

Diaconal Workers - Alongsiders or Dumpsters?

Jouko Kiiski

tutkimuskeskus

CHURCH RESEARCH INSTITUTE⁺

Diaconal Workers - Alongsiders or Dumpsters?

Jouko Kiiski

ISBN 978-951-693-331-6
ISSN 2341-7641

Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen verkkojulkaisuja 34

CONTENT

PROLOGUE	2
1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 Research background.....	3
1.2 Overview of diaconal work in Finland.....	3
1.3 Methods.....	5
2 AREAS OF DIACONAL WORK	6
2.1 The main areas of diaconal work	6
2.2 Other areas of diaconal work	9
3 PARTNERSHIPS AND CO-OPERATION	11
3.1 Partnerships.....	11
3.2 Experiences of cooperation	12
4 DIACONAL WORK THROUGH THE EYES OF DIACONAL WORKERS	14
4.1 Commitment, motivation and support.....	14
4.2 Work-related stress and resources for coping with it	15
5 CHALLENGES - AGEING AND MARGINALISATION	18
5.1 Ageing population.....	18
5.2 The marginalisation of young people.....	18
6 CONCLUSION	20
REFERENCES	22

PROLOGUE

Of the 5.4 million inhabitants of Finland, 76.4% are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF). Over the past few years, however, church membership has steadily decreased. Studies show that the diaconal ministry of the Church is one of the major reasons for maintaining membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In general, the Finnish people have a high respect for the work the Church does with the underprivileged and the elderly.

From an international perspective, diaconal ministry of the ELCF is exceptionally extensive in scope and in depth. According to the Finnish Church Law, a minimum of one diaconal worker must be employed at each parish. Currently, there are approximately 1,400 diaconal workers employed full-time by the 449 parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. An addition of 30,000 volunteer workers also participate in diaconal work.

This review of diaconal ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland aims to describe the variety of diaconal work carried out in the Finnish parishes, and how diaconal work can swiftly respond to the challenges of our modern times. The many areas of diaconal ministry are described together with their respective position within the Church. Diaconal workers cooperate with other actors, and these partnerships are investigated in this review. The Barometer also reviews the diaconal workers' opinions of their job. Specifically, population ageing and the marginalisation of young people are topical themes challenging the diaconal ministry of the Church.

This review is the result of teamwork. I am grateful for the support provided by the team members Ms. Marja Aho, Deaconess; Ms. Titi Gävert, MTh, Diaconal Worker; Ms. Tiina Laine, MHS, Deaconess; and Ms. Elina Juntunen, ThD. The team met several times to compose the questionnaire, review preliminary analysis results, and to discuss how to report the findings. I would like to thank Ms. Titi Gävert for her valuable input in the form of ideas, suggestions and information that have helped formulate this review. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those diaconal workers who took the time to fill in the questionnaire and shared their knowledge and experiences. The ELCF Research Institute has generously offered support in various forms in the preparation and publication of this Barometer. Collaboration with the Research Institute's Director Ms. Hanna Salomäki, ThD, D.Soc.Sc., has left nothing to hope for!

This publication offers an overview of the ever changing, ever adapting diaconal ministry of the Church. Flexibility and swiftly responding to altered situations are two of the main characteristics of diaconal work which typically involves working with people who have encountered one or several adversities in their lives. In such cases, the diaconal worker becomes a support person - someone to share your problems with. However, there are times when diaconal workers find themselves to more resemble a dumpster where all troubles and sorrows can be unloaded without inhibitions. One of our diaconal workers described this as follows: "I am so often a "dumpster" for a variety of problems. Yet, there is always room for learning something new and the opportunity to share someone's burdens. The versatility of this job is a great resource."

Joensuu, 28 May 2013
Jouko Kiiski

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Diaconal work seldom makes the headlines. Instead, it tends to be invisible and carried out in the outskirts of society. Hence, people are often unaware of the scope of diaconal ministry. For its part, this Diaconia Barometer attempts to shed light on the multiple tasks performed by diaconal workers, and the versatility and complexity of these tasks.

In Finland, seven Diaconia Barometers have been published between the years 1999 and 2011. The Church Council collects data and publishes statistics regarding the diaconal ministry of the Church. However, these statistics tend to provide a rather limited view of the reality. The scope of diaconal ministry and cooperation with a variety of partners, for example, do not show in the official statistics. Hence, Diaconia Barometers are published to give a more detailed picture of the diaconal work carried out in the Finnish parishes. Research is another important reason for publishing these Barometers - many researchers use the Barometers to compile data for doctoral dissertations on diaconal ministry. However, often only a minor portion of the data collected is published. Unlike in previous issues, special attention has been given to the reporting of the results in the Diaconia Barometer 2013. As an example of this focus on reporting, a summary of the Barometer is published also in English.

The Diaconia Barometer 2013 maps the tasks of full-time diaconal workers, the contents of diaconal ministry, and the positive and negative experiences related to diaconal work from several perspectives. The research questions evolved over the course of this process and were finalised as follows:

- To what extent do diaconal workers cooperate with other actors?
- What are the opinions of diaconal workers of their job?
- Who makes the decisions on what constitutes diaconal work?
- How do the current trends of ageing and marginalisation manifest in diaconal work?

1.2 Overview of diaconal work in Finland

In Finland, it was not until the 1880s when diaconal ministry received any larger interest, although the Helsinki and Vyborg Deaconess Institutes had already been established in the 1860s. However, they were classified as charities by many, and the clergy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland remained impassive towards the institutes. In 1888, the Finnish Sunday School Association (Pyhäkouluyhdistys) was established, and it soon expanded its

operations to cover social welfare and diaconal work. The city missions in the large cities - Helsinki, Turku and Tampere - promoted diaconal ministry.¹

Diaconal ministry gained importance as part of congregational life over the first two decades of the 20th century. In 1903, the number of deaconesses in Finland was 117, and by 1916 it had increased to 468. Since the beginning of the 20th century, diaconal work has typically been carried out in parishes. Deaconesses were first and foremost nurses, although help was channelled to the poor within the limits of available resources.²

In the 1930s and 1940s, diaconal work had proved to be an extremely necessary form of ministry, and it expanded and gained a stronger foothold in the parishes. In 1944, an amendment to the Church Law came into force mandating each parish to employ at least one full-time diaconal worker.³

After World War II, the diaconal ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland continued to gain importance and expand in scope. The launch of the Common Responsibility Campaign ('Yhteisvastuukeräys') - an annual fundraising campaign of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland first organised in 1950 - had a great impact on the visibility of diaconal work. In addition to promoting charity in the spirit of 'love thy neighbour', the proceeds of the Campaign significantly increased the financial resources of diaconal work. In the post-war era, the number of full-time diaconal workers employed by the Finnish parishes continued to increase. In 1946, the Finnish parishes employed 398 full-time diaconal workers. By 1959 the number had increased to 553, and nine years later totalled 702.⁴

The 1970s marked a great change. The Primary Health Care Act entered into force in 1972 excluding deaconesses from home care which had until then been one of the primary areas of diaconal ministry. In the new situation, diaconal ministry had to be reorganised, and emphasis shifted from home care to personal contacts and pastoral care - mainly with the elderly. Outreach activities including clubs, study groups, field trips and camps, became popular.⁵ By the end of 1979, the number of full-time diaconal workers was 906.⁶ Eight years later the number of diaconal workers had increased to 1,056.⁷

The 1990s was characterised by an economic recession, which impacted the Church and its diaconal ministry, in particular. People who had fallen victim to the effects of the recession sought help from the Church. The recession led to the introduction of food banks, which continues to be a prominent form of diaconal ministry even today. Food banks were established to provide acute relief. While the Church was acting in the interest of people suffering from financial problems, food banks received also criticism - that the welfare state could no longer provide for all of its citizens was considered a disgrace, and some feared that the Church was taking on too large a role in caring for the underprivileged and deprived which was seen as the duty of the state. Some voiced the opinion that diaconal workers should focus on personal contacts and pastoral care - not food delivery!⁸

1 Malkavaara 2007, 91–93; Mustakallio 2002, 201–205; 91–93; Malkavaara 2000b, 21–23.

2 Mustakallio 2002, 210–214.

3 Mustakallio 2002, 216–219. See also Malkavaara 2007, 103–105.

4 Malkavaara 2007, 106–110; Malkavaara 2002a, 241–242.

5 Malkavaara 2002a, 247–250.

6 Suomen ev.lut. kirkon nelivuotiskertomus 1981, 193.

7 Suomen ev.lut. kirkon nelivuotiskertomus 1989, 118.

8 Malkavaara 2000a, 11–12; Kettunen 2001, 191–194.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the economic recession had been overcome which again had an impact on diaconal work. The number of clients started to decrease with the turn of the millennium, and the number of house calls, in particular. The largest age group was 40 to 64-year olds, although the age group of over 74-year-olds was also quite considerable. Financial problems was the most common reason for contacting the diaconal services, although seeking help in issues relating to health/illness and relationships were almost as common.⁹

In 2012, the number of clients was 634,895. Approximately one in two (48.8%) belonged to the age group of 40 to 64-year-olds, while the over 74-year-olds represented a fourth of the total (24.0%). More than half of the clients lived in single-person households (53.9%). Close to one in two (49.0%) were retired, while a third was not employed for some other reason (34.6%). The four most common topics included financial issues (27.1%), health/sickness (18.4%), personal relationships (16.5%) and spiritual issues (11.4%). The number of volunteers was a little over 30,000.¹⁰

In 2012, financial aid was granted to 72,000 single-person households totalling MEUR 2.74. The number of families with children receiving financial aid was 45,000 and the amount of financial aid granted totalled MEUR 3.53. Other groups receiving financial aid were considerably smaller. The total sum of financial aid was MEUR 7.42. During the reporting period, free or low price meals were organised on 10,000 occasions, and the number of served meals totalled 634,000. A total of 102,000 food parcels were distributed and financial aid granted 240,000 times. Over the past two years, the number of open house events has decreased. In 2012, there were roughly 16,700 open house events which attracted a total of 453,000 visitors. Other events organised as part of diaconal activities (campaigns, celebrations, activities for the unemployed, etc.) totalled 430,000. The number of groups which met regularly in 2012 totalled 5,000 with 59,000 members participating. 63,400 persons participated in the 2,600 field trips and 39,000 people took part in the 1,700 camping events.¹¹

1.3 Methods

The material for the Diaconia Barometer 2013 was collected using an online questionnaire sent by email to the Church Council's diaconal workers mailing list. The mailing list included a few email addresses of persons not currently holding a full-time diaconal worker post in a Finnish parish. The scope was limited to diaconal workers employed by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Diaconal workers were requested to complete the questionnaire by the end of two weeks, and a reminder was sent a week from the first contact.

By the specified time, 472 diaconal workers had completed the questionnaire. 424 filled in the questionnaire in Finnish, and 48 in Swedish. According to the Church Council's statistics, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland employed 1396 diaconal workers in 2012.¹² Data was transferred from the online questionnaires to the SPSS to perform statistical analyses. Applied analysis methods included frequency distribution, percentages, cross tabulation, Chi-square test, mean values and standard deviation, correlation coefficients, one-way analysis of variance, Scheffé test and T-test.

⁹ Kirkko muutosten keskellä 2004, 194–200.

¹⁰ Kirkkohallituksen tilastot 2013.

¹¹ Kirkkohallituksen tilastot 2013.

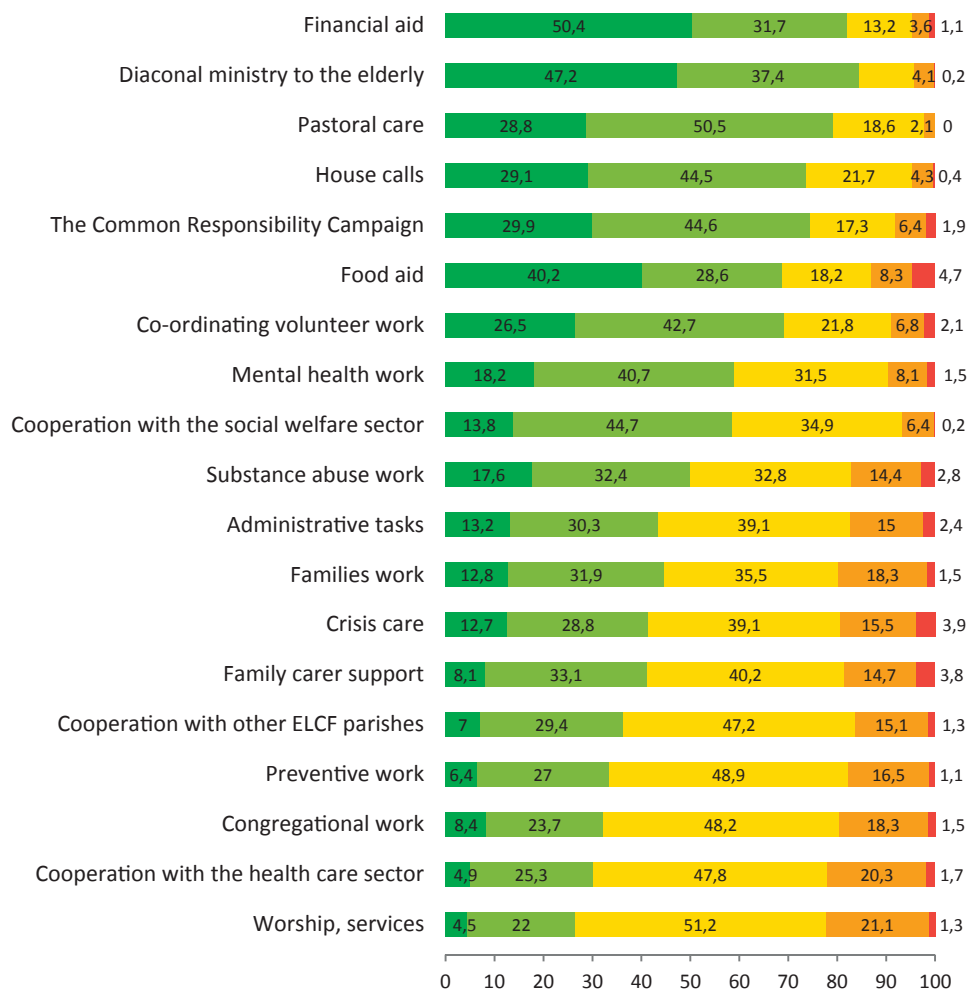
¹² Ala-Kokkila 2013.

2 AREAS OF DIACONAL WORK

2.1 The main areas of diaconal work

In the Finnish parishes, diaconal ministry takes on various forms. The questionnaire included 34 different areas - these were the same as those used in the Diaconia Barometer 2011. Question: "Considering diaconal work in your parish, how much of the total is devoted to the following areas?" Answers were given on a scale from 5 to 1 where (5) equalled 'a great deal', (4) 'much', (3) 'somewhat', (2) 'little', and (1) 'none'. For 19 of the mentioned 34 areas, the average was over 3 meaning that the respondents indicated the area to be at least 'somewhat' large. Nationally, the following 19 areas can be classified as the main areas of diaconal work. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1. The main areas of diaconal work in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland estimated by diaconal workers (%). (N = 472)



Traditional areas including elderly, mental health and pastoral care, and the Common Responsibility Campaign ('Yhteisvastuukeräys') continue to be prominent areas of diaconal work. New areas include financial aid, food banks and various forms of free or low cost meal services. Following the most recent liturgical revision, diaconal workers also actively participate in planning and assisting in Sunday services.

The economic recession in the 1990s left bankruptcies, unemployment, excessive debts and poverty in its wake. Through diaconal ministry, parishes started to address the consequences of the economic recession, which had a major impact on the content of diaconal work. The Church expanded its debt counselling and food bank activities, and participated in establishing the Takuu-Säätiö (Guarantee Foundation), a national foundation providing assistance to people in financial crisis.¹³ The effects of the 1990s recession have been long-lasting, and diaconal workers continue to grant financial aid to those who do not receive help from anywhere else. Financial aid in different forms, including food aid, remains a prominent area of diaconal work. Half of the respondents indicated financial aid to constitute 'a great deal' of diaconal work in their local parish, and one in three 'much'. Two in three indicated food aid to take up 'a great deal' or 'much' of the total.

Juntunen notes that in addition to material help, financial aid comprises other dimensions of assistance including co-operation with the authorities, guidance and counselling, discussions, negotiations and compassion, encouragement, support, and spiritual guidance.¹⁴ Professor Paavo Kettunen has also noticed that financial aid often incorporates spiritual guidance.¹⁵ In her Master's Thesis, Ms. Taina Paajanen observed that compared to municipal social work, diaconal ministry can offer a more holistic approach due to the inadequate personnel resources in social work.¹⁶

In Finland, diaconal work has long tradition in ministering to the elderly, although the largest age group (40.2%) today is the 40 to 64-year-olds. Elderly care also includes house calls. According to the diaconal workers, elderly care and financial aid are almost equally large areas in diaconal work with financial aid somewhat larger. Four in five respondents estimated that 'a great deal' or 'much' of diaconal work is targeted at elderly care, and three in four indicated there are 'a great deal' or 'much' house calls. According to the statistics, the number of house calls made by professional diaconal workers has decreased over the past few years. However, the absolute number of home visits has most likely not decreased as volunteers are trained to visit clients at their homes. Thus, diaconal ministry of the Church includes also other types of visits to the clients' homes than house calls made by professional diaconal workers.¹⁷ Kirkkopalvelut ry, an organisation of the ELCF and other Christian organisations, has published a guide on visiting clients at home to offer detailed information to the volunteers in diaconal ministry.¹⁸

Pastoral care is one of the main areas of diaconal work, and the third most important area according to the survey. Concerning pastoral care, one in four estimated that diaconal work contains 'a great deal' of pastoral care, and one in two indicated 'much'. According to the

13 Malkavaara 2002b, 293–303. On Takuu-Säätiö, see Takuu-Säätiö 2013; Iivari & Rastas 1996.

14 Juntunen 2011, 38.

15 Kettunen 2001, 196–198.

16 Paajanen 2008, 44.

17 Haastettu kirkko 2012, 200–201; Kirkon tilastollinen vuosikirja 2012, 96.

18 Diakoninen kotikäyntityö 2010.

Four-Year Report of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, relationships account for 18% of client contacts and spiritual issues 10%.¹⁹ In her doctoral dissertation, Jokela studied mental and spiritual support as one of the main areas of diaconal work. For some clients, an important reason for making an appointment with a diaconal worker was the fact that among other issues also spiritual questions could be addressed. However, Jokela also notes that not all clients wish to discuss spiritual issues with their diaconal worker.²⁰

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has been organising the Common Responsibility Campaign ('Yhteisvastuukeräys') for over six decades. The first Campaign was organised in 1950. At first, all of the proceeds were used in Finland. Since 1963, proceeds have also been channelled to international causes. Today, 60% of the proceeds are distributed to international targets, 20% to an annually selected national beneficiary, 10% to the diaconal funds of the Finnish dioceses, and 10% to the selected charity of the participating parish. In 2012, the proceeds of the Common Responsibility Campaign totalled MEUR 4.1.²¹

Diaconal workers spend a considerable amount of time and resources to organise the Common Responsibility Campaign. According to the survey, three in every four parishes devote 'a great deal' or 'much' effort to organise and coordinate the Common Responsibility Campaign. Without the significant contribution of diaconal workers, the Common Responsibility Campaign could not be organised in its current extent.

Due to its extensive scope and the variety of different activities, diaconal ministry requires the additional resources provided by volunteers. In 2011, their number totalled over 30,000. Over the past few years, the number of volunteers in diaconal ministry has increased. Volunteers require guidance from the diaconal workers. More than two in three estimated that 'a great deal' or 'much' of the diaconal ministry in their parishes is devoted to instructing and co-ordinating volunteers.

Only few of the respondents indicated that the effort required to coordinate volunteers was 'none'. Diaconal workers characterised their professional relationship with volunteers as follows: I co-ordinate the volunteer activities in my parish - 10.8%, I co-ordinate volunteer activities in the diaconal ministry - 21.6%, instructing and guiding volunteers is part of my job - 27.0%, I co-operate with volunteers - 36.1%.

Other areas of diaconal work include mental health, substance abuse, and families work, crisis care, family carer support, and preventive work. Co-operating with other actors is characteristic of diaconal work, and is discussed later in this article. Diaconal workers also participate in congregational work in the parishes. The most recent liturgical revision impacted the role of diaconal workers as well, and today diaconal workers actively participate in planning and assisting in Sunday services.²² This has become an important area of diaconal work. One in four indicated that 'a great deal' or 'much' of diaconal work in their parish is devoted to Sunday services. Only a few indicated that Sunday services are not part of diaconal work in their parish ('none').

19 Haastettu kirkko 2012, 200.

20 Jokela 2011, 135–154.

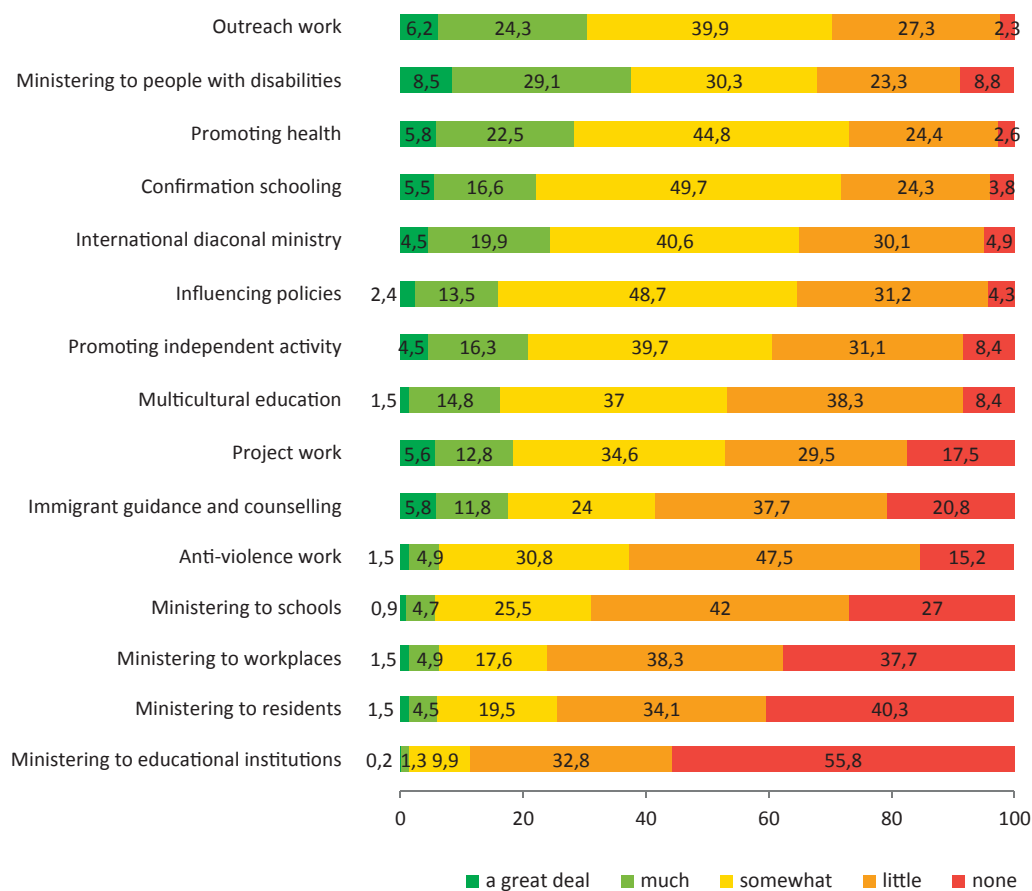
21 Yhteisvastuu 2013; Härkönen 1999.

22 Kirkon jumalanpalveluksen opas 2009, 75–80.

2.2 Other areas of diaconal work

In addition to the main areas of diaconal work discussed above, there are also other areas of diaconal ministry which albeit less prominent are none the less important. Most of these minor areas of diaconal work are present in most of the parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Other areas of diaconal work in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland estimated by diaconal workers (%). (N = 472)



A diaconal strategy has been introduced to provide guidelines for future work and to anticipate future challenges. The latest report on the strategy for diaconal work in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland was approved by the Church Council's Plenary Session in 2010 (Meidän kirkko – välittävä yhteisö. Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon diakonian ja yhteiskuntatyön linjaus 2015 [Our Church - A Caring Community. ELCF Guidelines for Diaconal and Social Work 2015]). The strategy recommends stronger emphasis on outreach work and an investigative approach to better identify and anticipate emerging needs.²³

One in three indicated outreach work as a major area in diaconal work, whereas only 4.3% indicated that their parish does not engage in outreach work at all. Outreach work

23 Meidän kirkko 2010.

is time consuming. Hence, not all parishes can spare resources to engage in outreach work, even when it is considered important.

The Disability Policy Programme of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland 'Kirkko kaikille' was approved by the Church Council in 2003. The publication is intended for the employees of the ELCF, persons holding positions of trust, and all members of the Church. The Disability Programme emphasises equal opportunities for everyone to participate in congregational life. According to the Four-Year Report of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, more than half of the parishes (56%) implemented the ELCF Disability Programme 'Kirkko kaikille' over the period from 2008 to 2011.²⁴

The Programme as well as ministering to people with disabilities affects all ministries in the Church, but has a special role in diaconal ministry. However, there is much deviation in how large a role ministering to people with disabilities is seen to have in diaconal work. More than a third of the respondents estimated that 'a great deal' or 'much' of diaconal work in their parish is devoted to ministering to people with disabilities. Less than ten per cent indicated that ministering to people with disabilities is not part of diaconal work in their parish.

The latest confirmation schooling plan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland emphasises the role of diaconal workers as follows: "The professional skills of diaconal and child care workers are an important addition supporting confirmation schooling."²⁵ Based on the survey, this objective is achieved in most parishes, because only a very small minority of the respondents were of the opinion that diaconal workers have no role in confirmation schooling.

Areas of diaconal work related to globalisation include international diaconal ministry, multicultural education, and immigrant guidance and counselling. The amount of resources devoted to these areas varies greatly between different parishes which is only logical as there may not be any immigrants in some parishes while in others there are plenty. Although ministering to schools, other educational institutions, workplaces and residents are very minor areas of diaconal work on the national level, some parishes devote a great deal of resources to these areas.

In large parishes, the scope of diaconal work is more extensive than in smaller ones which is only logical as the number of diaconal workers increases with the size of the congregation. The scope of diaconal work is extended when the number of diaconal workers exceeds three. Due to the regional characteristics and special needs, focus areas vary across Finland.

24 Haastettu kirkko 2012, 205; Kirkko kaikille 2003.

25 Rippikoulusuunnitelma 2001, 42.

3 PARTNERSHIPS AND CO-OPERATION

3.1 Partnerships

The parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland are relatively independent and free to organise and co-ordinate their operations as they see fit. Each parish is part of a diocese whose authorities support congregational activities. The Church Council issues briefings, recommendations and instructions on how to implement the Church Law.²⁶ Due to the organisation structure of the ELCF, parishes can easily enter into partnerships with various different actors.

One of the most important tasks of a Manager is enabling co-operation within an organisation. Furthermore, it is the Manager's responsibility to develop co-operative partnerships with other organisations.²⁷ Partnerships were surveyed using the same questions as in the Diaconia Barometer 2011. Hence, partnerships have not been comprehensively mapped and include only some possible partners of individual diaconal workers. A summary of partnerships is depicted in Figure 3.

The most important partner of diaconal ministry is the social assistance unit of the social services department - roughly two in three parishes co-operate 'a great deal' or 'much' with the local social assistance unit of the social services department. This finding is consistent with the fact that financial aid is the main form of diaconal work in Finnish parishes. The diaconal ministry of the Church attempts to catch those falling through the cracks in social services. Following the cuts made to social security in the 1990s, the provision of basic social services has been at risk. A more recent phenomenon faced by diaconal workers are clients who believe that they are entitled to diaconal financial aid.

Co-operation with other areas of parish work is almost as extensive as co-operation with the local social assistance unit of the social services department. Regarding the relevant questions, two in three indicated 'a great deal' or 'much'. Due to the extensive scope of diaconal work, cooperating with the other areas of parish work comes naturally. Typically there is also quite a lot of cooperation with other parishes of the ELCF. Indeed, diaconal work on the diocese or deanery level has long tradition, because many tasks are best accomplished in cooperation with other parishes.

The 1972 Primary Health Care Act had a significant impact on diaconal work. Until then, deaconesses had been engaged in home care but this lost its significance with the new act. In the 1980s, diaconal work focused on ministering to the elderly and pastoral care. Following the economic recession in the 1990s, cooperation between municipalities and parishes increased in several areas. The results of this survey show that municipal home care is the third most important partner. More than one in three indicated that they cooperate 'a great deal' or 'much' with municipal home care. Other areas of cooperation with the mu-

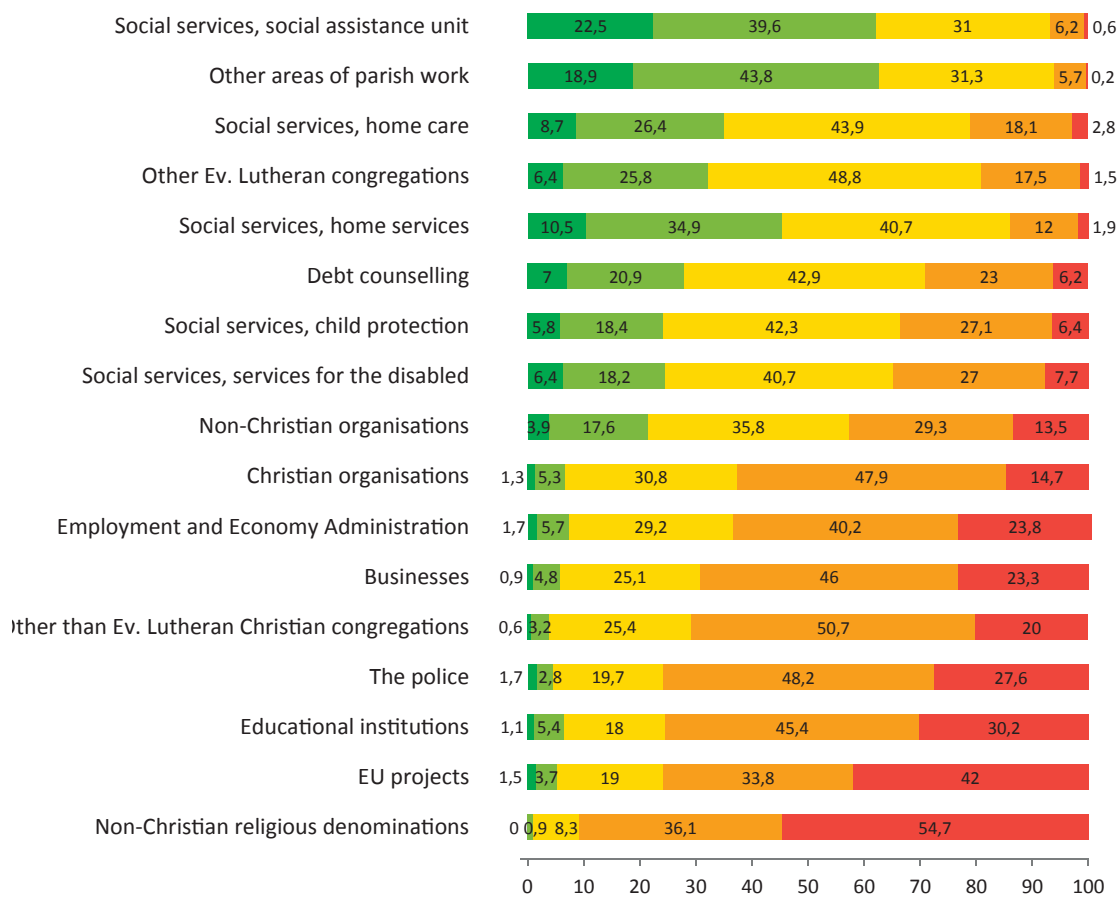
²⁶ Kantola 2001, 20–23.

²⁷ Palmu 2003, 12–15.

municipal social services include municipal home services, debt counselling, child protection, and services for the disabled.

Cooperation between diaconal work and municipal social services is most intensive in parishes located in cities with 30,000 to 100,000 inhabitants. The least cooperation between diaconal work and municipal social services is in smaller cities with less than 10,000 inhabitants. The scarcity of partners in smaller municipalities may be partly due to the reduced number of administrative sectors rendering the number of possible partners relatively low.

Figure 3. Cooperation with different actors estimated by diaconal workers (%). (N = 472)



The diaconal work in the Finnish parishes is a Christian ministry. Hence, cooperating with other Christian organisations and congregations of a different Christian denomination is common. Other partners of a somewhat lesser significance include the Employment and Economy Administration, businesses, the police and educational institutions.

3.2 Experiences of cooperation

The questionnaire included the following open-ended survey question: "What kind of positive experiences have you had regarding co-operation with other actors?" 82.6% of those who filled in the questionnaire answered this question. Some answers comprised a few

words only - "Mainly good" or "Only good". Others opted for slogans such as "Power in cooperation" and "Together we are stronger". Some were strongly in favour of cooperation: "I cannot see how we could work at all, if we didn't cooperate with the other actors." Most described instances of successful cooperation.

The positive experiences were divided into four thematic categories. A total of 160 diaconal workers noted that through cooperation diaconal work could offer its clients better quality assistance. 65 mentioned that outreach activities tend to be more successful when organised as a joint effort. Approximately 20 diaconal workers expressed these thoughts: (1) through cooperation diaconal workers are able to improve their professional skills, (2) working in cooperation with others offers relief and enhances the joy of work.

In the diaconal workers' view, cooperating with other actors is necessary if not imperative. Experiences of cooperation are largely positive, although some problem issues were encountered. The respondents were asked: "What kind of problematic experiences have you had regarding co-operation with other actors?" 73.5% of those who filled in the questionnaire answered this question. Although 27 declared that they had not experienced any problems, the majority had faced problems related to cooperation.

The analysis focused on the most common issues which were divided into eight categories. Professional confidentiality caused most of the problems hindering fruitful cooperation. This is mentioned as the single most problematic issue hindering cooperation by 76 of those who answered this question. Other problems encountered included the lack of time, unavailability of the partner, high employee turnover, cautious attitudes towards religion and the Church, communication gaps, the partners' ignorance of diaconal ministry, and exploitation of the parish's resources.

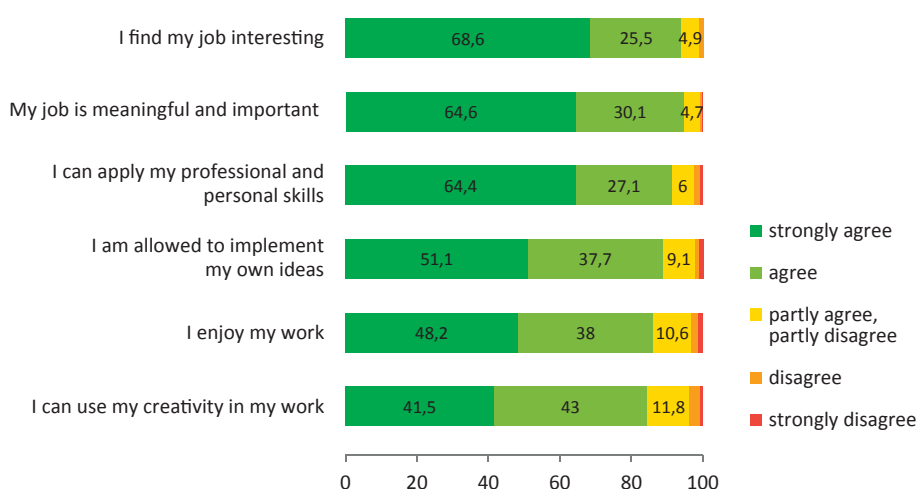
4 DIACONAL WORK THROUGH THE EYES OF DIACONAL WORKERS

4.1 Commitment, motivation and support

One focus area of the Diaconia Barometer 2013 is diaconal workers' commitment to their work. To investigate this commitment, respondents were asked how likely they were to change jobs in the next five years. The answers show that diaconal workers are extremely committed to their work - changing jobs within the next five years was considered unlikely by three in four respondents. Note that some respondents might be substitute workers when changing jobs is inevitable. Furthermore, it seems some of the over 60-year-olds interpreted retirement as 'changing jobs'.

Diaconal workers are highly motivated. We used the following statement in the questionnaire: 'I am motivated for my job.' 85.6% agreed with this statement. The high level of motivation is explained by an interesting job description and the possibility to apply personal and professional skills. The work incorporates a creative side allowing for the implementation of own ideas (see Figure 4). Diaconal workers have a highly favourable opinion of their job. There were only few who did not agree with the positive statements about diaconal work. Over 90% agreed with the following statements: I find my job interesting, My job is meaningful and important and In my job, I can apply my professional and personal skills. In short, diaconal workers love their job!

Figure 4. Diaconal workers' opinions of their job (%). (N = 472)



Superior support, opportunities for further and advanced education, and supervision have a significant impact on coping at work. 82.3% of diaconal workers are of the opinion that supervision is available when necessary, and 76.2% are satisfied with the amount of further and advanced education. What should be noted here, is that there remains a small amount

of diaconal workers for whom supervision is not available even when necessary, and who feel there is insufficient supply of further or advanced education.

Compared to supervision and further and advanced education, diaconal workers are less satisfied with the support they receive from their superiors. Less than two in three receive adequate support from their superiors. Superiors in diaconal work are more supportive than superiors who work in other ministries of the Church. According to Gävert, diaconal managers promote wellbeing at work by contributing to the division of labour and developing new working methods. Negotiations and discussions with the diaconal team are vital for this process.²⁸

4.2 Work-related stress and resources for coping with it

Over the past decade, the amount of work-related psychosocial stress has received much attention. When estimating mental and cognitive stress, the personal experience is the most important indicator. How a similar load is experienced varies greatly between different individuals - an event that may be extremely stressful for one person can be an invigorating challenge for another. In addition to organisation culture, interpretations of the amount of stress are closely linked with self-confidence and personal resources. Problems arise when the amount of stress is interpreted differently by the individual and the community. However, open and interactive relations at work facilitate solving such issues.²⁹

The questionnaire contained four statements on work-related stress. Two were positive and two negative. 50.4% of the respondents agreed with 'My job is very stressful', and 34.6% agreed with 'My job is often exhausting'. Despite these experiences, 80.1% estimated that they cope well with the challenges of their work, and 69.4% claimed to possess sufficient resources for the work.

In diaconal work, work-related stress is linked with emotionally exhausting client contacts, an overwhelming amount of work, problematic client relationships, the multidimensional characteristics of the job, and low pay. Between 38.8% and 46.4% of the respondents experienced 'a great deal' of stress as a result of the above mentioned issues.

Although the work is stressful, diaconal workers are able to cope with the challenges. This can be explained by the high motivation for work, and the fact that diaconal workers find their work to be important and meaningful. A high level of professional skill is an additional asset that helps diaconal workers tackle the challenges they face in their work. Professional skills are an essential part of good working capability and capacity.³⁰ In Finland, diaconal workers are trained at the Diaconia University of Applied Sciences which guarantees a high level of education. Diaconal workers are also offered a wide variety of further and advanced training.

The questionnaire listed 36 resources. The respondents were asked to define how important each of the resources is in coping with a stressful situation. The ten most important resources are listed in Figure 5.

²⁸ Gävert 2009, 83–88.

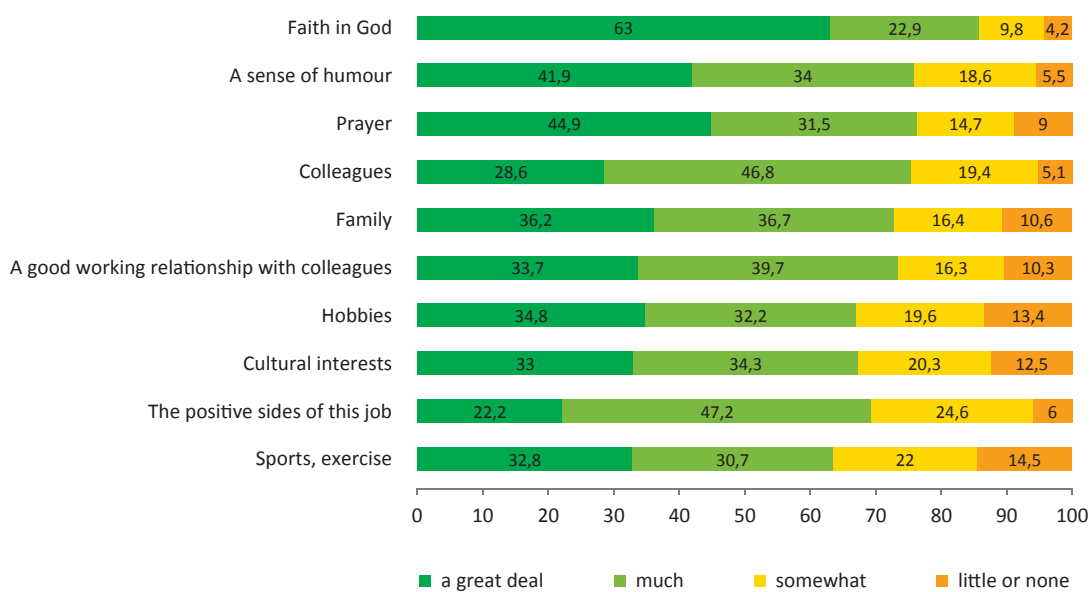
²⁹ Parvikko 2010, 15–21.

³⁰ Rautio 2010, 25.

The spirituality of diaconal workers becomes apparent when mapping resources for coping - having faith in God is the single most important survival strategy during stressful situations in life. Two in three indicated that their faith in God provides considerable relief in stressful situations. Prayer offers 'a great deal' or 'much' relief in stressful situations to two-thirds of the respondents.

Recently, religion as a resource to cope in stressful situations has been the focus of increasing attention. According to Carolyn Aldwin, spirituality gives meaning to adversity, and events are sometimes interpreted as being God's will. In prayer, a person feels they are in control. Faith in God offers consolation amidst adversity, and a congregation can act as a supportive community. For many people, religion gives the strength to make changes in their lives.³¹

Figure 5. Resources for coping with stress. (%). (N = 472)



Receiving support from others is considered an essential resource. Two in three find they receive considerable support and help from their colleagues. Against this backdrop, it is only logical that holding on to a good working relationship with colleagues is at least 'somewhat' important to nearly all diaconal workers. Three in four indicate family as an important resource. Copious studies show that social support is a vital resource to overcome stressful situations in life. For most, merely being able to share your problems with someone is a relief. Furthermore, close friends or family members can give information or tips that may help alleviate the situation. Discussions boost a person's confidence in their ability to overcome adversities.³²

Activities and hobbies unrelated to work are another important resource for diaconal workers. Approximately two in three agree that hobbies, sports, exercise and culture - including arts, literature and music - offer 'a great deal' or 'much' relief when faced with stress or adversities. Activities outside the home and unrelated to work provide an opportunity to

31 Aldwin 2007, 123–125.

32 Kiiski 2011, 172–177; Koskela 2011, 252–262; Pakenham ym. 2007, 92–100; Kiiski 2002, 222–239; Bryant & Conger 1999, 443–448.

develop as a person and to enjoy the company or the results of the creative work of others. A common resource among diaconal workers is a positive outlook on life with a good sense of humour and focus on the bright side of things. In stressful situations, these offer 'a great deal' or 'much' support for two in three respondents.

5 CHALLENGES - AGEING AND MARGINALISATION

5.1 Ageing population

In Finland, population ageing is not merely a common topic but a well established fact. The development of birth rate is important for the age structure in Finland. The post World War II birth rates form a peak in the Finnish demographics, whereas the generations born after the 1970s have remained more or less equal in size. The rising life expectancy has further contributed to population ageing. It is today 16 years more than it was in the post-war era in the 1940s. According to Statistics Finland, the cohort of over 65-year-olds comprised 777,200 persons in 2000, and by 2030 their number is estimated to reach 1,400,000. Compared to other EU member states, population ageing is advancing most rapidly in Finland.³³

The respondents were asked: "How does population ageing manifest in your work?" 91.0% of those who participated in the survey answered this question. Almost everyone had noticed that the ageing of the elderly was reflected on their work. Many felt that because of this development, elderly people are now more than ever in need of diaconal assistance. The number of house calls increases, a larger number of volunteers are required, the number of elderly people participating in outreach activities grows, there are more visits on birthdays, more visits to institutions, more support required by family carers, enhanced cooperation with other organisations, and a greater need for spiritual guidance for the elderly.

According to the diaconal workers, the most common problems among the elderly include illness and loneliness. Additionally, elderly people may have financial problems, and some suffer from substance abuse. Hence, diaconal workers need additional resources for elderly care, in particular. However, with the scarce financial resources of the Finnish parishes, for any additional resources, diaconal work relies heavily on the recruitment of volunteers.

5.2 The marginalisation of young people

Over that past few years, the marginalisation of the young has been the topic of many an article and discussion. Although "marginalisation" or "social exclusion" are terms often used in conversation, research reports, programmes and talk shows, the concept evades definition. "Marginalisation" is typically used to refer to the underprivileged, and to reflect accumulated problems such as long-term unemployment, income problems, difficulties in having control over one's life and diminished participation in the society. The "marginalised" or "socially excluded" have been shoved to the margins of the society - or beyond.³⁴

Mr. Pekka Myrskylä's research report on the exclusion of young people from studies and working life 'Nuoret työmarkkinoiden ja opiskelun ulkopuolella' was published in 2011 and

33 Väestön ikääntyminen 2013.

34 Vuokkila-Oikkonen 2010, 3–5; Sandberg 2008, 11–14; Helne 2002, 12

it aroused lively discussion. In his research, Myrskylä focused on 15 to 29-year-olds who did not have any degree beyond basic education, and were not employed or registered with an educational institute. In 2008, this group comprised 48,300 young people. 7,700 were on parental leave to care for their children. Hence, the number of excluded young people with only basic level education totalled 40,600. The income level of these young people is low.³⁵

The problems of children and young people are reflected on diaconal work. The questionnaire included the following open-ended survey question: "How is the marginalisation or social exclusion of young people visible in your work?" 419 diaconal workers, representing 88.8% of those who participated in the survey, answered this question. The main themes include the following: the number of young clients has increased (f=34), the adult clients worry about the young (f=30), marginalisation is visible in confirmation schooling (f=13).

Financial troubles are mentioned by a total of 159 diaconal workers. Other problems of the young include a lack of control over one's own life, unemployment, alcohol misuse, and a poor level of education. According to the diaconal workers, some young people are faced with a combination of problems. In such situations, substance abuse is often linked with a low level of education paired with unemployment. Young people seek help themselves, but in some cases the problems surface when ministering to families. Apart from elderly care, diaconal workers require additional resources for ministering to families to effectively help the young at risk of becoming marginalised.

35 Myrskylä 2011.

6 CONCLUSION

In the Finnish parishes, diaconal ministry covers a wide range of different areas. The flexibility of diaconal work renders it capable of adapting to altered situations and new challenges. In the 1990s, Finland plunged into severe economic recession leaving unemployment, bankruptcies and indebtedness in its wake. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland responded by establishing food banks and offering debt counselling. Despite the fact that Finland did recover from the economic recession of the 1990s, poverty remained. In 2013, the main area of diaconal work comprises financial aid while food aid is ranked the sixth most important area of diaconal ministry.

In the 1970s and 1980s - prior to the economic recession - diaconal ministry focused on personal contacts, pastoral care and outreach activities including clubs, study groups, field trips and camps. The elderly were the primary client group of diaconal ministry. In 2013, emphasis shifted from elderly care to financial aid with the largest client group comprising people of working age. Nevertheless, ministering to the elderly holds its position and is the second largest area of diaconal work while pastoral care is third. Personal contact and pastoral care are typically an integral part of ministering to those suffering from financial problems. Despite statistics showing a decrease in the number of house calls over the past few years, diaconal workers rank house calls as the fourth largest area of diaconal ministry. This discrepancy could be explained by home visits made by volunteers. The nature, scope and significance of these home visits offer an interesting topic for further study.

Although there are many competing campaigns and fundraising events, the Common Responsibility Campaign ('Yhteisvastuukeräys') has maintained its position as a prominent annual fundraising campaign. Diaconal workers invest a considerable amount of time to organise the Common Responsibility Campaign in its current extent. In 2011, the number of volunteers participating in the diaconal ministry of the ELCF totalled a little over 30,000. Giving instruction and co-ordinating volunteers is the fifth largest area of diaconal work. Volunteers have an important role in diaconal ministry, which warrants studying the topic from different angles.

Families work, family carer support, and crisis care are other areas of diaconal work. Diaconal workers also participate in general congregational work and in planning and assisting in Sunday services. The vision of including diaconal workers in worship has to some extent come true.

There is some variation in the focus areas between different parishes due to regional characteristics and the number of diaconal workers employed. In large parishes, the scope of diaconal work is more extensive than in smaller ones.

Active cooperation with other organisations forms an integral part of diaconal work. Municipal social services is the most important partner as diaconal workers cooperate with the local social assistance unit, home care, municipal home services, child protection, and services for the disabled. Diaconal workers closely cooperate with other areas of parish work and with other parishes of the ELCF. Experiences of cooperating with other organisations are largely positive, although some issues have been encountered. It is important that these issues are addressed.

The results of this Diaconia Barometer can be applied in a variety of ways. It provides an up-to-date overview of diaconal ministry in the Finnish parishes for all interested parties. It lists problems related to diaconal work which should be solved. There are a number of vacancies in parishes for diaconal workers, while at the same time diaconal workers experience work-related stress, and the need for diaconal ministry increases with the ageing population. Studies show that the Finnish people name the diaconal ministry of the Church as the single most important reason for maintaining membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Hence, it should be allocated sufficient resources. With the grave financial situation of the Finnish parishes, savings should be controlled and systematically implemented. This is not the case when vacant positions are not filled to create savings without any thought to the importance of the area of ministry.

Diaconal ministry is not limited to diaconal workers - all Christians are called to service. The Church Constitution states that diaconal ministry is exercised by the entire congregation and all of its members. In a sense, we are all citizens of diaconal ministry. The increasing number of volunteers is an example of how this philosophy is implemented into practice. However, diaconal work could be better integrated into other areas of parish life.

Jesus Christ said that the greatest commandment is to "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself". Diaconal work strives to fulfil this commandment in the context of our modern times. By taking part in Christian diaconal ministry and supporting it, we can fulfil this greatest of commandments and promote its implementation in our neighbourhood, our country and the World.

REFERENCES

Ala-Kokkila, Kari

2013 Diakoniatyöntekijöt hiippakunnittain. Kirkkohallituksen työmarkkina-asiamiehen antama sähköpostitieto 23.5.2013. Tekijän hallussa.

Aldwin, Carolyn M.

2007 Stress, Coping, and Development. An Integrative Perspective. Second Edition. New York: Guilford Publications.

Bryant, Chandra M. & Conger, Rand D.

1999 Marital Success and Domains of Social Support in Long-Term Relationships: Does the Influence of Network Members Ever Ends? – Journal of Marriage and the Family 61 (2). 437–450.

Diakoninen kotikäyntityö

2010 Diakoninen kotikäyntityö. Tukea ja rohkaisua vanhusten parissa tehtävään kotikäyntityöhön. Helsinki: Kirkkopalvelut ry.

Gävert, Titi

2009 Diakonian työalajohtaja ja hänen tiimiläistensä työhyvinvointi. Käytännöllisen teologian pro gradu -tutkielma. Helsingin yliopisto. Saatavissa: <https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/44854/diakonia.pdf?sequence=3> (27.5.2013).

Haastettu kirkko

2012 Haastettu kirkko. Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 2008–2011. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 115. Tampere.

Helne, Tuula

2002 Syrjäytymisen yhteiskunta. Sosiaali- ja terveysalan kehittämiskeskus (Stakes), Tutkimuksia 123. Diss. Helsinki.

Härkönen, Riikka

1999 Yhteisvastuun ajankuvat. Helsinki: Kirkkopalvelut.

Iivari, Juhani & Rastas, Merja

1996 Takuun varassa: Takuu-säätiö ylivelkaantuneiden auttajana. Sosiaali- ja terveysalan kehittämiskeskus (Stakes). Helsinki.

Jokela, Ulla

2011 Diakoniatyön paikka ihmisten arjessa. Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisuja A, tutkimuksia 34. Diss. Helsinki.

Juntunen, Elina

2011 Vain hätäapua? Taloudellinen avustaminen diakoniatyön professionaalisen itseymmärryksen ilmentäjänä. Suomen ev.lut. kirkkohallituksen julkaisuja 2011:3. Diss. Helsinki.

Kantola, Ilkka

2001 Seurakunnan työyhteisö ja johtaminen. – Johtaminen seurakunnassa. Toim. Raimo Turunen. Helsinki: Edita. 13–30.

Kettunen, Paavo

2001 Leipää vai läsnäoloa? Asiakkaan tarve ja diakoniatyöntekijän työnäky laman puristuksessa. Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. Sarja A 76. Tampere.

Kiiski, Jouko

2002 Rakkaus lamassa. Parisuhdeongelmat ja 1990-luvun talouskriisi. Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. Sarja A 77. Diss. Tampere.

2011 Suomalainen avioero 2000-luvun alussa. Miksi avioliitto puretaan, miten ero koetaan ja miten siitä selviydytään? Publications of the University of Eastern Finland. Dissertations in Education, Humanities, and Theology No 15. Diss. Joensuu.

Kirkko kaikille

2003 Kirkko kaikille. Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon vammaispoliittinen ohjelma. Hyväksytty Kirkkohallituksen täysistunnossa 13.8.2003.

Kirkon säädöskokoelma 101 (2005): Piispainkokouksen päätös diakonian viran kelpoisuusvaatimukseksi hyväksyttävästä ammattikorkeakoulututkinnosta.

Kirkko muutosten keskellä

2004 Kirkko muutosten keskellä. Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 2000–2003. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 89. Tampere.

Kirkkohallituksen tilastot

2013 Diakoniatyö. Kirkkohallitus. 19.3.2013. Saatavissa: [http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/36F995A398A68CE5C225785E004131AA/\\$FILE/Diakoniaty%C3%B6%202012.pdf](http://sakasti.evl.fi/sakasti.nsf/0/36F995A398A68CE5C225785E004131AA/$FILE/Diakoniaty%C3%B6%202012.pdf) (25.5.2013).

Kirkon jumalanpalveluksen opas

2009 Palvelkaa Herraa iloiten. Kirkon jumalanpalveluksen opas. Kolmas uudistettu painos. Helsinki: Kirkkohallitus.

Kirkon tilastollinen vuosikirja

2012 Kirkon tilastollinen vuosikirja 2011. Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko. Kirkkohallitus: Helsinki.

Koskela, Harri

2011 Lapseni elää aina sydämessäni. Lapsen menetyksen merkitys vanhemman spiritualiteetin muotoutumisessa. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 114. Diss. Tampere.

Malkavaara, Mikko

2000a Köyhyys, kirkko ja ruokapankit. . – Kirkonkirjat köyhyydestä. Toim. Matti Heikkilä & Jouko Karjalainen & Mikko Malkavaara. Kirkkopalvelujen julkaisuja 5. Helsinki. 11–16.

2000b Diakonian, teologian ja diakonian teologian murrokset. – Kirkonkirjat köyhyydestä. Toim. Matti Heikkilä & Jouko Karjalainen & Mikko Malkavaara. Kirkkopalvelujen julkaisuja 5. Helsinki. 17–57.

2002a Sodasta laman kynnykselle. Köyhyys ja diakonia hyvinvointivaltiota rakennettaessa. – Lasaruksesta leipäjonoihin. Köyhyys kirkon kysymyksenä. Toim. Virpi Mäkinen. Jyväskylä: Atena. 221–260.

2002b Nälkä ja köyhyys kirkon asiaksi. Näkökulmia laman ja markkinakilpailun aikaan. – Lasaruksesta leipäjonoihin. Köyhyys kirkon kysymyksenä. Toim. Virpi Mäkinen. Jyväskylä: Atena. 283–312.

2007 Suomalaisen diakoniatyön taustat ja nykytilanne. – Auttamisen teologia. Toim. Kari Latvus & Antti Elenius. Helsinki: Kirjapaja. 83–121.

Meidän kirkko

2010 Meidän kirkko – välittävä yhteisö. Suomen evankelis-luterilaisen kirkon diakonian ja yhteiskuntatyön linjaus 2015. Helsinki: Kirkkohallitus.

Mustakallio, Hannu

2002 Köyhät, sairaat ja kirkko. Suomalaisista diakoniaa 1800-luvulta 1940-luvulle. – Lasaruksesta leipäjonoihin. Köyhyys kirkon kysymyksenä. Toim. Virpi Mäkinen. Jyväskylä: Atena. 197–220.

Myrskylä, Pekka

2011 Nuoret työmarkkinoiden ja opiskelun ulkopuolella. Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriön julkaisuja. Työ ja yrittäjyys 12/2011. Helsinki.

Paajanen, Taina

2008 Diakonia- ja sosiaalityö kumppaneina sosiaalisen työn kentällä diakonia- ja sosiaalityöntekijöiden konstruoimana. Sosiaalityön pro gradu -tutkielma. Tampereen yliopisto. Saatavissa: <http://tutkielmat.uta.fi/pdf/gradu03479.pdf> (26.5.2013).

Pakenham, Kenneth I. & Chiu, Jessica & Bursnell, Samantha & Cannon, Toni

2007 Relations between Social Support, Appraisal and Coping and Both Positive and Negative Outcomes in Young Carers. – *Journal of Health Psychology* 12 (1). 89–102.

Palmu, Harri

2003 Osaanko kuunnella ja johtaa. Helsinki: Kirjapaja.

Parvikko, Olavi

2010 Työn psykososiaalisen kuormittavuuden hallinta. – Puheenvuoroja työn kuormittavuudesta. Toim. T. Kantolahti & T. Tikander. Työhyvinvointifoorumi. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. Helsinki. 15–21.

Rautio, Maria

2010 Arvioinnin moniulotteisuus ja työhyvinvoinnin hallintamahdollisuudet . – Puheenvuoroja työn kuormittavuudesta. Toim. T. Kantolahti & T. Tikander. Työhyvinvointifoorumi. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. Helsinki. 22–29.

Rippikoulusuunnitelma

2001 Elämä–usko–rukous: rippikoulusuunnitelma. Helsinki: Kirkkohallitus.

Sandberg, Otso

2008 Syrjäytyneistä huolehtimassa. Syrjäytymisen biopoliittinen rationaalisuus Helsingin Sanomien pääkirjoituksissa. Jyväskylän yliopiston yhteiskuntapolitiikan pro gradu -tutkielma. Saatavissa: <https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/38337/URN:NBN:fi:ju-201208212206.pdf?sequence=1> (16.4.2013).

Suomen ev.lut.kirkon nelivuotiskertomus

1981 Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 1976–1979. Toim. Heikki Mäkeläinen & Harri Heino & Eero Bäckman. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Suomen ev.lut. kirkon nelivuotiskertomus

1989 Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 1984–1987. Toim. Harri Heino & Juha Kauppinen & Risto Ahonen. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Takuu-Säätiö

2013 Takuu-Säätiö. <http://www.takuu-saatio.fi/> (16.4.2013).

Vuokila-Oikkonen, Päivi & Mantela, Jaana

2010 Syrjäytyminen ja sosiaalinen pääoma. Käsitteiden määrittely CDS-hankkeessa. Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulu. Saatavissa: http://cds.diak.fi/ff_customcss/Tiedostot/Materiaalit/images/Syrj_ytyminen_ja_sosiaalinen_p_oma.pdf (16.4.2013).

Väestön ikääntyminen

2013 Väestön ikääntyminen on suhteellista. Tilastokeskuksen tiedote. Saatavissa: http://www.stat.fi/tup/tieto aika/tilaajat/ta_05_03_nieminen.html (11.4.2013)

Yhteisvastuu

2013 Yhteisvastuu. Saatavissa: yhteisvastuu.fi (2.4.2013).

Of the 5.4 million inhabitants of Finland, 76.4% are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Over the past few years, however, church membership has steadily decreased. Studies show that diaconal work is one of the major reasons for maintaining membership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. According to the Finnish Church Law, a minimum of one diaconal worker must be employed at each parish.

Diaconia Barometer 2013 aims to describe the variety of diaconal work carried out in the Finnish parishes, and how diaconal ministry can swiftly respond to the challenges of our modern times. The many areas of diaconal ministry are described together with their respective position within the Church. Diaconal workers cooperate with other actors, and these partnerships are investigated in this review. The Barometer also reviews the diaconal workers' opinions of their job. Specifically, population ageing and the marginalisation of young people are topical themes challenging the diaconal ministry of the Church.

The material for the Diaconia Barometer 2013 was collected using an online questionnaire sent by email to the Finnish diaconal workers. 472 responses were obtained. In other words, a third of the Finnish diaconal workers participated in the survey. The author of the Diaconia Barometer 2013 is PhD Jouko Kiiski, Senior Lecturer at the School of Theology of the University of Eastern Finland.

CHURCH RESEARCH INSTITUTE 

**EVANGELICAL 
LUTHERAN
CHURCH
OF FINLAND**