

## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

DIAKONIA Council of Churches was founded in 1976 in order to provide a social justice agenda and voice for the church, and has been proudly ecumenical from its inception as the brainchild of the late Roman Catholic Archbishop, Denis Hurley.

Diakonia has provided refuge for many social activists, a number of whom are now the "City Fathers and Mothers", and some of whom are engaged at provincial and national government level.

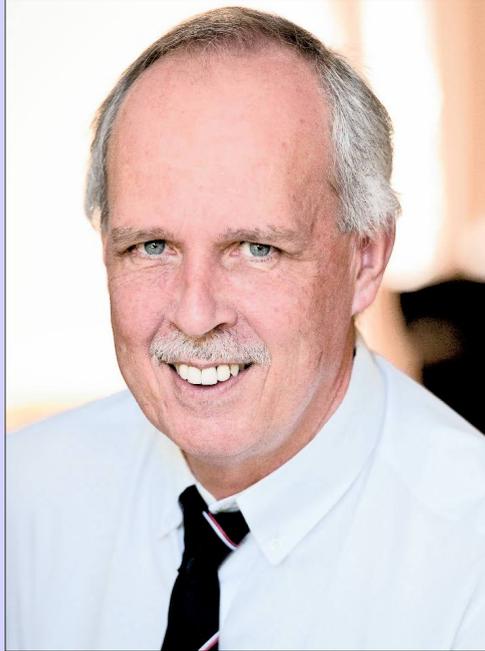
The continued relevance of Diakonia as an agency of social change has been assured by regular evaluations, conducted by external evaluators.

This has ensured that, while other agencies which were founded for similar purposes during the apartheid era have floundered since the advent of democracy in 1994, Diakonia has remained focused on meeting the needs of the constituency of eThekweni Municipality.

Diakonia has retained its strong social justice focus, and recognises the vital need for the church to be the conscience of the state and to provide a prophetic voice in the midst of a whole lot of other voices calling for profit and self-interest.

It is our pleasure to continue serving the eThekweni Municipality, with the assistance of our member churches, in the endeavour of transforming our society into a place of justice and peace for all who live here.

**Ian Booth**  
Chairperson  
Diakonia Council of Churches



## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

TO ensure that the notion of a better life for all becomes a reality, there is a need for strong civil society organisations such as Diakonia Council of Churches to strengthen democracy and guard against a repeat of past mistakes.

For the 35 years that it has been in existence, Diakonia is known to have touched so many lives. In its pursuit of justice, the organisation has been and continues to be a key role player in the eThekweni Municipality to ensure that a transformed world is possible.

As we celebrate this 35th milestone, we are mindful of

and grateful to our partners and friends, who have given resources including time and energy to the organisation. For this, we are forever grateful.

As we continue the pilgrimage of hope and transformation, we invite all like-minded people and organisations to partner with us – not only in celebrating the 35 years of our existence, but also to ensure Diakonia's long-term sustainability.

Indeed, let us be partners in working for a transformed society.

**Nomabelu Mvambo-Dandala**  
Executive Director



## DIAKONIA THE ORGANISATION FOR ALL PEOPLE

### History

THERE was a time when anyone in Durban suffering as a result of the actions of the apartheid government would be told: "Go to Diakonia: they will help you". And help would be found. At about the same time, those who supported the apartheid government, or who belonged to organisations opposed to the United Democratic Front (UDF) or the African National Congress (ANC) (banned at the time) would describe Diakonia as a terrorist organisation. Rumours went around that bombs were made at Diakonia in St Andrew's Street (now Diakonia Avenue).

Luckily for those who worked at Diakonia or who supported its cause, life was far too busy to worry about either of these extremes of opinion. There was work to do, lots of it, and one just had to get on and do it.

### How Diakonia started

In the 1970s, Archbishop Denis Hurley shared his vision of an ecumenical organisation to work for justice in the greater Durban area. He was motivated by his awareness that the Church should have been

doing much more about ending apartheid.

Hurley wanted Durban to take the lead in setting up an inter-church structure that would concentrate on the sufferings of ordinary people. "Working together to alleviate suffering and to humanise society is perhaps the most promising and exciting opportunity for ecumenism," he said.

It was a dream that the church would become more than a pious club for the middle-class and return to its roots as a radical organisation with its focus on those at the bottom of the pile – the ordinary workers, rural peasants, unemployed, homeless – what came to be called the *anawim* or "little people" of the world.

Hurley started discussions with other church leaders in Durban, looked for the right person to head up this work and founded Diakonia – using a Greek word which means serving the people.

The inaugural meeting of all the member churches was held on March 25, 1976 when Diakonia opened its doors with only two staff members, Paddy Kearney and Elizabeth Mkame.



**35th Anniversary Celebration**  
**A TRANSFORMED WORLD IS POSSIBLE**

