

Anglican-Lutheran Society Conference 2014

‘Fear Not Little Flock’ The Vocation of Minority Churches Today

Session Three : Diakonia

Common Good :The Evangelium of Hands

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I. Diaconia: a short history

The Diaconia started during the reformation. The congregations undertook the care of churches, schools, and other institutions which provided for widows, orphans, and paupers. The organization of the diakonia was based on the 19th century German model of internal mission, providing the foundations and the associations for equipping churches and schools, and supporting people in need.

Outstanding among this activity has been the work of communities of deaconesses. The deaconesses worked in different institutions and congregations in Nyíregyháza, Békéscsaba, Piliscaba, Budapest, Győr. A prominent figure among diakonal ministers was Gabor Sztéhlo. During World War II, Bishop Sándor Raffay (Alexander Raffay) sent him to join the work of the *Good Shepherd Association* for rescuing Jewish children. He was put in contact with the Swiss Red Cross and other foreign organizations carrying out similar work. In Budapest he organized 32 houses and apartments as "hidden" homes. They had a well-organized agenda, they provided basic care, and they was abused by the Nazis. He managed to save 1500 children and 500 adults. His service was outstanding, and the Jewish-State of Israel acknowledged that by awarding him the "Yad Vashem" honour, and he was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

After the war, many children no longer had any parents. They remained in the houses working in Budakeszi, and as more refugee children arrived new children's homes were created. Gábor Sztéhlo founded the Gaudiopolis (Örömváros) City of Joy. It was a child-

governed community (Youth State Ministry), and also had its own pedagogical method. In 1950, the Institute was nationalised by the State, and he was offered the position of Director, but he did not accept it. His activities in this area of work still have a timeless value.

After World War II the Hungarian Protestant Church also became part of a social system (Communism) whose ideology was atheism. At the time of the consolidation of the Socialist state, in 1951, all civil associations were banned.

Under the terms of the social policy of Stalinist socialism there were no social problems. No civil organisations or self-help organisations were allowed to operate. The aim was the total control of society by the State. Some religious institutions were allowed to work for elderly or handicapped people, because it was economically efficient, and the people cared for in the institutions no longer posed any ideological threat to the State, and it was not possible to train them in the new ideology because of their age or health status. There were pastors willing to cooperate in this arrangement.

Although the churches were allowed to operate in the changed political situation, new challenges were reported. These challenges influenced theological thinking. The Church developed a new theological system – the diaconical theology. This diaconical theology was influenced by Bishop Zoltán Káldy. It helped the Church to work in a new social policy based on communist ideology. The task of the Church was to have a theological and political and social role in the building of a socialism system.

In the 1960s, the operation of diaconia was organized by Gábor Sztehlo. He created a new basis of the Church organisations. It was a well thought out structure which continues to this day. His activity was very practical and ideology-free. However, there was a tension between the diaconia and diaconical theology.

2. Our organisation:

The Church created the Diaconical Department to organise and to help the institutions in the whole country. The maintenance of an institution could be by the national Church or by the parishes.

The “Board of directors” has an advisory and supporting role. Every institution has a director (either a pastor or a secular person), whether it be national or congregational, and every institution has its diaconical pastor to assist and encourage theological reflection.

3. What are the social contexts in which we are working today?

Poverty risk:

The proportion of single-person households is increasing, particularly among the elderly, but also among young people.

There are many families with elderly people living together.

There are issues of age – these concern elderly people and also children

The child poverty rate is 25%. The way this is calculated is as follows:

The amount of the minimum subsistence(without children):

	Active 1 person	Pension 1 person	Active (2 a)	Pension (2 p)
Ft	87510	78759	153 143	135 641

The amount of the minimum subsistence(with children):

	Active 1 person 1 child	Active 2 p 1 ch	Active 1. p. 2. ch	Active 2 p 2 ch
Ft	144 392	210 024 (70008/p)	188 147	253779 (63444/p)

The amount of the minimum wage: 98000 Ft (br.) 64 190 Ft (netto)

Lack of work (the unemployment rate):

2013. I. quarter	2014. I quarter
11,8	8,3

4. How to respond?

At present the range of diaconal services we operate is as follows:

Social and children’s welfare services:

- homes for the elderly : 24
- daily care schemes for the elderly : 12
- assistance for the elderly : 13
- feeding services : 12
- village services : 12
- homes for the handicapped : 3
- homecare for the handicapped : 3
- daily care for the handicapped : 2
- homes for homeless people : 1
- free meal kitchen : 2
- warm-up dwelling for homeless people : 1
- night-shelter for the homeless : 1
- homes for Families in need : 2
- daily care for people with addiction : 2
- daily care for people with dementia : 2
- daily care for Families in need : 2
- daily care for Children : 1
- nursery : 1
- workshop for handicapped people : 1

There are more than 5,500 clients and we have 1,500 co-workers

Ms Buda ended by comparing and contrasting two models of child care, one in Hungary and the other in the UK. The first was Gaudiopolis, referred to above, which was set up near Budapest in 1945 and which closed in 1951. The second was Summerhill in the south of England, which opened in 1921 and which is still in operation. She outlined the similarities and differences between them and has summarised them on the chart that follows

5. Two children's welfare models:

Two communities in which children could be free from adult authority in the XX. Century

	Summerhill	Gaudiopolis
Founded	1921. (Hellerau) (later move to Lyme Regis)	1945. (Budapest)
Be in action	nowadays	till 1951.
Creater	A. S Neill, a Scottish writer	Gábor Sztehló, Ev. Luth. pastor
Home and school	x	x
The aim	To show a better life	
Values	freedom, democracy, openness	
Function	privat school, with tuition fee	no tuition fee, refugee
Ideological basis	lack of spiritual basis	spirituality, theological background (free)
Problem of aggression	the self government means self-regulation	