

**CALLED
TO
ORDER**

*Ordained?
Commissioned?
neither?
all ? To
Diaconal
Ministry .
How shall we
be true to our
call and our
preparation to
that call?*

**April 14-17,
2009**

**Five Oaks
Centre, Ontario**

Visit DUCC
Website at
www.ducc.ca for
brochure or contact

Linda Clark
905-383-8634
lindaclark60@sympatico.ca
by March
20th



EVENT TO CELEBRATE 25 YEARS OF DUCC

It is not too late to register for this landmark gathering. The National gathering is a time for community time, theme reflection, worship, ecumenical guests, and, yes business. The following is a quick look at our business for 2009.

STATEMENT OF FAITH Take a look at the revised draft statement on the DUCC website (www.ducc.ca). It should provide a framework for a thoroughly spiritual and theological conversation.

AFFIRMING MINISTRIES Becoming an “affirming community” takes study and reflection. We will discuss the process and how it may be considered for our organization.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT How may we lessen our carbon footprint as we gather together from points across this broad nation?

STRATEGIES AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GENERAL COUNCIL Since the demise of the Committee on Diaconal Ministry a few years ago, we have struggled to find ways to have a voice at the national level. How might we improve communication for diaconal ministers, change prejudices or misinformation and seek financial support?

DUCC STAFF PROPOSAL Might we finance a staff

person through DUCC to make the path smoother for diaconal ministry issues ? Check the DUCC website for a proposal.

VIDEO PROJECT AND BROCHURE An exciting project of the Education Cluster that will help give the diaconal message to committees, boards and courts of our church.

REPORTS ON REGIONS, CLUSTERS, THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS, FINANCES, DOTAC and PLANNING for the future. Think about what your region or cluster might accept for the next term : Coordinating Committee, Communications, Theme and Worship, Conference Planning, Local Arrangements, Education, Liaison to General Council.

Is all this rather overwhelming ? We hope not !

Get a leg up on the information and reports by checking the web site. Reading the information in advance will prepare us to discuss, probe, and challenge the issues as only Diaconal Ministers can do!

Coordinating Cluster: Maritime Conference, Eric Tusz King, Kay Dean, David Hewitt, Nan Corrigan, Sue King-Darby and Lori Crocker.



DUCCs all in a row! at St. Albert event in 2007.

QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY FOR GATHERING

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denomination but we have identified ourselves more clearly as “Diaconal” and can name the gifts of ministry we bring to the church. The church as a whole however is not so clear. Diaconal minister Kay Heuer, in her essay, “So tell Me Again, What is a Diaconal Minister?”, writes that the challenge for Diaconal Ministers is to become more understood and that much time is spent justifying our ministry to prove its benefit to the church. The upside of this is that the whole process has challenged all ministers in the church to reexamine their understanding of ministry, but for those holding the more powerful position, that can be a difficult challenge. Another aspect of church leadership that I found to be relevant to our discussions has to do with charisma and structure. Author Edward Schillebeeckx, wrote that Jesus did not leave any instructions for church order, instead, he left a community. As the community grew larger due to the evangelical efforts of the ‘apostles and prophets’ leadership rose up from within these communities and the foundation was laid for the church. The spirit abounded, they believed they were in a new age, with new attitudes and new ways of being, in which the old rules of hierarchy were unnecessary and everyone was equal!

Women and men offered their many gifts which were equally valued to the building up of the body of Christ. Rosemary

Reuther suggests that for the church to survive in the midst of many ideologies and beliefs in that first century it had to be distinct. Such a leadership style with no ranking, enabled the church to be unlike the rest of the world, and each person was valued, both for the ministry she/he offered, and for her/himself.

Diaconal ministry has its roots in a more charismatic style of leadership

By the end of the first century however, the leadership style within the church had become more formalized. The original charismatic vision of the ministry became difficult to maintain. So a hierarchical model was adopted for survival. Jesus was not returning so they looked to familiar patterns based on the synagogue and the patriarchal family order.

By the second century the strain between maintaining an institution and valuing a charismatic style of leadership grew. Instead of living with the tension the second century saw the church become more rigid and the movement of the Spirit became restricted. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza notes that authority that once rested with the whole people became vested in the local officers of the church. This shift was to the men in the church. The women were ushered out. Myths and beliefs were put into place to support this move.

Diaconal ministry has its roots in a more charismatic style of leadership. It has always arisen in response to needs of the church and community. Remember the

Beguines in the 13 and 14th century? They reached out in their communities. In the 19th century in Germany and Britain the diaconate was revived, responding to needs for humanitarian service during the Industrial Revolution. In the mid 1900’s deaconesses responded to the needs of local United Church congregations in the area of Christian Development. Diaconal ministry responds to a vision with a style that is nurturing, supportive, enabling, growth oriented and one of standing with people. This style is not particular to diaconal ministry but diaconal ministers have a particular commitment to this non-hierarchical style of ministry. The question remains for us today in the United Church, can we live with this tension between responsive, charismatic leadership and prescribed, ordered leadership? Where do we as diaconal ministers see ourselves in this dynamic?

Lynda Gow is in a team ministry at Knox Metropolitan United Church in Edmonton and is on the theme team for the National gathering.





DUCC RESOURCE REVIEW

**With or Without God
by Greta Vosper**

**Reviewed by
Deborah Vitt**

METHODIST MOTHER OF DEACONESS MOVEMENT

Lucy Rider Meyer, one of the most influential women in the history of the diaconate, is one woman featured in Pitts Theology



Library's exhibit, "Through the Front Doors: Methodist Women's Journey Toward Ordination" Rider Meyer was instrumental in establishing the National Methodist Training School, founded by Canadian Methodists in 1892. <http://www.pitts.emory.edu/community/exhibits/womensord/page5.cfm>



Greta Vosper expresses ideas and perspectives that many will find new and perhaps challenging. I found myself often agreeing with her conclusions regarding the current state of worship in the church, expressions of God language and the importance of sustainable and vibrant community in the church. Throughout the text and included in the appendix are helpful questions, suggestions and resources for individuals and groups interested in pursuing their own analysis of worship and reading of religious texts.

I have to admit however, that I was looking for something that would offer a more significant challenge. Ms Vosper identifies many of the struggles named by a variety of theologians regarding the state of the church and religion. She names the difficulties caused by unhelpful biblical interpretation, lack of inclusive language, liturgy that binds worship, however, I kept finding myself saying "yeah, I agree, but".

At times I felt quite frustrated.

Ms Vosper clearly speaks from a United Church background, she was ordained in 1992. But lacking is an appreciation for the diverse expressions of ministry within the United Church. Our church has long standing institutions where new theologies are explored and where challenges to our Christian faith have been at the forefront of faith formation and education. As a diaconal minister I was saddened to note that she seems to be completely unaware of her diaconal colleagues in ministry. I kept hoping I was going to be wrong, that somewhere there would be a reference to diakonia, the rich and diverse culture of diaconal ministry, not only in the United Church but around the world. I found nothing. I was hungering for more validation of the work others have been doing.

I wish that Ms Vosper had accompanied some of us to that first Decade for Churches in Solidarity with Women Re-Imagining conference in Minneapolis in 1993. She refers briefly to this extraordinary event, which brought together amazing feminist women speakers who named the very challenges raised in this book. We experienced worship that shook the core of traditional liturgical expression. It was risky,

exciting and exhilarating and modeled a new way of being church and understanding God. From that experience, many of us have been inspired to keep challenging old understandings and to keep reimagining God in each time and place. This conference was not the only place of transformational learning, but the learning and legacy it left is worth further exploration.

I do appreciate that Ms Vosper is committed to facilitating a change in our understanding and expression of the divine. I would extend an invitation to her to join and share with the many women and men who are also on the journey as together we seek new ways of being the people of God in the world today.

With or Without God's published by HarperCollinsCanada.

Deborah Vitt is in ministry at Selkirk-Cloverdale Pastoral Charge in rural Manitoba.

Do you have an interesting book by your bedside? Would you like to write a review? Let us know.