

Kaiserswerth General Conference

Press Release

September 29, 2015



## **Kaiserswerth General Conference 2015**

### **“Diakonia – A Strong Brand?!”**

The 42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of the Kaiserswerth General Conference was held September 24 – 27, 2015 in Gallneukirchen, Austria. The theme addressed the tensions between diaconal values and the operational financial requirements for organizations of the Kaiserswerth motherhouse tradition.

"Diakonia: A Strong Brand ?! Between Values and Commerce" was the theme of the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of the Kaiserswerth General Conference held September 24 – 27, 2015 in Gallneukirchen, Austria, at the invitation of the Gallneukirchen Evangelical Diakoniewerk and President, Rector Christa Schrauf. Rector Schrauf welcomed the 130 participants from twelve countries, saying: "It is part of our self-understanding, that in a time in which countless people seek to flee the inferno of war, terror and violence in their homeland, we make our contribution to the love of neighbor, as we disagree with hostile refugee slogans and offer the possibilities that we have as diaconal agencies, which give concrete help and demonstrate our values.

The General Assembly confirmed the elected representatives from the regions for the presidium for the next six years. Elected are: Directing Sister Rollaug Waaler (Bergen) and Deaconess Terttu Pohjolainen (Villähde; both Northern Europe ), Pastor Annette Goll (Strasbourg, Western Europe), Director Rev. Marek Londzin (Dziegielów) and Rector Christa Schrauf (Gallneukirchen; both Central and Eastern Europe), Leading Sister Roswitha Buff (Neuendettelsau), Director Dr. Gundula Griebmann (Teltow), Leading Sister Anke Frickmann (Bielefeld), Director Klaus Riesenbeck (Kaiserswerth), Director Jürgen Stobbe (Ludwigslust), Director Karsten Stüber (Eisenach, all from Germany), and Deaconess Vilma Linda Reinar (São Leopoldo, Brazil) and Sister Melinda Lando (New York, both non-European representatives).

The sisterhood “Ushirika wa Neema” from Tanzania was unanimously received as a new member of the Kaiserswerth General Conference.

Keynote speaker Dr. Ulrich Körtner addressed the topic of “Human Care – Nursing Ethics and Christian Perspectives of Humanity”: "In medicine and nursing care, all people are entitled to our care, whether they are rich or poor, whether they have an Austrian passport or not, whether they believe in the God of Christians or Muslims, or have no religious beliefs. They all have the same rights to our attention and our respect", said the Viennese theologian and medical ethicist.

Economics professor Torger Reve of Norway addressed the topic of "Diaconal Institutions: Sustainable Values in a Market-Oriented Economy", saying that as health care and social services are driven by business practices, faith based organizations operate in a niche as they provide a quality of service based on values.

Best practice examples were provided from member houses and organizations of the General Conference, underlining the theme of the assembly: Implementing balance and strength exercises for the elderly in Lahti, Finland; unaccompanied refugee minors in Düsseldorf; and the merger of three faith-based hospitals in Strasbourg, France: Adassa (Jewish), Diaconat (Protestant), and St. Odile (Catholic).

The bishop of the Lutheran Church in Austria, Dr. Michael Bunker, and Dr. Klára Tarr Cselovszky, Head of External Relations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary led the Bible studies at the assembly. The sermons for the worship services were delivered by the Director of Diakonie Austria, Rev. Michael Chalupka and OKR Prof. Karl Schiefermair of the Lutheran Church in Austria. The General Conference received greetings from the General Secretary of Eurodiaconia, Heather Roy, Deaconess Ulrike Kellner representing the DIAKONIA World Federation, as well as Maria Loheide, Director for Social Politics, Diakonie Germany. "We want to give shape to diakonia and not be reduced to the role of being a charitable stopgap in a failing welfare state" stressed Loheide.

The participants of the General Conference also visited the special exhibit "Help. Life Risks, Life Chances" housed in the former Deaconess Motherhouse Bethanien in Gallneukirchen. The exhibit presented the development of the social security system in Austria and relief strategies for people in need.

Details of the next Diaconal Study Trip to Poland were announced for September 21-25, 2016. The participants will visit diaconal projects in Breslau/Wroclaw. The professional development day at the Eben Ezer Motherhouse in Dzięgielów will include contributions of former President of EWDE Rev. K.D. Kottnik and Director Wanda Falk, Secretary General of Diakonia of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Poland.

The 43rd General Assembly of the Kaiserswerth General Conference will be held in 2018 at the invitation of Pastor Ulrich Pohl of the von Bodelschwingh Foundation, Bethel-Bielefeld.

The Kaiserswerther General Conference is an association of more than 100 deaconess motherhouses, diaconal communities and organizations from Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa. Members of the presidium of the KGK are: Rector Christa Schrauf (AT), Deaconess Terttu Pohjolainen (FI), Directing Sister Rollaug Waaler (NO), Director Marek Londzin (PL), Sister Melinda Lando (North America), Director Jürgen Stobbe (D - North), Leading Sister Deaconess Anke Frickmann (D - West), Leading Sister Roswitha Buff (D -South ), Director Dr. Gundula Griebmann (D - East), Director Karsten Stüber (D - East), Director Rev. Klaus Riesenbeck (D - West) Pastor Annette Goll (F); KR Dr Christine - Ruth Müller (General Secretary).

Berlin/Bern, September 29, 2015

Media Contact: Thomas Flügge, Press Agent Tel.: +41(0)79.6401902  
E-Mail: [presse@kaiserswerther-verband.de](mailto:presse@kaiserswerther-verband.de)

Contact: KR Dr. Christine-Ruth Müller, General Secretary Kaiserswerther Verbandes and General Secretary Kaiserswerth General Conference  
Landhausstraße 10, 10717 Berlin, Tel. +49 (0)30.86424170  
E-Mail: [verband@kaiserswerther-verband.de](mailto:verband@kaiserswerther-verband.de)