

DIAC *Afric*

DIEN IN GOD SE MISSIE
SERVING IN GOD'S MISSION

Conference for the promotion of missional diaconate in Africa

1. THE CONFERENCE

The inspiration for this conference comes from two decisions taken by synods of the Dutch Reformed Church.

1. The first decision happened a century ago. In 1915 the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa decided to appoint a commission to promote and organise the diaconal work of this church. Originally this commission was called "Commissie vir Inwendige Zending". The concept inwendige zending reminds strongly of the term innere mission used by German churches and suggests therefore the influence of German theology on the DRC in those days. Four years later, at the next synod meeting, it was changed to "Armsorg Kommissie". The other three DR churches (Natal, Free State and the Transvaal) soon followed this new direction by appointing similar commissions. In the years to follow, these institutions, separately in their own contexts, and collectively in the broader Southern African context, played a significant role in the shaping of the Southern African social welfare landscape.
2. Many years later, in 2013, the General Synod of the DRC adopted a policy document on missional ecclesiology. The same meeting also adds a specific article to the Church Order of the DRC describing the nature of the church in missional terms. This policy document is the result of a series of study documents and reports by various commissions of the General Synod of the DRC regarding its mission work, its service of compassion or diaconal work and its congregational development.
3. This conference is a joint venture of The NG Kerk in South Africa, also called the DRC Western and Southern Cape and two institutions in the DRC that is directly linked to the development of the diaconal work of this church:
 - The Council for Church Social Services (CCSS) of the General Synod of the DRC
 - Hugenate Kollege, the college of the DRC family that trains social workers and other social services professions.

2. THE VISION

It is our dream that this conference will start a new discussion on the diaconal challenges for the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in Africa.

3. THE AIMS OF THIS CONFERENCE

With these two decisions as vantage points the following aims are set for the conference:

To celebrate the first century of institutionalised diaconal work in the DRC and to reflect on its achievements but also to learn from the past.

To envisage the diaconal work of the family of Dutch Reformed Churches in the next hundred years, especially in an African context.

4. THEMES / TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE CONFERENCE

The planning committee decided on the following themes/topics for the conference:

REFLECTING ON THE PAST CENTURY:

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| Prof Johannes Eurich | From the past to the future. The development of diaconia in Germany since the 19th century and its influence on the church in South Africa. |
| Prof Ignatius Swart | A critical reflection on the development of diaconal work in South Africa in the 20th century. |
| Dr Willie van der Merwe | Basic themes in the development of the service of compassion in die Dutch Reformed Church in the 20th century. |
| Dr Botha van Aarde and Rev Averell Rust | An overview of the church social services of the DRC family at the beginning of the 21st century. |

LOOKING FORWARD:

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| Prof Herman Noordegraaf | The development of a "diaconiewetenschap" in the Netherlands in the 21st century with special reference to role of congregations and the training of ministers. |
| Prof Jurgens Hendriks | The development of congregational diaconate in an African context. |
| Panel of social workers: Dr Susan Louw, Mrs Nicolette Myburgh, Mrs Amanda Kruger | A scope of practice for church social workers. |
| Dr Coenie Burger | Missional congregations and the diaconate. |
| Dr Susan Louw | The challenges of professional church social services. |

5. CONTACT DETAILS

For more information contact Madri Visser at Hugenate Kollege on +27 (0)21 873 1181 or info@diacafric.co.za

In association with:

