

# DIAKONIA OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

## **the voluntary association that expresses the vocational interests of diaconal ministers in the United Church**

Diakonia of The United Church of Canada, founded in June, 1984, is an association of diaconal ministers of the United Church. Membership is voluntary, fees are on a sliding scale, and a national gathering is held every two years. For the first two years of its existence, the coordinating committee of Diakonia consisted of one representative for each of its six regions, plus a secretary-treasurer and the national staff person responsible for diaconal ministry, Virginia Coleman. In addition, one member of the committee acted as liaison with the Standing Committee on Diaconal Ministry and attended the meetings of both organizations. At the last national gathering of Diakonia it was decided to base the coordinating committee in one region of the country, and Saskatchewan was chosen to form the new coordinating committee.

To date the two coordinating committees have chosen a logo, introduced the new organization to Conference Ministry Personnel and

Education committees, and kept in touch with the concerns of diaconal ministers in each of the Conferences. In addition, a major portion of the coordinating committee's time has been spent on developing a workable structure, establishing lines of communication, defining work to be done and managing the organization's funds. Diakonia has developed both an extensive theological and educational stance and has conducted all of its discussions and decisions through consensus. As a process, consensus was both time-consuming, and creative and engaging.

The purposes and goals of the new organization were established at the founding meeting in 1984 and involve a number of issues which the organization works at on its own and a number which it shares in partnership with the Committee on Diaconal Ministry. As an organization of diaconal ministers, Diakonia focuses on providing continuing educational opportunities for diaconal people, on planning local and national gatherings

for support and for the sharing of stories, and explaining and affirming our identity as diaconal ministers and on maintaining communication between individuals and groups. In partnership with the Committee on Diaconal Ministry, Diakonia works to provide a national identity and perspective for diaconal ministers, to critique and formulate policy concerning diaconal ministry, to develop and maintain an awareness and understanding of diaconal ministry throughout the whole church, and to make suggestions to appropriate colleges and committees for education and continuing educational of diaconal ministers.

The next national gathering will be held in 1988 in Alberta, and will include business sessions, informal gathering time and explorations into the theological basis and contemporary forms of expression of diaconal ministry in The United Church of Canada.

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