

Every year again ...?! The Protestant church calendar. Teaching tools.

[www.reliprax.de/pdf/lp-rp37.pdf](http://www.reliprax.de/pdf/lp-rp37.pdf)



## 2.4 Practising faith

In Matthew's Gospel (Mt 21:28-32), a parable describes what it means to practise faith. It's about the question of who really does God's will. A man asks his two sons to go and work today in the vineyard. The first son answers "I will not," but regrets it later and goes to the vineyard. The second son answers, "I will, sir," but not feeling like working, he does not go.

Jesus asks his audience: "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "Of course the first son," was the answer. With this parable, Jesus makes it clear who will join God's Kingdom: the one who practises faith.

- Are our expressions and practices of faith perceivable, understandable, encouraging, and liberating?
- Are they suitable also for people who first say "No," but want to share later on?
- Is the faith practiced and experienced in such a way that people might react to God's call and calling, even through we would not have expected of them such reactions?

After all, it is about 'working in the vineyard'. What matters is the actual attitude, not a prompt answer. What counts is the faith practised among one another, not the spoken word.

What makes our faith vivid and attractive is the obedience to God's will practised among one another, setting and taking examples. The Gospel opens up a freedom allowing humans to believe and fail, celebrate and doubt, pray and work, forgive and encourage.

### 2.4.1 Giving spiritual impetuses

#### Characteristic

"Although it is not a time to stand back and reflect, the time will not come again unless you stand back

and reflect now. Are you living now, for sure? At this moment, totally and wholly? And when, if not now?" (Christa Wolf). It is necessary for us to stand back and reflect, and have a 'retreat on workday', not only alone according to possibility and piety, but also together with others. This retreat may also be inversion or reversion. It is the flip side of the speed and drudgery of our working process. It becomes a spiritual retreat whenever Christ is reachable, recognisable and receivable as water and bread of life.

Working under Christian responsibility can be more easily done once a balance is established between various speeds, different demands and contacts. Spiritual recreation is necessary if we wish to bring about creative and performance-oriented working processes.

#### Practice

Almost all diaconal workers are familiar with a devotion or meditation, at least its form. It is a short worship containing interpretation of Bible verses, reflection and meditative elements. The devotional service ('Andacht') is perceived as a time in which

- the hands, usually working, lie still,
- the overall context of life is reflected upon before or after the contemplation on present working processes,
- my day-to-day life and biography are viewed from a different perspective,
- I may think to myself aloud and ask about orientation and Bible words,
- someone says and agrees to what I cannot give to myself.

Sometimes they are simply called 'morning impulse', 'weekending' or 'daybreak', less often 'spiritual tuning', 'morning praise', 'end-of-the-week devotion'.

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Under the slogan of 'angedacht' (devoted), the Saxony Diakonie compiled a series of spiritual impetuses. They may be used in institutions and working sessions for their own andachten.

[www.Diakonie-sachsen.de/arbeitsbereiche/theologie/andachten/angedacht\\_135.htm](http://www.Diakonie-sachsen.de/arbeitsbereiche/theologie/andachten/angedacht_135.htm)

It is no longer the case that all devotions contain hymns and prayers as recurring integral elements. Even the blessing is often left out when no deacon or theologian is around. Nevertheless, these elements remain important. Aesthetically appealing and spiritually impressive rooms give atmospheres conducive to reflection. Devotions should have recurring wordings for beginning and end and take place at fixed hours despite different plans and planners.

The magazine 'Für jeden neuen Tag' (for each new day) offers texts and quotations which give spiritual impetuses which may be used in devotions.

[www.a-m-d.de/angebote/literatur/fuerjedentag](http://www.a-m-d.de/angebote/literatur/fuerjedentag)

The 'Protestant Companion of Life' provides suggestions for a day-to-day spirituality. Biblical and traditional texts provide helps with the interpretation of experiences.

Evangelischer Lebensbegleiter (Protestant Companion of Life), Gütersloher Verlagshaus 2007

### Further work

- Who plans a devotional service for whom? Do the residents of a retirement home have an opportunity to hold a devotional service for the care-workers?
- The adolescents of a children's and youth's village might also set impulses.
- Are the forms of devotional service taken over from the church to be considered as standards, or should forms be developed which are adapted to the diaconal practice? The pastoral convent needs a devotional service different from that of an intensive care station.
- Can and may the colleagues without confessional affiliations plan a devotion or meditation to relate

their (life) experiences to God's words and are compelled to reflect their professional competence in light of the requirements set in the Gospel?

- Should the traditional forms be interpreted, or is it necessary to develop new forms?

## 2.4.2 Celebrating Holy Communion

### Characteristic

The celebration of Holy Communion dates back to Jesus' communal meals with his disciples and followers, with 'tax collectors and sinners'. Jesus shared a table fellowship with outcasts and rejects. In a special way, however, we remember Jesus' last supper with his closest companions, and in the words of institution we express what Jesus gave with his life and death (see 1 Cor 11:23-25 and Mt 26:26ff).

The Reformation churches enacted from the outset the celebrative meal of reconciliation with God and fellow humans among one another. A preparation leading to penance and confession, reflection and assurance forms its part just as the confession of faith and the greeting of peace do.

Christ meets us in Holy Communion. It establishes the connection between the service community and eucharistic community. The sacrament is necessary not only for maintaining spiritual competency; in Holy Communion, we are also bound to one another in various ways:

- The strong and the weak need to be strengthened through the same bread.
- The disheartened and sinners look up by drinking from one chalice and experience forgiveness in a supportive and egalitarian community.
- The voiceless and the religiously mute 'communicate' among one another and praise God.
- All those sharing Holy Communion, no matter where and when, unite their hymns of praises with the powers of heaven and Earth.

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That's why Holy Communion belongs again to the normal working settings of diaconia.

### Practice

Regular celebrations have been reserved for Sunday worship services, albeit six to eight times a year – in particular on occasions of ecclesiastical year or ritual ceremonies. In the past 50 years, however, a change has been on the way. Protestant Christians have sought and found new accesses: in family worships, 'Feierabendmahl' (= eucharistic celebration at the end of the day's work) of the Kirchentag (= German Protestant Church Congress). The table communion and the tradition of love-feast, Agape, enjoys a revival, too. Outside spiritual communities, diaconal workers have belonged very rarely to 'temporary congregations' or 'congregations of special form'. The unfamiliarity with Holy Communion in the diakonie is not only ascribed to having no church affiliation, but also to the lack of practice – in the diakonie as well as in the church. Where, for example, can diaconal workers observe live a eucharistic service? Where can doubts, fears, and dismal notions be broken away? Where can they at least see how friendly the Lord is to begin with before feeling like tasting?

The Weißfrauenkirche in Frankfurt's station district was changed into a diaconal church. A special accent is laid on the mission of the church to invite all people, beyond all social differences, to fellowship with Christ in Holy Communion.

[whlreview.com/JohnBellicchi.pdf](http://whlreview.com/JohnBellicchi.pdf)

The sacramental meal seems to be intended almost exclusively for the assistance to the aged and nursing care. 'Surprisingly', Holy Communion is barely present in the understanding of the last sacrament in diaconal practice – but then only for patients or residents well advanced in years. The personnel usually attend it as communicants to accompany the residents when Holy Communion is celebrated in diaconal institutions. A eucharistic service is asked for mostly for particular reasons.

### Further work

- How can a House Communion be introduced and arranged in a sheltered housing scheme?

- In diaconal institutions for children and youth aid, Holy Communion and confirmation should be discussed with all those concerned (also caregivers and custodians) and offered regularly as far as possible.
- Decision has to be made about Holy Communion with children and their admittance to it.
- Agape meal – how is it different from Holy Communion? Practice and information are desirable.
- Holy Communion on foundation day or anniversary celebration – will it be a tradition again?
- Closing a professional conference or symposium with a Communion instead of blessings for the journey.
- How is the sacrament related to local church and ordination?
- Holy Communion/Eucharist and ecumenism – what should our staff and residents know?
- Why not a Holy Communion in connection with a normal meal?

## 2.4.3 Blessing

### Characteristic

Is it a blessing to be always given what is necessary for living? The people of Israel called it so: an abundant living in all kinds of good gifts: fertility of people and cattle so that the Earth may be filled and yield its harvests, protection in hardship, peace for body and soul, success and happiness. The blessing at the end of a worship gives it expression: "May the Lord bless you keep you; may the Lord make his face shine up you and be gracious to you; may the Lord **turn his face toward you and give you peace**" (Numbers 4:24-26).

In the Greek New Testament, the word 'bless' can also be translated with 'praise'. Praising means saying 'something good about someone'; in blessing something good is said – as against cursing.

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Jesus blessed children (Mk 10:13-16); he also blessed bread and fish before eating (Lk 9:16). His disciples should even bless those who curse them (Lk 6:28).

### Practice

In practice, we come in contact with blessing in various places:

- It is a 'bliss and blessing' to ascribe the good and the received to faith: blessing of progeny, money, long life, and being accompanied by wishes of blessings.
- The blessing at the end of a worship accompanied by the gesture of blessing is spoken to the congregation (in standing), but in singular form 'thou'<sup>3</sup>. "May the Triune God bless thee," or "May the blessing of God come onto thee."
- The ritual and purely personal blessing in confirmation or wedding, inauguration into a ministerial office (consecration of elders after the election of managerial staff in church and diakonie) or maybe after a pastoral counselling.

The German word 'segnen' (blessing) or 'segnen' (to bless) is derived from the Latin word 'signum' (sign) or 'signare' (to sign). We see many Christians making the sign of the Cross on their chest (self-crucifixion) or it is made to a baptised child as a gesture of blessing at the end of service.

According to the Protestant maxim since Luther, only humans are blessed – no objects, things, and natural produce. According to the Protestant understanding, churches, diaconal houses, altars, church precincts and bells are not blessed in their own right, either; they have their merits only in their functions of serving humans.

<sup>3</sup> Translator's note: The German counterparts of the (now largely archaic) second person pronouns thou (singular) and ye (plural) are 'du' resp. 'ihr'. Whereas both 'thou' and 'ye', originally expressing intimacy and familiarity, fell into disuse and were replaced by the formal form 'you' in modern English, 'du', 'ihr' and 'Sie' (formal form) are still used in their original forms and meanings.

A comprehensive manual with direct instructions is offered by the Protestant High Consistory (Oberkirchenrat) Stuttgart, especially on the blessing of the sick.

[www.elkw.de/assets/567.pdf](http://www.elkw.de/assets/567.pdf)

The blessing for a journey is a farewell and sending ritual which is offered at the end of meetings or functions to the participants coming from afar. Besides wishes for the comfort during their journey, a fellowship going beyond the present gathering also finds expression in it.

Further reading: Udo Hahn, Segen, Kreuz-Verlag 2007

(added by the translator for Anglophone readers: Pierre Pradervand, The Gentle Art of Blessing, Personhoud Press 2003)

### Further work

- Who blesses whom?
- Blessing for a journey, for instance before starting for holiday or group activities – how can it be introduced?
- Morning and evening blessings in children's day-care facilities and shelters housings, hospitals and retirement homes – can they be offered on a daily basis?
- When the blessing is said with the laying on of hands, what is evoked becomes tangible. God wants to give people the power asked for.
- Blessing at inauguration of new personnel, civil service persons, social year beginners, trainees, or beginning of a different activity.
- Deathbed blessing with the laying on of hand on the forehead or head of the dying. The so-called 'valetsegen' is a deathbed blessing in which the dying person is given into the gracious hand of God. Even after the death has set in, the blessing can be said. While saying "May the Triune God

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be gracious to you and bless you into eternal life,” the sign of the Cross is made on the head or the chest of the dying or dead person.

### 2.4.4 Praying

#### Characteristic

In the Bible, the believer’s fellowship with God finds expression in prayer. At the time of the Patriarchs, prayer was often described as ‘calling on the Lord’s name’. Direct and familiar relationship to God is apparent (Gen 15:2ff); it is also combined with offerings in most cases. Intercession and advocacy were also main concerns. After the destruction of the Temple, prayer became one of the most important religious practices and remained so after the reconstruction of the Temple.

Jesus encouraged us to keep praying (Lk 11:5ff), trusting in the Father in heaven (Mt 7:7ff), not hypocritically (Mt 6:5f), ready to forgive (Mt 18:21ff) and full of hope (Mk 18:21ff).

It is our birthright to speak with God, to talk, feel, and sigh face to face before God – no more a duty. And it is at the same time a mission, an honourable mission and fulfilment in God’s nearness. I may give an answer to God who saw and talked to me – in my personal prayer with plea and thanks.

However, there is also a special promise in the prayer in community:

Jesus said: “If two of you on Earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Mt 18:19f).

#### Practice

Morning and evening prayers give frame to daily activities, structuring the beginning and end of a day, are learned as a child by most people and rediscovered by many in advanced age. Daily prayers as exemplified in the ‘Footnotes’, the Kirchentag Songbook 2001, are helpful for structuring the diaconal daily routine.

Saying grace testifies to the giving God, and we remember together that not everybody has the ‘daily bread’ as a matter of course.

We say quick prayers such as “Help me, God” or “Lord, have mercy on me” or “Father, show me the right way” when we do not have enough time for a fully formulated request, or our mental shock or helplessness and desperation keeps us from thinking clearly.

Praying for others is sometime easier than speaking with God for our own sake. Prayers spoken for others are called intercessions. Such prayers liberate us from the excessive self-responsibility, for they rely on God’s responsibility. Prayers for the sick should also be rediscovered (James 5:14f).

We usually pray with others in a worship service. By mentally following the contents of a liturgy, we can go into silent prayers.

Pre-formulated prayer texts which are available in a hospital ward, for example, are helpful when we find it difficult to pray in our own words.

Further reading: Stationen. Gebete im Krankenhaus von Ulrich Honecker und Gottfried Lutz, Lahr 2006

(added by the translator for Anglophone readers: <http://www.abcog.org/dicks.html>)

The once best-known prayer of all prayers, the Lord’s Prayer, is familiar to only a part of the personnel, not to mention their praying it on their own (for instance at the sick or death bed, birthday party, at the beginning of an excursion or hiking day for employees, or at the end of day in a housing group). Luther’s Small Catechism is designed to help with the interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer and inquires about each request: “What is this?” or “How does it happen?” The Lord’s Prayer is explained and commented, and still embraces all that is not described.

Further reading: 'Das Vaterunser entfalten' by Jan Janssen and Ulrike Suhr, Gütersloh 2006

(added by the translator for Anglophone readers: <http://www.bookofconcord.org/small-catechism.html#lordprayer>, The Small Catechism)

The Psalms as traditional prayers are a treasure of spiritual culture. It is sometimes of great help to interpret them in adaptation to the contemporary context. The imagery realisation of spoken Psalms is a tremendous wealth, for instance in repetitive recitation of the same Psalm over a longer period of time.

Symbols are helpful in praying, and objects are silent worshippers. A burning candle can be a silent symbol of hope, a stone on the altar may symbolise a burden.

#### **Further work**

Prayer as an independent form has become rare in diaconia. People have difficulties with praying – If God knows everything, what shall I pray for? What can be changed after all through my prayer? When I am in need, then perhaps... How can I express something so personal? As an adult, can I be on familiar terms with God? Does it have to be quiet when I pray? Prayers in the church rush by somehow; it's not my language, nor is it my world. But it's nice to see people come to think about others when they pray in worship...

Praying is in the first place an activity and has little to do with reflection or precise wordings. By means of prayer, we enter into an invisible world in which there are my words and God's ear.

Praying is not a supplement to or conclusion of other religious procedures. It is more than a component of worship service and the end of a visit of a theologian at sick bed. Jesus' disciples prayed to him: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1). Thereupon, Jesus gave them the Lord's Prayer.

### **2.4.5 Giving thanks and encouraging**

#### **Characteristic**

Thanksgiving is not only an unspoken cultural agreement, but also a mark of humanity. This is especially true of believers. For Paul, thanksgiving is the basic form of association with God: "In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil 4:6). "Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 5:20). In the narration of the healing of ten leprosy men by Jesus, it is pointed out significantly: "One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice" (Lk 17:15).

In Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament, there is no word for 'thanks', rather, thanks merges in with 'praise'. Praise is an exuberant enthusiasm resonating to the greatness of God's gift, be it about the beauty of the Earth (for example Psalm 105) or the salvation from a hopeless situation ("Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Psalm 103:2).

This faithful attitude has its impact at the interpersonal level. Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it in these impressive words: "In ordinary life we hardly realise that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only through gratitude that life becomes rich. It is so easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements compared with what we owe to the help of others" (from 'Resistance and Submission', letter to his parents written on 13 September 1943).

Gratitude is based on our 'humble' recognition, not self-sufficient, not self-reliant, but dependent on being given. Gratitude is therefore a lifestyle. It also influences the practice of professional life.

#### **Practice**

Places and forms of formal expression of thanks towards employees are indispensable in corporate management. Sincere expressions of thanks come from individual attention and caring resourceful-

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ness, be it in a form of a festive meal, an excursion or congratulations on jubilees and anniversaries.

With and for one another. Model texts for greetings, birthdays, jubilees and farewells in diaconal institutions, ed. EKD Diakonisches Werk (Series 'Diakonie & Lutugie').

EKD Diakonisches Werk, distribution centre, Vertrieb@Diakonie.de

In order that the words of thanks may not sound clichéd and formal, it is necessary to look honestly into the work history and collegial relations of the persons concerned. The more seriously conflicts, complaints and needs are taken, and the more analysed and mastered by all those concerned, the more credible expressions of gratitude become.

People who by nature have no high self-esteem need special encouragement, a caring sign of appreciation, a present, a kind word, a small token of gratitude. The attitude that “the cup is not half empty, but half full” or mentioning what a person can do, instead of what he/she finds difficult or unable to do, goes with the good news of justification and thus has a soul-soothing power.

This life force of gratitude becomes stronger according to how importantly an institution considers the places and times which generate spiritual forces. Our activities are kept in good order when they are rooted in (joint) reflection and reception of divine promises. This involves prayers, hymns, biblical words and blessings as spiritual fundamentals. “For thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever.”

The culture of gratitude finds expression in annual tributes to employees (e.g. award of Crown Cross) and personal appreciation for contributions and special efforts on the occasion of a birthday, after a sick leave or other personal stress situations.

Right at the beginning of a new job, gratitude may be extended to the employee concerned for taking a job in a diaconal institution and thus standing on the horizon of God's Kingdom. A good opportunity

to express it is the induction days for ‘newcomers’ in diaconia, which is a good opportunity to take personal blessings, for working in diaconia involves more than just a formal hiring process.

Gratitude may be expressed at an annual workers' reunion, combined with honest work reports, working climate assessment, development of spiritual life. In doing so, critical remarks and uncertain attitudes should meet with ready acceptance.

Developing new ideas on renewal, consolidation, ascertainment, and regular encouragement is a clear sign of the will of the Lord for the church to build his kingdom in part in diaconia: determinedly and graciously at the same time. This should be experienced and proclaimed more intensively.

### **Further work**

That attitude of thanksgiving creates feeling of freedom that human beings are a lot more than mere achievements, and in fact this ‘added value’ is independent of job performance and salary, even independent of sympathy and antipathy. There where this fundamental conviction of the Gospel is experienced, the atmosphere of a Christian institution is also determined by that.

On the other hand, however, gratitude is also an answer to achievement and is expressed in forms of recognition. The malicious phrase “in the church there is the highest expression of recognition of envy” is to be taken seriously as a pointer to a possible danger. Recognition may be expressed in a personal word or letter of praise, a present, assignment of special tasks, entrustment of higher responsibility, in many cases even in the increase of salary.

### **2.4.6 Forgiving**

#### **Characteristic**

“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19). It is necessary to develop our own readiness and ability to forgive and reconcile in view of the acts of sin done to others by us.

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When others do harm to us, and vice versa, or if we are practising sinful activities, wounds and offences arise – in the whole person. Forgiveness cannot simply undo these injuries, breaches or even scars. There is no automatic system of coping with them or bringing about instant healing. Forgiveness is the best means of healing process, however, precisely because it does not urge, still less conceal or silence. It addresses the injury and recognises responsibility, and tries to recover what has been lost.

Our Protestant conviction of God's forgiveness is:

- Jesus Christ established an ever-renewing connection between us humans and God with his words, deeds, life and death, and through his resurrection. Relying on our own power and reason, we are not able to live up to the image of God. We sin again and again towards God and fellow humans.
- The insight of our necessity to forgive is given together with the grace and mercy of Christ. Our ability and willingness to forgive is founded on God's forgiveness. Christians can turn to God in prayer and confession of sins in order to receive pardon.
- God's forgiveness and our salvation cannot be limited to the realm of church and denominations, but the church, with its diaconia and congregation, should respond to God's "entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19) so that it may be experienced in body, mind, and soul.

### Practice

Everyday practice fields of diaconal work comprise nonviolent communication, conflict resolution, crisis intervention, coming to terms with the past.

Conflicts sometimes need more than open discussion and fairness, more than mediation and external counsellor, and arbitration office. They need an external approval and invitation to reconciling and reconciliatory actions as well as sincerity towards otherness and diversity. An external promise of pardon is necessary as well. The church terms for these are confession and absolution.

Reconciliation begins with the sensibility for violence and conflicts in their various forms. Diaconia is expected to do a great deal in the field of overcoming violence. Prevention and support for victims are considered appropriate and effective as strategies for dealing with violence.

An overview of the commitment of the diakonie in the 'Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence'.  
[www.diakonie.de/downloads/DK-01-2003.pdf](http://www.diakonie.de/downloads/DK-01-2003.pdf)

A clarifying talk to begin with may help as the first step of exercising forgiveness. Focused information meetings and instruction sessions with employees and management are other possibilities. Larger diaconal institutions may produce a handout about how to deal with bullying at the workplace. It is also helpful to name a person and train him/her to exercise the function of a mediator.

Confession of guilt is an important step towards forgiveness, often the most difficult one, though. Prior conditions of a confession of guilt are honesty and integrity. Not until everything is openly confessed can a new relationship enabling forgiveness be established. It is important to accept, however, that confessions of guilt do not obstruct the freedom of the victims, for forgiveness cannot be forced.

The diakonie is seeking steps towards reconciliation concerning the ostracisms and assaults committed against the youth in the fifties and sixties.  
[www.diakonie.de/downloads/DK-01-2003.pdf](http://www.diakonie.de/downloads/DK-01-2003.pdf)

Reconciliation of this world is in God's hand alone. Out of this calmness, we can confidently take the word of conciliation and the act of forgiveness in our hand, even well knowing that we may fail.

### Further work

Words and signs of peace are important. We can use for example monthly devotions or job briefings as good opportunities to encourage willingness towards reconciliation.



## ■ Action processes in diaconal life and works

A prophylactic measure against escalating conflicts would be a joint spiritual retreat or a manager retreat which invites an external spiritual counsellor every four or five years, take times for pastoral care, and gives impetuses.

All forms of resisting injuries and offences should be sought and applied. Every endeavour which contributes to reconciliation and forgiveness must be duly appreciated.

## 2.5 Believing, working and living with one another

In diaconal services and institutions, people work together and bring the nearness of God into the realm of experience. While fulfilling the tasks entrusted to them, Christians in diaconia also work with people who have chosen for themselves different religious orientations or world views. Concern about the needs of those in need of help brings different people together to commit themselves to a common cause. In the diaconal context, such actions transcend personal boundaries, and are understood as actions related to the church. It is therefore essential to structure and implement them in keeping with Christian values and the practice of Jesus, without having to permanently express them explicitly.

The willingness to use our God-given strengths and capabilities for those who need them (at the moment) comes from a principal Christian understanding. This willingness is the source of community life. Just as common believing can lead to common working, common working can in turn lead to common believing. A community life is geared towards participation and equitability of surplus and shortage.

Love of neighbour, belief in God, social responsibility, and delight in joint actions are closely interconnected in diaconia. The common motivation, knowledge of the scope and complexity of tasks, and the life shaped in community make people dedicate their attention and energy to a community, for example a team, staff, diaconal support groups, sisterhood. Acting as a community is a characteristic mark of diaconia. Whoever is ready to assume responsibility for himself/herself in a community is ready to live in a community. Community lives on the willingness to help and be helped. In diaconia, people seek and experience common actions and community in different ways.

- People seek help and find others who are ready to care for their matters. The needy situation of individuals leads to common activities and life projects. In housing groups and self-help groups, in working communities and advisory commit-

tees, needs are taken care of together and equal participation is assured.

- People look for employment and find jobs in diaconia. Pressure of achievement, economic and legal regulations, and specialisation also determine the professional work in many fields of diaconia. These conditions are likely to isolate people in their work and hinder the whole-person approach. In diaconia, therefore, it is necessary to make targeted efforts to open up a space where people experience in full awareness what interacting means, how they complement one another in working settings, and how the community consolidates and eases the burden.
- People want to give their faith a visible and active expression, and find other people in diaconia who have the same goal. Community orientation arises from the attempts to assume a diaconal responsibility driven by the freedom of the Gospel and the efforts to combine it with personal bearings on life. Communities which succeed in mastering professional and personal challenges are sustained by the experience that commitment does not mean renouncement, but consolidation.

Despite individual particularities, all diaconal encounters and endeavours share the experience that diaconal actions hinge upon community. This insight depicts the reality of diaconal actions and at the same time expresses the hope that God fosters community ever anew with Christian faith.

### 2.5.1 Acting as a community

#### Characteristic

Diaconal work succeeds only if it is carried by a community. Although the exemplary narration of the Good Samaritan describes a situation which all of us find ourselves in, the calling and mission of diaconia are always addressed to a community. Apart from spontaneous acts of help, Diaconia builds a set of actions which are oriented towards the image of a Christian congregation on the one hand, and

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assure the effect and continuity of helping hands. Diaconal impulses aim to build and strengthen communities which organise and account for helps and supports based on mutual strengthening and complementing.

The New Testament image of the congregation as the body of Christ is the description of a community in which each person serves others, albeit in different ways. In this basic sense, diaconia is no gift of individual persons, but that of a community. This arises when God's spirit works in the community and the whole spectrum of individual gifts are brought into it.

The experience that diaconal acts of help are mostly done in an organised and institutionalised way in a specialised and complex society underlines, at an empirical level, that diaconia is dependent on community. Community is the space in which people take care of others.

Diaconia stands on two pillars: the expectation that diaconia comes from common faith, and the will to implement it as successful social and pastoral activities. Diaconia is constantly challenged to represent both equally. In both dimensions, diaconia is community action.

### **Practice**

In order to act as a community, both providers and receivers of help must be well aware of their community. It is necessary to understand the goals and working processes of diaconal institutions and services. Diaconia embraces common goals and structured services which allow the help seekers to partake in the community, too.

Nowadays, professionalism is of course one of quality maxims of diaconia. This obliges diaconal institutions and services to combine the continuing professional education with a sensitisation for the questions of community building. Continuing professional education is a part of community consolidation.

Diaconal training centres and further education offers contain a variety of community-building and community-strengthening elements in their conceptions since community is a fundamental element of diaconal action.

Diaconal institutions and services, which understand community as an integrative requirement of their work, pay great attention to promoting community. Organisation of worship services, feasts and meetings, and also for example preparing together corporate anniversaries, are opportunities to bring together workers, residents, guests, supporter groups, and church members. Not only do open days allow visitors and guests to take a look at the work of diaconal institutions; they are also significant for the employees involved in the preparation as a chance to reflect more intensely on their joint work.

The thanksgiving festival of the Johannesstift is a big Christian folk festival. The entire premises becomes a multicoloured market; dances, theatres and music are presented on various stages. One very special event is the big festival procession of workers and residents followed by an official speech.

[www.johannesstift-berlin.de](http://www.johannesstift-berlin.de)

In diaconia, acting as a community draws on the conviction in mutually shared values. This common basis should not be only implicitly presupposed. Phrasing common convictions of value requires occasions and spaces. Facing controversial issues together strengthens a community, too, above all when the commitment and efforts for common goals become perceivable.

Diaconal workers facing borderline situations of life need the opportunities to voice their questions and master them together with others by means of discussions. Since a value community influences the quality of the services, thematic evenings, discussion groups or other offers are important.

Community is coupled with emotionality. Therefore, also for that, besides spontaneity, places and opportunities should be arranged. Community is not conceivable without shared joy and suffering.

### Further work

Asymmetric and symmetric help, care, and participatory solidarity build a tricky balance in diaconia. These forms of interaction substantially influence the questions of togetherness. Asymmetric forms of diaconia can be 'produced' and 'sold' as marketable services. Through such professionalism services are rendered effectively, but work alone does not contribute to the collective diaconal action. A community which draws a dividing line between help providing and help receiving parts is not a living community.

Anyone who is merely a client and receives a 'treatment' feels as if he/she were an object. God's image remains concealed in him/her. Community becomes alive only when reciprocity and participation are organised in such a way that allows the participation of all. Jointly set goals and their joint achievement are a forward-looking basis of a diaconal community.

## 2.5.2 Accompanying throughout transit periods of life

### Characteristic

People wish or need support in important stages of life. This is true both of help-seeking and help-providing persons in diaconia. Our lives have rhythms and phases, and are marked by farewells and commencements. Outward forms and rituals help us to come through those periods. They connect moments of uncertainty with the Christian hope for a successful life and the community with God and among one another in this world and the hereafter.

In such periods and in times of crises, we are especially dependent on guidance since we have to tread an unknown path. The strongest crises of human life are serious diseases and death. But other phases, too, e.g. moving to a residential care home or divorce-related crises and unemployment entail doubts and desperations which can be mastered more easily through counselling.

Guiding people through stages of life belongs to the diaconal work. In doing so, the prescribed outward forms of performing rituals are less frequent than earlier times, and the inner significance must be communicated with great care. Forms must keep the balance between expectations and scopes of interpretation and strike the chord of personal religiousness. The purpose of such guidance is to give people security and confidence. This assurance finds expression especially in the blessings, and reminds those saying and receiving blessings of the fact that they themselves do not fulfil the requirement of this act, but it happens only through God's caring love and nearness.

### Practice

Inauguration or retirement, and celebration of birthdays or jubilees of co-workers are individual occasions for counselling. A sense of community becomes visible on these occasions. They are good opportunities to strengthen the relationship by lending proper expressions to gratitude, recognition and respect.

The booklet "With and for one another" of the series 'Diakonie & Liturgie' contains model texts for greetings, birthdays, jubilees and farewells in diaconal institutions. The printed proposals contain well-proven texts for various forms of inaugurations, jubilee celebrations, farewells and guidelines for small rituals and accompanying letters.

EKD Diakonisches Werk, distribution centre, Vertrieb@diakonie.de

Dying and death mark a stage which frightens many. For the dying and the mourning, and also for diaconal workers, rituals such as Holy Communion or the Last Rites may facilitate the way. Although death is a part of our life, it is at the same time a farewell from the visible community. The last blessing prefigures the farewell from the deceased. It is important for the farewell to be given sufficient space and time, in residential care homes as well as in private surroundings. Rituals and symbols are especially important in the face of the speechlessness which often follows death.

Possible elements for the process of the last blessing in texts and hymns are presented in the template for the ceremonies of last blessing by the Birkenhof Association: 'Ablauf einer Aussegnung, Diakon Gottfried Wasmuth Birkenhof e.V., Hanover.

Other proposals are compiled in the booklet 'Life Amidst Death' of the series 'Diakonie & Liturgie'.

EKD Diakonisches Werk, distribution centre, Vertrieb@diakonie.de

For some diaconal workers, being admitted into a diaconal community and entering the office of diaconia are remarkable and important steps of life. The preparation period, especially training courses or inauguration days, serves as preparation, and is concluded with a consecration. The consecration places the decision to live and work in a diaconal community in imitation of Jesus Christ under divine promise.

Übersicht über die Ordnungen für die Einsegnung/Ordination von Diakonen/Diakoninnen im Bereich der Landeskirchen der Mitleidsgemeinschaften des VEDD (Survey of the orders of consecration and ordinations of deacons and deaconesses in regional churches of the members of the VEDD), as of Feb. 2002.

[www.vedd.de/Dokumente/UebersichtOrdinationsformulare.pdf](http://www.vedd.de/Dokumente/UebersichtOrdinationsformulare.pdf)

### Further work

Guiding people through important stages of their lives turns out to be amenable to interpersonal and pastorally intended arrangements. It aims to provide support in uncertain situations. This is especially applicable to stages leading to a vulnerable phase of life, conflicts and separations. Forms of accompaniment in such situations have seldom been developed until now. Rituals which may be of symbolic support for an accompaniment could be particularly significant. Such rituals can make the community with God and others tangible, especially at critical moments. Rituals are not appropriate for all critical situations; they should be adapted to other forms of counselling and pastoral care.

### 2.5.3 Living in community and organising in a binding manner

#### Characteristic

Diaconal institutions have been and still are places of working and acting together. Teams or communities built in a work context usually regard their collective living as a simple living together. Nevertheless, a community with a faith-based self-image attaches a high value to offering and performing social work in keeping with basic Christian attitude and specified professional needs.

In mutual relations, it is important that individual co-workers feel personally respected in the community with their different gifts and limitations. The relationship governing between a community and its individual members is decisive for essential factors of perceivable diaconal culture. On the one hand, a community gives its members opportunities to unfold their personalities. On the other hand, individual members use their gifts to foster the sense of community.

In a diaconal culture, reliance and commitment are important attributes of common work and faith. Traditional requirements play less of a role nowadays in deciding what commitments should be made to, to what extent elements of collective living should be involved, and what kinds of religious rituals express the sense of community. Formulating answers to these questions and living accordingly with one another belongs to the community-building process.

#### Practice

Co-workers in different communities assume their diaconal task by recognising and attending to the needs of those under their care, and exercising the ensuing duties. Besides personal experiences and abilities as part of professional competence, it is the community that accompanies and strengthens the individual workers throughout their diaconal commitment. The community helps by providing ritual assurances (e.g. devotions), grappling together with topical themes (e.g. community evenings) or offering opportunities for confidential talks.

A diaconal community requires open-mindedness and confidence, ability to handle conflicts, and reconciliation. A diaconal community allows for different concepts of life and styles of piety, multigenerational living together, shared and personal responsibilities. Diaconal communities contribute for instance towards the diaconal profile by means of educational offers. In such offers, diaconal knowledge and motivation are cross-related.

[www.kaiserswerther-verband.de](http://www.kaiserswerther-verband.de)

Lending expression to a Christian community in space and time requires the strength of Christian spirituality. To achieve it, religious rituals and forms of piety, e.g. devotions or prayer times, should be combined with work.

This means that the work should be structured in such a way that employees are given the chance to make these offers their personal ritual. Spirituality is awareness, and prayer is handicraft. They are acts performed by individual personas, and in a group it have the potential of becoming blessing for people in need.

The members of the Diaconal Community of the Evangelical Lutheran Diaconal Foundation in Dresden are men and women working on salaried or voluntary basis in the Foundation or one of its subsidiaries, and furthermore wish to live 'Diaconia in Community'. The Community was founded in 2007. In the order of the Community, confessions of faith are combined with concrete duties of its members.

[www.diako-dresden.de](http://www.diako-dresden.de)

### Further work

Individuality and flexibility are characteristics of modern-day social developments. The forms of community which may be built in diaconal work and life contexts are strongly influenced by them. In communities, therefore, there must be constant adjustments of balance between commitment and freedom.

An important role is thereby played by styles of piety, traditional requirements and imprints, individual

expressions, and the common search for Christian answers to ethical and social issues. Communities live on learning processes of individual persons and experiences of being with and for one another. Communities are challenged now more than ever to bring forth the attractiveness of a common search for answers to the questions of life in Christian faith.

### 2.5.4 Shaping the church together

#### Characteristic

The sentence "Diaconia is Church" is a theological statement and entails an organisational task. It involves both promoting the awareness-building for diaconal tasks within the church and building up diaconal activity fields in church settings and related areas. A close cooperation between parishes and church districts and diaconal services and institutions is a prior condition for a diaconia which supports people in need of help in the neighbourhood and takes account of their whole milieu of life.

The task of shaping the church together is not limited to organisational forms or institutions, but meant for all Christians. Various activities and spheres of influence in which Christians are actively involved often overlap. Institutional structuring is less important than the common commitment. Whenever diaconal workers commit themselves voluntarily in the church, and church members look for voluntary activities in diaconal activity fields, shared goals and a spiritual bond build the core of their activities.

Owing to the similarity of concerns, the interaction of parishes, church districts and diaconal institutions is not limited to mere cooperation or mutual services, but it also involves the realisation of joint spiritual sphere. In this sphere, helping actions and interpreting words compliment each other. Word and deed cannot be assigned separately to different institutions. Church is also a helping community which attends to social concerns. Diaconia is also a spiritual community which accounts for proclamation and pastoral care.

### Practice

Local churches, church districts, diaconal services and institutions have common local or regional references. The significance of diaconal activities and initiatives in parishes has been perceived and shaped more consciously for the past years. Local churches look for diaconal activity fields and build up an important part of church life based on this commitment. In order to promote this aspect of parish work with its projects and initiatives and to encourage people to imitate them, many devices have been developed: cooperation exchanges and project directories, prizes, and reports on the merging of church and diaconal works.

The cooperation exchange of the Diakonie Württemberg offers above all a directory of ongoing projects of cooperation between diaconal institutions and churches:

[www.diakonie-wuerttemberg.de/direkt/de](http://www.diakonie-wuerttemberg.de/direkt/de)

For the purpose of strengthening the awareness of shared diaconia-church identity, the Diakonie Hanover awarded a quality label 'Diaconal Church':

[www.diakonische-gemeinde.de](http://www.diakonische-gemeinde.de)

The Bavarian Church and Diakonie jointly held an open competition 'Strengthening the Acting Faith' for projects which excel in living and practising the church-diakonie incorporation:

[www.diakoie-bayern.de](http://www.diakoie-bayern.de)

The diaconal work in churches and parishes, and the strengthening of church aspect of diaconia are interrelated. Diaconal workers who have a traditional church background hold this view. Furthermore, it involves a conscious consideration of a church setting in the work arrangement of diaconal services and institutions. The efforts to lend Protestant as well as professional profile to diaconal activity fields revolve around the churchliness of institutions and services. However, this churchliness cannot grow unless it is actively networked with a church setting. There are plenty of examples of such networking: diakonie health and advice centres which organise evening gatherings for their patients and parish seniors in cooperation with the

parish; diakonie housing groups practising church visits with active participation in worship services and prayer meetings; parish visitation groups which become voluntarily involved in lending hands to the residents of diaconal facilities.

In a federal-regional programme 'Soziale Stadt' (caring city), diaconal institutions and churches are given the opportunity to offer their know-how for general interests and become involved in social networks for innovative and sustainable projects.

[www.diakonie.de/downloads/Texts-12-2007-Handlungsoption-Gemeinwesendiakonie.pdf](http://www.diakonie.de/downloads/Texts-12-2007-Handlungsoption-Gemeinwesendiakonie.pdf)

### Further work

Categorising diaconal institutions to the church goes beyond formal criteria. A diaconal culture cannot exist in the long run without its ties to church settings. Given the changing and secularising society coupled with diminishing traditional churchliness, church and diaconia should hold on to their common roots and goals more than ever. Institutional and organisational differences must be overcome in favour of joint actions. Here it is necessary not only to initiate short-term projects, but also to conduct structural cooperation.

This does not require the renouncement of diaconal professionalism, but linking activity fields which have strayed back to church settings. In such forms of cooperation, the main concern is the question of how social work and church life can be shaped in interaction. Diaconia and church are interdependent, and must draw their resources for joint work on a living Christian faith.

### 2.5.5 Practising ecumenism

#### Characteristic

The realm of God's reign and the sphere of human responsibility is the whole inhabited world (Greek: 'oikoumene'). The term ecumenism covers not only interdenominational or international relations of churches. It also means the concern for the well-being of all people – regardless of their religious or denominational affiliations – and the whole of the

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international community (Gal 6:10). Ecumenical diaconia covers the broadest spectrum of spontaneous, custom-tailored help for persons in difficulties and support for partner churches in difficulties, emergency relief for refugees, disaster relief, structural help and social diaconia in whatever country, and also responsibility for a just global socio-politics. Worldwide mobility and unlimited communicational possibilities bring us to the remotest corner of the Earth. The world has become an actual single unity of relations in which almost every local occurrence is exposed to the processes in other places or global processes in a complex interrelatedness. The insight that the Christian responsibility should not stop at the responsibility for neighbours, or a new definition should be given to the term neighbour, is more than a mere ethical postulate in times of globalisation.

### Practice

Joint diaconal action turns out to be a uniting cord of churches. It is a basic experience and surpasses dogmatic differences and denominational boundaries.

'Bread for the World' is a help programme of the regional and free churches in Germany. It was founded in 1959. With more than 1000 projects, it provides help for self-help in cooperation with local churches and partner organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Its leitmotiv of work is: Justice to the Poor.

[www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de)

Love of neighbour in action is an essential manifestation of life of common priesthood of all believers and as such (personally and collectively) an essential part of practising Christian faith. It is indispensable living process of church, be it Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox. Within diaconal activity fields, we work together in awareness of differing denominational roots.

The church-based German traveller's aid service points [Bahnhofsmissionen] are, with their c. 1500 workers, central nodes of a social network. They help everybody immediately, free of charge, and without prior notice or requirements – often at hours of the day at which other forms of help are out of reach. Their help ranges from handing out band-aids and lending a sympathetic ear to accompanying travellers (e.g. children, seniors, the handicapped) and the help for the homeless or persons with high suicidal risk. They have been offering these helps for over 100 years and in almost 100 places in Germany. The Bahnhofsmissionen are services of the Protestant and Catholic Churches. They offer every committed person – not only professionally – the opportunity of participation.

[www.bahnhofsmission.de](http://www.bahnhofsmission.de)

In our intention to proclaim God's merciful love through our being and doing, there is no denominational difference.

As an essential and visible expression of Christian churches, Caritas [German Catholic social work] and Diakonie [German Protestant social work] undertook together the cataloguing of over 700 hospitals and made a selection of hospitals which meet the quality criteria, awarding them a quality seal. They thus created a church-based joint quality manual.

[www.procum-cert.de](http://www.procum-cert.de)

Ecumenism is simply and easily lived in diaconia.

### Further work

Departing from our understanding that diaconal action is nurtured through shared celebration of Holy Communion, we cherish the hope for a rapprochement in the practice of Holy Communion. The Vancouver Assembly (1983) of the World Council of Churches thus spoke of a "eucharistic vision" which "unites our two profoundest ecumenical concerns: the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and destiny of the human community. Church unity is vital to the health of the church and to the future of the human family... Christ – the life of the world – unites heaven and Earth, God and world, spiritual



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and secular. His body and blood, given to us in the elements of bread and wine, integrate liturgy and diaconate, proclamation and acts of healing... Our eucharistic vision thus encompasses the whole reality of Christian worship, life and witness.”

The number of ecumenical projects jointly undertaken by Caritas and Diakonie is still too small. As essential functions of the church, the understanding of church leadership and that of its exercise are mutually dependent. This can obstruct or avert pragmatic solutions for existing organisational or institutional difficulties.

There are differing denominational emphases in both church-based main welfare organisations – for example different appraisals of bioethical issues. The reference to the common roots of Diakonie and Caritas and the efforts to identify and tackle the needs ecumenically promotes the unity of the believers in one Church of Jesus Christ.

### 2.5.6 Salaried and voluntary personnel

#### Characteristic

Diaconal action has broad social roots of volunteering. Commitment in diaconia has a biblical motive, the call to freedom (Gal 5:13). This freedom given by the Spirit of God does not separate people. Rather, it is in mutual caring that this freedom is maintained. Those who commit themselves voluntarily and for one another – also in self-help groups – live this freedom. Through togetherness in solidarity, they lay claim on their freedom and at the same time receive and expand the space of freedom. This commitment is not directed in the first place towards professional or institutional affiliations, but towards the matter of concern and the practice of Christian faith. The community of salaried and voluntary diaconal personnel is formed out of this affinity and considered more important than institutional or professional classifications.

#### Practice

On a practical side, organisational questions of joint work of the salaried and voluntary personnel must be settled. It is not only a question of identification of forms and possibilities of commitment, but the

concepts for a systematic and targeted cooperation. Such concepts should be developed in a joint process of paid employees and volunteers. Motivations, expectations, necessities and competences of volunteers should be better related than before to the goals of services and institutions. After all, only the self-commitment of all those concerned can assure the systematic cooperation and a long-term success.

Since salaried employees responsible for this task field play a vital role, regional diaconal agencies, e.g. of Bavaria, Kurhessen-Waldeck, Rhineland, and Wurttemberg, have organised training programmes for the post of volunteer services coordinator.

A good volunteer management is necessary in order to recruit volunteers for projects and provide them with a supportive and professional guidance throughout their activities. A conscious arrangement of cooperation with volunteers begins with the clarification of fundamental issues. This includes the description of the targets of cooperation, activity profiles and requirements. Special attention should be given to clearly delineate tasks of different workers to avoid conflicts. In order to prevent overtaxing or undertaxing the volunteers, it is useful to describe the tasks as clearly as possible.

A model concept of a volunteer management  
Contact: Karen Sommer-Loeffen, Rheinland Diakonisches Werk  
Phone +49 / 0211 / 63 98 - 258  
ksommerloeffen@dw-rheinland

Volunteer recruitment is a part of the communicational task of diaconal services and institutions. Volunteers are motivated by a convincing message which conveys the importance, requirements and benefits of a commitment. Working with volunteers is particularly geared to the relations to people and groups. For this reason, personal contacts are important when recruiting volunteers. Contact persons and friendly atmosphere help to overcome the initial barriers.

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Models of a good public relations work appealing to volunteers were designed and carried out by the Oldenburg Diakonisches Werk with a view to recruiting young adults through the projects 'Sozial dabei' ([www.soda.de](http://www.soda.de)) and 'Szenenwechsel' ([www.szenenwechsel.de](http://www.szenenwechsel.de)).

The joint work of paid staff and volunteers extends the networks to the local community. Diaconal services benefit from such networks, since a close involvement of local or regional structures leads to idealistic and institutional consolidation. With their competences and contacts, volunteers bring their own sphere into the diaconal work, which contributes to the better understanding and handling of the various life situations of the local community and its help-seeking members.

An example for a local community work which is particularly geared to the confraternity with volunteers was set in 2002 by the Samariterstiftung in Nürtingen with the project 'Bürgerschaftliches Engagement und Vernetzung ins Gemeinwesen' [civic commitment and networking into the local community].

[www.samariterstiftung.de](http://www.samariterstiftung.de)

### Further work

Society is a source of a variety of impetuses to further development of voluntary services. Under the title 'Voluntary Commitment in Diakonie and Church' (Diakonie Texte 11.2006), numerous suggestions were compiled and the principles of a successful joint work of paid staff and volunteers were presented. Voluntary commitment is a field of dynamic change, new target groups and new forms of commitment require as much attention as further development of existing forms. It is important that the basic impulse to be with others in solidarity should find perceivable expression in respective activities.

### 2.5.7 Interreligious opening and intercultural cooperation

#### Characteristic

According to the micro census 2005, every fifth person living in Germany has an immigration back-

ground. The past decades have seen an evolution of productive diversity of religious and ideological convictions and approaches to life, which also has an impact on the life in diaconal services and institutions. Diaconia is there where people need it – regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, religion, skin colour and ethnic origin. A universal help ethos challenges diaconal action home and abroad. Diaconal mission includes the efforts for interreligious opening and intercultural cooperation.

Diakonie is entitled to the self-determination of churches under Article 140 GG [basic constitutional law]. By virtue of this right, it may, even must in part, select employees taking account of their religious affiliations for the purpose of safeguarding the congruence between work and Christian conviction.

#### Practice

Diaconal institutions and services take account of this plurality of life styles and religious orientations by opening up to multicultural settings and continuing to develop concepts for intercultural and interreligious education.

Intercultural opening of children's day-care facilities: cultural and religious diversity is common in most Protestant children's day-care facilities. It is an important goal of intercultural opening in children's day-care facilities to meet all parents and children with respect and to embed respect and diversity in the processes of education and formation.

The Württemberg Diakonisches Werk conceived and carried out a wide-ranging series of further education for the 'Children's Day-Care Facilities in the Immigration Society' together with various cooperation partners.

Contact: Gisela Wolf

[wolf.g.@diakonie-wuerttemberg.de](mailto:wolf.g.@diakonie-wuerttemberg.de)

Culture-sensitive care for seniors: for immigrants who came to Germany in the sixties as migrant workers, their second homeland has become their old-age domicile. Immigrants aged 60 years or more are a rapidly growing population group. For-

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mer migrant workers bear in old age a high risk of nursing care dependency and disability due to the physical overtaxing detrimental to health in their active life such as hard physical work or security service. Diaconal services and institutions involved in the elderly care are preparing more intensively for the needs of this clientele and organisational challenges. The EKD Diakonisches Werk supports the campaign for a culture-sensitive elderly care.

The Diakonisches Werk Neukölln-Oberspree e.V. conducted a comprehensive model project regarding the intercultural opening of diakonie health and advice centres in Berlin.

[www.diakonisches-werk-berlin.de](http://www.diakonisches-werk-berlin.de)

Intercultural opening in hospitals includes the awareness that medical treatment and nursing care must be given in the context of patients' and personnel's different languages, cultural backgrounds and social life situations. This sensitiveness entails the efforts to optimise the residential care of patients with various needs. Its main goals are reducing inequalities in medical supply, improving the services which take account of special needs, and imparting the respect of this diversity at all levels of the company.

The Rheumaklinik Berlin-Wannsee and the Centre for Naturopathy of the Immanuel Diakonie Group participated in a project of the European Commission conducted from 2000 to 2004 under the theme of migration and hospital. The Immanuel Diakonie Group implemented the principles of the Task Force Migrant Friendly Hospital at various levels.

[www.immanuel.de](http://www.immanuel.de)

### Further work

Over the past years, there has been in the diakonie a growing awareness of the diversity of cultural influences, albeit primarily with regard to the danger to the Protestant profile. From now on, it is necessary to shift the perspectives and use this diversity among clients and staff in a productive manner. Some diaconal services and institutions have begun the processes of intercultural opening which aim not only at boosting the understanding

of 'the foreign', but also reflecting on 'the own'. It can also entail a (new) awareness of Christian influences. These processes will consolidate in the long run the Protestant features of diaconal action, too, since they offer room for an in-depth examination of religious identities and hence improve religious communication. From a religious point of view, too, it may bring about the experience "Through the Thou a person becomes I" (Martin Buber).

In the future, we should bear in mind that the integration of people with immigration backgrounds should also be taken up as a task of individual services and institutions, and the process of intercultural opening should be forged ahead and embedded effectively in the personnel and organisational development. A question arises as to whether and under what circumstances diaconal workers with different religions may be deployed in certain activity areas without impairing the corporate principles. The diakonie is thereby challenged to make its Protestant identity visible internally and outwardly in the complexity of universal mission and profile. This also involves pointing to the limitations to prevent the encroachment upon Christian interpretive culture, possibly beyond recognition. In doing this, the diakonie advocates a culture whose main concerns are the respect of the freedom of religion and opinion, gender equality, and non-violent conflict resolution.

### 2.5.8 Communicating diaconia

#### Characteristic

Diaconal culture must be communicated outwardly and internally. In addition to other welfare organisations, there are also a large number of providers of social services. Witnessing to identity means to present anew the uniqueness and distinctiveness beyond the traditional methods of public relations. By means of modern communicational methods such as brand strategy and brand communication, life and work in diaconia should be communicated internally and externally as authentically as possible, with diaconia as a trade name. The trademark diaconia shall inspire confidence of clients, persons affected and seeking help, and make the diaconia recognisable to the general public as the social outreach of the Protestant church.

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Diaconal public relations consist in defining the diaconia clearly with its values and all professional characteristics and position them for strategic advantage. This has a parallel effect of campaigning for a public climate which does not stigmatise or exclude people in socially precarious situations.

### Practice

Objectives based on brand communication were the crucial factors for the preparation of the three big campaigns with which the diakonie addressed the general public nationwide for the past years. These campaigns have a demonstrative character. Their strategic goal is imprinting images and concepts.

The campaign 2003/04 made it clear what values the diakonie stands (up) for.

[www.diakonie.de/de/html/presse/2131.html](http://www.diakonie.de/de/html/presse/2131.html)

The campaign 2005/06 'If Life Builds Walls' presented how these values might be implemented in day-to-day activities.

[www.diakonie.de/de/html/presse/3224\\_3270](http://www.diakonie.de/de/html/presse/3224_3270)

With a third campaign 2007/08 entitled 'Amidst Life. Diakonie', the diakonie presents its fields of activities. Advocacy, brand marketing, introduction of products and services are interrelated in it.

[www.diakonie.de/de/html/presse/5292.html](http://www.diakonie.de/de/html/presse/5292.html)

The diakonie associations, support agencies and institutions have availed themselves of the catchphrase of these campaigns, using them for their own publications and placates. Against the background of their activities fields, the messages are consolidated and related to other themes.

The German Association of Protestant Hospitals (DEKV) uses the slogan 'Sick. And amidst life. Diakonie is medicine and care' for publications and placate. It addresses the personnel, institutions, doctors, cooperation partners, funding agencies as well as patients and their families. The campaign slogan was lodged among the best practice examples in the association's magazine under the title: 'In hospital: ecumenically thinking and diaconally acting'.

[www.dekv-ev.de](http://www.dekv-ev.de)

Advocacy for persons affected is embedded in the description of activity fields and services in diaconia. This tie illustrates that advocacy is no delegation of tasks and problems, but the struggle for one's own cause and the advocacy for a caring and just society belong together. For the connection between advocacy and the advertising description of one's own services and offers, it is important that the motives and backgrounds of diaconal action become visible. To this effect, the public relations of institutions and services refer both to the questions and answers of Christian faith and a humaneness embracing integrative and caring approaches.

To name an example, a network portal offers introductory information on various counselling areas and helps consultants find a Protestant counselling office in their vicinity.

[www.evangelische-beratung.de](http://www.evangelische-beratung.de)

### Further work

Polls over the past years show that the diakonie enjoys a good to very good image with regard to its task fulfilment, professional competence and client-friendly attitude in diaconal institutions. The positive evaluations stand, however, in contrast to the low degree of name recognition.

According to a market survey conducted by the Institute for Social Researches of the University of Esslingen, 40 percent of the interviewees remembered seeing a campaign slogan of 2003/04 and 2005/06, of whom 75 percent felt positively impressed.

These positive results show where to begin with. A prior condition for that is an uninterrupted campaigning. More attention should be given in the future to boosting the degree of name recognition of diakonie and pointing clearly to the cost-effectiveness, value-orientedness, Protestant profile and future competence by means of the presentation of further services. Protestant profile is a competition advantage: The diakonie presents its uniqueness by showing its origin, identity and direction. In doing this, the unity of Protestant background, values,

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goals and actions play an important role. All these are conducive to the identity and personality of the trademark diakonie which is still to be established.

Needless to say, further campaign efforts of the diakonie must be made as effective follow-ups of the existing campaigns. This continuity is advantageous for public recognition and trustful relations among recipients.

### 2.5.9 Communicating mission statements

#### Characteristic

Diaconal workers are the most valuable capital of a company, institution or association. At the same time, they constitute an important public group. Workers are always ambassadors, opinion builders, and disseminators. Through their personality and attitude, they bring information to the public and are considered representatives of their employers by people they come into contact with. It is an opportunity for diaconia, too, as its concern is not only an economic success, but also social values.

Internal communication has an important function in consolidating the personnel in the diakonie. A sincere commitment must receive due recognition. Internal communication contributes to the feeling of identity of the personnel with diakonie and their willingness to show diaconal profile.

The commitment borne by faith has been crystallised in the corporate identity of the diakonie. At its core is the Protestant profile with its Christian values. Further elements are communicational capability towards society as well as open-mindedness and strong professional competence.

In order for the Protestant profile to be made tangible in the diakonie, processes and procedures are necessary which are characterised by a common spiritual search, recognition and appreciation, respect and fellowship from the management level to the employees. Such communication should be able to defy contradictions to which even people in the diakonie are exposed. These attributes are indispensable for a successful internal communication.

Corporate communication (commercial or non-commercial) should avoid advertising with promises and values which are not kept within the organisation. In other words: Diakonie's good product should not only be advertised, it should also be lived and experienced within the diaconal organisation. A corporate identity does need a model.

#### Practice

'Values,' 'For people,' 'Life.' Such was the theme of the year 2004 of the Bavarian Diakonie. Those who promote values should also reflect on and represent them. Without internal communication and constructive critical debates among co-workers, a trustworthy external communication of values is not possible. A well-structured internal communication made it possible for the Bavarian Diakonie to communicate the theme effectively and extensively both within the organisation and among its 1300 members.

A similar example was the nursing care campaign in Hessen. The 2002 campaign, carried out by the Protestant Church and Diakonie in Hessen prior to the upcoming parliamentary elections, aimed to bring the abuses in the nursing care policies to the attention of the public, to lobby for decent nursing care, and to exert influence on politics for the improvement of the conditions without impairing the reputation of the workers in the nursing care. This greatly nurtured the feeling of identity of many staff groups in diakonie and church, and contributed to strengthening self-awareness and profile-building.

An important and widespread means of internal communication is the joint creation of a mission statement. A mission statement is the result of a process in which as many members as possible should be involved. It describes the fundamentals and goals of the common work. In it, the present situation assessment is put into context with a concrete set of goals. These are a binding entity for the whole personnel.

Mission statements live in processes. At the conference 'Mission Statement and Self-Understanding of Diakonie', the 10-year long debate about the mission statement 'Diakonie – for the success of life' was on the agenda.

[www.diakonie.de/downloads/Texte-23-2006-Leitbild-Tagung.pdf](http://www.diakonie.de/downloads/Texte-23-2006-Leitbild-Tagung.pdf)

This process should be accompanied by an external moderator. Its timetable should not be too tight or overstretched. Mission statements must 'live', i.e. be communicated in job interviews and in public. They must be also 'kept in conversation' among the workers in order that their ongoing works might be constantly oriented and readjusted along the lines of mission statements.

#### **Further work**

There is no panacea for the best methods of internal communication of state-level associations or health care providers and institutions. Company magazines, intranet, trainings, further and continuing education, workshops, employee surveys followed by information about the results and follow-up work – these may serve as principal elements of internal communication. When choosing the 'channels' or methods of internal communication, it is important that the communication enables and assures talks and the whole staff are informed of the current events and concerns of the diakonie. Diaconal workers wish to be able to identify themselves with their organisations, corporate objectives and mission.

Diakonie meets all prior conditions to hold its ground in the social services market as a strong brand name. It depends on how successfully it forges ahead with the brand imprinting through internal and external communication and combines it with an effective marketing strategy. The diakonie must be recognisable internally and externally as a brand name for Protestant values, social services and humaneness which is up-to-date, open to the world, capable of dialogue, and high-performing. For the success of the diakonie, it is important that its workers are convinced of their work and are themselves supporters of the brand name diakonie.

## **2.5.10 Celebrating**

### **Characteristic**

Celebration and joy belong together. They are expressions and attributes of a life connected to God. In other words: even in a life susceptible to various sufferings, there is something to celebrate. This relation reflects primarily the message of Jesus, who gave diaconia its mission, and God's Kingdom proclaimed by him. This source of energy exists both for those who work in the spirit of diaconia and for those who benefit from diaconia.

Since diaconia has a great deal to do with the suffering side of life, its work is strongly moulded by 'a life for others'. This puts it under particular demands which tempt workers into overexertion, burnout, resignation, sometimes even overestimation. If we give much, however, we should also receive much. In the long run, we can bear up against suffering only if we know the joy and bring confidence into life. Diaconia would do well to heed the advice of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf: "Be smart for services and pleasures, both are important for the Church of Christ." Both have their right and time.

Feasts and celebration mobilise forces against overexertion and resignation. For "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh 8:10). It is rejoicing in God's manifold gift, in professional achievements and in the Gospel with its anticipation of the Coming Kingdom of God (Mt 25:21.23). Feasts give a special shape to the joy and a refreshing break to the daily routine.

There are occasions to celebrate for the beneficiaries of diaconal action, too. The Gospels are their inspirational sources. They show Jesus amongst people who live at the margins of society (cf. Mk 2:18-22). Where Jesus is together with people, there prevails an exceptional situation comparable to a wedding celebration. It is also illustrated in light of the parable of a father and his two sons (Lk 15:11-32 and 1-10): Where Jesus is present, the father celebrates with his once lost sons and daughters their regained life and reopened future.

### Practice

Occasions for and arrangements of celebrations are various. It is important for the horizon or the source of joy to be given names. Sunday (or regular) worship services and church feasts serve as a platform within diaconal institutions to express the joy and celebrate God's kindness and care. Furthermore, it is advisable to consider annual festivals and festive celebration of events.

Such celebrations are opportunities to stand back and reflect on the way. They allow room for retrospective and prospective views, realisation and self-assurance. They are sources of new inspiration and motivation. Crucial events and new beginnings, farewells, accomplishments of tasks and projects, and remarkable results may be such opportunities. Diaconal action needs imaginative accompaniment and structuring by means of occasions which by nature give good reasons for celebration.

Some examples of occasions for celebration: the grand opening of a new building, start of work (not only of leading positions), appreciation of meritorious work upon retirement, long-service anniversaries, beginning or end of an activity, and of course special contributions and 'successes'.

Attention should also be given to a more day-to-day dimension of the work. Small successes of the team, conflicts mastered, critical situations well-managed, also events in personal life of the workers such as birthdays, childbirths, diseases overcome, goals reached could be occasions for small celebrations and feasts. When a culture of recognition and appreciation is nurtured, feasts are celebrated at appropriate times.

These reflections regarding celebration include of course patients, home residents or other receivers of diaconal services. This is especially true of those living in community and joint residency. Joint worship services may be arranged and events in personal life may be celebrated together. Such joint celebration can reduce an uneasy hierarchical gap

between workers and persons under their care, and contribute to a culture of mutual acceptance and care.

The initiative 'spiritual centre for people with dementia and their families' in Berlin offers counselling and pastoral care. Furthermore, it holds regular worship services in congregations in Berlin for dementia patients, their families and carers. The worships choose traditional forms of liturgy and well-known hymns to tease out deep-rooted memories.

[www.glaube-und-demenz.de](http://www.glaube-und-demenz.de)

When something is celebrated at all, then it should be done properly! We have to do ourselves and others good, celebrate with one another, and we should be able to enjoy the celebration, too. It is not a call for excessive waste of resources. Yet, something special should be allowed to demand some costs. Appreciation has its price. Christian freedom is also shown through the celebration of feasts at appropriate times. Saving in this case ought not to be encouraged.

### Further work

In the face of the rising pressure on cost savings which the diakonie feels constantly exposed to, a plea for a culture of celebration is a plea against the trend. But a culture of celebration well-thought of and rich in contents and forms belong to the quality marks of diaconal work and pays off for it in many ways. In the spirit of good stewardship, financial resources must be managed and rendered available for right celebrations at right times. If diaconia does not celebrate, it will lose its identity. When it celebrates, the present, no matter what it looks like, is overpowered by the divine glory and grandeur.

In conclusion, it should be borne in mind that celebration can also have a dark, shady side, and it takes then the form of lament and grief. 'There is a time' not only to laugh, but also to cry, in diaconia more than elsewhere. This other side should not be suppressed or repressed in diaconia.

## 2.6 Management and leadership

Executives must be ready to deal with and assume leadership responsibility. Responsibility in diaconia is to be taken not only vis-à-vis boards and personnel, but also before God. Leadership is an essential ‘function of services’ which requires qualification and training.

In every organisation, there is management and leadership in the sense that (analogous to communication) it is not possible not to lead. Leadership is always present, however covertly, timidly or reservedly it may be exercised. When it comes to the question about appropriate managerial conduct within a working community, especially in a diaconal structure, it usually concerns the question of ‘hierarchical power’ or the (negative) gap in responsibility and decision-making. “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave” (Mt 20:25-27).

A possible ‘abuse’ of power within diaconal leadership is to be coped with by means of a responsible supervisory structure as voiced, for instance, in the Diaconal Corporate Governance Code.

An authentic and honest intercommunication among leading and led persons cannot be taken for granted. Rather, it requires a cautious arrangement. This is especially true of social activity fields which largely hinge on the originality and creativity of people. The claim to leadership and the freedom of the Gospel seem to contradict mutually, especially in the realm of church and diaconia.

There is a vast variety of management models and leadership concepts. Good management belongs to the services. It does not make much sense to identify one or some of them as being specifically diaconal and recommend them for a blind adoption. Rather, leadership models must take account of the present requirements such as the existing structures of an organisation, its specific tradition and

culture, and the persons concerned. There certainly are leadership models whose main accent is placed on the gifts and talents of individual persons in conformity with the Christian human image. They concretise the ideas of working community and see the responsibility shared by the whole of the staff of higher and lower hierarchical levels for the best possible fulfilment of their tasks.

‘Management and leadership’ within the structures of church and diaconia must meet the demand of the Gospel. They should assure codetermination (based on partnership as far as possible), transparency, reasonability, (structural) clarity, clear intercommunication, integration, justice, appreciation and acceptance.

‘Principles of management and cooperation’ as exemplified in the management concept for the head office of the Württemberg Diakonisches Werk clearly specify these demands and serve as the basis of joint work.

[www.portal.diakonie-wuerttemberg.de](http://www.portal.diakonie-wuerttemberg.de)

In the spirit of the Protestant maxim ‘ecclesia semper reformanda’, a ‘diaconal’ leadership culture is obliged to a ‘learning’ working community. This, too, has consequences regarding the attitude towards the co-workers. A good diaconal management must have a guidance quality going far beyond a practical procedure. It is therefore expected of the management in diaconia that it focuses on individual persons, inspires confidence, and is motivated and authentic.

Many support organisations and state and federal associations of the diakonie offer continuing education towards management and leadership.



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The Federal Academy for Church and Diakonie, together with the Federal Technical Academy (BuFa) and the Institute for Continuing Education and Organisational Development (GFO), offers a series of courses for 'Management and Leadership' in its programme 2007.

[www.bundesakademie-kd.de](http://www.bundesakademie-kd.de)

The courses are designed not only for the top managerial staff. One of such courses is 'Qualification for Group and Co-op Leadership in Charity Organisations'.

[www.diakonische-akademie.de/programme/index.php?ink\\_code=6178](http://www.diakonische-akademie.de/programme/index.php?ink_code=6178)

The Fachhochschule (college of applied sciences) Diakonie addresses particularly those who have already studied social-work related subjects and have managerial functions or are preparing for them.

[www.diakonie-fh.de](http://www.diakonie-fh.de)

son-to-person talks, clear reference should always be made to God's 'ultimate leadership'. This may be done, to begin with, for example, through a short meditation on the day's watchword or biblical texts through which executives render an account and reflect on what they are led by.

At the same time, we become aware of the difference between ongoing important and necessary activities (daily business) and their inherent temporariness (God's Kingdom has already dawned – and it's not for us to create). We have to ascertain ever anew our common fundamentals and define them (what is the ground that sustains us?).

Executives also have a formative influence on others with their personal attitudes and stances. It includes the ability to admit one's own mistakes and to forgive oneself. This way the other employees see how their mistakes would be handled and whether they may expect pardon or not. So it should appear quite natural that executives 'openly' ask their co-workers for intercession on their behalf.

### 2.6.1 Serving as a model

#### Characteristic

Diaconal profile is given its distinctive face through faces. People who assume leadership responsibility in diaconal agencies or institutions at various levels represent this profile through their activities for people within and outside diaconia. Those working with them can take them as a model and figure out how Christian faith can take shape in the work and in the context of working community: the manners in which the leadership is exercised are evidence for the maxims determining the organisational culture.

This becomes particularly obvious when the executives show the source of their approaches (faith / Gospel) and how they are inspired by that source (willingness to self-criticism / awareness of their own 'place' in the managerial and organisational structures...). This holds true above all when we deal with our own limitations and weaknesses. Diaconal leadership practice claims to have a holistic approach.

#### Practice

In various managerial instruments such as 'leadership club', 'inter-department conferences' or per-

#### Further work

In order to be able to use their model function as a positive managerial instrument, executives should have a clear notion of the models and maxims they themselves use for guidance. It should be examined what 'impact' the executive decisions would have, especially on those concerned: whether to reach the objectively right results – or to reach the whole person for the shared task.

Executives can reflect on their leadership activities by means of so-called superior's feedbacks which are given during job performance reviews.

### 2.6.2 Demanding and supporting

#### Characteristic

From the supervisory board to team or group leadership at all levels, executives assume the responsibility to see to it that the best possible result be achieved for everybody by diaconal work: both for those who are accompanied and supported by it and for those who, as salaried or voluntary workers, wish to use their professional competences and individual

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talents for it. With this in mind, the best possible job performance of the workers should be demanded, but at the same time they should be supported in their professionalism and personal development.

### **Practice**

Tasks are defined by job or activity specifications. Requirement profiles describe the attitudes which may serve as an orientation help and self-assessment criteria for the co-workers and at the same time as a clear expression of the expectations that the management have of them. By means of agreed goals, concrete requirements of working processes are drafted by mutual agreement, and honest and appreciative feedback in performance appraisal can regularly take place.

Within the organisational structure, creative potentials and self-responsibility of co-workers are objects of consideration in setting up working schedules and processes tuned to necessities. This way, they are more satisfied and their commitment is encouraged. For instance, workers on ward duty can work according to their individual time management without neglecting their care duty.

In regular intervals, executives hold company meetings and institutionalised personal development as a core task of the 'company development', to which required financial resources should also be allotted. By doing so, they give the employees chances for change, inspire the eagerness to learn, and promote personal development.

### **Further work**

Many small diaconal companies cannot by themselves meet the requirements of a targeted personal development, partly due to the lack of financial and personal resources and partly due to the lack of opportunities to provide additionally qualified employees with new challenges on account of long-term employments. This can be changed if several diaconal service providers form a collective organisational pool for personal development, which enables, for example, leave replacements during seminars or targeted qualification for tasks in another diaconal service provider. The switch-over of a qualified worker should not be interpreted as a loss

for a specific institution but as a gain for the whole diaconia.

In regular company meetings, employees receive appreciative feedback about their performance, above all relating to the further development of their capabilities and competences. They can reflect on the requirements imposed and try to meet them by agreeing upon supportive and promotional measures.

### **2.6.3 Motivating**

#### **Characteristic**

People working in diaconia often have a special motivation for their work: they want to help in order to do 'good' to others. Due to social changes, however, this motivation can no longer be presumed to come from faith, nor can it be presupposed. Diaconal workers often do not know the commandment of love of neighbour as being the origin of church and diaconia. They are often unaware of the link between the motive to help people and the 'inner mission' (domestic mission).

Not least, however, the challenges of the very laborious and highly taxing work with the endangered, failed, sick and dying persons or people with high-degree physical or mental disabilities need a profound and sustaining motivation: 'enthusiasm'.

Even the best personal management cannot create the Holy Spirit or 'generate' enthusiasm. However, best possible prior conditions must be created for the good and special diaconal spirit to unfold:

People must be convinced of what they are doing and of the manner of doing it.

An executive should possess three distinguishing marks in order to be able to motivate people:

- Trustworthiness and honesty: what he/she says should really be reliable.
- Clarity of communication and action: what he/she says should be clear and reasonable.

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- Ability to set visions and goals and to formulate them: he/she should be able to express, verbally and in writing, what he/she considers important and right and what consequences and action processes can be derived from it for the future of the organisation.

### **Practice**

The managerial staff should be able to get enthusiastic themselves and radiate this enthusiasm. They should render an account of their own motivation and give 'room' for their own as well as their co-workers' enthusiasm. At the same time, they should be able to 'endure' others' enthusiasm and adopt unconventional ideas.

In exercising executive duties, motivating means sharing 'successes' in solidarity and putting an emphasis on progress, i.e. the development and growth in the matter in hand. Setbacks or errors do not mean culpable failures of individuals, but a common learning field for improvements and changes.

Motivation cannot be elicited only by means of rewards (piecemeal, performance-based bonus, etc.). Motivation comes from the wish to do things to one's own satisfaction, to advance together, reach the best possible results, to get 'confirmation', 'perfection' and 'recognition', experiences of 'bliss' with work done well.

### **Further work**

To motivate salaried or voluntary workers, we can draw on various sources:

- The opportunity to live one's own faith also in the workplace, for instance through regular devotions, prayer meetings, and bible studies. Time and place should be provided for this purpose, or pastoral support organised.
- An intensive participation in the further development of the activity field and its improvement process through an organised proposal system or regular brainstorming sessions.
- The process of co-determination and description of long-term goals (future workshop).

- The review of the mission statement, especially with the query in mind: what facilitates or hampers my/our work in reaching these goals.

## 2.6.4 Participating

### **Characteristic**

A common goal can only be reached together – each co-worker brings special talents in diaconia besides his/her profession. This competence pool as well as specific professionalism should be exploited optimally, and decision-making and responsibility should be allowed the broadest possible leeway, with hierarchy kept as horizontal as possible (plays point to the necessity of a playful/free/flexible attitude in clear structures – but with the freedom to change).

Participation presupposes clarity of communication, which includes regular information and ascertainment.

### **Practice**

Due to the clear participation in structures and processes by means of regular team meetings, executive circles, supervisory boards or thematic workshops, the workers concerned are involved in respective processes. They assume responsibility within the scope of participation, and become a vital success factor as committed and enthusiastic co-workers, even in case of informal participation. In a holistic approach of the personnel, such participation is not limited to narrow professional qualifications, but embraces appreciatively a variety of other competences and talents of the staff at all levels.

Participation requires a sincere attitude towards the leadership with proposals of change or improvement as well as with expressions of doubt or critical remarks.

### **Further work**

Many commercial firms have introduced continuous improvement processes in the style of Japanese model of Kaizen (kai – change, transformation; zen – towards improvement) which involves both executives and non-executive employees. Kaizen does not aim at leapfrog innovation, but constant

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and step-by-step development towards improvement by means of participation, suggestion system, quality management, etc. as well as the strengthened identification of the workers with the institution.

It is often difficult to manage alone such a process of organisational development, and it is helpful to ask for advice or support of trained staff of other diaconal institutions.

### 2.6.5 Making decisions and communicating in a transparent manner

#### Characteristic

An essential executive task is not only structuring communication and participation processes, but also bringing about ultimate decisions. Within a large-scale working community, it is self-evident that decisions cannot be made behind closed doors and communicated in a top-down way. Due to different professional competences, personal experiences and responsibilities, however, it is very difficult to reach a general agreement in a group process, still less unanimous decisions.

Given the usual lack of time for the consent of all interested parties, the responsibility for decision-making falls ultimately on the management.

#### Practice

It is an executive task to formulate clearly and understandably the result of a decision-making process and to keep the process of arriving at the decision as transparent as possible:

- Who was involved in the decision-making? When, how, and with what intention?
- Who contributed to which part of the decision-making?
- Why were certain aspects taken into consideration, and other excluded?
- What justifies the decision made?
- What impact does the decision have on the personnel or organisation?

- Is it necessary or possible to review the decision?

The more honestly employees are involved in the decision-making process, the more earnestly they feel committed to the implementation of the decisions, even in case of difficult ones. This is especially true of the decisions which would entail crucial changes or probably 'unacceptable' conditions for the employees.

#### Further work

The decision-making structures within an organisation should be laid out clearly and maintained consistently.

### 2.6.6 Dealing with conflicts

#### Characteristic

The way conflicts are managed is an important touchstone in a diaconal institution. It determines general maxims of behaviour, especially at the leadership level. Conflicts should not be sidestepped out of misunderstood fraternity or swept under the carpet. Nor should they succumb to authoritarian suppressions or top-down decisions. As disturbances play a crucial role in a group process, we should tackle the conflicts promptly and determinedly, allowing the necessary room for conflict resolution.

It is crucial to analyse the conflicts well and clarify precisely all the aspects of conflicts:

- Does the conflict have primarily work-related or interpersonal causes?
- Do we know all those involved in the conflict, or are there 'hidden' conflict lines?
- Can we resolve the conflict internally, or is an external support necessary?

#### Practice

Conflicts arise from contradictory positions, interests and goals. Causes for conflicts may be manifold. Behind the conflicts, there are often grave problems such as drug abuse, weak performance, depression, excessive demand or bullying in the workplace. Conflicts also result from the collision

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between personal interests and economic delimitations or work requirements.

There are meanwhile numerous methods of conflict management and conflict shooting: conflict talks, mediation, individual or group supervision.

The Cause-Effect Diagram (Ishikawa-Diagramm) is a fishbone-like diagram designed as a simple aid for a systematic detection of the causes of problem. The advantage of this method is the linkage between the objective (work-related) and subjective (interpersonal) dimensions.

[www.diakonische-akademie.de](http://www.diakonische-akademie.de) | Kursangebot: "Leichten Fußes Probleme lösen"

Professional supervision is important for employees working in conflict-prone areas. Since conflict resolutions are often sought within the repertoire of the experienced emotional values and learned views and behavioural patterns, it may be reasonable to fetch help from outside in the conflict management. A successful conflict management helps to find new solutions in gridlocked work situations through insight, acceptance and positive attitude towards differences gained from new perspectives, and thus to enable the employees to resume their work.

The Federal Mediation Association has a special section 'Mediation and Church'.  
[www.bmev.de/www/documents/mediation-kirche.pdf](http://www.bmev.de/www/documents/mediation-kirche.pdf)

If a conflict turns out to be irresolvable, this has to be honestly admitted. Not all conflicts are resolvable to satisfaction. Then ways must be sought for the conflicting parties to make the contact bearable or to work independently from each other as far as possible. Here we may apply an adjustment aid such as arbitration and 'interest compromise'.

### **Further work**

Sometimes separation is the only way of resolving conflicts. This requires a particularly cautious attitude towards each other. Unfortunately, there are few appropriate ways in diaconia in this regard. Separations are often interpreted as personal failure and defeat. In fact, however, it may only be the result of disharmony between individuals and given structures and traditions (cf. Gen 13:12.13).

Besides personal attitudes, ethical principles and world views such as community life and love of neighbour play an important role in the decision-making process within diaconal institutions and organisations in comparison with other organisations. For this reason, it often involves the questions of the church's mission and Christian self-understanding when it comes to work-related decision-making. This is an additional challenge when dealing with conflicts, but it also provides the opportunity to come to reconciliation in the shared realm of faith.

## 2.7 Economising and budgeting

Humanity is called to safeguard creation. This obliges people to treat resources responsibly. This applies not only to the ecological resources of our Earth, but also to financial and personal resources, organisational bases, and the ensuing challenges which are necessary for the maintenance and further development of services.

The aim of diaconal action is to provide help for people in different situations of life. According to the diaconal self-understanding, supporting people is a subject matter in its own right. The State has partly taken up this matter in the social legislation as a self-imposed national policy objective. Where the State commits itself to the support of people in terms of providing basic needs and ensuring survival, diaconal action can also do its part in the implementation of the social legislation. In diaconia, therefore, it is a prior condition to respect the public guidelines relating to financial and personnel management and organisational rules.

Beyond the state-managed support systems, people's needy situations may call for diaconal action. It has to be kept in mind, however, that diaconal work often began with empty hands (Mt 14:13-24). The commitment was driven by the impulse to help people and dedicate time and energy for that purpose. In confidence of God's help and in the hope of supports and donations, the questions about financial constraints were set aside, and help was rendered out of diaconal self-understanding. In a reliable diaconal work, however, the courage to venture into an insecure beginning must be replaced by cleverness and farsighted budgeting.

### 2.7.1 Public welfare and public utility

#### Characteristic

The principle of public utility is an important element of German social structure. The specific fiscal provisions are only an indicator of a social consensus that social services for public interest should primarily be rendered on a non-profit basis and that there are social sectors which refrain from a pure material profit and market orientation while follow-

ing the principles of economic viability and efficiency. Like other stakeholders of free welfare service, diaconia orients its work towards public welfare. Diaconal understanding of public welfare has grown from its own Protestant roots and should not be identical with fiscal criteria. Important elements of diaconal welfare orientation are innovative orientations towards people's needs, social and ecclesiastical networking, and systematic involvement of interest representation of those affected, honorary workers and other voluntarily committed persons. By doing so, the diakonie assumes an important task of integration and socialisation. Public utility is an organisational element of the civil society which serves among other things to ease the burden of the State which would otherwise have to fulfil more extensively the tasks of a welfare State. This partial fiscal relief is proffered alongside a series of welfare-oriented commitments such as the prohibition of excessively high remunerations and the obligation of speedy allocation of resources.

#### Practice

Recognition of needs and procurement of pertinent offers in diaconia constitute the basis of the innovative work of diaconal institutions. They take notice of ongoing social changes, see people's state of demand and try to find possible solutions. The executives and non-executive workers of the institutions and volunteer citizens work closely together in their common efforts or take turns in taking initiatives.

The hospice movement is a response to the lack of services which give courage to terminally ill patients to die in dignity. The residential and domiciliary care offers began at first without any financial coverage under social law.

The insights from the hospice movement have resulted in the creation of a network of palliative care to ensure a domiciliary care around the clock. This happens in the form of an integrated care in which a hospital cooperates with palliative physicians in private practice. Nursing care and other service providers join the network as cooperation partners.

In the course of the Health Care Reform 2007 'specialised domiciliary palliative care' was categorised as a health insurance service. The diaconal institutions which offer domiciliary cares are thus given the opportunity to train their workers as qualified special carers and enter into new activity fields.

Due to the increasing ratio of elderly people to the total population, new forms of housing have emerged which may be regarded as low-threshold offers besides the time-proven residential care possibilities in residential care home for the elderly, day care, assisted living in suitable housing estates. For example, elderly people can live together in a domicile-sharing arrangement. From this, opportunity arises for the diaconal institutions to cooperate with housing companies or to initiate their own projects.

The Johanneswerk im Stadtteil gGmbH (non-profit company) is a Bielefeld-based 100% subsidiary of the Evangelisches Johanneswerk, one of the biggest diaconal service providers Europe-wide. Its offer is geared towards modern forms of living which are tailored to individual needs of residents. Within a community, old and young, sick and healthy, people with or without disabilities live together and are taken care of by all means through flexible help services.

[www.jw-im-stadtteil.de](http://www.jw-im-stadtteil.de)

Assisted living at home is another low-threshold type of care which has recently been developed. It is based on home care by the hour combined with the in-house emergency call device of the diakonie. Diakonie can thus develop affordable alternative offers to the east European care services.

A discussion paper of the German Protestant Association for Care for the Elderly (DEVAP): moonlighting in nursing and home care, problems of illegal employment, 2007, available at [www.devap.de/uploads/media/impulse\\_schwarzarbeit\\_in\\_pflege\\_und\\_betreuung07-03-30.pdf](http://www.devap.de/uploads/media/impulse_schwarzarbeit_in_pflege_und_betreuung07-03-30.pdf)

### Further work

Diakonie is required to see the coming or changing needs of people in need of help and offer suitable services. Keeping the available financial means in mind, it must constantly weigh its action. In order to be able to offer custom-tailored services as far as possible, it is necessary to economise financial means.

### 2.7.2 Saving and economising resources

In order to reach the aim of providing people with services and in part materials custom-tailored to their needs, costs must be sufficiently covered. Diaconal institutions need sufficient financial and material resources, and above all motivated workers. Insofar as diaconal concerns align with social legislation, the State must fulfil its financial responsibility. Furthermore, in consideration of the diversity of needs of help-seeking persons, new resources must be continually tapped. This applies especially to attracting donations and sponsors in different aid sectors. Innovative professionalism geared to changing needs and volunteer services are mutually complementary.

With this background in mind, it is necessary to use the available personal, material, and financial resources to the maximum benefit of those affected. Often there are not enough financial means to cover the needs of people. The corps of salaried and voluntary workers are limited, too.

It follows that efficient budgeting does not mean saving at all costs, but striving for an optimum ratio of costs and services. All diaconal actions must be grounded on cost-effectiveness – entirely irrespective of whether there is any law-based obligation of cost-effectiveness for particular activity fields. Cost-effectiveness is one of the attributes of diaconal culture. This means at the same time that the diakonie looks for possibilities to constantly improve its cost-effectiveness.

### Practice

An optimum service rendering presupposes the use of managerial methods and instruments in order to assure the cost-effectiveness of all activities as far

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as possible. First and foremost, the targeted (upper and lower) aims must be formulated clearly and explicitly. The various aims pursued by an institution can be set, for example, by mean of a balanced scorecard.

In the v. Bodelschwighsche Anstalt Bethel, the balanced scorecard was further developed, which led, among other things, to the formulation of the goals of diaconal identify and values going beyond the five perspectives of clients/addressees, finance, personnel, processes/structures, and corporate development. Its reporting and controlling systems reflect its aim of having life and work guided by Christian self-understanding.

[www.bethel.de/beth\\_de/ueber\\_uns/vision\\_pdf/Vision\\_07.pdf](http://www.bethel.de/beth_de/ueber_uns/vision_pdf/Vision_07.pdf)

To ensure well-coordinated cooperation and thus cost-conscious practices of the organs of an institution, the Diakonie Conference adopted the Diaconal Corporate Governance Code (DGK) which all institutions – obligatory for those surpassing a certain size – are expected to implement. The DGK presupposes an adequate risk management to ensure the longevity the institution.

Corporate Governance Kodex für die Diakonie  
[www.diakonie.de/downloads/Diakonie-CGK.pdf](http://www.diakonie.de/downloads/Diakonie-CGK.pdf)

Another method enabling constant improvement of cost-effectiveness is to work out the key expenditure figures and compare them with those of other diaconal institutions. This comparison makes it possible to examine the causes of, for example, results diverging from the mean.

A survey of nation-wide standardised key figures for comparison and assessment of the situation of (diaconal) health and advice centres and for the development of future-oriented strategies. The key figures of staffing, distribution of work hours of the employees, performances and costs, and remunerations were compiled by a task force of the workers of the regional associations under the overall responsibility of the EKD Diakonisches Werk.

The corporate cost-effectiveness can also be enhanced through the creation of service co-ops. This can be done either through the network of various activity fields of the same organisation or the cooperation of different organisations. Service co-ops may consist of both various activity fields such as elderly and handicapped aids and the use of central offers of an organisation for various activity fields. This may serve, among other things, to compensate the workload imbalance within a sector.

Various service sectors within a company such as patient transport, nursing care, home emergency call, meals on wheels complement one another, provide economical synergy effects (a joint office for transport arrangement and home emergency call), and meet clients' demands: "I would like to have all out of one hand" is a project of the Waldeck-Frankenberg Diakonie Ltd.

[www.diakoniegesellschft.de](http://www.diakoniegesellschft.de)

### Further work

Managerial instruments and methods must be examined with regard to their utility in diaconia, modified if necessary, implemented in the practices of institutions, and used for the further development of innovative services. The methods and instrument already in use should constantly be assessed and improved. Various offers and providers must also be continuously networked.

### 2.7.3 Fair and just remunerating

On the basis of church's constitution-based right to self-determination, it is possible for diakonie to lay out its own employment regulations adjusted to employees' needs, combined with a corresponding obligation to provide for employees' welfare and co-determination procedure relating to the specification of working conditions. The questions relating to employment regulations are largely settled through the so-called 'third road' method which is characterised by confidential and collegial cooperation of all persons concerned and the determination procedure on an equal footing of employers and employees regarding the specification of work conditions of the employees. This resulted in diakonie-specific employment regulations.



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Employees in the diakonie have to fulfil their tasks within the scope of the diakonie-specific regulations on the one hand, and are entitled to suitable welfare arrangement and remuneration provided by their co-workers on the other. The claims on the balancing of interests between employers and employees have become acute in recent years due to the insufficient funds allocated to the remuneration by the funding agencies. This is all the more significant as the personnel costs, with some 60 to 80 percent, represent the major cost factor of a funding agency. The situation is worsened through the competition of diaconal funding agencies with profit-oriented providers home and abroad. Against this background, the diakonie commits itself as an advocate for the people affected vis-à-vis the State and society. Within the diakonie, balance should be kept between the annual balance sheet and the employees' interests in sufficient remuneration. The manner of handling this tense relationship must be in conformity with the characteristics of a diaconal culture, say, seeing participation instead of confrontation and avoiding such collective actions as strike and lock-out.

### Practice

General socio-political conditions do not always allow a performance-related pay of an employee. The diakonie pleads for a sufficient and quality-proven refinancing by means of fringe benefits.

In supplementary gratuities, it is important to provide not only money but also the recognition of the employee's achievement.

As a token of gratitude and at the same time as an opportunity of recreation and regeneration, every co-worker was given two free spa tickets for the extraordinary achievements during the remodelling of the old building of the orthopaedic clinic Hessian Lichtenau.

[www.lichtenau-ev.de](http://www.lichtenau-ev.de)

As a financial recognition, employees may be given such tax-exempt benefits as fuel coupons for up to 40 euros per month. In taking such measures, attention should be paid to limits relating to tax and social security. Compensatory off-duty arrangements, for example in the form of additional leave, may be another way of rewarding extraordinary achievements.

Besides a fair and just remuneration, the question of recognition is of great importance for a diaconal culture. The appreciation towards co-workers can be expressed in a variety of ways, from honouring birthdays and jubilees, taking account of their feedback given during staff meetings and target agreements, and congratulating on successful continuing educational measures, up to rewarding special achievements through extra holiday.

### Further work

The diakonie is expected to contribute to political discussion in their sphere of influence in order to improve general socio-political conditions. Special attention should be given thereby to the maintenance of a fair and just remuneration of employees.

It is important that the upgrading of employment and wage scale regulations should be regarded as relevant in dealings with the questions about diaconal culture. The legal and pay arrangements of the employment relationship must be compliant with the characteristics of a diaconal culture. The declarations in the mission statement of the diakonie serve as the basis for the tension assessment and decision guidance in conflict situations. In this regard, great importance is attached to the mission statement that diaconal actions come about from a community. The sense of belonging of all those living and working in the diakonie, the awareness of joint responsibility, is put over to the questions of employment and pay arrangements.

## 2.8 Ensuring and promising quality

The quality of services plays an important role in the corporate culture of the diakonie. Diaconal work should not 'mean' to be good while being unprofessional and of questionable quality. The description of diaconal culture is therefore the basis for strategies, structures and processes.

With this in mind, a diaconal action aims to develop, assure and constantly improve, and also 'promise' it to the customers (patients/clients).

The quality manuals and quality management systems developed by the diakonie highlight the aspect of quality in diaconal practices which builds a unity of organisational, professional and spiritual characteristics.

Although only outward aspects of spiritual orientations are observable, these characteristics, once explicitly assimilated, serve as indicators of their underlying dimension. Efforts towards the spiritual makeup and assurance of this background, too, influence quality management. Understanding and shaping quality in diaconal terms means giving the diaconal action a structure in the spirit of God.

### 2.8.1 Putting the mission statement into Practice

#### Characteristic

Notwithstanding their partly visionary character, the declarations of mission statement must become a commitment and pledge of quality in due course so that they may be tangible in their work processes and effects. In order for the corporate ethics to become perceivable, operationalisation, i.e. a process of making it observable and measurable, becomes necessary.

#### Practice

A mission statement is created for quality development by taking each article of the statute as the basis for common horizon of meaning of all activities. The drafting of the mission statement is done in a participatory process by the whole staff under the responsibility of the management. The mission statement is a means to describe the corporate culture.

Quality standards are also set up in a participatory process. They should answer the question of how quality is understood and what it means in (each activity field of) the organisation. Mission statement and quality standards are therefore the core elements for the development and establishment of a quality management.

The Samariterstiftung Nürtingen went a step further by combining the declarations of its statute, mission statement and quality standards: by using the highly demanding business excellence model EFQM, the formulations adopted from the mission statement and quality targets were made available as documents to consolidate the respective quality requirements, for example the description of how the managerial staff try to win the confidence of clients and external organisations.

[www.samariterstiftung.de](http://www.samariterstiftung.de)

In practice, a vast variety of processes are initiated in order to clarify the meaning of the declarations for the practical social work in various work sectors and organisational units. As a linkage between the corporate mission statement and the professional requirements, job-based mission statements (e.g. nursing care mission statement) or occupational-theological guidelines are also drafted.

The Centre for Diaconal Continuing Education in Anscharhöhe/Hamburg has developed basic principles of diaconal nursing care quality. The basic guidelines should be taken into consideration not only when implementing nursing care, assistance and supply but also when framing managerial and organisational general conditions and personnel development. These authorised copyrighted guidelines are the basis for many diaconal nursing care quality manuals.

Source: Bundesrahmenhandbuch Diakonie-Siegel Pflege, Berlin 2006

The process of operationalising the instructions given in guidelines should not fail to establish a direct link between the contents of mission statement and the practical implementation: for example,

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the statement ‘safeguarding the creation’ should be associated with the demand of a responsible treatment of resources. In the practical implementation within organisation, this means in turn:

- Working in compliance with ecological standards, e.g. the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) launched by the EU in 1993. The EMAS is also practiced in the EKD Diakonisches Werk and regularly inspected by independent State-certified assessors.
- Working in compliance with ecological standards, e.g. in the business management and administrative sectors: bookkeeping, cost and production account, controlling, etc.

Many mission statements contain declarations on staff orientation, service community of men and women, and assurance of professionalism by means of job training and life-long education. If job standards turn out to fall short of the targeted goals after repeated inspections, new measures should be taken for the achievement of goals.

If an organisation spends less than one percent of the pre-tax personnel costs on job training and life-long education of its personnel, and there is no established suggestion system and complaint management, the contents its mission statement regarding staff orientation or service community should be reviewed or greater efforts should be made for its implementation.

### Further work

Many contact groups of the diakonie such as clients, co-workers, support organisations, business partners rely on the declarations of diakonie mission statement, but they occasionally have their own interpretations, high expectations or even disappointments. Talks with these groups must be backed up by the goal of aligning the contents of mission statement and the real practice. Its aim should not be the reduction of the expectations for the effects of the mission statement, but the satisfaction of the expectations through an improved practice.

## 2.8.2 Shaping structures and processes

### Characteristic

In diaconal institutions, business models, organisational structures and work processes should be chosen and built up in such a way that the (typical) diaconal culture is reflected in them.

### Practice

For the business model, this means: clients belong to the stakeholders of a company. The organisational complex of strategy and culture aims at an optimal service to the clients. A strategic stakeholder concept (after Freeman) should be set up with regard to clients and other stakeholders, e.g. the staff. In diaconal institutions, it is unusual to adopt the shareholder-value approach (profit maximisation) or the stakeholder-value approach (well-balanced long-term consideration of all stakeholders to bring about a maximal shareholder value). On the contrary, an ethical (normative critical) stakeholder concept is often applied: relevant stakeholder groups are people whose human dignity should be respected and whose moral rights strengthened. It is therefore not a matter of satisfying the ‘mighty influential’ groups, but of the morally justified legitimacy (e.g. socially precarious persons).

This means for the (organisational) structures: In keeping with its self-understanding, the diakonie has set the goal of reacting to new social challenges in the pertinent fields. This presupposes a certain degree of flexibility which must find expression in the structures of an organisation. On the one hand, this involves a constant adaptation to the challenges (existing and new needs of people, processes of deregulation and globalisation, the evolution of information and communication technology). On the other hand, structures must allow for a high degree of flexibility, for instance by means of permanent and flexible forms of work).

The EKD Diakonisches Werk adopted a flexible structure within the scope of its improvement plan of organisational structure.

Source: Project manual of the EKD Diakonisches Werk

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In the diakonie, there are structural parameters only to a limited extent. The implementation of the Diaconal Corporate Governance Code can only be regarded as a recommendation. Nevertheless, its significance consists in the expression of churchliness of a diaconal institution. In this regard, attention should be given to the structures which result from the legal form of a diaconal institution. The controversial discussion about the legal forms suitable for the diakonie often focuses on the recognition of some flexibility once the welfare orientation is perceivable and the stakeholder groups are reached.

Besides the organisation structure, the work processes particularly require the flexibility of an organisation with regard to the task fulfilment. The diakonie has to take account of three categories in its work processes:

- Business processes embody the practical performance of market-oriented core activities of a company (client orientation).
- Support processes serve to provide infrastructure and render internal services.
- Management processes embrace all fundamental managerial tasks concerning the shaping, steering, controlling, and development of a purpose-oriented organisation.

In diaconal institutions, a practice has been established which tries, as part of quality management, to identify existing processes with the ultimate goal of constant improvement. The institutions also draw up process maps when describing complex activities of an organisation.

The EKD Diakonisches Werk has created a process map in its federal vade-mecum 'Diakonie Seal Nursing Care' taking the continuous improvement process PDCA Cycle as an example. It is based on diaconal practice and illustrates using an example process how the highly complex processes of a diaconal organisation interact in the nursing care unit.

Source: Federal Vade-Mecum Diakonie-Siegel Pflege (diaconia seal nursing care), guidelines for the development of quality management system in the elderly care, Berlin 2007

These processes should also reflect the particularities of diaconal institutions pursuant to the Protestant profile. This work can especially be entrusted to the quality circle.

The institute Herzogsägmühle has set up a quality circle Spirituality. The insights gained from this process should be reflected in the whole work of the institute.

[www.herzogsaegmuehle.de](http://www.herzogsaegmuehle.de)  
[info@herzogsaegmuehle.de](mailto:info@herzogsaegmuehle.de)

### Further work

Optimum structures and processes are indispensable preconditions for a high diaconal output quality. A high degree of flexibility (in structures, processes, also in the legal forms among other things) assures the diaconal standard which should be reviewed ever afresh in compliance with social changes.

### 2.8.3 Achieving high efficiencies

#### Characteristic

In diaconal institutions (positive) effects resulting from mission statements, structure and process arrangements must be verifiable. An efficiency orientation should be indicators of the (positive) effects on customers. Diaconal institutions regard the efficiency orientation as an important primary concern of diaconia. This primary concern corresponds to the definable quality requirements. The criteria of examination point to the methods of examining the verifiability of effects.

### Practice

In diaconia, the effect of action is placed at the centre. This compels us to define clear goals and describe criteria of success. The effects of diaconal action are the effects observed in and by the addressees to the achievements of which diaconal efforts have substantially contributed. Effects are understood as the improvements or stabilisation of life circumstances or a slowdown of aggravations.

The Diakonisches Werk Hamburg released a position paper on the effect orientation in social work. Effect orientation places people at the centre, not the organisation. In effect-oriented concepts, models are set up showing how effects can be described, observed, measured, evaluated and also possibly rewarded on the basis of formulated objectives.

[www.diakonie-hamburg.de/\\_SIR5dHsT5tSnO-IOMWU/kd.112300846/kd.1126000846.8/info.html](http://www.diakonie-hamburg.de/_SIR5dHsT5tSnO-IOMWU/kd.112300846/kd.1126000846.8/info.html)

### Further work

The quality of diaconal work does not refer only to the (optimal) organisational state of the art. Rather, the quality should be described from the perspective of the clients. In various social activity fields, therefore, increased efforts should be made in order to develop indicators and measures for more quality (of life) and bring them into harmony with the cooperation partners in politics and society including support organisations.

## 2.8.4 Achieving transparency

### Characteristic

In diaconia, quality is the result of the interaction of many different parties. In order to ensure the quality all together, transparent working and procedural methods of all those concerned are necessary. At the levels of both service providers and receivers, transparency must prevail so that we may reach the common goal of effective help and support. Transparency can primarily be achieved at two levels. On the one hand, written documents containing the reports on type and scale of the services, structures, processes and working methods serve as a formal guarantee of a transparent action. On the other hand,

it is expected that the parties involved perform their duties and functions in a comprehensible and unmistakable way. Without a personal dimension, there is a possible danger that a transparent task fulfilment remains formal, and it is impossible to achieve reliability and the necessary quality of the service. The demands on Christians to be “always prepared to give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15) is not limited to the questions of motivation and faith alone.

### Practice

In practice, a quality management manual is an important instrument of safeguarding transparency, for requirements and standards are comprehensibly described in it. Quality management manuals are usually structured in keeping with a specific standard.

A diaconal institution uses its diaconal mission, usually the statute, as the basis for creating its mission statement, describing its quality policy, and fixing its goals of work.

A quality management manual describes the profile of the institution along with other contents of work, the description of the quality standard and processes.

In the meantime, quality management manuals have gained a foothold in many diaconal services and institutions. As a transparent instrument, they keep their efficiency only if they are kept up-to-date and adjusted to changing conditions and requirements. The Diaconal Institute for Quality Development offers its service to support continuous improvement processes.

[www.diakonie-dqe.de](http://www.diakonie-dqe.de)

In the diakonie, there are successful examples of how quality can be generated through continual improvement of work processes in a transparent procedure. As a matter of fact, they are constantly evolving (virtual) documents designed to improve existing quality manuals. All the co-workers have the same electronic manual and can constantly contribute to the improvement of the processes in their own task fields. On the basis of a preset coordination scheme, the manual continues to evolve almost

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everyday in the expectation that all proposals would lead to the improvement of the work processes.

The Theodor Flieder Foundation in Mülheim launched a virtual quality management manual. This manual is not only accessible for all employers, it can also – in respective areas of responsibility – be changed and constantly improved, which enables a constant optimisation of structures and processes.

[www.fliedner.de](http://www.fliedner.de)

Phone +49-(0)208-4448102 (Mr. Möller)

Transparency is an essential precondition for participation. It embraces both the availability of information and topicality of documentations and the readiness of all employees to share an open, col-

legal and transparent work procedure. There are errors and troubles in the diaconal context, too. In such situations, transparent approaches are required more than ever, in order that improvements may offset deficiencies.

### **Approaches to Further work**

A high degree of transparency and participation by using electronic manuals should become a standard in all activity fields in the diakonie.

In the future, clients should also be given the opportunity to participate in the improvement of processes. Relevant participation models are to be developed.

### 3. Diaconal culture and the hope for God's intervention

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Diaconal culture has many facets. It embraces the atmosphere of a house, the openness of an institution, the ability to integrate people and let them join the community. It also involves beliefs, knowledge, moral principles and many other abilities and customs which employers and residents, executives and guests can contribute to the mutual assistance of a diaconal institution or gain there.

Diaconal culture is hence inseparable from the cultural imprints of its surroundings, of the society. It interacts with the particularities of religious and social contexts, church or regional settings. It took shape from its history and traditions. This dependency is the resource and challenge of diaconal culture.

On the one hand, the mutual assistance is nurtured in the diaconal activity fields with the religious convictions and church settings brought along. A diaconal culture needs attention, all the more as it grows difficult to resort to such values and behaviours. On the other hand, the increasingly secularised society puts diaconal institutions and service providers to the task of nurturing a diaconal culture.

The compilation of the characteristic of diaconal culture has the overall goal of rendering help with maintaining a corporate culture in which queries are consciously made about the orientation towards the Christian human image. It is a culture in which freedom and hope of the Gospel find their expression and human efforts to give help and support draw on the comfort we find in God's nearness.

The attentiveness and endeavours to nurture a diaconal culture come from the conviction and hope

that the manners of action and thinking have repercussions on the surroundings and become messengers. However, these repercussions are challenged more strongly in a dominantly secular and heterogeneous environment as in a Christian and mature environment.

Despite the possibilities of shaping, diaconal culture cannot be 'produced'. Culture cannot be made concretely out of objects and regulations. It is not a tangible material substance. Culture is closely linked to personality. Culture cannot arise apart from human existence; it is an expression of human freedom, individuality and the reference to God. This insight is especially the case when diaconia is understood not only as a social system, but at the same time as a church, too. This view opens a broad concept of culture since in theological terms it should be recalled that culture is oriented towards the overall development of human personality, the wellbeing of the community and the realisation of a human society. This perspective also bears the warning that culture is not producible object, but it depends on the spirit moulded by it as a scope of creativity.

The promised and experienced nearness to God is the condition for a diaconal culture. This is related to the hope and promise that God's Spirit empowers humans to give their faith cultural and mutually influencing expression. The promise and experience of God's nearness in the building of culture lifts the shared work and life in diaconia above the posed boundaries of human constriction. Diaconal culture is nurtured from the community of humans and God.

## Members of the Project Group

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### Project leadership

Dr. Ingolf Hübner, Project leader  
Theology, Board of directors  
Diakonisches Werk der EKD e. V.

Uwe Schwarzer, Assistant project leader  
Strategic management, Board of directors  
Diakonisches Werk der EKD e. V.

Käte Roos  
Project coordination  
Diakonisches Werk der EKD e. V.

Michael Schmidt  
Executive manager  
Diakonisches Werk Bremen e. V.

Paul-Gerhardt Voget  
Direktor  
Samariteranstalten Fürstenwalde/Spree

### Project staff

Dr. Astrid Giebel  
Theology, Board of Competence Centres  
Diakonisches Werk der EKD e. V.

Norbert Groß  
Director  
Association of German Protestant Hospitals

Alfred Jung  
Executive manager  
Diakonie Waldeck-Frankenberg Ltd.

Ulrich Laepple  
Diaconal-missionary community building  
Consortium of Missionary Services  
Diakonisches Werk der EKD e. V.

Christine Rösch  
Diakonisches Werk Evangelischer Kirchen  
in Mitteldeutschland e. V.

### Experts

Cornelia Coenen-Marx  
Senior Church Official  
Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

Wilfried Knorr  
Direktor  
Herzogsägmühle  
(Innere Mission München – Diakonie in München  
und Oberbayern e. V.)

Kathleen Niepmann  
Press officer  
Diakonisches Werk in Hessen und Nassau e. V.

Dr. Claudia Wohlleber  
Fiscal law/basic issues, business administration  
Diakonisches Werk der EKD e. V.





## Notices

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## Notices

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Diakonisches Werk der  
Evangelischen Kirche  
in Deutschland (EKD) e. V.  
Stafflenbergstraße 76  
D-70184 Stuttgart

Responsible for the series:  
Andreas Wagner  
Communication Centre  
P.O. Box 101142  
D-70010 Stuttgart  
Tel.: +49 711 21 59-454  
Fax: +49 711 21 59-566  
redaktion@diakonie.de  
www.diakonie.de

Contact:  
Dr. Ingolf Hübner  
Diakonisches Werk der EKD  
Theology, board member  
Reichensteiner Weg 24  
D-14195 Berlin  
Tel.: +49 30 83001-237  
Fax: +49 30 83001-222  
huebner@diakonie.de

Translated from German by  
Hera Moon  
E-mail (for correction  
purpose): h.moon@kaisers-  
werther-verband.de

Layout:  
H. M. Saecker, A. Stiefel

Order:  
Distribution Centre, Diakoni-  
sches Werk der EKD e. V.  
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Diakonisches Werk  
der Evangelischen Kirche  
in Deutschland e. V.  
Staffenbergstraße 76  
70184 Stuttgart  
Telefon: +49 711 21 59-0  
Telefax: +49 711 21 59-288  
[diakonie@diakonie.de](mailto:diakonie@diakonie.de)  
[www.diakonie.de](http://www.diakonie.de)