

Diaconia Barometer 2016

Findings in Brief

Titi Gävert

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By Titi Gävert**

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Prologue

The 9th Diaconia Barometer offers a comprehensive view of diaconal work in Finland in the aftermath of the arrival of a wave of migrants in the fall of 2015. As opposed to the statistical data collected on the more traditional forms of activities and published annually by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) and the general trends reported in the ELCF's Four-Year Report, the Diaconia Barometer maps the experiences and opinions of the diaconal workers. This latest Diaconia Barometer records the actual consequences of the arrival of the migrants and asylum seekers, and how they were received. Furthermore, the collected data reveals that the migrants have fled severe hardship.

Since its beginning, Christianity has been defined by brotherly love and putting your own needs aside to help others. Diaconal work is founded on this desire to help those in need. The Diaconia Barometer is conducted regularly - previously biannually, but currently every three years due to the altered rhythm of the national conferences. Through repetition, we have acquired a chronological continuum of results demonstrating not only change, but also what has remained unchanged. This year, some of the detected trends are similar to those of previous years, while the biggest changes are related to the wave of migrants.

Over one in five diaconal workers of the Finnish parishes participated in the survey. Apart from the migrant flow, the focus areas included issues related to the underprivileged population and applying community development as an avenue for offering help. In addition to the more traditional forms of diaconal ministry, diaconal workers typically co-ordinate partnerships and collaboration with agencies. In order to shed light on future issues, the respondents were asked to name iconic persons exemplary of diaconal work and to consider skills that might be useful in the future. The Church as an employer was assessed through characterisations regarding the management structure, co-operation with superiors, and safety at work.

Today, the Diaconia Barometer is a well established survey providing invaluable information about the views of the majority of the Finnish diaconal workers. However, although interesting, the views of the majority are often not the most intriguing findings of the survey. The ELCF's extensive and traditional organisation occupies a rather established position within the Finnish society. Therefore, the views of a small minority are interesting in that they sometimes indicate a possible future trend, offering a view to developments which would be easily lost in the mass of more common issues. Some of these possible indicators of future developments are discussed in the Conclusions section of this report.

The history of diaconal ministry and of the Diaconia Barometers have been described in detail in the Diaconia Barometer 2013 by Jouko Kiiski, a Senior Lec-

turer and Docent in the School of Theology at the University of Eastern Finland.¹ As in previous years, the 2016 survey was undertaken by the Finnish Society for Diaconal Research (Diakonian tutkimuksen seura, DTS), the Diaconal Workers' Association (Diakoniatyöntekijöiden Liitto, DTL), and the Unit for Diaconal Work and Pastoral Care of the ELCF's Central Administration (Diakonia ja sielunhoito, Kirkkohallitus). The team members comprised Ms Titi Gävert (ELCF Central Administration) as research expert, Ms Elina Juntunen (ELCF Central Administration, Finnish Society for Diaconal Research) as Chair and specialist, Ms Tiina Laine (Diaconal Workers' Association) as a representative of the labour union, and Mr Jouko Kiiski, Docent (University of Eastern Finland, Finnish Society for Diaconal Research). The team co-operated closely with the stakeholders and with experts on diaconal research.

On behalf of all the stakenholders, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those who participated in the planning and implementation stages of this year's Diaconia Barometer. It has been a great pleasure to work with such skilled and competent professionals who share a genuine interest in the improvement of diaconal work. I would also like to thank the Church Research Institute for their knowledgeable collaboration and for publishing the Diaconia Barometer in the Church Research Institute's online series (Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen verkkojulkaisuja), thus enabling a wider distribution of the results that can, hence, be implemented not only in research but for the improvement of diaconal work.

Moreover, without the contribution of the respondents, the experts in the field, there would be no results to share. Therefore, I wish to extend my most sincere thanks to all of our respondents who despite their hectic schedules found time to participate in this survey. Your contributions are sincerely appreciated.

Hollola, 12 June 2016

Esko Ryökäs

Chair, the Finnish Society for Diaconal Research

1 Kiiski 2013, 2014.

1 Background and implementation

The Diaconia Barometer maps the experiences of the diaconal workers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) and their views and opinions on topical themes related to diaconal work. This report is a summary of the key findings published in full in the “Diakoniabarometri 2016” (in Finnish only). The survey was undertaken by the Finnish Society for Diaconal Research (Diakonian tutkimuksen seura, DTS), the Diaconal Workers’ Association (Diakoniatyöntekijöiden Liitto, DTL), and the Unit for Diaconal Work and Pastoral Care of the ELCF’s Central Administration (Diakonia ja sielunhoito, Kirkkohallitus). Data was collected in February–March 2016 via questionnaires sent by email to all diaconal workers in the Central Administration’s mailing list. A link to the survey questionnaire was also posted on the social media sites of all of the above mentioned organisations. The online questionnaire was available in Finnish and in Swedish. The respondents comprised 287 diaconal workers, 4 diaconal theologians, 8 diaconal workers without proper formal education, and 4 respondents who did not disclose their educational background, totalling 303 persons. The age distribution of the respondents corresponded with the age distribution of the diaconal workers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. A little over half of the diaconal workers are over 50 years old, and over 10 per cent are over 60. Four per cent are under 30 years old. Responses were received from diaconal workers across Finland. All of the respondents were experienced professionals. A total of 65% of the respondents had over ten years of experience in diaconal work, and 35% over 20 years.²

The Central Administration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF) publishes annual statistics, and the Church Research Institute compiles and publishes a report on the Church’s activities every four years. The ELCF’s annual statistics report total volumes in terms of participants and organised events of select areas of diaconal work offering chronological data on developmental trends regarding the surveyed data.³ What the annual statistics do not reveal is the distribution of resources among different areas of diaconal work nor the situation of the people encountered (privileged/underprivileged). The Four-Year Report of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland offers a broader view of the work carried out in the parishes, and seeks to explain the causes of contemporary phenomena in Finland’s society.⁴ However, it does not focus on the views, opinions, experiences, values, choices, and future visions of the workers.

2 Diacona Worker Statistics 2015.

3 Diaconal Work in 2015.

4 Community, Participation and Faith 2013.

The Diaconia Barometer complements the other statistical analyses and reports published by the ELCF. By focusing on the views, opinions, and experiences of diaconal workers and others who participate in the diaconal ministry of the Church it allows the voice of the workers to be heard. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections: the underprivileged, community engagement, asylum seekers, iconic personalities in diaconal work, skills required in the future, management, and occupational safety. The responses were analysed against the backdrop of the respondent's diocese (geographical area) and the total population of the locality.

The Diaconia Barometer provides a tool to assess how well the Church has succeeded in its diaconal ministry with the currently available resources. Have adequate resources been allocated to the right causes, and how should the available resources be distributed in the future?

2 Diaconal workers come into contact with all forms of disadvantage and deprivation

According to the Church Constitution, diaconal work is a demonstration of our Christian love whereby we provide assistance to those in desperate need who do not receive help from elsewhere.⁵ This definition includes several concepts that need to be regularly redefined: What is understood by “providing assistance”? How is “desperate need” defined? Whose need is the most desperate? Who are the people “who do not receive help from elsewhere” in our modern welfare state?

Various statistics can be used to estimate the total number of underprivileged in Finland. There are approximately 700,000 people living in relative poverty. In 2015, there were 261,500 households receiving social assistance, which is the last-resort financial assistance, and the number of unemployed totalled 252,000. Over the past years, the number of households receiving long-term social assistance has increased annually. People relying solely on social assistance have a level of income below the threshold income necessary for subsistence, the so called “minimum consumption level”. Furthermore, not all those eligible apply for social assistance. Hence, the actual amount of households eligible to receive social assistance could well be two-fold. According to estimates, there are approximately 30,000 people living in absolute poverty, in total social exclusion.⁶

The survey questionnaire listed 35 categories of disadvantage and deprivation. The respondents were requested to indicate how often they came into contact with people falling into the listed categories. The 35 categories were grouped into financial, health-related and social deprivation, victims of violence and abuse, and accumulated and transgenerational disadvantage and deprivation.

5 Church Rules of Procedure 1993, chapter 4, rule 3.

6 Report on the Evaluated Adequacy of Income Security 2015; Saari 2015; Tanhua & Kiuru 2016.

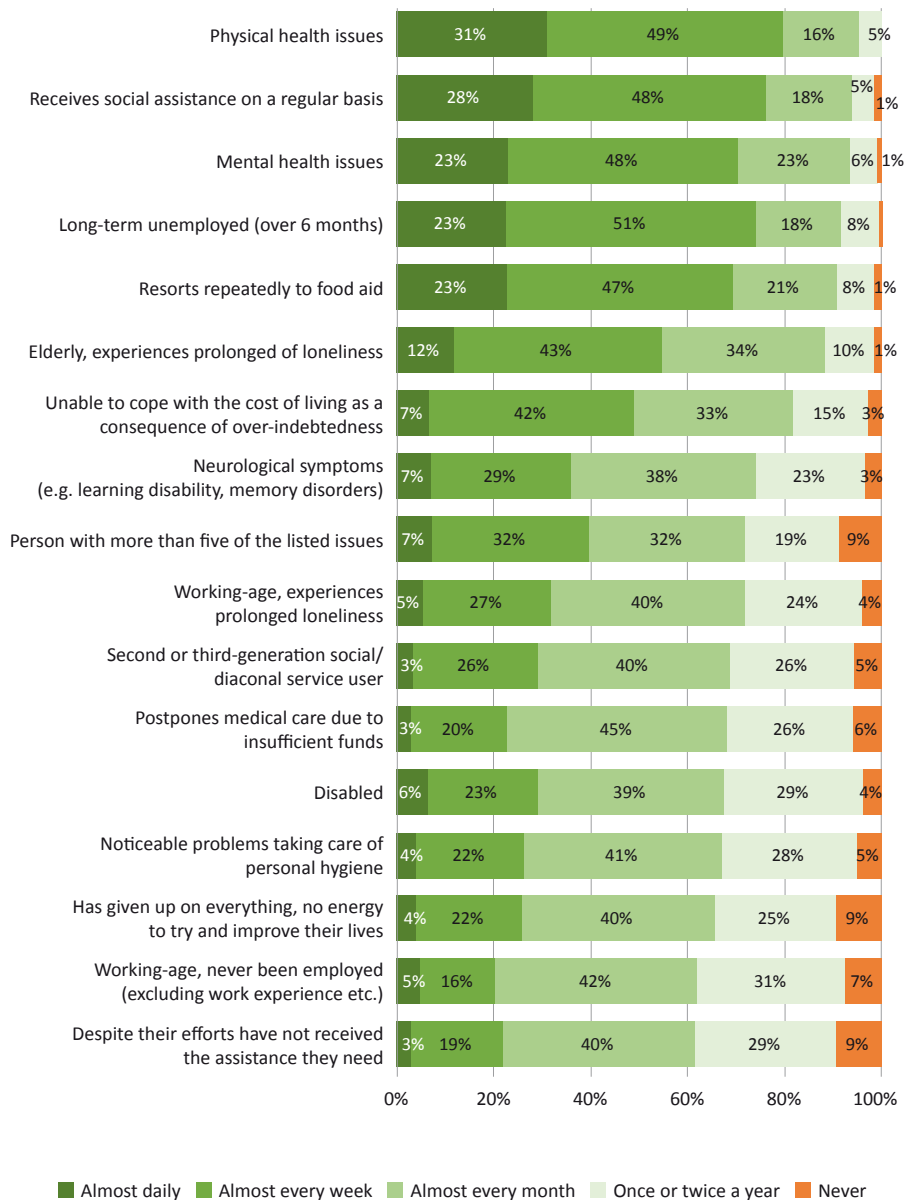


Figure 1. How often diaconal workers came into contact with people falling into the listed categories (1 of 2)

Diaconal workers most frequently came into contact with people suffering from physical or mental health problems, receiving social assistance, or who were long-term unemployed, or had repeatedly resorted to food aid. Over 90% of diaconal workers met people who fell into these categories every week, or even daily. Other frequently encountered people included elderly persons suffering from prolonged

loneliness, and those in excessive debt. For each of the listed 35 categories, there were diaconal workers who come into contact with people falling into that category daily, and several who reported encountering such persons once a week or once every month.

Diaconal workers met underprivileged people in the offices of diaconal ministry, private homes, open house events, etc. Contacting diaconal workers by phone or email is becoming increasingly common. In addition to personal contact, the underprivileged were reached via group activities, camps and field trips, networking and volunteer work.

For persons experiencing loneliness, the diaconal worker might be one of the few people, if not the only person, they meet. Sometimes personal contact can be the first step in encouraging a person to participate in parish activities, in open house events, for example. Befriending programmes are an important form of diaconal work designed to alleviate the loneliness of elderly persons, in particular.

According to the diaconal workers, a person seeking assistance can be described by to up to five different categories. Approximately 40% of diaconal workers came weekly into contact with people trying to cope with a number of serious problems, and one in three every month. Offering assistance to people with accumulated problems requires advanced skills in multiple fields, and close collaboration with other agencies.

Transgenerational deprivation and disadvantage where problems are “inherited” by younger generations were encountered weekly by over 25% of the diaconal workers, monthly by 40% and once a year by approximately one in four. A large part of diaconal workers have over 10 years of working experience, and many over 20 years and, hence, they are perfectly positioned to witness the “inherited” - or transgenerational - deprivation and disadvantage in their respective communities. Some diaconal workers have client relationships with members of the same family extending over several years, even decades.

In recent years, the number of people with memory disorders or learning disabilities seeking help from diaconal workers has increased. Learning disabilities are often paired with attention issues which might in turn complicate applying for social benefits. Nearly 40% of diaconal workers met persons suffering from a neurological disorder weekly, and 40% monthly.

Nearly one in four diaconal workers came weekly in contact with persons who had postponed their medical care due to insufficient funds, and nearly one in two every month. Typically, these persons did not have enough money to buy their medications or to visit a doctor.

2 Diaconal workers come into contact with all forms of disadvantage and deprivation

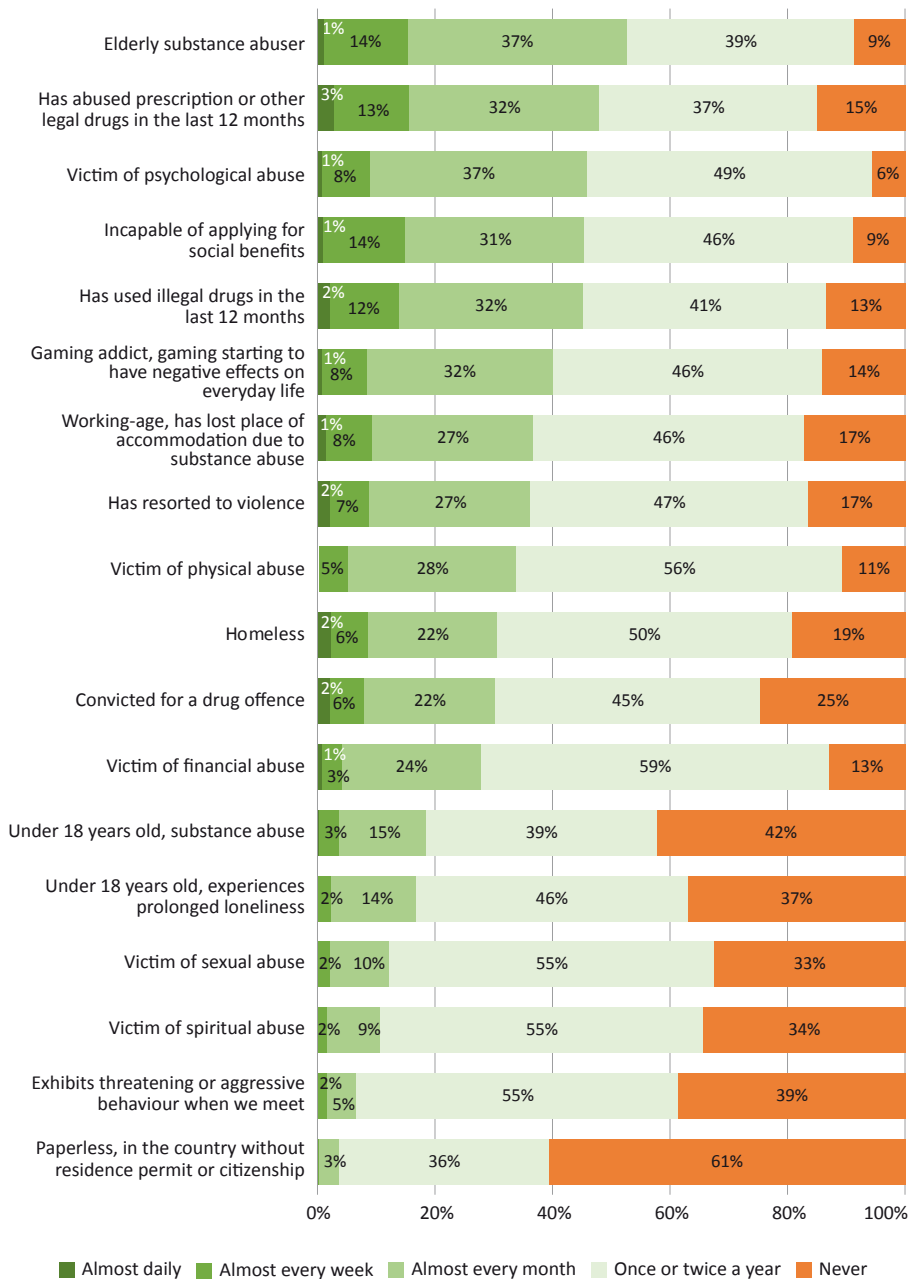


Figure 2. How often diaconal workers came into contact with people falling into the listed categories (2 of 2)

Many diaconal workers came into contact with people who did not know how to apply for social benefits they would have been entitled to. Nearly 15% came into contact with such persons weekly, and one in three every month. Additionally,

one in five diaconal workers came weekly into contact with persons who despite their efforts had not received the assistance they need, and 40% every month.

For several decades, reaching out to the elderly has been an important area of diaconal ministry. Diaconal workers observed an increase in the number of elderly persons experiencing loneliness and with substance abuse problems. A total of 15% of diaconal workers came weekly into contact with elderly persons having problems with substance abuse, and one in three every month. Over 50% of the diaconal workers came weekly into contact with elderly people experiencing long-term loneliness, and approximately one in three every month. Prolonged loneliness predisposes to various health problems and negatively affects the overall quality of life.⁷

Meeting young people under the age of 18 seems to divide diaconal workers - nearly one in five met underprivileged young people at least once a month, while approximately 40% of diaconal workers never came in contact with young underprivileged persons. The figures regarding encounters with young people experiencing prolonged loneliness or having problems related to substance abuse were similar. It is likely that there is some overlap between these groups. For a young person, it is crucial they receive help via at least one of these channels.

In diaconal work, coming into contact with victims of violence or abuse was somewhat less common than meeting people with problems related to substance abuse, or those undergoing financial hardship. However, it is not unheard of as 96% were accustomed to meeting victims of psychological abuse, nearly 90% to meeting victims of physical violence or financial abuse, and 75% to meeting victims of sexual or spiritual abuse.

7 Saari 2009.

3 Promoting community development

The promotion of community development includes all activities taking place in schools, hospitals, work places, etc. where an employee of the Church practices community engagement to increase the wellbeing of the community members.

Promoting community development may also refer to community members coming together and each contributing their skills and experience to take collective action. Depending on the situation, communities can be of locality, interest or identity. This area of diaconal work covers all forms of social involvement, volunteer work, participatory democracy, and other forms of social engagement and community development.

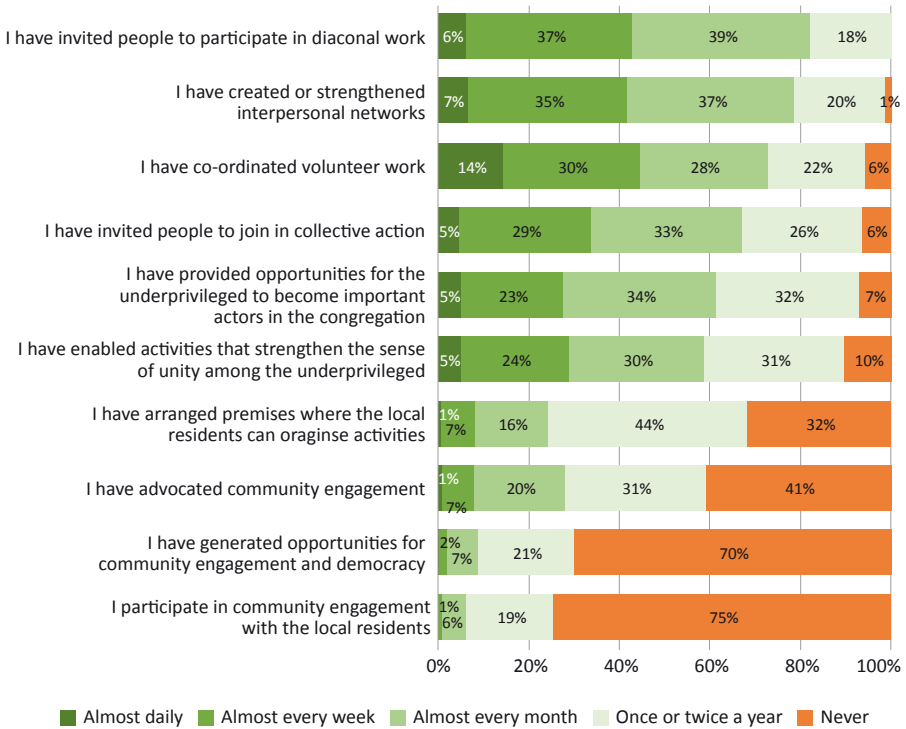


Figure 3. Diaconal workers who had promoted community development

Within the context of the Church, promoting community development is always work that extends beyond the congregation. By promoting community develop-

ment, the church seeks to promote social inclusion, focusing on our shared need to feel accepted and to be able to make a meaningful contribution to our community.

The Diaconia Barometer 2016 explored how much diaconal workers practice community development by asking them to estimate how often they had participated in the listed activities in 2015.

Diaconal workers had promoted community development in various ways. Inviting local residents to participate in diaconal work was most common. In addition to promoting and spreading the spirit of 'love thy neighbour', this generated opportunities for people to contribute their skills and knowledge for the common good, enabling enjoying a meaningful role in the community.

To be there to create these situations where everyone gets to feel that they're ok, to hand out help and responsibilities in appropriate shares. Underprivileged persons can be active members also, not always the target of assistance.

Diaconal Worker, Diocese of Espoo

Diaconal workers strive to make the underprivileged feel they are valuable members of the congregation. In several strategies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, communities and promoting community development have been defined as important focus areas in the 2000s, in particular. The Church seeks to establish itself as a unified community where everyone feels welcome. This, however, is still very much a work in progress. A total of 93% of diaconal workers say they provide opportunities for the underprivileged to become active members of the congregation. One in four engages in these activities on a weekly basis.

Two in three diaconal workers offer local residents the use of Church premises. Nearly all diaconal workers invite people to participate in social activities. One in three does this every week. The job description of all diaconal workers includes networking. By promoting interaction and co-operation between community members, diaconal workers counterbalance the polarisation and hate speech present in today's society.

Promoting community development takes up approximately 10% of the total working hours of diaconal workers, while meeting clients, i.e. personal contact, takes up a maximum of 44%. Half of the meetings take place in the Church's facilities, half elsewhere which leads to the conclusion that diaconal workers often leave the confines of their offices to meet people.

4 Networks put to good use to help the asylum seekers

A wave of asylum seekers and migrants flooded Europe in 2015. In Finland, the parishes were among the first to actively organise accommodation, and up to 60% had organised clothes and goods donations. One in four parishes arranged meals, sporting events and other activities to the asylum seekers, and approximately one in ten provided facilities for temporary emergency accommodation.⁸

Experiences related to helping the asylum seekers were for the most part positive. Collaboration with other ministries of the Church and with partners was smooth. In several locations, co-operation between parties actively involved in helping the asylum seekers improved over time.

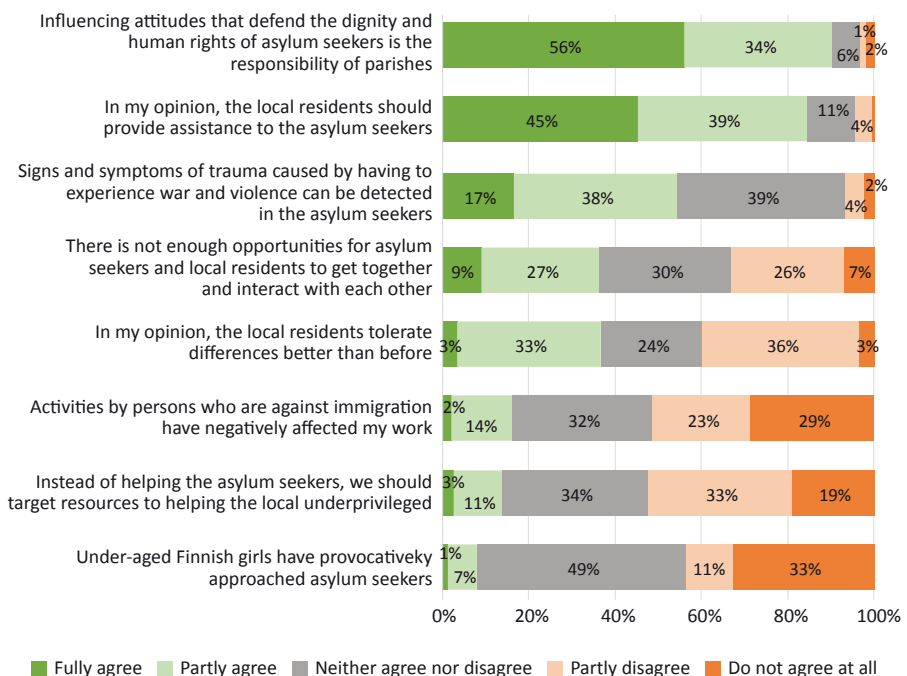


Figure 4. Opinions of the diaconal workers who took part in helping the asylum seekers

⁸ Assistance provided by the Finnish parishes to asylum seekers 2016.

Diaconal workers seemed to be of one mind in that the Church should advocate the dignity and human rights of asylum seekers. In addition to the Bishops' addresses, also the congregations have an influence on attitudes. Locally, congregations play an important role in distributing information both to the migrants and to the local residents.⁹

To shake up the traditional allocation of roles, diaconal workers arranged situations where asylum seekers were given the opportunity to be the ones to provide assistance. The effects of this on the asylum seekers' self esteem and self-respect cannot be over-estimated. Furthermore, turning the tables impacted also the attitudes of the local residents.

Diaconal workers reported that actions by persons against immigration had negatively affected their work even in locations where there were no reception centres and no asylum seekers. Anti-immigration propaganda has not only influenced attitudes, but has created a need to correct false claims. Furthermore, the threshold to tolerate any kind of difference seemed to have risen in these locations.

Diaconal workers are experts on crisis intervention and traumatic events, and were able to detect symptoms of trauma in most of the asylum seekers. However, some of the respondents noted that not all of the asylum seekers they had met displayed signs and symptoms associated with trauma. According to diaconal workers, not all asylum seekers suffer from trauma, but their numbers are considerably smaller than the public debate might lead one to believe.

In an open-ended question, the respondents were asked to list things that would help the immigrants and local residents live peacefully together. Distribution of information and personal contact were considered to have the highest impact. In personal contact, immigrants and asylum seekers become ordinary people - you learn their names and discover that they have a familial and cultural background, and hopes and dreams, just like you. This is the most desirable change in attitudes. The parishes should arrange events for the local residents and asylum seekers to get together and learn to know each other.

Once we get to know them, we realise that "those asylum seekers" are ordinary people just like us and the prejudice dissolves. It is so much harder to hate someone you know than to hate an unfamiliar, unknown mass. To advocate the view that asylum seekers are our brothers who need our help and are just as important as human beings as we are, and not think that everyone's a criminal just because some misbehave.

Diaconal Worker, Diocese of Espoo

9 Jackson & Passarelli 2016, 8, 95, 101–102.

The replies indicate that diaconal workers rely heavily on the power of information. According to the diaconal workers, asylum seekers and local residents alike would benefit from accurate information.

The diaconal workers recommend that asylum seekers be provided with opportunities to participate in volunteer work or studies, or to apply for a job as soon as possible. Prolonged idleness is not beneficial for anyone, and being without any meaningful occupation breeds stress and various other problems. The same is true regarding all unemployed, and the diaconal workers voiced their concerns about the employment rates of the underprivileged among the local residents.

Last fall, targeting resources to asylum seekers caused some of the underprivileged in our parish to become worried about the effect this would have on them, and I think their concern was justified. The government announces how it is necessary to cut public spending, and the implemented actions target disproportionately those with already low means. And then at the same time, the asylum seekers cause increases in public spending. Hence, it is no wonder our clients feel threatened.

Diaconal Worker, Diocese of Espoo

Much can be done locally, but politicians must express their opinions unambiguously and offer their uniform support for helping the asylum seekers. From the media, the diaconal workers expect truthfulness and transparency; they hold the media responsible for distributing accurate information.

The politicians need to demonstrate uniform support that we will pull through, that we can take care of this, that it is in the interest of everyone. Any political ambiguousness leaves room for all kinds of speculations diminishing the possibilities for co-operation. You need some sense of proportion - Finland is not going to fall apart because of 30,000 asylum seekers.

Respondent, unknown educational background, Diocese of Turku

5 The icons of modern diaconal ministry are networking reformers

The respondents were asked to choose from five candidates the one who, in their opinion, best exemplifies diaconal work, or to name their own idol. We selected Mother Teresa as an example of charitable, nurturing diaconal ministry which was prevalent in the 1960s, in particular, when deaconesses acted as visiting nurses long before the municipal system was established. Martha, from the well-known Biblical story, was selected as an example of an efficient organiser who takes care of everyone's every need. Within the congregation, diaconal workers sometimes adopt this kind of role helping the poor; visiting the sick; feeding the hungry; organising worships and devotional hours; participating in the organisation of Sunday services; offering support to families; organising activities for the elderly, disabled and substance abusers; and planning the parties in celebration of annual holidays. This image of diaconal work was probably most prominent in the 1980s when the variety of congregational tasks increased, and activities were organised separately for each group needing support. Martin Luther King was chosen as an example of courageous diaconal ministry, defending justice and equal human rights. This type of diaconal ministry was perhaps the most evident during the recession in the 1990s to bring the debt and hunger present in the society into public view.

The three classic examples were complemented by two additional figures: Florence Nightingale was chosen as an example of a reformer, determined to develop and establish new and better working methods. She represents diaconal ministry, which regularly re-defines the ultimate suffering in the society, re-evaluates the allocation of resources, and develops new methods to best address the current issues. And finally, Team Player X, a networking partner, was selected as an example of coordinating partnerships and multidisciplinary collaboration. The respondents could also name their own idol.

None of the alternatives gained a clear majority. The top three included networking partner Team Player X, reformer Florence Nightingale, and defender of justice Martin Luther King. Martha, the efficient "Jack of all trades", received the least votes.

Based on these results, the future trends of diaconal ministry involve dynamic interactive collaboration. The diaconal workers see themselves as team players in partnership relations where networking plays a key role and the set objectives are achieved in collaboration with others. New operational methods are relentlessly developed with focus on securing - and, if necessary, even fighting for - justice and equal human rights.

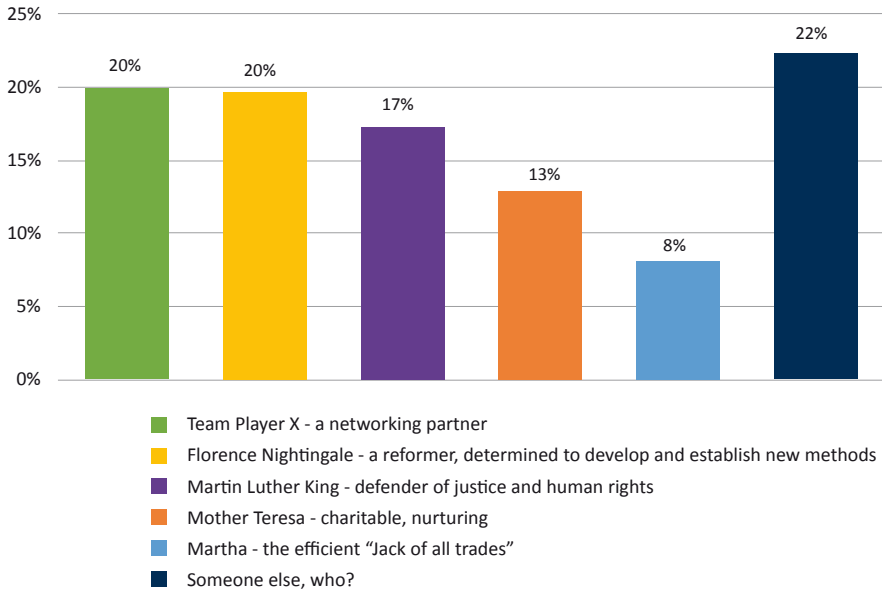


Figure 5. Iconic figures representing diaconal ministry

6 Interpersonal skills, networking, crisis management and accepting uncertainty are the cornerstones of diaconal work in the future

In 2014 and 2015, the Institute for Advanced Training of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (Kirkon koulutuskeskus) and the ELCF Labour Market Institution (Kirkon työmarkkinalaitos) set up several workshops representing various fields to identify the skills and capabilities needed in the future. The workshops set out to identify skills and capabilities necessary for all employees of the Church to possess in 2020 and in 2035. The Diaconia Barometer surveyed the diaconal workers' visions regarding the skills and capabilities needed in the future. The respondents were asked to choose five of the listed 20 skills that in their opinion are among the key skills and capabilities needed in diaconal work in the next ten years.

The top five skills included interpersonal skills, partnerships and networking, Church doctrine and values, crisis intervention and management of trauma, and managing change and reform. Over 70% of the respondents, had included the top two skills among the five key skills and capabilities needed in the future. Interpersonal skills are a necessary asset to be able to see through the problematic situation and misguided choices to the person. Considering the extensive networks of the Church, the importance of partnership skills will increase with the implementation of the upcoming municipal changes, in particular. In situations where the contact person is not known or changes frequently, partnerships require frequent updating. The top two options received the most votes, and differences between the next 12 were relatively small. Skills and capabilities necessary in diaconal work range from keeping up with changes in the social and health care sector to communications, and from being able to tolerate the discomfort of being outside your comfort zone to giving sound financial advice. According to the respondents, the key skills needed in diaconal work in the future include finding a way to tolerate the discomfort of being outside your comfort zone, and to skilfully manage change and reform.

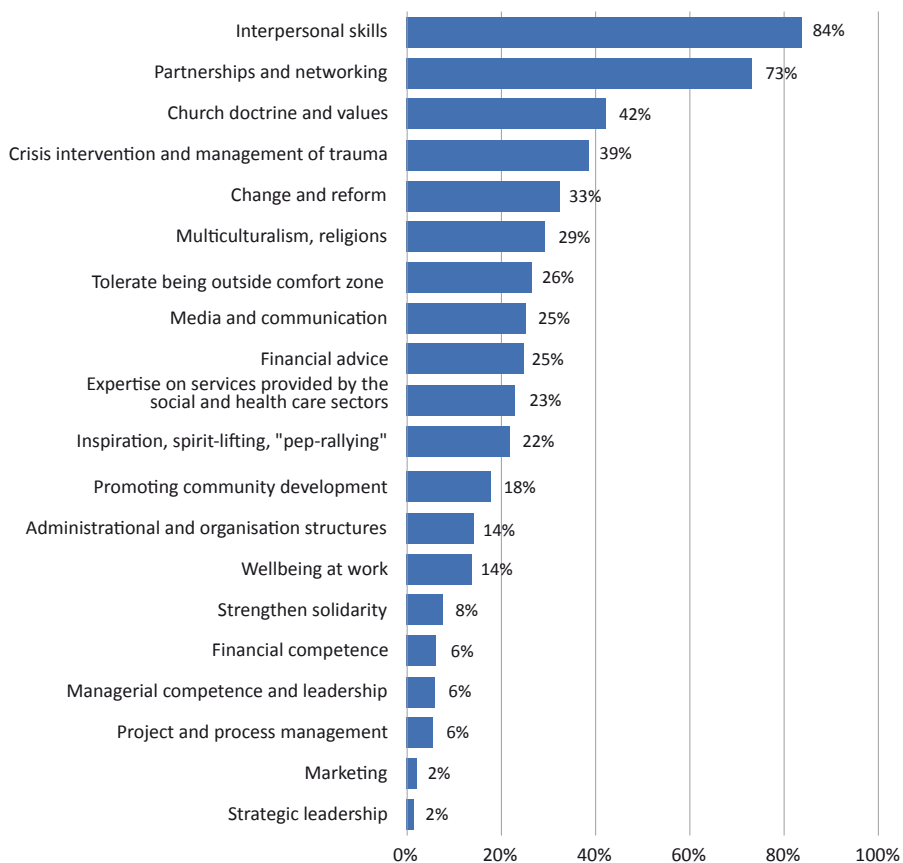


Figure 6. Skills required in diaconal work over the next ten years

Considerable differences were noticed when the results of the Diaconia Barometer 2016 were compared with the views expressed by the Church's ministers and financial managers, and representatives of the vocational institutions training future employees for the Church. Vocational and educational institutions emphasised multicultural competencies and religion skills, understanding administrational and organisation structures, and marketing, project and process management whereas ministers and financial managers considered managerial and financial competencies and strategic leadership to be important for everyone to master.

7 Diaconal managers are competent team leaders

How management is organised depends on the size of the congregation and on the established management culture. In large parishes, a significant amount of working hours needs to be allocated to managerial tasks. In most parishes, teams are divided according to geographical areas or professional fields. In the latter, employees are divided into teams according to their respective professional fields. For example, diaconal workers comprise a team, which is led by an appointed officer (e.g. the Chief Diaconal Worker). The responsibilities of team leaders are defined in more detail locally.

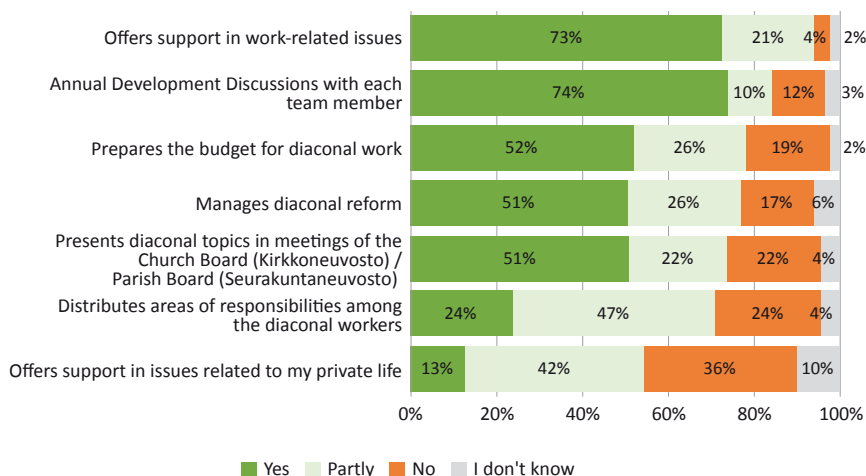


Figure 7. The responsibilities of diaconal managers in the respondents' parishes

According to the survey results, the most important task of the diaconal managers is to provide support in work-related matters. Managers with a background in diaconal work were particularly capable of supporting their team members in work-related issues and prioritisation. Other key responsibilities included budget control, managing reform in the diaconal ministry, and presenting diaconal topics in meetings of the decision-making organs of the parish. Four in five listed these as the responsibilities of diaconal managers in their respective parishes.

Most respondents felt that they received sufficient support from their superiors. The situation was less rosy in small parishes where many felt that they had not received sufficient support from their superiors. The respondents whose superior

had a background in diaconal work felt more often that they received sufficient support in work-related issues when compared to respondents whose superiors had a background in other congregational ministries.

A satisfactory number of applications were received for nearly all vacancies for permanent and temporary positions in the dioceses. The largest numbers of applications were received in the Diocese of Lapua and the Archdiocese of Turku. The recruitment situation was most alarming in the Diocese of Porvoo where 27% reported that no-one had applied for an open permanent or temporary diaconal position.

8 Threatening situations continue to occur, overall safety at work has improved

In 2015, over 60% of diaconal workers had in their work come into contact with a person behaving threateningly or aggressively. Approximately 10% of the diaconal workers in small towns (population between 10,001 and 30,000) had experienced threatening or aggressive behaviour nearly every month.

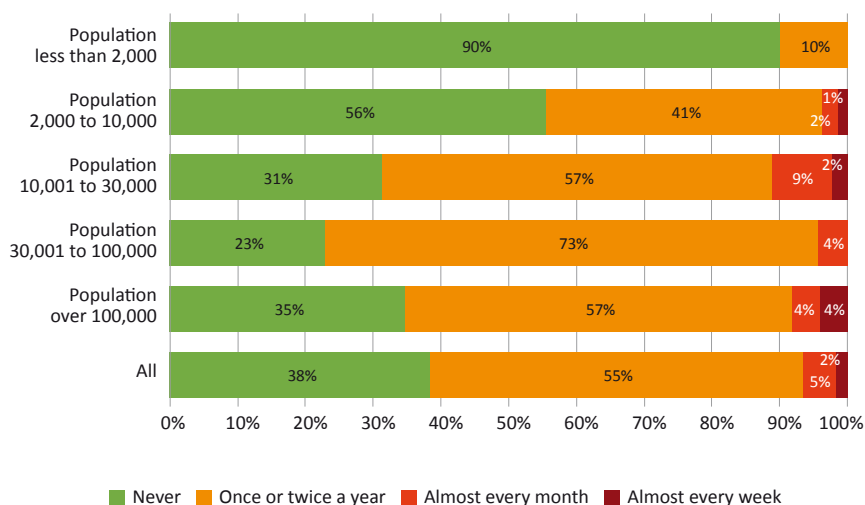


Figure 8. Diaconal workers who in their work came into contact with people behaving threateningly or aggressively (grouped by population)

Situations where diaconal workers felt threatened occurred frequently, although it was rare for these to escalate to violence. In 2015, 4% of diaconal workers had personally experienced violent behaviour. Compared to the previous Diaconia Barometer, personal safety has improved significantly - nearly one in five of the respondents had personally experienced violence in 2013.

Although situations where diaconal workers felt threatened occurred in all parts of Finland, their frequency was somewhat higher in the larger cities. Violence had been experienced by both experienced diaconal workers and those fairly new in the field. The most seasoned diaconal workers with over 20 years of experience were victims of violent behaviour more often than other diaconal workers.

More than one in three had been treated uncivilly by a client; 22% had experienced incivility once and 15% several times over the year. Approximately 20%

had been uncivilly treated by their co-workers or superiors. Under the Finnish Occupational Safety and Health Act, employers are obliged to prevent harassment and other incivility at the workplace using all available means.

9 Analysing the results against regional variables reveals differences across the geographical areas of Finland

A comparative analysis of the results reveals some differences between the dioceses. The number of seasoned diaconal workers with over 20 years of working experience is highest in the Diocese of Helsinki. Compared to the total number of diaconal workers, the Dioceses of Helsinki and Tampere have the smallest proportion of diaconal workers newly out of school. The largest number of parishes employing only one diaconal worker are found in the Dioceses of Porvoo and Oulu, while the largest numbers of diaconal workers employed in small towns are found in the Dioceses of Porvoo, Oulu and Kuopio. The recruitment of new diaconal workers is most pressing in the Dioceses of Porvoo, Helsinki and Kuopio where over 10% of the diaconal workers are over 60 years old. In the Diocese of Porvoo, up to one in four diaconal workers is over 60. The diaconal workers of the Dioceses of Helsinki and Espoo meet the largest number of paperless persons and drug abusers, while the diaconal workers of the Diocese of Mikkeli and the Archdiocese of Turku reach out to a larger relative proportion of drug users. More than elsewhere, the diaconal workers of the Diocese of Helsinki offer premises for use by the local residents.

As expected, the larger the city the more often diaconal workers came into contact with people who had given up on everything, victims of violence, and persons behaving threateningly. However, in some areas small towns with a population under 2,000 proved exceptional in that the diaconal workers had met more people who had given up on everything, and victims of psychological violence and sexual abuse than the diaconal workers in larger towns. Compared to the larger towns and cities, the diaconal workers employed in small towns more often felt that they did not receive sufficient support from their superiors.

10 Conclusions

The Diaconia Barometer is conducted regularly and systematically to map the views, experiences and opinions of the diaconal workers employed by the parishes of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. It complements other sources of data on the Church's diaconal ministry, and has been able to correct errors in interpretations based purely on statistical data. The previous Diaconia Barometer, for example, revealed that house calls was a central, resource-intensive area of diaconal ministry much more extensive than data from annual statistics had led to believe. This year's Diaconia Barometer sets straight incorrect interpretations regarding the importance of coming into contact with the underprivileged and meeting with clients within the sphere of diaconal work.

Annual statistics include data regarding some areas of the Church's diaconal ministry. However, far-reaching deductions have often been made based solely on statistics covering meetings with clients. According to the Diaconia Barometer, meetings with clients take up less than half of the working hours, and for some diaconal workers the share of hours spent meeting clients is somewhere between 10% and 20%. Other tasks include collaborating with other agencies; organising group activities (peer groups led by professionals), field trips and camps; coordinating the distribution of food aid and organisation of low-priced meals; maintaining low-threshold meeting places (to alleviate the prolonged experiences of loneliness and lack of purpose, drop-in centres to assist in navigating the social benefit application processes); recruiting, training and co-ordinating volunteer workers; participating in worship and general congregational tasks; communication and social participation; administration; and providing assistance to asylum seekers. All with the input of fewer employees than before.

Threatening behaviour and incivility must not be tolerated. Diaconal workers should be warned against considering experiencing such behaviour as "part of the job". Like others, diaconal workers also have the right to work without their safety being compromised, and without being threatened or harassed. Coming into contact with persons behaving threateningly or aggressively is common. Hence, diaconal workers need above average interpersonal skills and training in de-escalation techniques. Employers are to implement all available means to prevent harassment and violence against their employees by other employees of the Church and members of the congregation.

The views and opinions of the different actors within the ELCF should be taken into consideration when making plans for the future. Which skills and competencies are deemed necessary in the future largely depends on the person making the prediction. Diaconal ministry is very much based on respectful interaction and, hence, interpersonal skills combined with networking and collaborating

capabilities are vital competencies. Crisis intervention and trauma skills, being able to tolerate being outside one's comfort zone, and a wide variety of factual knowledge and applicable tools are among other necessities listed by diaconal workers. Diaconal workers come into contact with people who are facing one or more crises in their lives and, therefore, crisis intervention and management of trauma are part of the basic set of required skills. Change management and being able to tolerate the discomfort of being outside one's comfort zone are deemed more important than being able to provide sound financial advice, keeping up to date with the developments in the social welfare and health care sector, or media and communication skills. According to the diaconal workers, it is perhaps impossible to engage in diaconal ministry, if you are unable to tolerate being forced outside your comfort zone.

Actions are needed on the national and local level to promote the peaceful co-existence of immigrants and local residents. In addition to the Bishops' addresses, parishes should make every effort to defend the dignity and human rights of the asylum seekers. As Finland gains people from different cultures, it is important that everyone participates in maintaining a good and peaceful living environment. Meeting places and joint activities provide a setting where asylum seekers and local residents can get together, interact and learn to understand one another. Furthermore, asylum seekers and local residents alike would benefit from accurate information based on hard facts. Turning the tables on the traditional allocation of roles is beneficial for both parties - instead of being solely on the receiving side, asylum seekers can also be the ones to assist local residents.

Diaconal workers have witnessed resentment against asylum seekers among the underprivileged of the local residents. Bitterness arising from hardship provides an optimal breeding ground for hate speech. However, diaconal workers do not differentiate between people needing help, and they expect the policy-makers to adopt the same principles. Asylum seekers and local residents both need jobs and education. The decision-makers and the media should take responsibility for the choices they make.

Low-threshold meeting places, drop-in centres, and the distribution of accurate information, as suggested by the diaconal workers, could decelerate the polarisation of opinions and reduce social distance. Parishes could act as initiators, starting with congregational activities and then spreading the new way of thinking to a wider audience. Fulfilling the Church's vision of becoming a community where everyone can feel welcome poses a challenge for many Finnish parishes. To overcome the challenge, diaconal workers who are familiar with the stories of the underprivileged and understand the limits of the congregation and the people, have a lot to offer. Providing opportunities for people to get together and engage in mutually meaningful activities, and by spreading information and sharing the stories of people's lives, parishes could alleviate polarisation within their respective towns and cities.

Diaconal ministry is not confined within the walls of the diaconal offices. In fact, some diaconal workers spend most of their working hours elsewhere, and nearly all of the respondents reported spending at least some of their working hours in the field. In the spirit of 'love thy neighbour', diaconal workers have invited people to participate in diaconal work and have allowed the local residents access to the Church's premises to organise activities of their own.

Diaconal ministry is targeted at those who are not receiving enough or any help from other sources. Networking is key to solving problems faced by the underprivileged. Social assistance and other social benefits are granted to those who apply for them. However, applying for social benefits requires a certain level of skill and initiative, and diaconal workers come regularly into contact with people who are unable to apply for social benefits they are entitled to, or who despite their efforts have not received the support they need. Persons seeking help from the Church's diaconal ministry often have memory disorders, learning disabilities, or attention issues, and diaconal workers come into contact with people who have postponed their medical care due to insufficient funds. How are these people taken into account in the planned service system reorganisations? The Church should remind the decision-makers not to plan social welfare and health care services from the perspective of healthy individuals.

Finding those in desperate need is at the heart of diaconal work, and although focus areas and methods may change, the essence remains the same. Sufficiently loose job descriptions ensure methodological improvement and development. Furthermore, diaconal workers should have the power to discard activities that are no longer productive after thoroughly analysing the current situation. The Diaconia Barometer can be used as a tool to assess how well the parishes have succeeded in diaconal ministry. Should accumulated and transgenerational disadvantage and deprivation, increased community engagement, and providing assistance to the asylum seekers continue to be relevant in the future, the diaconal workers of the ELCF are well prepared for what lies ahead.

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The Diaconia Barometer maps the opinions and experiences of diaconal workers on topical themes related to diaconal work. A survey questionnaire is sent to all diaconal workers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF), and the results are used to complement the picture of congregational diaconal work painted by the annual statistics compiled by the ELCF's Central Administration and the Four-Year Report published by the Church Research Institute. The Diaconia Barometer is not an exhaustive representation of congregational diaconal work, but it does provide information that can not be found to the same extent elsewhere.

Data for this 9th Diaconia Barometer was collected in February–March 2016. The questionnaire started with questions about the respondent's background and continued then with questions regarding the underprivileged, community engagement, asylum seekers, iconic personalities in diaconal work, skills required in the future, management, and occupational safety.

The survey was undertaken by the Finnish Society for Diaconal Research, the Diaconal Workers' Association, and the Unit for Diaconal Work and Pastoral Care of the ELCF's Central Administration. This English summary and the full report in Finnish were both compiled by Ms. Titi Gävert. With a background in practical diaconal work, she also holds a Master's Degree in Theology from the University of Helsinki, and is currently employed as a Specialist at the ELCF's Church Administration.

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