

## REFLECTIONS FROM DOTAC PRESIDENT

### World DIAKONIA on YOUTUBE

Sharilynn Upsdell has created slide presentations from the World Diakonia meeting held in Atlanta in July 2009.

CHECK THEM OUT!!!

Google:  
World Diakonia Youtube

### By Linda Ervin

Several years ago I received a phone call to do a workshop at the DIAKONIA World Federation Assembly in Wolfville, NS. I said 'yes' to the invite, and that 'yes' led me into a whole new world of diakonia! I knew about Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean (DOTAC) and the World Federation but had never attended, even though encouraged to by Margaret Fulton, a diaconal minister who was very active in the international diaconal scene. Another diaconal mentor, Katharine Hockin, was at the Assembly and encouraged me to continue my involvement. I left Wolfville with the plan to go to next World Assembly in former East Germany, as well as the next DOTAC meeting in Nashville.

Initially I was a little concerned about the theology and how 'servant' was understood in DIAKONIA. However, what became important for me wasn't the differences, it was connecting around diaconal ministry and getting to know people all over the world who did diaconal work.

I was quite surprised when I was elected President of DOTAC. Election of officers is

done using a discernment and consensus model. It is a very spiritual election. As DOTAC President I had the privilege to travel to several member groups to speak and lead workshops. In the first four years I shared the role with my good friend Sr. Hildegard Hertel of the Lutheran deacons in Brazil.

The DOTAC president is on the World Executive as well. In the last few years we have tried to develop best practices for the activities of the World Executive. This is difficult to do as we all understand executive work and meetings differently. With my DOTAC colleagues June James of the Wesley Methodist Order of Deacons in the Caribbean and Ted Halenbeck from the Episcopal Order of Deacons in the US we tried to raise the question of equity around the World Executive. Diakonia Asia Pacific (DAP) and DOTAC each have two representatives at the Executive however Diakonia Region Africa-Europe (DRAE) has one from Africa and five from Europe. My one disappointment is that Africa is still not a region on its own. I let my name stand for World President, while I was not elected, it was a great experience to run and I was honoured to do so.

In my DOTAC and DIAKONIA work I listened, especially to understand the intercultural way of doing work. I offered theological reflection, speaking about God in our midst. In the justice work I did I sometimes found myself in a very different place from others. In DUCC we think of being servant very differently than some of our sisters and brothers. While it was difficult to step back

often that was the best action, waiting until I could share insights at another time when they might be better heard.

**Diaconal ministry seeks mutual empowerment**  
DUCC Statement

As President of DOTAC I used process of consensus and discernment as we made decisions. We stopped when we needed to take a break and we listened with respect for the diverse opinions around the room. We clarified our Mission Statement and objectives for the future, developed policy around DOTAC Conferences, became a non profit in the USA and welcomed four new member groups to the DOTAC and the World table.

My concern for the future is that we will not be able to afford DOTAC and World Conferences, many of our new member groups come from countries that do not have the funds that enable this kind of participation. I sensed a shift began at the 2009 World meeting in Atlanta to meet differently,



Linda Ervin has represented DUCC on the international scene as President of DOTAC. Photo: Sharilynn Upsdell

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maybe in small regional groups where we can get to know our ecumenical neighbours and work on joint projects together. I am excited to see where it will lead us.

The next DOTAC conference is in Oklahoma in 2011 and I hope many of you will attend. The theme is Chairs at The Feet of God, this theme came from a discernment process and is inclusive of the varied theologies and experiences of people around the table.

I have enjoyed my DOTAC and World Executive experience, it has been challenging, prayerful and engaging. Thank you for your support.

[www.diakonia-world.org](http://www.diakonia-world.org) [www.dotac.diakonia-world.org](http://www.dotac.diakonia-world.org)  
[www.drae.diakonia-world.org](http://www.drae.diakonia-world.org)

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