



# Seeking Conviviality



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

A Communion  
of Churches

Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe

Evaluation and Commentary from the European  
Solidarity Group

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# Preface

The three LWF regions in Europe – Central Eastern Europe, Central Western Europe and the Nordic countries decided to launch a process to re-form community diakonia as part of a contribution to the Reformation Anniversary. At first glance the regions are diverse, but through the process of “Seeking Conviviality – Reforming Community Diakonia in Europe”, the European Solidarity Group of diaconal workers found that they face similar concerns about the need to reevaluate the practice of congregational and local diakonia. They found that growing inequality, deteriorating working conditions and unemployment, especially among young people were critical issues to be addressed. As well as the struggle for justice and the need to address the growing environmental crisis, diaconal actors were searching for a new overarching concept and a change of practice related to local contexts.

Starting in 2011, the LWF in partnership with interdiac, an international network academy based in the Czech Republic, developed a process with diaconal actors from the three European regions. A series of workshops were organised to share experience, analysis and theological reflection on practice and they supported the development of holistic responses by the LWF member churches to the growing challenges they faced in all three regions of the continent.

The 2014 report on what has now been termed the ‘conviviality process’ outlined new approaches that can inform diakonia in Europe and other regions of the communion. It advocated lifting up “conviviality” – defined as “the art and practice of living together” as a core concept and guiding vision for local diakonia, based on vocation,

justice and dignity. The group, which based its work on reflections on practice, then prioritized work, welfare and economy as key issues to be addressed and over the next three years. They worked on the development of the concept of a “convivial economy” and mapped out the contours of such an economy and local strategies to work on this. The European diaconal Solidarity Group coordinated a program of exploring convivial economy and on convivial theology. In 2017 a report on this work was finalized and published.

An evaluative report and reflections on the process forms the backbone of the latest publication, together with practical proposals for mutual cooperation. A booklet containing a series of Bible studies on vocation, dignity and justice for use by the whole communion has also been published. A leaflet that describes the basic concept and the process was produced to inform people and the churches. The pressing issue of the growing numbers of migrants and uprooted people has also been a focus of the work of the Solidarity Group since 2016. Concurrently, theological reflection on conviviality has been the subject of reflections in the group and recently Lutheran Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean expressed their interest to learn more about the conviviality process in Europe. The publications of the group have been translated into different languages and there is an effort being made to translate the documents into Spanish and Portuguese.

I encourage all LWF member churches to join the journey to conviviality and engage in the process of mutual learning about congregational and local diakonia in rapidly changing times.



Photo: Peter Szyuka

This report is also commended as a valuable contribution of European Lutheran Churches to the global reflection on the meaning and implications of liberation by God’s grace during the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, with the hope that it will inspire the Lutheran Communion and strengthen our presence in the public sphere in the future.

Rev. Dr. Martin Junge  
LWF General Secretary

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# Introduction to the Process

Rev. Dr. Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato

Rev. Tony Addy

## The European Diaconal Process

The LWF European Diaconal Process started in 2011 under the impact of the global financial crisis and its repercussions on the social situation of people throughout Europe and the growing arrival of people seeking asylum from countries that were engulfed in war and civil conflict. These processes unfolded during the life of the process. The impact of the financial crisis was handled by state finances which were used to rescue financial institutions and the policies of austerity and the combined effect was to bring people and communities and in some cases whole societies and even governments to the brink of bankruptcy. The refugee streams became ever larger and the crisis created a major crisis of policy for national and European Union governments. Therefore the European process had to ask what this alarming situation means for being church, especially as churches in Europe were receiving and reflecting the LWF Diaconia Handbook “Diaconia in Context” The actual European context challenged to developing a concept of being church with and for those in vulnerable situations at a time when populist movements were also on the rise, claiming for themselves the role of defending ‘Christian Europe’ (sic).

## The Working Process

The LWF member churches in Europe developed the idea for a programme to support community diaconia as part of the process towards

the Reformation Anniversary. It was agreed that LWF would partner with interdiac (The international academy for diaconia and Christian Social Action, Central and Eastern Europe). Interdiac works with a participatory approach and has focused on community diaconia since its launch in 2008 and it was proposed to start work with local diaconal actors. A working group was formed which included more than 25 diaconal actors, mostly working face to face at the local level, but also including concept makers and educators from LWF member churches in all regions of Europe. After a short time they called themselves the Solidarity Group for community diaconia and they became a strong network.

In four workshops between 2011 and 2016, the group worked on the process of reflection on the need to re-form community diaconia in Europe, and the direction it should take.

The process started by exploring the motivation of the members of the group according to a reflection on their biography. They then shared and clarified the expectations they had from their work. This inductive and participatory approach was a hallmark of the process. At the same time, interdiac, which was the partner in the project, was also reflecting on community diaconia in its training and development work. They were developing a concept of community diaconia under the leading framework of conviviality. The term is a translation of the Spanish “convivencia” and refers to “the art and practice of living together” in context of (religious, cultural, social) diversity. Conviviality has its recent roots in Latin American

experience and was developed by Ivan Illich, but it has also been applied to practice in the diversifying European context. This approach was shared with the group as a heuristic concept and it became clear that an expanded concept of ‘conviviality’ would address the economic questions, the issue of growing diversity in Europe and the rise of a politics of exclusion based on populist nationalism.

To develop the work, two workshops were held:

- 2011 Starting the Process (Järvenpää, Finland)
- 2012 Developing Conviviality (Odessa, Ukraine)

The outcomes of the process have been brought together in a publication entitled “Seeking conviviality – Re-forming community diaconia in Europe”. The English version of the publication was printed in December 2013 and translations have been made into several languages including Russian, German, Estonian and Norwegian. Other translations are underway, including into the Czech language.

On the basis of this publication, the members of the Solidarity Group developed their individual action plans for dissemination and introducing the concept of conviviality into their local and national contexts of church and diaconia. In perspective of transformed perceptions of being church, with stronger diaconal church identity in the public space, advocating for social economic justice and conviviality in church and society became key agenda points. The interim report of the work of the Group was shared with the European Church leaders

meeting in presentation and discussion in Ostrava, Czech Republic in 2012. The feedback was positive and the report was well received by many church and diaconal actors.

Based on the success of the process, including also the reached “convivencia” and commitment of the Solidarity Group members, it was agreed to initiate a second phase of the process from 2014 to 2017. Besides further dissemination of the conviviality publication, an international European program was developed. Three core thematic components were identified to deepen the work with the conviviality concept, as an overarching theme. A time line was drawn from 2014 to 2017, with specific actions to make each of the 3 foci operational:

- 2014 conviviality in practice (Rummelsberg, Germany)
- 2015 convivial economy (Manchester, Great Britain)
- 2016 convivial theology (Tallinn, Estonia)

The workshop in 2014 identified work, welfare and economy as key themes and therefore the Solidarity Group split into five sub-groups and created the framework for the Manchester workshop. A report on this workshop, ‘Towards a Convivial Economy’ has been published. The last workshop of the process was built around reflection on the learning and development in the Solidarity Group and the evaluation of the whole process.

A further step in the process was the preparation of a book of Bible studies on the theme of Conviviality. Members of the Solidarity Group prepared the material and tested it in their own context.

The book, ‘Convivial Life Together’ has been published on the LWF web site and covers the core themes of vocation, dignity and justice written by



five members of the Solidarity Group from different parts of the region.

During the process, members also worked locally and nationally to share the findings of the process, for example organizing translation of the texts and dissemination and organizing workshops and strategic seminars. For example, the Czech participants shared the first report with the Czech LWF national committee and a plan developed for sharing the findings. As the first step, the translation of the report into Czech was organised. National seminars on the theme were organised by the Solidarity Group members in both Latvia and Estonia.

The report was presented to the national church office in Sweden and The Church of Norway has distributed the translated document Seeking Conviviality to all its diaconal workers (deacons) and has recommended it for the students at the diaconal college (Diakonhjemmet/VID Specialized University) where a research programme on community diakonia is also under development. In the Norwegian Church City Mission (Kirkens

Bymisjon) many of the new projects that are now being implemented work according to the basic ideas of conviviality with the main themes of dignity, justice, vocation, work & the convivial economy) - especially all the projects working with immigrants. In several countries, articles were produced for regional and national papers and newsletters in different languages and shared on the Solidarity Group Facebook page. Also the Bible studies have been used in different localities to open up the related issues.

In Bavaria the results of the conviviality process were the focus during the annual conference of local church social workers (Kirchliche allgemeine Sozialarbeit = KASA). Under the headline, ‘Autonomy’ nearly 70 social workers discussed questions such as; ‘is it possible, to realize autonomy in a society where you are a foreigner’, ‘are our clients strong enough to live independently – also from intervention of social workers?’, ‘is our discussion about autonomy more or less a theoretical debate or is it oriented on the daily life of those whom we are sent

to serve?'. The social workers realized, that law and order, economic boundaries or social prejudices increasingly restrict their independence. In the conference they discussed alternatives to commonly accepted concepts of social intervention. The input from the ideas developed during the conviviality process, which were presented by Tony Addy, brought orientation to the continuous work. It became clear, how the important interaction between vocation, justice and dignity creates new practice in social activities, which is focused on a community based process of inclusion and participation as well as political advocacy. The parishes are facilitated to take part in the initiation and development of small communities and so to realize conviviality as a church in society, together with others. As a result of the conference, the social workers continued the process in regional meetings, discussions and practice with congregations in many local contexts.

Articles about the process have also been published internationally, including two articles and two reports in the international journal, 'Diaconia, Journal for the Study & Research of Christian Social Practice'.

An interesting aid to reflection on the process was that one member of the group – Maria Vuoristo (nee Kulju) a student of diakonia from Diak, Finland carried out a research project on the process as part of her studies and was able to give an evaluative feedback at the workshop in 2014.

This whole process has built up towards a European contribution to the Reformation Anniversary under the theme of community diakonia. The results of the process were presented to the meeting of the European delegates to the LWF World Assembly to be held in May 2017, in Windhoek, Namibia. To assist with this a small explanatory leaflet, grounded in the experience of the Solidarity Group has been designed

and printed. In the presentation the work of the Solidarity Group was linked to the three key sub themes of the Assembly (Salvation, Human beings, Creation Not For Sale) and other LWF priorities such as The Church in the Public Space and engagement with the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda of the United Nations

The results of the work between the Manchester workshop and the Tallinn workshop are shared in this report. First we have a reflection on the process based on the contributions of all the members of the Solidarity Group to the Tallinn workshop and then we share an evaluation of the process and outcomes and outputs. Secondly, we have gathered three papers from members of the group, two of which have appeared in other LWF publications – one on the conviviality concept itself and another related to Lutheran ideas for social welfare. The third paper was produced during the Tallinn workshop as part of the reflection on working with migrants and refugees.

## Links To LWF Strategy

The European Diaconal Process links to the overall LWF Communion identity to be committed, "With Passion for the Church and for the World". The community diakonia of the conviviality concept is focused on holistic mission, integrating witness, diaconal service and advocacy. In fact the theme of conviviality and living with difference has been discussed as an aspect of the theology of missions, introduced by Theo Sundermeier. Through the "Solidarity Group", communion building is supported in and across European regions, among diaconal actors and educators and among member churches. The program consciously aims at deepening relationships.

The Process integrates a cross cutting theological dimension, aiming at further developing common theological understanding of key social and diaconal issues in Europe, contributing to transforming and empowering diaconal performance.

## Follow Up and Next Steps

The Solidarity Group has nominated Janka Adameová and Tony Addy to represent them and to present the outcomes of the work on community diakonia in the LWF Assembly in Windhoek. It is hoped that the already expressed interest of other regions in the European process can be followed up. The Solidarity Group is interested to continue to deepen and to extend the process but this depends on the main program lines and priorities decided in Windhoek. What is certain is that community diakonia as an essential aspect of being church, is creating innovative responses to the critical situations facing many communities in Europe and other world regions. The Seeking Conviviality approach is an important aspect of this and training, networking and supporting this process is a strategic key to future development.



Photo: Peter Szyuka

# Part One

## Reflections on the Process

### 1. Journey to Conviviality

#### Personal Reflections from the European Diaconal Process

Rev. Dr. Eva-Sibylle Vogel-Mfato

Dr. Ulla Siirto



Photo: Solidarity Group

#### Introduction

During the past 6 years, about 25 diaconal workers, pastors and teachers have worked together in the consultative program of the “European Diaconal Process”, initiated by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and led together with interdiac.<sup>1</sup> It is one of the thematic processes towards the 500th Reformation Anniversary, 2017. Against the background of the deep economic, political, social and religious changes in European societies, the participants assessed the challenges and opportunities to strengthen diaconal commitment as a key feature of Christian witness in society, and especially with forgotten people in forgotten places. The name they gave themselves expressed their vision: “Solidarity Group”. On one side, starting from their working experience with people, they are committed to strengthening community approaches towards dignity, justice and diaconal vocation. On the other side, they realized their own need for advice

and support and discovered a wealth of resources in their group that called for deeper sharing. ‘The Christian who engages in diaconal work is that of an imperfect person helping another imperfect person to find the way towards fullness of life.’ (Addy ed., 2014.)

The first phase of the Diaconal Process was concluded with the publication of the first outcomes, entitled “Seeking Conviviality: Re-Forming Community Diakonia in Europe” (Addy, ed., 2014). In the second phase, the group has deepened the conviviality concept by looking at key issues to be addressed to deepen the concept. Beginning in 2014, means of networking among diaconal actors across Europe, especially through social media were explored and a Facebook group was set up. In 2015, the participants explored the issue of convivial economy: what concepts of economy will support convivial communities? And finally, in

2016, reflections on convivial theology were deepened.

Throughout the process, the four focal and inter-linked themes served as a red thread: Conviviality as the art and practice of living together; diaconal vocation as call by God through the other; human dignity as challenged by consumer society and its excluding dynamics; and sustaining justice, as individuals and churches. The concept of conviviality is further studied in LWF guide material to the themes of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation (Siirto, 2015). Bible Studies by Solidarity Group members can also be downloaded from the LWF website. They carry the title “Convivial Life Together, Bible Studies on Vocation, Dignity and Justice” (Addy ed., 2016). The results of the work on Convivial Economy were published in 2017 under the title, “Towards a Convivial Economy” (Addy, ed., 2017).

<sup>1</sup> The international Academy for Diaconia and Social Action o.p.s. is based in the Czech Republic. See: [www.interdiac.eu](http://www.interdiac.eu)



Photo: Solidarity Group

### ***Participatory learning***

The special approach to the development of the group has been to use the working methods of participatory learning. It is a convivial and empowering enterprise. It brought together key elements from liberation oriented pedagogy (Freire, 2006) and from the CABLE approach, contextualized by interdiac especially for diaconal formation in Central Eastern Europe (Addy, 2013a, 2013b). Thus the European Diaconal Process has been engaged in supporting a dialogue, in accordance with the level at which participants perceived their reality and saw themselves as engaged in diaconal vocation. Living in community in such a consultative process, implies participation. Deepened awareness of broader contexts went along with the motivation to work for transformation. The yearly movement

between workshops and local practice allowed participants to review content, objectives and methods for community diakonia. As Freire (Freire, 2006) underlined, learning happens in the community through dialogue. The context is assessed for harvesting the learning through new actions. People also undergo processes of self-awareness, transformation, humanization and dignity, as they become actors in the process.

### ***Concluding the process: Feedback from participants***

Before the Solidarity Group concludes its six years of intense exchange and developing conviviality in concept and practice together, the participants were asked for their feedback, reviewing the six years journey together, from the first workshop in Järvenpää/

Finland in 2011, to the fifth in Tallinn/ Estonia in 2016. As part of this review process, participants shared their own stories with conviviality

The rich variety of testimonies produced by participants is connected to all the four key themes, and are especially concerned with their theological grounding. In summarized form, but as far as possible in authentic words, we share the received feedback with the readers of this report. The personal conclusions affirm the participatory and empowering pedagogical approach to constructing working relationships (and, in fact, personal friendship) among diaconal actors from very diverse European contexts.

The shared stories from the Solidarity Group members reflect a wealth of experiences and insights. They reveal how spirituality is rooted in a relational space. Conviviality has shaped



key experiences that have led to individuals' vocation. Conviviality has gained its place in new expressions of diakonia, sometimes built up after hurtful experiences of suppression in dictatorial regimes. Convivial spirituality has re-affirmed human dignity. Convivial theology leads to awareness on situations of injustice and to the commitment for human rights. In dialogue with the Bible, Christian social practice often finds unexpected ways to build and sustain community where all have a place, and their contributions are welcome. And finally, in contexts of struggle over financial resources, churches and diaconal actors help one another to discover a wealth of human resources and simple, yet creative ideas to live conviviality. The Solidarity Group members shared with each other touching examples full of grace, humility and empowering joy.

### Vocation

*Diakonia is a faithful response to God's call through the other. The Solidarity Group found that they should be aware of the roots of their personal motivation. Each commitment to serve is nourished by a biographical dynamic, sometimes by personal experience of crisis and vulnerability. Testimonies of group members:*

- “As a foreign exchange student in the US, I found a parish - a social meeting point of committed people who nourished their communion life together and practiced hospitality. I was impressed when adults' groups gathered to reflect jointly what faith meant to their life's concerns. Here, I experienced conviviality for the first time. Soon after, I decided to study theology and to contribute to community building in my home church.”
- “I was raised up in a coal miner's area in Western Germany. The village was a melting pot of people coming from the European East and South, and later also from Turkey. My interest in “the art of living together” grew, the more problems, conflicts and prejudices I saw in my social environment. So I decided to become a social worker. I learned sociology, I did Comparative Studies of Religion and focused on Judaism and I became a Community Organizer.”
- “In my home place, the Lutheran Church is small and defines itself as a welcoming church. The Catholic main church was an exclusive church. One day in 1963, my mum and myself converted to the Lutheran church. Attending the youth group, I met all: well educated, rich ones, workers and farmers' children. I wasn't an extraordinary person, very normal – that was fine. In this warm and welcoming church I wanted to work. I wanted to become a social worker in the church. So our pastor invited me to diaconal studies. That became my identity until today. Perhaps it was a call.”
- “Living and working together with children and young people facing exclusion was taught to me by my parents. They were always ready to take in youngsters having problems with various forms of addictions and integrate them in our family life. I remember our family Christmas Eves always having special guests at our common table, who otherwise would have been alone during this wonderful season. The testimony of my parents teaching us conviviality from childhood by personal example was very important for my future way of thinking.”
- “‘Convivial theology’ has so far been mostly a personal experience. This is to say that my relationship to this word or concept is related to the people I have met in the LWF process from Järvenpää in 2011 to Tallinn in 2016. This once again confirms to me that all progress is dependent on personal relationships.”
- “A few years ago, the concept of “conviviality” didn't mean anything to me. It was a strange word, maybe Spanish? Or Latin? But thanks to the European Diaconal Process, I began my journey in understanding the concept of conviviality. And the journey is still going on.”

### Dignity

*The Solidarity Group realized that, for diakonia, dignity means emphasizing the inclusive love of God and God's Grace, which implies the absolute value of every person made in the image of God. Dignity means centering life together on values based in Eucharistic sharing, as brothers and sisters in Christ and working to resist that which excludes people and committing to social and economic sustainability. Looking at their own learning experience, participants commented:*

- “In the period of socialism, churches were greatly discriminated against and their rights suppressed. Church property had been confiscated. Faith and Christians were discredited by public media. The degrading experiences had a major impact on the functioning of the church. It became isolated.”
- “Dictatorial culture had betrayed the notion of community and living together. “Community” was used as



Photo: Solidarity Group

an ideology that would manipulate the population into a closed in view on people, blood and race. After the war, people would not trust community anymore and withdrew into the private. Conviviality offered new space to regain dignity as a person, in trustful relationships with others.”

- “I realized, in the parish, the deep need of people for working over their lives, for space to bring before God, their burdens, their traumatic memories, their need for reconciliation and renewed self-esteem.”
- “The impact of socialist ideology is still evident. People do not trust the Church as an institution. People are lacking religious education and knowledge of Christian values. They insist on the old communist-built prejudices. People often also lack a European perspective and experience. Yet, after the collapse of communism, charities and diaconates have started offering church related service. They have become social service providers offering exemplary quality services. The public is therefore turning to diaconal organizations with growing confidence. This opens opportunities for living witness and inviting into communion.”

- “Martin Luther’s insight is that nothing is needed to earn God’s love and one’s own human dignity. This creates the basis for human rights. Life in abundance and human dignity are given by God, by grace. A life that follows Christ means a life with insight in and thankfulness for my rights and filled with struggle for the rights of all other people. Through meeting and empowering one another, praying and forgiving, listening and learning together, sharing bread, faith and life (koinonia), we can be a serving communion (diakonia) that together can contribute our part, ‘to love the world back to God’ (Swedish hymnal, no. 62).”
- “Valentine’s Day: When the long discussions about how to organize youth work in our county had resulted in the elimination of the youth center, of a new coordinating organization, helping youth in writing CVs and job applications, it is complicated to put together a Valentine’s Day celebration in the community church. But maybe it isn’t. You just have to leave the doors open, glue hand-made posters to the bus-stops and call a couple of friends that happen to be teachers to let them know about the event. Your son will

prepare a cake in the evening and organize music, your daughter will put on training clothes and do a handstand in the middle of the room, and your neighbor will set up color-music. The room is full and the budget is non-existent. We will send the pictures with regards to the mayor. Life is wonderful! We just have to trust one-another!”

## Justice

*From own practice analysis, participants underlined that diakonia promotes equality and justice. It works to ensure that everybody is able to participate in the decisions that affect their life. It actively seeks an economy and society where all have access to the resources for life. Diakonia works against discrimination, both in society and in its own institutions. Nevertheless, this is a challenging topic, as group members’ witness:*

- “Only three years ago, the State decided the return of frozen church property. Now, for the first time since the 50s, the church is learning to manage its own property. Big differences of financial opportunities remain, among state, churches and NGOs. Only in the last two years, chances among civil society actors have become more balanced. Through the Diaconal Process, I have gained more awareness for these transformations, and for the church’s opportunity as actor in society.”
- “On the background of traumatizing experiences during Nazi dictatorship, the social environment in my youth had passed on to me a sense of commitment for human dignity, justice and reconciliation. I wanted to work for a church that was carrying forward those values, starting in grass roots community

and reaching out to a world yearning for healing and peace.”

- “In our Solidarity Group, personal pain had come up to surface. One of the participants once paid money to secure proper care for her mother, under the table. She told us that, at that time, she had enough money to pay extra also for the care for the woman who shared room with her mother. That was her way to handle corruption that she saw herself forced to commit. The burden to name such hard realities became apparent, and we all came to think over in what kind of unjust and even corrupt structures we are stuck in, in our respective countries.”
- “It is shocking to witness to growing violence and terror, in the name of religion. The refugee crisis is a crisis of compassion and of solidarity, throughout Europe, and also among church members. Our conviviality theme is very actual and urgent.”
- “In the refugee crisis, politicians call for the protection of Christian values and of longtime European history. Paradoxically, this European history includes prejudices that have grown under communism and that are still burdening us. Thus, the refugee crisis is perceived sometimes almost hysterically. Another factor: One sided positive Western political approaches to the challenge result in negative counter reaction in the East. At the same time, there is spontaneous volunteering through many people from my country, going abroad to assist refugees.”
- “In the Solidarity Group, we share joy and pride over good examples and we share sorrow and frustra-

tion over unemployment and poverty which are so many people’s reality. In all this, we search for practicable ways for diaconal work. I have become more and more aware of our need of listening and learning.”

- “A question from the perspective of a receiving church: Naturally, our church identity is to stand up for refugees. But why, then, are there so few employees in the church who chose to live in the suburbs of our big cities where most of the immigrants, and other vulnerable people live?”

### **Conviviality**

*Diaconal engagement is its approach to life in community. Diakonia develops conviviality – the art and practice of living everyday life with people. Key features are sharing resources in common actions, being open and affirming, breaking barriers and bridging. Diaconal congregations support diaconal vocation and creative innovations. Solidarity group members conclude:*

- “A Christian community features the dimensions of worship, teaching and diakonia - which together characterize the mission that God has called us to participate in. Diakonia, love for the neighbor, needs to be part of a holistic church, in all that we are and do. We shall be a sign in the world called to love and care for all created beings.”
- “After the first meeting in Järvenpää, I made a last note on my paper, before leaving: ‘Forgotten faces in forgotten places’. This idea is moving me since that time. Have we forgotten people around us? And perhaps, are there white spots on our map of the parish? To

discover people and places is the most exciting challenge of a convivial community. We should be discoverer like Jesus himself was a discoverer of the marginalized and hidden people of his time. That is the way of God, when he sent his son to our places.”

- “I am aware of the role of tradition and religion in everyday life of the people and I try to root everything I do as best as I can in the Bible. I love diversity and ecumenical action. On this path, I came to convivial theology.”
- “Everyone is a valuable. The roles of givers and receivers may change in one day. For me, conviviality speaks very strongly about the Gospel. We are called to live in a community. To serve others, but also to be served, to be givers and receivers. We are called to respect different kinds of people with different backgrounds, skills, and life situations. That’s what Jesus would do. I think that is conviviality.”
- “When the concept of conviviality was first explained to me at our



Photo: Solidarity Group

meeting I thought, ‘this is how we live together in our project, without having a special name for it’. It is one of our key values, in our refuge for children, to openly live as a community accepting and loving each other because Christ first loved us (1. John 4:19). Just by living transparently, teaching by personal example and implementing Biblical principles of common living we are impacting the next generation.”

- “‘Convivial theology’ has invited me to look more closely at the results for people involved, and not so much focus on theological correctness. We express our faith in different ways, and we are all practice related. Conviviality has given me confidence in an ecumenical, inter-religious approach in our diaconal work. This is liberating! Being Lutheran is not about having the right opinions about different topics, but to believe we can take part in the struggle for human dignity in our neighborhoods.”
- “‘Convivial theology’ is foremost a practical exercise to me. Less a dogmatic theoretical approach. This I appreciate very much because it is easier adaptable to my context. In our group, our different contexts shared were not seen as competitive or in conflict, but rather as positive diversity. I especially notice that diaconal practice and its effectiveness is not dependent on material wealth, but on ‘human capital’.”
- “This “journey” has changed my way of looking at Diaconia from “my point of view to our point of view” in our church. The idea of open church, doing together and sharing our gifts, opportunities and faith has taught me very much. I must say, that nowadays we are working together in our community and in our church

much more than before. We do not say: “We have a task for you”. We ask: “What would you like to do, how participate” and so on.

- “On the way from Järvenpää to Tallinn I have learnt that hospitality is not enough. The notion of hospitality always carries the expectation that newcomers are leaving some day, and it has also a connotation of charity. Instead, the concept of conviviality gives me a wider perspective: it is something that we have to learn together as a community. It is the art of living and practicing together in solidarity.”

Finally, a story about “Convivial Day”:

- “The idea of a speech-gathering event made many of us yawn in advance. We decided to do a diaconal market. We printed a leaflet of Conviviality on recycled paper, introducing the values and forms of conviviality. In the hall local people were offering home baked bread, people with disabilities were talking about their work, fair trade activists were introducing their ideas and creators of Green Bible initiative were there to share a more nowadays view on spreading the word of God. We also heard about family work and support services for people about to be released from prisons. Someone brought carrot-pies, someone sung; it was a pleasant mess where everyone felt at home. The mayor and archbishop met and the local priest smiled knowingly. The less force you use the better the ride!”

### Conclusion

In the lived experience of the European Diaconal Process, one can find

resonating the praise and affirmation from the beatitudes (Matthew 5, 3-10), as well as in a service of thanksgiving, during the last workshop held in Tallinn, February 2016, the Solidarity Group prayed for God’s Holy Spirit to come to our churches and our world, to inspire us, and create all things new. The group concluded in prayer for God’s blessing:

- ✓ May there be peace in all places.
- ✓ May we trust God that we are exactly where we are meant to be.
- ✓ May we not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.
- ✓ May we use the gifts that we have received,
- ✓ and pass on the love that has been given to us.
- ✓ May we be content knowing that each is a child of God.
- ✓ May this faith settle into our bones and our bodies,
- ✓ and allow our soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.
- ✓ This freedom is waiting for each and every one of us
- ✓ and for our communities that stand behind us.
- ✓ Amen.

After a long and intensive process studying and experiencing conviviality from different perspectives, the Solidarity Group has learnt not only to look and understand situations from different points of view and within different social, cultural, political and religious contexts, but also to meet and overcome the difficulties

in understanding those differences. The process taught them that living in conviviality is not always living in harmony. There is always a need to solve disagreements and even to live together in spite of differences. Thus, experienced conviviality revealed that art and practice of living in solidarity is embedded with same challenges that face any other kind of living. But the conviviality perspective offers a way to go over those challenges by sharing experiences and finding the common way forward, by living in reciprocity and respecting each other.

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Photo: Ireneusz Lukas

## 2. Participant Evaluation of the Process

Mgr. Janka Adameová

Rev. Tony Addy

The Seeking Conviviality process has been a long journey undertaken by a group of more than 25 people from different regions of Europe. The participants testified that the process had been inspiring and given a profound impulse to understanding local diakonia in the new context. They expressed thanks to the LWF and also expressed gratefulness for what has been done to create a real learning and sharing process. The evaluation was organised in two steps, group reflection and personal reflection. Finally we add some relevant remarks from the thesis, which was undertaken by one of the group members, Maria Vuoristo, which adds to the reflections made in Tallinn.

### Group reflection

The first step in the evaluation was organised as an imaginary sailing trip where the participants visited 'islands' related to the outcomes of the conviviality process. They were asked to find the people who would join them on a visit to the same island. On each island there was a flipchart with a topic, which the visitors should discuss. On each island there was a participant who found it to be so sunny, they wanted to stay and not sail off to the other islands. The 'cost' of this was that they should report the findings from all the visitors to that island to the final plenary. At the end of the journey all the voyagers came together and shared the stories of their sailing adventure. Here are the findings from the different 'islands':



Photo: Solidarity Group

### ✓ Knowledge, Experience & Diaconal Practice

The Seeking Conviviality process has been a valuable working and learning experience. Sharing & working together as an international group of professionals and volunteers in the diaconal field as well as learning from each other and from visited projects in particular local contexts has been most valuable. Rooting this learning in participants' self understanding and reflection through such processes as 'retreat on the streets' has been a valued and rewarding experience. (see: [www.strassenexerzitionen.de](http://www.strassenexerzitionen.de))

Reflection on community as a central concept for creating conviviality raised the question of the impact of the unrecognized power structure, which seems to be a hidden drive for some diaconal practice. By being challenged to adopt a new way of thinking has the implication of supporting empowerment in concrete life situations and creating a working environment of equality between the members of community. It means diverse people meeting and doing things together. However an open invitation to enter the community and showing hospitality is not enough; Conviviality

is needed for the creation of communities with more care, with mutual giving and receiving and with a concern for inclusion.

**The open question is:** How can such a practice concept be communicated so that it is more widely understood and mutual giving and receiving becomes a shared idea, which breaks down the idea of worker/beneficiary or volunteer/beneficiary?

### ✓ People & Networks

Face to face meeting and the experience of being together is an irreplaceable element in the process. Sustained and deep relationships mean that after a time of 'silence' it is easy to re-connect. The process gave the group a way to become open, trust each other, share food typical for own country and be like a family, which can also struggle with the conflict situations we faced in the group.

Making friends and trustful relationships among participants who have a wide range of age, experience and engagement from all over Europe enabled the creation of a social 'whole' across the boundaries. Learning went in unexpected directions, insights were found from new unexpected sources. The uniting of the group in common prayers, related to tasks and context, gave spiritual support and enabled the transformation of difficult life situations through positive action. However, the regional differences are evident through, for example, the differences in the availability and affordability of some resources and materials, or even of food, is not a self-understood fact in every region of one country and of Europe.

Being touched by life stories of people and meeting each other as 'soul mates' undoubtedly has an impact on relationships. The diversity of the group became more chal-

lenging and enriching at the same time. It is as if there is a price to be paid back when we are blessed and privileged by belonging to such 'colorful' group.

**The open questions are:** How can this experience, based on a participatory approach and grounded in the resources people bring through their biography and practice be included in learning programmes for diaconal workers, volunteers and local congregations? How can the multiplication of this experience in the future and its 'translation' into new contexts be supported? What will the future be for the Solidarity Group?

### ✓ Publications and Actions of the Project

The concept of conviviality has become more and more accepted, and this largely thanks the publication "Seeking conviviality – Re-forming community diakonia in Europe" It has been translated into different national languages, e.g. German, Russian, Estonian, and Norwegian, has brought the concept closer to more people. Along side this, the English version of the publication "Convivial life together" has been produced and already used or adapted for local Bible studies.

Another "door opener" for making conviviality more visible, has been the platforms of church leadership meetings in Ostrava (Czech Republic), the meeting of LWF Assembly delegates in Höör (Sweden) and the chance to present the results of the process at the LWF Assembly in Namibia.

Five members of the Solidarity Group agreed to meet in Odessa in an initiative built on personal and working relations in order to create and facilitate supportive actions that will respond to the needs of people affected by the war. The Solidarity Group also tried to work on the rec-

onciliation of the conflict between the DELKU and the Bavarian church, but without positive effect.

Among other local and national events organized individually by the members of solidarity group, it is important to mention is that a Bachelor Thesis dealing with the issue of conviviality and the process of the Solidarity Group has been defended at Diak in Helsinki. A participant in the Solidarity Group, Maria Kulju, wrote the thesis. Furthermore the concept and related practice have been included in courses and workshops at Diak by several lecturers involved especially with community based diakonia.

**The open question is:** How to integrate the concept and practice of conviviality in organizational policy practice of churches and diaconal institutions? In the light of experience, this seems to be both an inviting prospect, yet difficult to fulfill.

### ✓ Feelings and Other Issues

Undoubtedly, learning process of the people of the Solidarity Group drawn from such diverse backgrounds has been a unique and deep emotional experience. This has brought a deeper understanding of the importance of seeking conviviality, which we have observed, shared and reflected in different working places. At the same time this valued experience is inspiring and carries with it a strong wish & hope for change on different levels.

On the other hand, we have experienced the feeling of anger, frustration and sorrow resulting from lack of responsiveness to the call for solidarity with those suffering and a lack of involvement of church leadership in some contexts. Even we experienced church leadership working against conviviality by making decisions with

exclude people – for example female pastors.

The rhetorical question arises: "Does conviviality work or it is just a nice concept?" This evokes the feelings of doubt and of hope. The desire to implement the concept of conviviality as the 'art and practice of living together' has been strengthened by the experience of the group. But this is a challenge that has to be recognised and responded to contextually in many different ways.

**The open question is:** How will the LWF and the member churches support the search for conviviality in Europe, both locally and organizationally and politically and what role can the Solidarity Group play in this process? What resources are available and what resources could be produced to support this process?

## B. Personal Reflection

The second part of the evaluation was an invitation for personal reflection. Participants were encouraged to look back to the start of journey, from Järvenpää to Tallinn and to think of their learning points. The learning was divided into three parts - personal and professional learning and special joys and worries brought about during the process.

- **From the personal point of view,** the most valuable aspect for the participants in consultation process was the **diversity of people,** people who became friends and with whom the network was created. This network was described as a "harbor" where people could find support for their work and some nourishment for a spiritual growth. Alongside this, the people of the Group met in the different working places provided further inspiration. These encounters

were experienced as unexpected grace.

**Learning** and **sharing** together with and from each other was pointed up as a very important aspect of the process, which strengthened participants' own professional identity. The participants expressed it as, 'the privilege of having time and space to develop the idea of conviviality with a committed group of people, to experience the amazing international cooperation on the basis of Christian love and understanding and to experience the growth of mutual respect and unity in the light of diversity.

The privilege of having **time to reflect** on oneself and on the variety of approaches and methods in diaconia of such different working contexts, created a bigger picture and deeper understanding on what conviviality means and can mean. Participants learned from practical examples and at the same time, the reflective process has revealed the similarity of aim and the achieved unity in walking towards the common goal – to create more convivial communities.

- **From the professional point of view**, learning about the approaches in the work with people in need and on the margins and **sharing the ideas for diaconal projects** has been appreciated as beneficial gain for the service in participants' own churches and diaconal work.

This learning experience gave the **motivation, encouragement and support** for the participants to carry out the work already started and to become innovative with new dreams for the future, which has been inspired by sharing with others at the grassroots. The international composition of Solidarity Group and international settings for our meetings have faced

participants directly with the need for understanding towards a "stranger" coming to "my church, my country". The interpretation of "other" based on participants' own roots got another quality and created positive common lines.

The expansion of horizon about the diaconal work brought also new insights and a better understanding of diaconia in other countries, specifically the region of Eastern Europe was highlighted.

- **Joys & Worries** are two sides of the coin! On the one hand participants enjoyed the personal and small group reflections at each workshop as a positive way to move the process forward and **the achievements in working towards a common goal became increasingly visible.**

Being in an international context was new for some people, so they had a feeling that they lacked knowledge or competence. However after **walking together along the common path and reflecting together right away removed uncertainty** and the sharing of what seemed to be abstract topics was overcome. The worries dissolved and the goal became clearer. Through this process of dialogue and trust building, the feeling of insecurity gave way to a more relaxed mood.

**Language problems and misunderstandings** and the experience of different life realities were challenging to deal with. The 'silence' of some participants during the periods between the workshops and in some cases a lack of transparency has been perceived as disturbing elements throughout the process. Concretely, this surfaced in the conflict between the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ukraine and Evangelical Lutheran Church

in Bavaria, which was on the table in the work of the Solidarity Group and the members, who had also been organizing informal support for the Diaconia in the conflict situation in Ukraine, attempted to mediate. This process did not work out although members invested time and energy.

**Tough nuts have to be cracked to realize bright dreams!** In order to move the process forward, the Participants expressed a commitment to:

- Find ways to influence church leaders, staff members, media (if relevant) and others so that they better understood the conviviality concept in order to promote & implement it in respective churches and societies.
- Disseminate the results from the process within LWF family & interdiac and beyond in order to make an impact on practice and on the world issues that have affected grassroots communities.
- Contribute, if possible, to conflict resolution between German Evangelical Lutheran church in Ukraine and Evangelical Lutheran church in Bavaria, as it has affected the group, in sense of trust and security.
- Undertake the practical steps personally and together for and with people towards conviviality on local, national and international levels.

The Solidarity Group members agreed to continue to journey together, to pray for each other and to keep alive an active vision of conviviality in Europe and beyond. The process has proved to be an inspiring and



encouraging appeal to make a change locally and globally in light of conviviality as an innovative diaconal concept in practice.

### **Maria Vuoristo (nee Kulju) Thesis**

During the first phase of the project, one of the participants, Maria Vuoristo wrote her Bachelor's thesis on the basis of participating in the process and also interviews and discussion with members of the Solidarity Group. The report from this research was shared with the participants in the Rummelsberg meeting and this supported the mid-way reflection and future planning. The results concerning the core concept 'conviviality' are summarized below:

- 'Learning to use the concept of conviviality was seen to be an important part of the Seeking Conviviality process. The meaningfulness of defining the concept and exploring its relevance to the churches was also emphasized. The concept of conviviality is relatively new to the context of diaconia, which probably affected the view that some of the respondents found it meaningful to work on the definition. Furthermore, the concept is still developing.
- As many of the respondents highlighted, it was important to learn about resources; how 'less can be more'. Also, learning about economically poorer circumstances was reported to be helpful for some of the participants. This learning can also be linked to conviviality. That is, because from the point of view of the diaconal concept, conviviality is seen as an approach for strengthening identities and sharing of resources. This can be

seen in the way that diaconia advocates for the creation of church communities which are open and welcoming for different people and willing to share resources, no matter if the people are different than the mainstream. Based on that, the learning about resources could be linked to conviviality as well.



Photo: Solidarity Group

- From the point of view that conviviality also refers to living together in solidarity and to sharing of resources as well as to the joint struggle for human dignity and sustainable community, the concept supports the learning which was described incisively by one the respondents, that parishes should more rely on strength of relationships than on money. This view could also be linked to conviviality and solidarity.
- The experiences related to insights and ideas can be linked to conviviality. Some of the respondents described the fact that they have gained ideas about voluntary work and about the cooperation between volunteers and professionals,

involving more people in diaconia, hospitality and motivation and spirituality, which can be useful in their own context. Similarly, conviviality is about promoting companionship between people and recognition of interdependency. Thus, the cooperation between professionals and volunteers and service users points, all in all, to the willingness to include more people in diaconia, that could be seen as promoting companionship between people. Especially, the cooperation between professionals and volunteers can be seen as interdependency; both parties need each other for common good of all.

- To conclude, some of the respondents have found it meaningful to learn to use the concept of conviviality as well as to develop the meaning of the concept. Furthermore, the ideas related to conviviality can be seen from the responses, especially from the learning about resources, and ideas about the importance of voluntary work, cooperation between volunteers and professionals and service users as well as the importance of engaging more people in diaconia.

Concerning the process, the thesis concludes:

- 'this kind of process, which brings together people with different backgrounds, supports the view of learning through participation and especially learning from other peoples' experiences and points of view. The goals set by the process have a rather good correspondence with the experiences of the respondents. Based on that, it can be stated that the goals were set in a way, that

such group could achieve them, by learning through participation and from other people's experiences.'

Concerning the results of the process:

- The results of this research disclose that for many of the participants the Seeking Conviviality process has been meaningful and useful, but also that the concrete outcome of the process might be hard to

visualize in a large organization. Based on that finding, it could be recommended that more attention should be paid to strategies for the implementation of the outcome of the process in the future of the project. In case similar kinds of process will be organized, more attention could be paid on that matter from the beginning.

Finally, in terms of organizing such a participatory process, the research showed that there is a need to ex-

plain the time commitment and the overall expectations more clearly so enough time can be freed up for the participants to work on the process in-between the seminars and workshops – for example in contributing the material for and commenting on the publications.

The thesis can be found on the web site:

<https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/1552/browse?value=Kulju%2C+Maria&type=author>



Photo: Solidarity Group

# Part Two

## Background Papers for the Tallinn Workshop and the work of the Solidarity Group

### 1. Conviviality—a diaconal core concept

Dr. Ulla Siirto

#### Introduction

Human Beings-not for sale: This topic is one of the three key topics of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Reformation. Globalization and the principle of profit maximization have led to a global challenge, to which the worldwide Lutheran Church tries to find and formulate an answer.

Indeed, on the experience level everything seems to be for sale, including the human being. What can people do to protest against this harsh reality? Lutheran Church was from the beginning a protestant church which means also a church not content with the experienced “order” of the world, that is defended by the agents of the respective order verbally or, if this does not help, also by use of force.

“Protestant” implies at the same time not only opposition. It comes from the Latin “pro-testare” that means, “to testify in favour of something or somebody”. The New Testament is the testimony of God’s love to people, that becomes obvious in Jesus Christ’s words and deeds for people. Christ’s deeds are to a large extent deeds of compassion. His whole being can be understood under the term of “*kenosis*”- Christ leaves

heaven, in order to share earthly life with people, out of mercy. He becomes a human being in all consequences (Phil 2). In his resurrection he empowers people for a life in new existence, for renewed relationships with their neighbours.

“Conviviality” is a diaconal concept that is not just a concept but furthermore an expression of this renewed Christian and evangelical way of life. In the following some aspects of conviviality, as they are understood by modern diaconal and social science research, shall be outlined.

#### Processing diakonia from different realities

Diaconal actors from all over Europe have taken part in the preparations of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation by processing reflections on diaconal work in the context of a changing Europe. The process has been facilitated by the LWF and the group of diaconal actors involved in this process is called a Solidarity Group. Participatory process “Seeking Conviviality - Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe” which began in 2011 in Järvenpää (Finland), continued in Odessa (Ukraine) in 2013, and finalised the first stage of the process in Nuremberg (Germany) in 2014. The publication (edited by Tony Addy in 2013), which bears the name of the whole process, was also



Photo: Solidarity Group

launched in Nuremberg. Besides, a part of the Solidarity group was invited to organize a diakonia day for diakonia leaders of European Lutheran churches in Ostrava (Czech Republic) in 2012.

Mapping the changing European context, the Solidarity Group realized how the different social, economic and political changes have become more and more global, and thus affect all European countries in one way or another. These changes have for example driven entire nations nearly to the brink of bankruptcy, created new flows of migration and enlarged income gaps. Also local communities have changed at the same time with the global changes. In many neigh-

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bourhoods a wider range of people from different kind of backgrounds are now living together.

By telling stories from different working contexts, background reading and research the Solidarity Group was able to look at changing realities in Europe. These facts and experiences challenged the group to look at its task from different perspectives. Firstly, the group named economic, social and political changes, even crises as contextual challenges that affect people's life worldwide. Secondly, the group gave attention to the fact that the young and the elderly have to pay the highest price in the ongoing changes. Thirdly, the group saw the impact of worldwide migration and its flip side, which means that some people are forced to stay in the most extreme conditions. The fourth challenge is the fact that a growing proportion of people are excluded and very often they remain 'hidden' from the mainstream society and the organisations that offer social support.

After looking more deeply and analytically at different contexts the Solidarity group was able to recognize some common themes that were visible in different realities. From those themes four core themes were selected, vocation, justice, dignity and conviviality, through which the group started to study diakonia in a changing society and in different communities. The first three themes are very often connected to diakonia, but the latter provides a new perspective for looking at the core of diakonia. Its meaning is close to the Spanish word 'convivencia' and the German word 'Konvivenz'.

Conviviality in its interpersonal meaning was mentioned in recent times for the first time in Ivan Illich's book "Tools for Conviviality" (1973). He underlined the understanding

that the concept describes the autonomous and creative communication between both people and people and their environment. In the Seeking Conviviality - diakonia process the Solidarity Group continued to develop the meaning of the concept. Simply put, the term conviviality means art and practice of living together in solidarity. The art and practice of living together has risen to be a challenge in a new way, especially in increasingly diverse communities.

### From hospitality to conviviality

The concept of hospitality has repeatedly been featured in the discussion of 'strangers' and immigration. However, it is possible to understand the concept hospitality also related to all relationships with the 'other' – with people who are 'strange' or different to us. An example can be found in the way in which the understanding of conviviality challenges the use of the concept of hospitality in the context of migration. Hospitality has a prominent role in the biblical tradition, according to which the guests or strangers should be treated even better than own people or family representatives (for instance Gen. 18-19; Hebr. 13:2). The concept has offered roots for understanding the way we treat other people well.

The philosopher Jacques Derrida, himself also an immigrant, has written about hospitality (with Anne Dufourmantelle as a co-author) in *De l'Hospitalite* (1997, published in English in 2000 under the title *Of Hospitality*). In this book he points out that when the guests are integrating so much that they will become similar to the population, they cease to be guests. It also means that hospitality disappears. On the other

hand hospitality disappears even when the 'native' population does not set any conditions for newcomers and lets them live their own life as they want. Thus, Derrida maintains that the concept of hospitality is problematic.

In addition, the concept of hospitality has yet another problematic connotation. It involves an assumption that the guest is just visiting and will be leaving some day for another place. What about the situation when the guest is here to stay? Would not she or he have become a co-resident? Is hospitality still a valid concept?

Instead of hospitality, the concept conviviality highlights the fact that all communities are diverse in one way or other and residents must learn the art and practice of living together, respecting each other's differences. In a convivial society people not only tolerate differences, but also accept those in mutual respect. When every day is shared with others, it is possible to learn from each other. If people are able to expose their identity to other identities, they are able to build mutual relationship with other people different from them. (See: Theo Sundermeier's contribution *Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz heute*, published 1995 in *Missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen*, Neue Folge 3).

A number of studies have found that people like to be with similar kind of people, which is visible, for example, in segregation of neighbourhoods; making friendships or spending free time. Yet, the art of living together demands conscious learning. Members of a community have to break borders that they have built between different people and worldviews. Very often it means going outside of one's comfort zone.

The idea that people are too different to live together is also challenged. On the one hand the art



Photo: Solidarity Group

and practice of living together has to be learnt in a changed society. People are not able to continue by building borders, since it is a recipe for disaster. On the other hand, all people are called, in creation to conviviality. They are created in all the diversity of God's own image. By getting to know each other and by acting together people just join in God's creative work. However, the art and practice of living together requires curiosity and a willingness to learn from each other. Research (see Madeleine Bunting in the article *If you don't think multiculturalism is working, look at your street corner* in *The Guardian* on 16 March 2014) shows that people living side by side together generally develop tolerance but communities which do not have this experience, are less tolerant. In this way people can see that conviviality is learnt over time.

### Conviviality as a living together in solidarity

The word 'solidarity' will bring yet another perspective to the concept of conviviality. Solidarity means sharing, and giving up one's own. However, it is not a charity, because charity too easily implies a control dimension, in which the beneficiary is lower than her or his helper. Solidarity means mutual efforts to create a better living together and, by extension to create a better world. Solidarity can be equal, joint activities for the common good. It assumes that, firstly that everybody tries to get to know themselves and their own motives and hopes, and then the same applies to others. A joint review process of sharing the result helps build community and raise awareness of the things that are important at any given time.

Professor Miles Hewstone who has studied conflict areas, in *'Why can't we live together?'* (2013) makes a difference between the possibilities for encounters and for meaningful encounters. According to him, possibilities for encounters do not constitute a commonality, but rather, it is meaningful encounters that are significant. Such encounters prevent prejudice and create empathy. Already knowing one 'different' person will help increase the understanding and acceptance of other people who are different.

Paul Gilroy noted in turn, in his contribution, *'After Empire: post-colonial melancholia or convivial culture'* (2004) and his keynote speech, *'Colonial Crimes and Convivial Cultures'*, presented at the exhibition 'Rethinking Nordic Colonialism' (2006), that the concept of conviviality will bring a new aspect to the discussion about diversity. According to him, conviviality is associated with living, interactive processes. He claims that many problems can be solved by mutual encounter related to building the feeling of 'sameness'. When people find a common cause that they are united, it is possible to go beyond other differences. It is possible to find these kinds of common causes or issues within local communities, for instance, when people start to work and fight together in order to create better circumstances.

Alongside this, it is important to notice that conviviality relates to the atmosphere and feeling between people (see Amanda Wise and Selvaraj Velayutham in the article *'Conviviality in everyday multiculturalism: Singapore and Sydney compared'*, published in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* in 2013; and Amanda Wise in the article *'Hope and Belonging in a Multicultural Suburb'* in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* in 2005, nr 26). Sharing and learn-

ing together lead inevitably to joint celebrations in communities.

## Convivial diakonia

As societies change, so the churches come to be challenged in a new way. People's problems become more difficult and fragmented through social changes, which result in a wide range of realities, that diaconal work (and the wider work of churches) should be open to get to know. Poverty and marginalization affect many people, even whole areas and regions become marginalized. Members of churches should live as a church in the middle of the people and work with them in order to change the circumstances.

Changes can be implemented in the diaconal church that builds bridges with and between local diverse communities, along with all kinds of people in different life situations. A diaconal church can create space and processes for learning. It also can enable participation of those outside of working life as community builders and supporters of voluntary community-based work. The diaconal church is enabled by the motivation, attendance and participation, which arise from experience, relationships and faith.

According to the results of the Solidarity Group, reflection and action in diakonia is based on the four themes mentioned above: vocation, justice, dignity and conviviality. The call comes on the one hand from God and on the other hand from people who are suffering. However, to 'see' other people and other kinds of realities, requires awareness. Through awareness it is possible to start working together with local people in order to bring about change. Living together in solidarity is based on respectful interaction and reciprocity.

In diaconal activities church workers and volunteers encounter many people who pay the price of social injustice. One of the aims of diakonia is to work for equality and justice. It also means that diaconal workers should practice non-discrimination in relating to people in need and they should be careful not to misuse

the local situation, on the spot, where people are. In this case it is possible to see that diaconal vocation is based on the local church and community life. Working with all those involved clarifying diaconal activities using the framework which is developed in 'Seeking Conviviality' - process, communities can be created which



Photo: Solidarity Group

their power either in relationships or decision-making. Following diaconal values implies that the decent life means the application of basic human rights in relationships and structures. Diakonia in practice contrasts with the consumer society and the market economy by bringing out its values in action and by promoting alternative ways of meeting needs. It always stays on the side of those who are the most vulnerable. By doing this, diakonia is underlining that nobody is for sale.

## Towards the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation

The starting point of re-shaping of community-based diakonia is from

also include those who are in many ways excluded.

The art and practice of living together in solidarity is the basis for the diaconal congregation and for local diaconal practice in which different people are equal to each other. Seeking for justice is based on a diaconal community, in which the entire community is looking for justice. Human dignity appears in different people as diverse reflections of the image of God. Moreover, the existence of Christ, who was incarnated under the terms of "kenosis", encourages us to become humane ourselves and to stand up against the commercialization of our fellow human beings. We are free, not to be caught again into another law-system (Gal 5, 1). Therefore all are valuable. The re-formation of diakonia also requires that the local

actions be supported. It is important that people receive training in order to practice in this new context and also enable people to advocate their own concerns in the times ahead.

The process of re-forming diakonia continues. The whole process fits well under the main headline of Jubilee of reformation: 'Liberated by God's Grace'. Conviviality is a concept that describes one part of this liberation. At this moment, the European Solidarity Group has been divided into three thematic areas, which all reflect their work to salvation, human being and creation; subtitles of the anniversary of Reformation, underlining that none of those are not for sale. One of the thematic groups is considering con-

crete steps for conviviality; another explores the understanding of what is needed for a convivial economy, and the third is working towards a convivial theology, carried by the kenosis of Christ and the liberation he brought to people. In the following years towards the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation the Solidarity group is carrying out its work on these three concrete foci will assist in the diaconal activities of the churches.

Finally, the Solidarity group wants to put forward a message: what is the place for you in strengthening the vocation of diakonia by creating a stronger local diaconal culture, creating an open community for diversity and for the development of conviviality?

### For further discussion and reflection:

- ✓ What does conviviality mean in your local context and what can you do together with other people in order to strengthen it in your context?
- ✓ What are the issues that might threaten the conviviality in your context?
- ✓ What extra value does the concept of conviviality give to theology and spirituality?



Photo: Solidarity Group

## 2. Convivial Theology

### Some Reflections in View of People Forced to Move

*Notes from an input at the Tallinn workshop*

Tony Addy

#### Introduction

The Tallinn workshop coincided with the reality of the arrival in Europe of a large number of asylum seekers from conflict and war torn regions of the Middle East. Many members of the Solidarity Group were involved in responses to the crisis as part of their diaconal commitment. During the workshop we shared experience and reflection on this issue because it is very strongly related to the issue of 'conviviality'. At the time, church and civil society organizations were at the forefront of receiving people who had made the perilous journey from the Mediterranean region and North Africa. At the same time, the reaction of governments ranged from openness and welcome to hostility and fence building. In some countries, there was also a disturbing rise in nationalist and racist political action against the asylum seekers and refugees. In the Solidarity Group our shared our experience of working to receive the uprooted people was also discussed theologically and here we share a reflection on this by Tony Addy.

#### Basis of a theological approach

Our reflection starts with the affirmation that 'every person is created in the image of God and therefore has



Photo: Solidarity Group

intrinsic dignity and has the right to a life in dignity'. This is grounded in the first creation story, which affirms that human beings are all created in the image of God (Gen. Ch.1 v.27), and the Gospel promise of fullness of life for all. This understanding finds its secular reflection in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1 which states, 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.' The language of the declaration reflects the time when the document was first written, but we should understand this statement to be 'gender inclusive'. In fact, this sentiment can be found reflected in many religions

#### Three starting points for reflection on the 'Other'

When we reflect on the way in which people think about the development of diverse and multicultural contexts in Europe, in our experience we find three different divides which shape thinking and practice and which especially inform political and social movements. We have to work out how

to deal with these in our relationships, or practice and political decision-making. The first two divides reinforce each other:

In the discussion about the reception of asylum seekers and the presence of a Moslem minority in Europe, **we often confront the idea that there are irreconcilable differences between 'us' (however defined) and 'them'**. This is the thesis of civilizational conflict that was given credence by the thesis of Samuel Huntington, in his book, 'The Clash of Civilizations'. This has been much discussed and the thesis forms the backbone of the idea that Europe is a Christian continent and that there are unbridgeable differences between Christianity and Islam (especially) and perhaps between Christian Europe and other world regions with different majority religions. Many of those involved in so-called 'populist parties' in Europe support this theory.

The countervailing view is that 'we share a common humanity' and there is more that unites us than divides us. In fact we are all (inter) related. In the Solidarity Group the latter view is reinforced by the idea of 'conviviality', which is predicated on working out the art and practice of living together. We are not invited



to subscribe to the view that we are 'all the same' but rather to recognize differences and to work through open and transparent processes to find the ways in which people can live together. In fact when we look through the lens of 'conviviality' we can see historically that between Islam and Christianity there has been a great deal of creative borrowing and many ideas and ideals are held in common. It can be argued that there are exclusivist aspects of some understandings of Islam, but this is something it shares with other religions including Christianity.

**The second issue relates to the idea of a common culture, which is often related to place.** This type of thinking underpins national movements and also much of the thinking that each nation has its own common culture (historically rooted) - which is different from other cultures - even those in the same region. In practice, however, when you read statements about British culture or that of any other nation, it is hard to find the substantive difference. In fact, European nations are quite recent inventions and even within one nation, it was necessary to impose a common language, a process resisted in

some countries until today. The idea of a common culture does not 'work' even on the level of the nation state, as we see in many nations there is a struggle for the maintaining of local differences. Europe has lived through periods where a common culture was imposed by totalitarian regimes with resultant genocide and uprootedness. Another level of this debate is to refer to 'common European culture' informed by Christianity so that it is not so much national identity, which is at stake but European identity, as part of the 'Christian West'.

The idea of a common culture within a given geographical space is very tempting in times of rapid change and insecurity, especially when that is associated with migration flows. However, it very often leads to a totalitarian politics of exclusion and at least to the legitimization of excluding the 'different other'. We could therefore counterpose the idea of exclusion based on an alleged accepted common culture related to place, with the idea of the universal claim of human rights and the consequence that all people should be treated equally in spite of their differences. This has been nuanced in the phrase, 'different but equal'. If residents in a territory

have the right to remain, they should also be entitled to social rights as denizens. The basic concept, put forward by Hannah Arendt, is the need for the recognition that all people have 'the right to have rights'. If a person does not have the right to have rights it means that they can be excluded from any society that denies these rights. They have no rights to an opinion, thought, action or for due process. In this situation people are open to abuse and even torture or summary execution. This is the case in Europe, when people are summarily deported to contexts where cruel and inhuman treatment abounds. There is growing evidence that the treatment of such deported people and of asylum seekers is also inhuman and degrading, denying human rights. The case of growing numbers of stateless people on the streets is indicative of a failure to recognize the 'right to have rights' even in the so-called core countries of the European Union.

The third point is rather different. In modern liberal societies, there is talk of the need for the 'toleration of the other' and this is no bad thing. It is important that there is tolerance of people with diverse cultures, cultures which may even bring some



Photo: Solidarity Group



Photo: Solidarity Group

new elements of value into the so-called mainstream and which will almost certainly expose some blind spots. But what Richard Sennett has called ‘the rights of toleration’ is not enough. The daily experience of people who are ‘different’ and live in a society where difference is tolerated is no guarantee, long term, of effective rights. In many cities in Europe there are different groups who live to some extent parallel lives. This is sometimes overstated for political reasons, but, for example, one local congregation in the city where I live has a sizeable Afro-Caribbean membership but there are no real lived connections between the black congregation and the white congregation. Tolerance abounds but there is a (hidden) boundary. This can be seen more clearly in the history of segregation of Roma families in certain areas of the city in former communist countries and in the history of Europe

in the formation of various ‘ghettoes’ – places where the different other could be tolerated. The problem is such areas become not only spaces of identification, but too easily spaces of repression.

We rightly focus on the question of rights in civil society – freedom of religion, freedom for people to follow their own culture and communal practice if it does not transcend the accepted law of the country. In this way we can see human rights as social, cultural and religious practice. These rights are essential but are different from the rights associated with universalizing views, which can be seen to underpin classical human rights. We can see the right to religion and culture as rights of toleration but **rights of toleration have to be underpinned by fundamental human rights, based on human dignity, which legitimate the presence of the wide range of different ‘others’ and incorporate them as equal**

**members/citizens of the state with all that this implies.**

In summary, if we look at these issues from the perspective of conviviality, we affirm our common humanity and the human dignity of all. This implies that we also will reject all efforts to create a space, which can only be shared by people with one (constructed) identity. This leads to the rejection of a politics of populist nationalism for example and the support of human rights for all. Toleration of cultural and religious rights needs to also be embedded in a politics of legitimation, which is sensitive to and inclusive of diversity. In reflecting on our diaconal work we came to see that, on the one hand we have to respect diversity, but that we also have to establish communication/relationships between diverse groups. This is an area of social practice that is demonstrated in the work of members of the Solidarity Group. But we can

also see that this has to be extended to the political sphere **to embed and guarantee rights through the political structures**. This is right now a very contentious area because the 'right to have rights' is under attack in Europe as in other continents.

## Place and Dis-place

Now I would like to reflect on the role of place in the question of working with uprooted people – or to some extent even of people who are migrants and may not have been forced to move. The role of place in relation to identity is very different for different people – also in our Solidarity Group. Thinking about my own experience, I grew up in a place that was already an amalgamation of many different forgotten or half remembered traditions and cultures. My family history is in a modest way 'European'. The place I grew up in was probably a Celtic burial site and it is mentioned in the so-called Domesday Book (1086). It was a Viking settlement. But it did not grow and was settled later by so-called Moravians. My family names show both Viking and Dutch roots. But the formative experience was the industrial revolution, which created a strong working class identity in the area. Relationships crisscrossed between work, trade union, churches, clubs and societies. Scarcity was always an issue. There was a strong political tradition connected to the industrial culture. I could tell much more...and this culture has rapidly eroded in the last 30 years. But still it is constitutive of *my* identity, which was originally constructed through the relationships in this environment. I can trace values and attitudes to this concrete experience. This was changed by 'going to University' – a first among family and friends and this experience was

extremely disruptive, disturbing my settled views. What I learnt to see was how much of my 'culture' was actually 'imposed' by political and economic power and by scarcity. Later in my life I moved to live in other countries and was therefore really 'out of place'. But in general, I was free to move and I chose to move.

I tell this story because it shows how identity is constructed and related to 'place'. When I changed 'places' – first to the University and then 'abroad'. Reflecting on this, I can see how organically the common culture of my home place was built up but also how this is somehow an 'imagined community'. Maybe others 'imagine' it differently but politicians often appeal to this 'imagined community' in order to argue for exclusion of 'others' who would destroy it. I say it was an imagined community because there were already unremarked differences. For example, the large Irish minority was not really part of my 'imagined community' at the time I was growing up. But the main point I want to make is that it is very typical that people recall and even want to preserve (the alleged specificity) of an 'imagined community'. And when I go 'back' I 'hear' the distant echoes of my childhood but the 'place' is almost unrecognizable.

When you move from 'your place' and become a minority, maybe it is not visible that you are 'different' – or at least you think it is not visible, maybe it is visible. Nonetheless the 'locals' of the new place soon notice the 'difference'. When you move to another place, your 'home habits' look different in the mirror of 'the other'. This was my experience in the University, later in Geneva, Prague and so on. If you are relatively confident, you can use this 'mirroring' as a point of learning. Maybe you could focus on learning about the other, but I would say also and mainly learning about 'your self-identity'.

What I have roughly described is a common experience. Out of our resources we can cope with it and learn from it – perhaps even change! But what about other experiences of 'displacement'? What if you are forced to move, even from a place you love to somewhere you did not choose? What if you have no material resources? What if that move is not only disturbing but also completely changes your life? What happens when you look in the 'mirror of the other'? Who do they see? Who do you see? If we talk about 'seeking conviviality' we have to reckon with the trauma of being forced to see yourself in a mirror *not* of your choosing. How do we reflect, as 'mirrors' to the uprooted people we meet? What do they see in the reflection? Do we give space to this, beyond sharing some relatively easy cultural aspects such as food habits?

And we should think about the reverse situation. What about the people in our context who are 'forced to stay'? How do they view their own common culture? Are they part of the imagined mainstream? How do they react on the people who come there because they are 'dis-placed'? If we want to work with the 'displaced' people, it is probably equally important to pay attention to and work with those who are 'forced to stay' – especially those who are marginalized, out of the labor market or who face the 'fear of falling'. This is probably an equal challenge because the support for exclusionary (nationalist) politics comes from these groups as well. One of the reasons that populism can get a purchase on the situation is that it provides a direct link to the lived experience of marginalized people and communities. It implies that simply to moralize is neither an appropriate response because it also turns the 'other' into an object and reinforces the feeling of exclusion. Rather diaconal work has to

continue with an approach based on compassion and conviviality. It has to recognize the real sense of loss and fear that often drives populist sentiments.

## Judeo Christian Tradition on 'Place and Dis-place'

Working in diakonia, we draw on some resources and insights from the Bible and the Christian tradition, as well as our own experience. I just want to pinpoint a few points for further reflection:

The Old Testament narrative starts with Abraham being displaced, migrating. So at the very beginning of the story in the Hebrew Bible we have a story of 'dis-placement'. In fact, uprooting seems to have a positive value, the people of the Old Testament often thought of themselves as wanderers. Even for the Hebrews, God, Yahweh was a wandering God. After the Exile in Egypt and before the building of the Temple the people began to locate the presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was an object that the people of Israel carried with them. When the Philistines captured the Ark, they realized that God and this 'moveable place' were not connected directly. Yahweh began to be seen as a God of time not of place. God travelled with his people everywhere – to the ends of the earth. Nevertheless, they continued seeking a promised land.... so that place and identity could be re-connected. What can we learn from the idea that our God is not a God of place; that God wanders with the people and even goes into exile with them? On the other hand, we can reflect on the deep-rooted need to find a place where our identity (and spirituality) can be located.

## New Testament & Early Church Perspective on 'Place and Dis-place'

When we come to the New Testament, we find many elements in the Gospels and the early Church that resonate with the questions of 'place and dis-place'. We can see it in the challenges faced by the Jewish people under the Roman occupation, where their religion was tolerated but they were definitely subject to outside rule. The contradictions of this are played out in the narrative of Jesus' birth, ministry and death. We can also see that even in the Gospel story, Jesus had to be challenged to go beyond the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel', for instance in his reaction to the Canaanite woman – who challenged Jesus to see beyond the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Mt:15 v21)

Nevertheless, the possibility to travel and the Jewish diaspora was one reason why the gospel was able to spread so rapidly. But still there was the inner struggle over the gentile mission and the questions concerning the baptism of those who were not Jews. It was a question not only of God 'wandering' with the people of Israel wherever they went, but also of being for all people.

In the New Testament corpus, there is a very interesting statement about the relation of Christians to the surrounding context and the key point made is that here on earth 'Christians have no abiding city'. (Heb. Ch.13) This can be seen a quiescent way but there is a long tradition that the people of God should seek the welfare of the city and the early church had a special concern for the poor and marginalized. Wandering and exposure were the consequences of faith for

the Christians as for the Jews and it is worth recalling the Epistle to Diognatus:

*'Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity either in locality, speech or customs.... they do not dwell in cities of their own...they dwell in their own countries as sojourners...every foreign country is a fatherland to them and every fatherland a foreign country....'*

The image of the wanderer was one of the ways in which Augustine defined the two cities – the earthly city and the heavenly city. In the Genesis story Cain was the one who built a city and Abel was a wanderer, a pilgrim on earth. Interestingly the text goes on:

*'The true city of the saints is in heaven, though here on earth it produces citizens.... who wander as though on a pilgrimage through time, looking for the kingdom of eternity'*

The pilgrimage of the people of God through time, as opposed to settling in a place echoes Jesus' refusal to allow the disciples to erect monuments to him – and his promise of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem! Thus we can see that the Judeo-Christian traditional culture is one of experiencing dis-placement at its very core.

What does it mean for us in our work with uprooted and dis-placed people to recognize that as Christians we follow a tradition of uprootedness? We recognize the positive aspect that people with uprooted lives are equally human beings with resources and vocation as well as people having the 'right to have

rights'. The early Christians, 'wandering through the world' were set free from blind participation and could make new choices free from past prejudice and superstition. In our time, there is a resurgence of the idea that the 'truth claims of place' have priority, yet in our tradition the truths may be discovered more by being a wanderer (pilgrim) and becoming a 'foreigner' or by 'seeing in the mirror of the 'foreigner''. In this way the asylum seeker or migrant may be a gift for understanding and faithfulness.

## A Tension in 'Christian Europe'

One of the sharpest challenges, as we found in the Solidarity Group, is to find ways in which we can practice 'conviviality' in contexts of growing diversity and difference. We want to go beyond tolerance and beyond hospitality, beyond welcome towards common citizenship and equal rights. This is a very contentious position in the modern European context. There is a resurgence of nationalism, which places a strong emphasis once again on sharing among similar people who share aspects of everyday culture and beliefs. It is being asserted that politically that people should be excluded on the grounds of difference. In the past such political viewpoints allied with a strong emphasis on 'decisionism' and sovereignty in a time of (alleged or real) crisis have led to disastrous consequences, even genocide.

When we started the Conviviality process this movement was not so strong but the last 5 years have seen a resurgence of populism. There is much to analyze and act on but I would like to focus here on the role which religion plays in this resur-



Photo: Solidarity Group

gence. In some cases it is focused on nationalism, for example the neo-fascist 'Britain First' movement noisily targets the Church of England, claiming that the elite church leaders have sold out to the Moslems. Other parties focus more on the civilizational aspect of Christianity – claiming the defense of the Christian West, not specifically tied to one national church – and this trend is more pervasive. In this discourse, the focus is not on the practice of Christianity but more on the notion that European values (variously defined, usually unreflected) are Christian or rooted

in Christianity and that the churches should defend these values. This can be seen in the politics of national governments, which in some cases will only receive 'Christian asylum seekers'.

This makes it even more important to emphasize 'conviviality as the art and practice of living together', in order to create a platform of shared experience in contradiction to the assertion that essentially European Christians (sic) cannot live with those of other faiths (especially Moslems). The populist parties certainly value a national community and defend

their stance variously in relation to Christianity. Some parties are very conservative with specific views about gender roles and family (which are surprisingly, quite close to patriarchal views in general) and others more liberal, for example on issues of sexuality but some of them claim liberalism is a product of Christianity.

In our practice, how do we relate to these developments? At what points do we value 'traditional' community at the expense of 'transformation' through conviviality? How do we relate this to the view that transformation can come through literal or figurative displacement?

## A View from the Migrant or Refugee Perspective

This issue becomes even clearer, but more complex, when we appreciate the role that religion – and to some extent culture – plays in the life of an asylum seeker, refugee or migrant. When you move to a new place, especially if you are 'uprooted' the 'back home culture' becomes more

important. We can even see this in the Christian tradition – people create congregations of immigrants to share their own ways of worship, their common language and so on. It is a much more important factor when people are forced to move! One difficult aspect of this is that Europe has become increasingly secular (if we look simply at religious observation) and the connection between believing and belonging on a daily basis is eroded. In Europe we witness what has been called believing without active belonging whereas populist politicians on the other hand promote generalized Christian belonging, without believing. So we have the contradiction of often fervent worship (according to diverse religious traditions), where believing and belonging are connected closely to daily life, existing alongside a Christian culture where active church membership is very low even in countries with a high percentage of (paying) members.

All this means that the culture and religion of the 'other' look different in the mirror of the 'culture(s)' of the receiving country and vice versa.

When you arrive in a 'strange place' you are placed in a tension:

**On the one hand the main political line is that those who enter a country should be assimilated.** This literally means a loss of distinction, which is normally an unachievable goal. But it also implies a loss of a distinctive voice; in fact it is a form of self-censorship. There is no guarantee that steps towards assimilation will lead to the promised income security and occupational advance but, conventionally, it may help. The dominant culture has power and is resistant to integration because if the 'other' is integrated it means that both parties change. The process of 'seeking conviviality', which is relational, implies that there will be change!

**On the other hand the second strategy for dealing with 'difference' is 're-membering'.** In some cases, this positive re-membering can be a source of pride, stability, support and feeling a small space of home. But for many people, to be continually thrown back on their (imagined) roots means to be trapped in a trauma of continual dis-



Photo: Solidarity Group

place-ment. In this situation where there is no conviviality, the migrant or refugee is perhaps caught up in the continual thought of 'going back' to an imagined but maybe no longer existing home.

Under the pressures of living in a context that continually mirrors a person's difference - and sometimes in a hostile or exclusionary way - people can become isolated and lonely, insecure and frightened (sometimes with due cause). It is not the case that immigrants and refugees always want to meet for their primary socialization with people from their own background. As an example, for some people, the 'back-home' divisions and conflicts may be reappear in the new local setting as well and others may simply have stronger identifying characteristics. For example on friend who had cleared all the requirements for residence said to me, jokingly, 'Why do people assume I want to meet with those from a country I was forced to leave? For me to play football here is more important....'.

Diakonia, seeking conviviality aims to create spaces and processes where people feel secure, where negative mirroring is minimized and the pressure to assimilate and the trauma of re-remembering is handled in a way that is empowering and leads to change.

## Hospitality or Conviviality

Hospitality is a deeply rooted Judeo-Christian Practice which was one of the key marks of the early church and which continued with a variety of different settings, such as in monastic communities. This is linked to the oft-repeated injunction to 'love your neighbor'. In a recent

election in Austria, one candidate produced a slogan that read, 'love your neighbor, my neighbor is an Austrian'. But as we have seen the Bible does not limit the concern for the neighbor to those from the same culture. In New Testament times the limitation would be to the Jewish identity, but Jesus transcends this boundary. In the Hebrew Bible you find the oft-repeated injunction not to neglect the stranger, the foreigner, the alien but to treat them with compassion and justice.

Hospitality is a good thing, but it is based on welcoming the 'other' and treating her or him as yourself, but it is a short-term business...you are not expected to stay; it should not necessarily change you and it is quite clear that the power lies with the giver of hospitality. But hospitality is only the first, albeit important step towards conviviality. Conviviality changes the relationship from giving and receiving to living together. The practice and the 'service model' are different, related to the different expectations. Through seeking conviviality we are invited to have productive conversations that lead to new meaning for all the partners and to integration based on mutual learning, giving and receiving.

## Pluralism or Conviviality

The final point I would like to address is the question of pluralism. This has already been hinted at and the present conjuncture presents sharp questions to the possibility of living together with the growing diversity we face in Europe. I have to say, from a historical viewpoint, the idea of a homogenous national culture has always been a matter of construction, even imposition. As mentioned previously, we have

enough history in Europe of the evil results of the politics of purity. On the other hand, Europe is a diverse continent with state boundaries not following linguistic or other lines. Diversity is a fact of life, which has been deepened by mobility, migration and the so-called refugee crisis. The question of living with diversity has been and has to be addressed in different ways, other than the search for national purity!

The basis of tolerance can be a matter of simply agreeing the boundaries of different communities on a live and let live basis. This is a form of diverse communitarianism and migrants form their own communities as if they have 'never left their homeland'. This has always been a tendency. But in our Solidarity Group we clearly see the possibility and the challenge to go beyond this to living together with the 'other(s)' and to be continually transformed by the process. To relate this to the discussion above, we find our identity as we see ourselves in the mirror of the 'other'. Conviviality resists all efforts to create bounded communities in which there is no 'other' from whom we can learn. It is a process resistant to all totalitarian politics and which seeks to build on the gifts all bring to the table. However, it also requires an appropriate political and economic framework and can contribute to a healthy politics and a sustainable economy.

Conviviality in practice leads to an ongoing process of integration, which changes not only the 'other' but also we ourselves! This is the challenge and the risk!

**Note:** This text is written as it was 'spoken' and therefore the references and some qualifications are missing. In the future it may be produced in a different form.

### 3. First theological thoughts of conviviality A discussion paper

Fritz Blanz

#### Introduction

For the first time in December 2011, a working group of the Lutheran World Federation (hereafter referred to as “European Solidarity Group”) met with the aim of initiating a process of diaconal community structure (or as it was called later, the community diakonia). Since that time, 25 members from 16 European Churches are working on the topic ‘Seeking Conviviality’ and they published the document Seeking Conviviality: Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe, in 2013. Later other reports were produced. The aim of the overall process is to introduce the contents as a contribution to the Reformation Anniversary in 2017, contributing to the debate and to support the development of community diakonia in the member churches of the Lutheran World Federation. This process is the basis for the following thoughts and it was prepared as one of the inputs for the theological discussion in the spring of 2016 in Tallinn, Estonia.

#### Cornerstone: Conviviality

During the process that led from the individual experiences of the participants - both spiritual and practical - to the general positions, three basic statements emerged, which are explained briefly below.

- **Human dignity and God’s image (1st criterion)** “The church



Photo: Solidarity Group

is within the human being, not outside; every human being in which the Lord is present is a church “(Emanuel Swedenborg)<sup>2</sup> Across the different national and theological boundaries, the European Solidarity Group discovered human dignity as grounded in the creation story and as an essential attitude for working in the community: “and God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him. And he created them as male and female “<sup>3</sup>

The notion of the image of God continues in the parable of the Last Judgment and the therein contained Works of Mercy. The statements are summarized in the phrase “what you did for one these least brothers (I add” and sisters “), that you did for me. Personally, I like to see the text from Mathew 25 as a provocation of God, a pro - vocatio, a “vote for” or advocacy.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Nachrichten der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, 7/8/2015; S. 227

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 1,27

As if God would admonish us “ you can bypass me.”

The notion of the human dignity, of God being near in solidarity runs like a red thread through the history of faith, from the founding fathers, the Christian communities’ practice in the New Testament to the hospice movements, the diaconal treasury (Gotteskasten) in Luther’s time and diaconal revival movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- **Justice and God’s presence (2nd criterion)** Karl Barth unfolds in his exegesis on Romans the question of God’s righteousness, which leads to the formula: justice, which is the close presence of God to the people. Now you might be tempted to refer to the statement as an abstraction, but that would be contrary to the tradition of how God is encountered in the Old Testament. There, experiences with God are always placed into the concrete context. This becomes clear when the socio-critical prophets times and again point at discrimination and oppression of the poor and



the weak (cf.. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and other prophetic books), as signs of God's absence.

We like to tend to separate earthly justice from the righteousness of God. At least according to the Old Testament understanding, this is not possible because the Jewish understanding of the state has always been linked to the question of God (God's people) until nowadays. Thus, God's presence always has to do with the way that others are treated, the widows and orphans, the strangers, the marginalized, the weak and the sick.

The life of Jesus confirmed this attitude in dealing with these target groups in (!) the society. To separate church and society, as it often happens through the misinterpretation of the two kingdoms doctrine, is unimaginable in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Who supports structures and practices of injustice, permits or ignores them, cannot claim for him- or herself, at the same time, God's presence. That's unthinkable.

The Solidarity Group agreed unanimously that the concept of justice, in the context of the community, includes the terms of inclusion. That means not only integration into an existing system but fellowship, participation and involvement in the development of the community and related decisions. Here, the approach in the Babylonian exile becomes clear: even when not all can find their homeland within the Christian Community (for whatever reason), it remains our mission, "to seek for the peace of the city"<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the Solidarity Group pointed at the important issue not to discriminate dissenters and other faiths because that cumpens conviviality, if it does not even destroy it. To put good meanings into words and to aim

at what is good is the best way to nourish justice. Helpful is the 12th chapter of Romans which, starting out from the Christian community, also includes its environment.<sup>5</sup>

- **The call by and trust in God (faith) (3rd criterion)** Abraham believed (= trusted) and that has been credited to him as righteousness.<sup>6</sup> This core sentence which is quoted by the Apostle Paul in two letters and which is the centerpiece of the interpretation of Romans by Karl Barth, is a third important feature for community diakonia. Firstly, it gives the motivation of our actions which, in the first Diaconal Process workshop in Järvenpää, was of great importance. Where do we get the energy from to cope with even the most complex and stressful situations, without slipping into resignation and letting ourselves be unsettled? So it is a personal criterion.

However, it is also a universal criterion. If the question of faith is entirely connected with confidence and ultimately connected to trust in God, we can assess our actions in society by how much we have succeeded to build an atmosphere of trust. In particular, in the letters of the New Testament, this question again and again plays a role when it comes to how Christians should behave in a critical environment, for example if they are attacked or threatened, as a minority, to sink into insignificance. How much more this may be virulent where Christians are still being heard and their collaboration is expressly affirmed, as in many countries of Western Europe

For me personally, to build trust is becoming increasingly of importance in a society that is increasingly characterized by distrust and where mistrust is being enhanced by economic mechanisms. Let us just think of the more and more extended control system for service providers in the health care sector or the multi-paged purchase contracts with its small print and legally hardly contestable terms. People no longer trust the other, and it is urgently needed to establish a counter-culture of trust. One should recognize us as Christians, are as those who are indeed rooted in a deep trust.

## The pilgrim people of God

- **Exodus from structures of slavery and injustice, foreign domination and false values, misunderstood autonomy and economic liberalism** In the workshop of Odessa and most comprehensively in the Manchester workshop, the European Solidarity Group dealt with the question of the neoliberal economic system and its impact on the people. It is not so important how we name the system but that we describe the system mechanisms. Following this, we can discover astonishing parallels to biblical contexts. This may indicate that people in all eras of history and probably also in all places in the world tended to take advantage of others, to put their rights into question and to build systems of oppression through abuse of power. In the Exodus story, we learn about such mechanisms and the liberation of these people to whom God is near.

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<sup>5</sup> See Romans 12, 19-21

<sup>6</sup> See Romans 4,3 and Gal 3,6

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 29,7

But the Exodus alone does not prevent from new offenses, such as the 3000-year history of Jews and Christians shows. The socially critical prophets remind repeatedly of undesirable developments and the anger of God against his people. One could set up a whole catalog of wrong doings directed against the weak in society, such as abusing a person's vulnerability and murder in the history of Naboths vineyard<sup>7</sup>, bribery and refusal of jurisdiction by the princes in Jerusalem<sup>8</sup>, false witness<sup>9</sup> still common practice even at the times of Jesus<sup>10</sup>, or false measure<sup>11</sup>, suppressing the debtor and the poor<sup>12</sup> or the shift of property boundaries<sup>13</sup>.

Now some topics may sound antiquated, however, if one considers the methodology and its implications for the parties concerned, a picture of parallels records becomes clear. Ultimately, most of the instruments boil down to upsetting the right to life and existence of the marginalized and disadvantaged groups. At that time, they were the widows and orphans, sick and strangers, old and lepers, today we recognize comparable proceedings in dealing with refugees, homeless, disabled, sick, unemployed, elderly and many others. A life in dignity and self-determination is denied, they are patronized by legal regulations and defamed by political polemic as "lazy" and "social parasites". People are trapped in a system of hopelessness – no way out.

In contrast, diaconal parish forms a counter-society. It overcomes the ban of the Red Sea, sets off on in

pilgrimage with the people - even if times of drought shape everyday life, it keeps a vision of the country flowing with milk and honey, and builds on the land of Canaan.

Exodus Yes, but where to? The admonitions of the prophets are memories of sustainable values, as they had been written down during the origins of the Israelite nation building. Certainly not from the open sky, but from the first experiences with the people of God and above all, in dialogue with God. They can be found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, in the prophetic writings and all the way to dialogues of New Testament witnesses. The wheel must not be rediscovered, but a return to the values is needed that promise quality of life for all.

It is important that we set out on a way that leaves behind the familiar and explores a new country, connected with visions of a New Jerusalem<sup>14</sup>. As static people of God, conserving and preserving, we will not advance but worsen the situation. We remain Pharisees, perhaps scribes, yet, in any case people who are looking for solutions within fixed systems. What we need, however, is a pilgrim community of Jesus Christ.

## On the way to people

Walking on the way does not protects us from repeatedly experiencing periods of disorientation. Therefore, the periodic review of the target is necessary. In my earlier work with unaccompanied minor refugees, I got a meter rule, one day. Folded, one could read on the side the words "the human person is the measure". I think this was a successful idea. In the focus of our actions, the human person must remain, as a good crea-

ture, as an idea of God. So at every crossroads of our actions, always where decisions are pending, we should look at the people, whom we encounter in our living context:

- ✓ Is action oriented in a way that ensures dignity?
- ✓ Do we participate in a way that brings more justice, in the sense that every person receives what he or she needs to live?
- ✓ Do we work in such a way that we build a climate of trust, which allows, without fear, changes to take place and which offers an opportunity for everybody in the new situations?

In his "Theory of Communicative Action", the sociologist Jürgen Habermas analyzes the life-world and the system-world. While in the life-world, all acting subjects are involved and continue to develop the social context in a constant discourse and shape it autonomously, the system-world embodies a static entity (mainly in the economy as a market-regulated economy and in politics as a bureaucratic administrative state to which human persons have to subordinate to, so that the system does not falter. If life-world and system-world have disconnected and the system colonized the life-world (Habermas), inevitably conflicts come up. One form of the conflict may be that systems are no longer accepted and an exodus from the system is the consequence. I think that, in the present days, it is only a matter of time before that happens. From the recent history we know such processes, like the revolutions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or the student revolts (they were not only students) in the 68 years.

Today, too, congregations no longer satisfy themselves with the status

<sup>7</sup> See 1st Kings 21

<sup>8</sup> See Isaiah 1, 21-23 and Isaiah 59

<sup>9</sup> See Micah 6,12

<sup>10</sup> See Mark 14,57

<sup>11</sup> See Micah 6, 10; Hosea 12,8

<sup>12</sup> See Amos 2,6

<sup>13</sup> See Deut. 9,14

<sup>14</sup> See Isaiah, 58, 6ff and 65, 16ff

quo and set out on their way. Probably, we are currently experiencing the broadest movement in the refugee work. In Germany, an unprecedented welcoming culture is developing. It is the path to the people!

## Luther's time and the Social Question

During Luther's time, the question of poverty and the approach to solutions was rather sparse. However, in the 95 theses contributing to the discussion of the indulgences, in the theses 43-46, he refers to poverty reduction issues: "Who gives a poor or lends a needy, is better than if he bought indulgences". In thesis 45, he brings it to the point: "You have to teach the Christians that who sees a needy, but does not care for him and spends for indulgences, does not acquire indulgences by the pope, but God's contempt." Thus, the responsibility for the poor is seen rather in competition with the sale of indulgences and is evaluated as the better part.

How far Luther and the Reformation actually have taken a decisive influence on relief of the poor remains controversial. Some authors claim that this has originated in the 13th/14th Century.

Luther himself sees in the (individual) helping the poor the good work of charity, that theologically reflects the last act love to the neighbor. Much more important is (and here is expressed a considerably modern approach) that one should commit to poverty prevention. The alms he called even "... *how big, much and precious it may be, in vain and lost*"<sup>15</sup> To help someone else when it's too late, is for

<sup>15</sup> Dalferth, Silfredo Bernardo: Die Zwei-Reiche-Lehre Martin Luthers im Dialog mit der Befreiungstheologie Leonardo Boffs. Ein ökumenischer Beitrag zum Verhältnis von christlichem Glauben



Photo: Solidarity Group

Luther only to the actor's "*own fame and glory will*", and not worth anything.

So Luther criticized the usurious practice of his time, at first bringing people into distress. Here, he connects to the Old Testament practice. In his view, interest rates are possible only in an extremely limited framework; better is to waive interest. Real Christian behavior shows in situations such as someone in need without prestige of persons to give things in vain, willingly and without any interest, also without prestige of persons, to borrow goods or money (even the enemy).

An alms system based on the treasury (Gotteskasten) or other social care structures were rather in place in the monasteries. However, life companions of Luther, like Johannes Bugenhagen and others already were working out first municipal social assistance systems.

und gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung. Frankfurt/Main 1996

## The country is bright and wide<sup>16</sup>

✓ The model of a dynamic congregation in the community (Ralf Kötter)

In the spring of 2015, the Federal German Diakonia network for community work met for the second time. One speaker particularly attracted attention through his convincing model of community work: Rev. Ralf Kötter who since more than a decade has been rebuilding his parish towards a congregation oriented at community diakonia. And the success speaks for itself! "The country is bright and wide" is the title of his book<sup>17</sup>, a sentence taken from the German church hymn 'Trust the new ways'. There, he summarizes his experiences. Here in this text, is not enough space to introduce the whole concept, but some theologi-

<sup>16</sup> The following chapter is orientated at the book by Ralf Kötter with the same name

<sup>17</sup> Ralf Kötter, Das Land ist hell und weit – das Modell einer dynamischen Gemeinde im Gemeinwesen, Berlin 2014

cal reflections will be brought to the readers' attention.

✓ **The Word was made flesh - of a theology of incarnation**

Starting with the Evangelist Luke, after who his congregation is named, Kötter reflects the wonder of God's presence in the world. Kötter and his congregation love the contextual theology of the evangelist that begins with the historical introduction to the Christmas story. The theologian sees the Evangelist Luke less as a theologian, but mainly as a historian. Jesus, who consistently goes his way in this world up to the bitter end, is looking, among his disciples, for people who are ready to face the challenges of their time and to cope with them. . He points out that the story of the Good Samaritan (which is part of the special material of Luke) answers the abstract question of the scribe "whose my neighbor?" with a real life story. And as conclusion, Jesus does not reflect the abstracted teaching on the neighbor, but says simply: "Go and do in the same way". The deep diaconal message is found in Luke's Gospel again in another text part: "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor (!) The gospel is preached"<sup>18</sup>. Kötter is convinced that the evangelist Luke sees in Jesus a person working on a fearless and visionary atmosphere that seeks reconciliation. (Compare with the picture of the prodigal son). This positive atmosphere needs to be brought into in the congregation.

At Martin Luther's time, a person appeared who was working on the design of social space: **Johannes Bugenhagen**. He is not only a contemporary of Luther, but teammate

in Wittenberg and an advisor to cities such as Hamburg and Bremen, in the construction of social housing. That time of change contained so much trouble and unrest. The world was expanding with the discovery of the Americas, and the Church was losing credibility with its theory of the earth as a disk. Trading companies were collecting unimaginable richness, and obedience to those in power in church and state was dwindling away increasingly. It was a time of upheaval and Luther found the answer to it in his writing on the Freedom of a Christian: "The Christian is a perfectly free lord of all things and subject to none - the Christian is a servant of all and subject to everyone". Thereby, he liberates the human person from the paternalism of the ruling and at the same time binds him to the responsibility for society - the same we find again in the categorical imperative according to Immanuel Kant. Luther's companion Johannes Bugenhagen translates these thoughts into a concept of social responsibility. They play a key role in "the construction of the church and society in the Protestant sense"<sup>19</sup>. The doctrine of the Incarnation (the incarnation of God) plays a central role here. For him, the incarnation changes life at all times and in all places; it is not only a historical event at the times of Jesus, but also taking place today. God is present at all times and at any location. As a logical consequence, a conflict was programmed to traditional understanding of mission that wants to bring God into the world (of the unbelievers), is. But similar to Bugenhagen, also Leonardo Boff says that God was already there before the missionaries came. This attitude has far-reaching consequences if we start from the premise that God is already

at work before the church awakens from the sleep of the just. On this basis of theology of incarnation or as "the crazy reality of God", as he described it himself, Bugenhagen designs municipal rules for the city of Hamburg where he thinks together closely Christian community and civil community. God's Word is not only for the church, but also for the community. Erfurt and Danzig follow. In Braunschweig, Lübeck, Schleswig Holstein he was asked for advice. Like Luther, he also "looked to the people's mouth" and developed community up-building starting from the grass roots, always sustained and motivated by the leading perspective that the presence of God can be perceived in worldly matters. Schools and colleges, education and midwifery, diakonia and donor boxes are built up in the responsibility of the community and are no longer relegated behind the walls of monasteries.

Years later, **Bonhoeffer** deals with the idea of the incarnation of God. Challenged by the claim of the Nazis to totally control the church and society and connected to the struggle of the Confessing Church to reach common positions, he developed, between 1940 and 1943, in his manuscripts the ethics of a community-oriented church. In this text, he described Jesus Christ as reality in this world. World and Church are not opposite to one another, but by the reality of Jesus form one unit and are interwoven. Christian community and civil community are inseparably interrelated and must be thought together. The church's mission is to carry into the world and its living reality the reconciliation with God, to live it and, in the love of God to his people, translate Christian reality into experience. The result is that the reality of God and the reality of this world form a unity that has in view not only the individual, but also the community. Individualistic Christian-

<sup>19</sup> Hauschild Wolf Dieter, *Reformation als Veränderung christlicher und bürgerlicher Existenz*, Amsterdam 1988

<sup>18</sup> Luke 7,22



Photo: Solidarity Group

ity is unthinkable in Bonhoeffer's thinking. Therefore, he looked for allies in the world in whom God's reality was already manifesting – he reflected about an unconscious Christianity. Prerequisite for this alliance remains, however, that Christians become aware of their mission and their values.

**Karl Barth** continues this idea after the World War II. He is firmly convinced that the Christian community is always part of the community of citizens and that there is no problem in the civic community that is not relevant for Christians. He refers to the letter to Timothy, wherever he sees, for the Christian community, a responsibility in the State.<sup>20</sup> For everyone (!) should have a share in the truth of God and his work of reconciliation - not only in

the abstract but also in the reality of life. Church can not remain neutral towards the State, but must take a stand in faithfulness to God's message, that means to carry into this world faith, hope and charity and let the solidarity of God in Jesus Christ become reality in the social context. Solidarity and co-responsibility are, in the understanding of Barth, no abstract concepts, but they are taking place in the everyday situations in the regular small (socio-political) decisions. Here, Christian community needs to avoid that it represents certain worldviews and morals that cause rejection rather than sympathy. Church lives by the message of love by reconciliation and advertises this position for a society in which community and solidarity comes to fruition, in which Diakonia and social justice are the formative elements and in which the people can live in autonomy and responsibility. In

the opinion of Karl Barth, the church should always take a stance for the marginalized and weak, but never assign to a political party.

During the reform movement of the '60s, an additional name appeared: **Ernst Lange**. He engaged in a new understanding of worship-service, the "Mass in Everyday Life". In his book "opportunities of everyday life - Considerations on the function of Christian worship in the present times"<sup>21</sup>, he urges Christians to be always present in the realities of the world. The mission consists in the "being for others". God himself expects us in this world. Therefore, Lange struggles against a sacramental, liturgical alienation of worship and insists on the principle: "For the Christian, the whole reality of his life was liberated

<sup>20</sup> See 1. Tim. 2,4

<sup>21</sup> Lange, Chancen, S. 33

to a worship of faith, love and hope". Lange reflects this on the basis of the realities of Jesus' life, the street, the market, the fields, the vineyards, the professional worlds of the disciples. These realities were also Jesus' realities, and not only the world of the synagogues. After a self-withdrawal of the church from this world and the contemporary rejection of the Church, it is of importance today to be present in the world and to work towards bringing together the realities of the world with the reality of God. To remember Luther's script "On the Freedom of a Christian": The church may be make themselves free from free the power structures of the powerful, but it cannot get rid of its responsibility towards the world!

"Arise and be light", this is a Christian hymn line sung in a responsive way. May we discover the light in this world, so that we realize together with the world what is good. But may we be careful not to dazzle people.

### **And finally, we need a broad-based debate**

✓ *May the method of falsification by Karl Popper help us*

This document is meant to serve as a basis for discussion. It aims at giving impulses for further reflection. And then I will be happy together with Karl Popper who is grateful for any argument that refutes statements,

so that the truth will be revealed. And what cannot be disproved should remain truth!

*"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."  
Mt. 25, 40*



Photo: Peter Szynka

## 4. The Common Chest – An Inspiration for the 21st Century?

Dr. Peter Szyuka

### Approaching Luther's Attitude towards Economy

We can approach Luther's attitudes for and against economy in different ways. We may read his sermons against usury and use his sermons to preach against usury. We can cite his polemics against monopoly structures. We may notice his opinions about vocation and work<sup>22</sup>. We also might follow German sociologist Max Weber, who states a strong connection between the protestant work ethic and the development of modern capitalism<sup>23</sup>. Protestant work ethics according to Weber is rooted in the ability to stay away from immediate gains and to work instead for eternal health. Or we may analyze his contributions concerning the poor as he does in the prefaces to the "Liber Vagatorum" and Caspers Adler's book "On Almsgiving" or focus on his invention of the Common Chest. This is what I try to do here because I think this is Luther's most important impact on Diakonia.

### The Socio-Economic Background of the Reformation

Before we do so, we should have a brief glimpse on the socio-economic background and the psychosocial situation before Reformation. A simple

<sup>22</sup> Prien, Hans-Jürgen (1992): *Luthers Wirtschaftsethik*. Göttingen.

<sup>23</sup> Weber, Max (1904): *Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*. Tübingen 1988.



Photo: Solidarity Group

way to get an idea of the historical situation Luther had to cope with is iconographic. I will describe and briefly interpret two famous paintings of those rapidly changing times: "The Wine on St Martins Day" (1568) from Pieter Breughel the Elder and "The Haywain" (1498) from Hieronymus Bosch. They illustrate the welfare crisis at the beginning of the reformation.<sup>24</sup>

In "The wine on St Martins Day" we see St Martin riding desperately on his horse trying to escape the mass of beggars, poor and handicapped people who surround him. He seeks a way to disappear in the background because he doesn't know anymore with whom to share his coat. The mass of people circles around a big

red vat of wine and everybody tries to get his share. The mass of people is more orientated to usury and greed than to virtue and work. St Martin has drawn his sword ready to cut his coat, but nobody notices him. St Martin's model of benevolence does not work anymore. His model of benevolence is a model of one helping another. It is based on mutuality. But now poverty has become a mass phenomenon, and poverty became affected with the same greed, usury and injustice, that have caused it.

Breughel's painting is based on a panorama that shows the dramatic living conditions of poor, uprooted and travelling people that have been forced to make their living outside the cities all over medieval Europe. "The Haywain" of Hieronymus Bosch is an interpretation of a Flemish saying which reflects the economic situation of his time: "The world is a Haywain and everybody tries to get his portion." This diagnosis would also fit to modern economies, where everybody tries to get a share of money without contributing to sustainable ways of production and consumption. Later we find all these scenes of poor and travelling people again in the early book illus-

<sup>24</sup> You may see these pictures in high resolution on the website of the Prado Museum in Madrid.

<https://www.museodelprado.es/en/resource/the-wine-of-saint-martins-day/6a4a9c81-e2f3-41b2-9a73-c0d8e5020dab>

<https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/obra-de-arte/el-carro-de-heno/7673843a-d2b6-497a-ac80-16242b36c3ce>

tration of Luther's first printings: Poor and handicapped people trying to get into the cities.<sup>25</sup>

## The Original Accumulation as the Original Sin

Economists like to describe this situation as an outcome of the "First" or "Original Accumulation". Original Accumulation describes the transformation of former communal land into private property. It describes the changes of land use from corn growing to sheep breeding. The "Enclosure" of former communal lands by the early nobility led to the dislocation of masses of poor people. They lost their small fields, where they used to make their poor living and tried to nourish their families. People were uprooted and forced to search a way into the cities. The wool manufactories developed and a mercantile economy grew up which was searching for laborers. Karl Marx wrote that the process of the Original Accumulation has the same importance in political economy as the Fall of Mankind has in theology. He cites from Thomas Mores' "Utopia", where he states that he has seen country "where sheep are eating men"<sup>26</sup>. This metaphor is understandable only in the face of the background of the economic transformations in England and Europe of his time.

<sup>25</sup> A collection of illustrations of early Luther prints can be found here: <http://diglib.hab.de/edoc/ed000007/startx.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Marx, Karl (1867): *Das Kapital*. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band. In: Marx/Engels Werke (MEW) 1997, Band 23, Berlin.

## Luther's Fight against Fear and Hysteria

More and more poor people came into the cities. They were begging, suffered diseases and handicaps. It was a firm part of the catholic tradition that one has to secure one's own salvation by doing good works to others. Preachers went from town to town and described hell and purgatory in screaming colors. But the hardship of the masses of poor people could not be tempered by individual alms anymore. So anxiety and desperation broadened. Dutch Historian Johan Huizinga assumes that outbreaks of hysteria among the people took place, when preaching and indulgency selling events were held on the market places. Citizens intentionally holed and patched their new clothes to make themselves look poor and tried to play down their wealth in order to make their way through the enraged masses<sup>27</sup>. A psychological situation was created which introduced a new business: the selling of letters of indulgence.

## Luther's Experience with Beggars

We could see how helpless and perplexed St. Martin was in Breughel's painting mentioned above, when he rode through a mass of poor and drunken people. Saint Martin was the titular Saint of Martin Luther and we can assume that Martin Luther was aware of his legend and that he was sensitive to the situation of the poor. Maybe later, he became somehow reticent about St. Martin, as he was a roman soldier. But In 1528 Martin

<sup>27</sup> Huizinga, Johan (1941): *Herbst des Mittelalters*. Studien über die Lebens- und Geistesformen des 14. und 15. Jahrhundert in Frankreich und den Niederlanden. Stuttgart 2015.

Luther edited a new issue of the so called the "Liber Vagatorum", a book that described "The Betrayals of the Two-Faced Beggars". He wrote a new preface to this book in order to make it known to the local administrations. This book, originally issued in 1510 distinguishes numerous types of beggars. Among them we find ex-prisoners, handicapped people but also begging monks, wayfaring pilgrims and scholars. The list was illustrated by stories and a small dictionary of the "Wayfarer's Language" was added. In his preface Luther tells us, that he was "cheated" by beggars repeatedly "more than I want to tell". He suggested the introduction of local supervisors, the restriction of public expenses to local citizens and therefore registers of those poor people in need.

## Luther's Experience with the Donors

In 1533 another text of Dr. Martin Luther was printed as a preface to Caspers Adler's "On Almsgiving". Under the supervision of Martin Luther, Caspers Adler sharply analyses that giving alms according to the Holy Scripture could only be seen as a good work, if the money was given to the poor was earned honestly by one's own and honest work. Martin Luther seems to have had many doubts whether that was regularly the case at his time. He came to the conclusion that probably only a smaller part of the people ("der kleine Haufen") could be saved and that a greater part of the people ("der große Haufen") probably will be lost forever.

## A new Motivation for Benevolence

Luther himself was an anxious man. We know this from the legend





Photo: Juho Kuva

that when he was on the road himself and came into in a thunderstorm, he expected seriously to be struck down by lightning because of his sins. But then the thunderstorm passed by and he was not hit. Luther learned to cope with anxiety and timidity. This might also have been a step towards his teachings on justification. We cannot overestimate the importance of Luther's teaching on justification within these difficult times of mass poverty. His teaching (ex-)changed the motivation for doing good works. He taught that anxiety and fear of purgatory could not longer to be seen as the right motivation for giving alms. Instead, we should give forward the gift of grace we received or we are expecting. Grace only can be reached by faith and righteousness. It is a gift given by God's own decision. We should share it with others.

It was in the 20th Century, when the American Psychiatrist Lawrence Kohlberg described his model of moral development. He distinguished three stages of moral development and these stages can also illustrate what

happened during the Reformation. According to Kohlberg a child acts morally on the first stage simply to avoid disadvantages and punishment. At the second stage a child acts morally to gain advantages and to receive recognition. It is only at the third stage, where we may act morally out of convictions, faith and rational considerations even if it is difficult<sup>28</sup>. Luther's teaching of justification calmed down the hysteria and fears and liberated the people for a new vision. It gave hope to overcome the desperate socio-economic situation by virtue and righteousness. He paved the way to a more rational way to poor relief and social security. This might be regarded as progress, despite the fact that he tended to exclude non-citizens.

<sup>28</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg and Elliott Turiel, *Moralische Entwicklung und Moralerziehung*. In: Gerhard Portele (Ed.), *Sozialisation und Moral* (Beltz-Verlag, Weinheim und Stuttgart 1978), 18-19

## Keeping Magistrates Responsible for the Poor

Luther's attack against the selling of indulgences and his resistance against the emperor led to struggle and war. Reformation caused a loss of power and wealth to the Catholic Church. The Peace of Augsburg brought church possessions and properties under governmental control<sup>29</sup>. The governmental bodies were obliged to use these possessions for both church and secular use. That was not always seen as a matter of course. The Peace of Augsburg provided a lot of options that were independent of papal decisions. Some principalities and magistrates took this as a chance to make their own use of the wealth and income that belonged formerly to the churches

<sup>29</sup> Klosterkammer Hannover (Ed.), *„Der Sache nach Kirche, der Form nach Staat“*. Die Klosterkammer Hannover im Spiegel von Landesverfassung und Staatskirchenrecht. (Klosterkammer Hannover, Hannover 2014), 8

and monasteries. They “dumped it down into their own throats” as critics said some centuries later<sup>30</sup>. But the purpose of church property still was among others to secure social welfare and to provide care for homeless, sick and invalid people. So something had to be done to implement public control on governmental decisions and to find ways to keep the magistrate responsible for the poor people. “The administrators should be to the society, what the soul is for the body,” Luis Vives, a contemporary wrote in 1525. And: “The soul quickens and animates not only this or that part, but the entire body; thus the magistrate may never disregard a portion of his governance. Those who only fancy the wealthy and despise the poor are like those doctors who are not concerned about healing the hands or the feet because they are at some distance from the heart.”<sup>31</sup>

## A Chest with Three Locks – A Story to be told to our Grandchildren

Luther and his disciples Karlstadt and Bugenhagen travelled around the cities to establish by-laws for local congregations containing regulations for poor relief: Wittenberg 1521, Leisnig 1522, Nürnberg 1523, Straßburg 1523, etc.<sup>32</sup>

Every City should care for its own poor. Wayfaring strangers, pilgrims and begging monks should not be

<sup>30</sup> Franz Mehring, *Die Lessing-Legende* (Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1983), 85

<sup>31</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *On Assistance to the Poor* (University of Toronto Press, 1999), 35

<sup>32</sup> Anneliese Spengler-Ruppenthal: *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Reformatorischen Kirchen- und Armenordnung im 16. Jahrhundert*. (Diakoniewissenschaftliches Institut, Heidelberg 2000), 6

supported by local means, but brought to work. Craftsmen from outside the cities should be welcomed.

In Wittenberg they established “a chest with three locks, to be set well secured but visible in the church, wherein all the alms were to be thrown”. The governing mayor should appoint supervisors from every quarter of the city, who were supposed to know best about the problems of the poor and handicapped. “Of the three keys they should hold two; the governing mayor should hold one”. With that a new form of mutual control was established on local level. No one alone could make use of the Common Chest alone because all the keys were needed at the same time to open it. Not only were collections kept in the common chest but also every kind of revenue of the church and all the documents of the property as well. The by-laws for the Common Chest spread all over the reformed cities and princedoms and set the rules for using the reformed or secularized wealth of the church for the sake of the poor. The idea of mutual or public control on church and governmental practice became a Lutheran Tradition. Later it became also an important part of political programs during the era of industrialization. On

the other hand, this model of narrow cooperation between church and state found its critics and indeed “the alliance between throne and altar” could make the churches dependent so that churches could lose their identity and even affirm dictatorship.

## The Spirit of the Common Chest in Modern Industrial Europe

Outside observers might be confused by the numerous and different systems of social welfare and social security in Europe. Indeed the European Union has left the responsibility for the organization of social affairs to the national states. Besides that, the European Union is a relatively young cooperation mechanism and everything is still developing. In 1990, the Scandinavian sociologist Gösta Esping-Andersen<sup>33</sup> tried to create a typology of European welfare states. Based on statistical and socio-economic data, he described “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism” and distinguished different levels of “commodification and de-commodification”. This meant, that there were different exceptions and



Photo: Peter Szyuka

<sup>33</sup> Gösta Esping Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Polity Press, Cambridge)



Photo: Solidarity Group

degrees accepted by national welfare states, which allow their citizens to stay away from daily work. For instance in case of pregnancy, age, handicaps, unemployment, illness etc. they may receive different kinds of public subsidies, if they are in need. Esping-Andersen differentiated three models: the “Liberal or Anglo-Saxon Model”, the “Conservative or Continental-European Model” and the “Social-Democrat or Scandinavian Model” of welfare state. Despite its fruitful discussion this typology showed some contradictions and shortcomings. A fourth “Mediterranean Model” was missing. Esping-Andersen finished his work before the new Member States from middle and Eastern Europe joined in and signed the “Community Acquis”, the central document of the European Union, which obliges them to build minimum standards of social security. The new members later formed new and fifth and somehow “eclectic” model of welfare capitalism. This was also missing in Esping Anderson’s typology.

The German sociologist Philip Manow<sup>34</sup> tried to describe the religious roots of this European Welfare Typology and came to the conclusion that we could better refer to Lutheran, Calvinist and Catholic traditions of social welfare. The Catholic Model could be assigned to the Mediterranean area, where in priority social support by family-members and the local church is expected. The Lutheran Model would be related to the Scandinavian Model and emphasizes the great contribution of state activities and regulations in the first place. Furthermore there would be the Calvinist Model, which could be related to the Liberal Model and which emphasizes more self-help and individual responsibility. We can find this somehow in the Anglo-Saxon world, but also in Switzerland and in the Netherlands (and in the United States). So we can

conclude that Luther’s Common Chest and connected ideas could be found most purely in the Scandinavian and partly within Conservative Continental Model, where we can find stronger state intervention to avoid poverty. German historian Franz Mehring drew attention to an interesting point about the historical difference between Calvinist and Lutheran welfare traditions: In Reformation times Wittenberg was a small village at the edge of civilization, whereas Geneva was already a big and flourishing city. So Luther had to win the support of the German Nobility and Calvin had to win the support of the wealthy Citizens of Geneva<sup>35</sup>. The German nobility pre-formed the regional and national structures of governance in Germany whereas rich and flourishing cities like Geneva paved the way for economies of industrial production and merchandise trade.

<sup>34</sup> Philip Manow, *Religion und Sozialstaat. Die konfessionellen Grundlagen Europäischer Wohlfahrtsregime*. (Campus Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 2008)

<sup>35</sup> Franz Mehring, *Die Lessing-Legende* (Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1983), 86

## The Crises of the Modern Welfare States

With the help of these typologies we have at least a structure to understand European Welfare Models. As we have seen, the European Union is still in development. The European Union tries to harmonize the different levels of welfare with own programs and policies. In addition the European Welfare Systems are undergoing moral, political, demographic and economic crises. Harmonization on European level could mean, that previously elaborated comprehensive systems have to cut down their expenses to a lesser level and that low level economies have to lift their expenses for social welfare in order to avoid greater territorial differences and migration. On the other hand, low social costs may make it possible to produce goods of a comparable quality for a cheaper price. Welfare systems are an important factor within competition among European Member States. So again a common degree of social security and minimum social standards should be fixed.

British sociologist Anthony Giddens published his “Third Way” (1990) and it was meant as a compromise with capitalist reality and as a contribution to “to save social democracy” and social welfare. It was then that British Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder started a series of reforms based on the ideas of Anthony Giddens. According to Giddens individual social rights have to be grounded in social obligations (Giddens 1990, 82). Simply expressed, if somebody does not contribute to social welfare, he should not receive it. The so-called market reforms of that time brought a lot of improvements for international investors but they also brought hardship and exclusion for poor, unemployed and homeless people. The “statistical scissor” be-

tween the rich and poor opened. Only a few rich people control most of the national and international wealth. As a consequence of these developments the Labour Party in Great Britain and Social Democrats in Germany began to lose elections. The influence of international investors grew. The market was expected to solve social problems. Social policy was no longer expected to be implemented by the state or to be demanded by the churches. In future, social policy should be implemented by social investors.

Another British Sociologist Kevin Crouch also wrote a book in order “to save social democracy” and social welfare. He stated that the economic development of the last two decades will endanger democracy and has already led into an age of “Postdemocracy”. He reports and analyzes the failures and shortcomings of the so-called market reforms, which meanwhile can be found in Great Britain, the heartland of the neoliberal agenda.<sup>36</sup>

## The Common Chest and Conviviality - Inspirations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

The neoliberal agenda with its negative results and the desire to reform the concept of community diaconia brought a European Working Group on Community Diaconia together. It started in 2010 and is organized by the Lutheran World Federation. Conviviality means “the art and practice of living together”. The development of a framework for “Community Diaconia in Europe” aims to empower the Churches to take up the challenges of the neoliberal agenda, starting from the dif-

ferent social systems and traditions in Europe, facing social cuts and trying to help growing numbers of poor people and large numbers of migrants. The capacity of the LWF member churches to understand and act in their social environments should be strengthened and their role in civil society should be sharpened. The author of this article was honored to be part of this group. We worked on the issues of Social Work/Employment, Migration, Corruption, Debt and Poverty. We outlined the basics for a Convivial Economy and for a Convivial Theology, which would be helpful for the 21st century not only in Europe. The core of Conviviality is the idea of a just, peaceful and productive society. The idea of cooperative social planning, a democratic control of social systems and a sustainable use of nature, wealth and social budgets, derived from a Lutheran tradition should stay at the heart of our activities. This is, because we have been somehow inspired by the ideas that began in the Lutheran Tradition with the Common Chest.<sup>37</sup>



Photo: Peter Szyzka

<sup>36</sup> Colin Crouch, *Die bezifferte Welt. Wie die Logik der Finanzmärkte unser Wissen bedroht.* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin 2015), 105-148

<sup>37</sup> Lutheran World Foundation (Ed.), *Seeking Conviviality. Re-forming Community Diaconia in Europe* Lutheran World Federation 2013.

# Appendix 1

## Participants in the Workshop, Convivial Theology & The Solidarity Group

Ms	Janka	ADAMEOVÁ	International Academy for Diaconia and Social Action, Czech Republic	Czech Republic
Rev.	Tony	ADDY	International Academy for Diaconia and Social Action, Czech Republic	Austria/ Czech Republic
Mr	Fritz	BLANZ	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria	Germany
Ms	Nicole	BORISUK	Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche der Ukraine	Ukraine
Ms	Gunnel	CLAESSON	Church of Sweden	Sweden
Rev.	Steinar	ERAKER	Church of Norway, Kirkens Bymisjon	Norway
Ms	Liubov	GALIMOVA	Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche der Ukraine	Ukraine
Ms	Maria	HALLDÉN	Church of Norway	Norway
Rev.	Zsolt	LAZÁR	Evang.-Lutheran Church in Hungary	Hungary
Mr	David	LIN	Lutheran Church in Great Britain	United Kingdom
Rev. Dr	Ireneusz	LUKAS	LWF	Switzerland
Ms	Marjut	LUKKARINEN	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland	Finland
Mr	Petr	NEUMANN	Czech Brethren Church	Czech Republic
Ms	Marija	PARNICKY	The Slovak Evang. Church A.C. in Serbia	Serbia
Ms	Aleksandra	SELIVERSTOVA	The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia	Russia
Dr	Ulla	SIIRTO	Church of Finland	Finland
Rev.	Szilard	SZABO	Evang.-Lutheran Church in Hungary	Hungary
Dr.	Peter	SZYNKA	Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Oldenburg Diakonisches Werk	Germany
Ms	Vera	TKACH (Petrovna)	ELKER	Russia
Rev.	Avo	ÜPRUS	Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church	Estonia
Rev	Martin	URDZE	Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia	Latvia
Rev. Dr	Eva-Sibylle	VOGEL-MFATO	LWF	Switzerland
Rev.	Svetlana	VOJNIC FELDI	The Slovak Evang. Church A.C. in Serbia	Serbia
Ms	Maria	VUORISTO (Kulju)	Kirkon Ulkoasianosasto	Finland
Rev.	Jiří	WEINFURTER	Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren	Czech Republic
Ms	Marta Zuzanna	ZACHRAJ	Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland	Poland

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# Appendix 2

## Documentation and Resources

### 1. Publications from the Conviviality Process

1. Addy, Tony (ed.), 2014, 'Seeking Conviviality. Reforming Community Diakonia in Europe', Geneva, Lutheran World Federation.
2. Addy, Tony (ed.), 2016, 'Convivial Life Together. Bible Studies on Vocation, Dignity and Justice', Geneva, Lutheran World Federation.
3. Addy, Tony (ed.), 2017, 'Towards a Convivial Economy', Geneva, Lutheran World Federation.
4. Addy, Tony (ed.), 2017, 'Seeking Conviviality Re-forming Community Diakonia in Europe, Evaluation and Commentary from the European Solidarity Group, Geneva, Lutheran World Federation.
5. Addy, Tony (ed.), *Introductory Leaflet: 'Seeking Conviviality, Reforming Community Diakonia in Europe'*, Geneva, Lutheran World Federation.

### 2. Other supportive publications

#### (a) on conviviality as a concept for Diakonia

Glitzenhirn, D., 2011, 'Gemeinwesendiakonie als Verwirklichung von Konvivenz', in epd Dokumentation 39, 'Kirche in der Mitte der Gesellschaft'

Download from: <http://www.eaberlin.de/nachlese/dokumentationen/2011-39-kirche-in-der-mitte-der-gesellschaft/epd-2011-39.pdf>

Glitzenhirn, D., 2014, 'Conviviality – Facets of a Concept and Theological Framework for Community Based Diaconia', Vol.5 Issue 2, *Diaconia, Journal for the Study of Christian Social Practice*, Vol.6 Issue 2, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Haugen, H. M., 2015, 'Approaches to Inclusive and Equitable Societies', *Diaconia, Journal for the Study of Christian Social Practice*, Vol.6 Issue 2, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Kulju, M., 2014, 'And I have got new friends all over Europe', Bachelor's thesis evaluating the process. Download from: <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/1552/browse?value=Kulju%2C+Maria&type=author>

Siirto, U., 2015, 'Conviviality: A Core Value of Diakonia'. In Burghardt, Anne (ed.) 'LWF guide material to the themes of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation: Human Beings – not for sale'. Geneva, Lutheran World Federation.

## (b) on conviviality

Gilroy, P., (2004), 'After Empire: post-colonial melancholia or convivial culture', London, Routledge

Gilroy, P., (2006) 'Colonial Crimes and Convivial Cultures', presented at the exhibition 'Rethinking Nordic Colonialism'  
Downloaded from: [www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org/files/pdf/ACT2/ESSAYS/Gilroy.pdf](http://www.rethinking-nordic-colonialism.org/files/pdf/ACT2/ESSAYS/Gilroy.pdf)

Illich, I., (1973), 'Tools for Conviviality', London, Marion Boyars

Le Bord de L'Eau, (2013), 'Manifeste Convivialiste, Déclaration d'interdépendance', Paris, Editions Le Bord de L'eau

English translation: 'Convivialist Manifesto, a declaration of interdependence' Downloaded from: [www.gcr21.org/publications/global-dialogues/2198-0403-gd-3/](http://www.gcr21.org/publications/global-dialogues/2198-0403-gd-3/)

Sundermeier, T., (1995), 'Konvivenz als Grundstruktur ökumenischer Existenz Heute', in Küster, V., Ed, (1995)'Missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen, Neue Folge, Band 3', Erlangen, Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission

Wise, A. and Velayutham, S., (2014), 'Conviviality in everyday multiculturalism: Singapore and Sydney compared', in European Journal of Cultural Studies, Issue 4, 2014, London, Sage Journals

Wise, A., (2005), 'Hope and Belonging in a Multicultural Suburb' in: 'Journal of Intercultural Studies, Nr 26, 2005 London, Taylor & Francis



Photo: Solidarity Group

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## (c) on related concepts

Addy, T., (2013) 'New Approaches to community-based work, social service and Diaconia', in 'Diaconia, Journal for the Study of Christian Social Practice', Vol. 4 Issue 2, 2013, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

Addy, T., (2013), 'CABLE, Community Development and Diaconia' in in Porkka, J. and Pentikäinen, M., (eds.) 'Community of the Future', Helsinki, Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.

Freire, P., 2006. 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', 30th Anniversary Edn., New York, Continuum.

Szynka, P., 2017, 'The Common Chest - an Inspiration for the 21st Century', in Burghardt, Anne and Sinn, Simone (eds.), 'Global Perspectives on the Reformation. Interactions between Theology, Politics and Economics', Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.



Photo: Peter Szynka



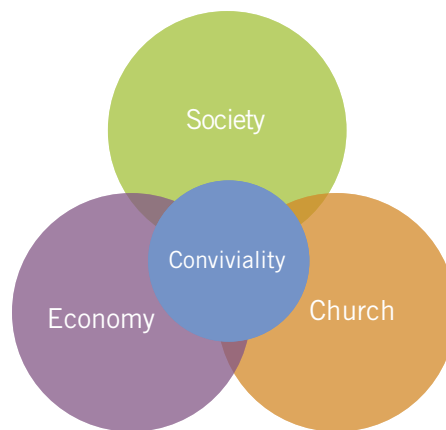






The European Solidarity Group came to the conclusion that the concept of conviviality linked to vocation, justice and dignity forms a core concept for community diakonia in Europe. Furthermore, conviviality linked to society, economy and church informs diaconal action for a sustainable and livable economy. Seeking Conviviality offers a perspective on local diakonia that addresses the current social, political and economic challenges in Europe, based on participation and transformation.

This report is an overview and evaluation of the work of the Group and includes additional resources related to the process.



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