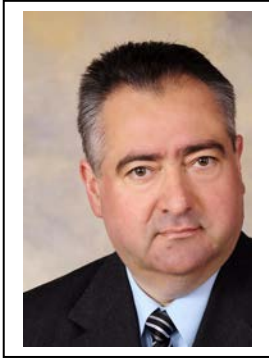


Diaconal Model Project in Kecskemét Hungary 1997 -2017

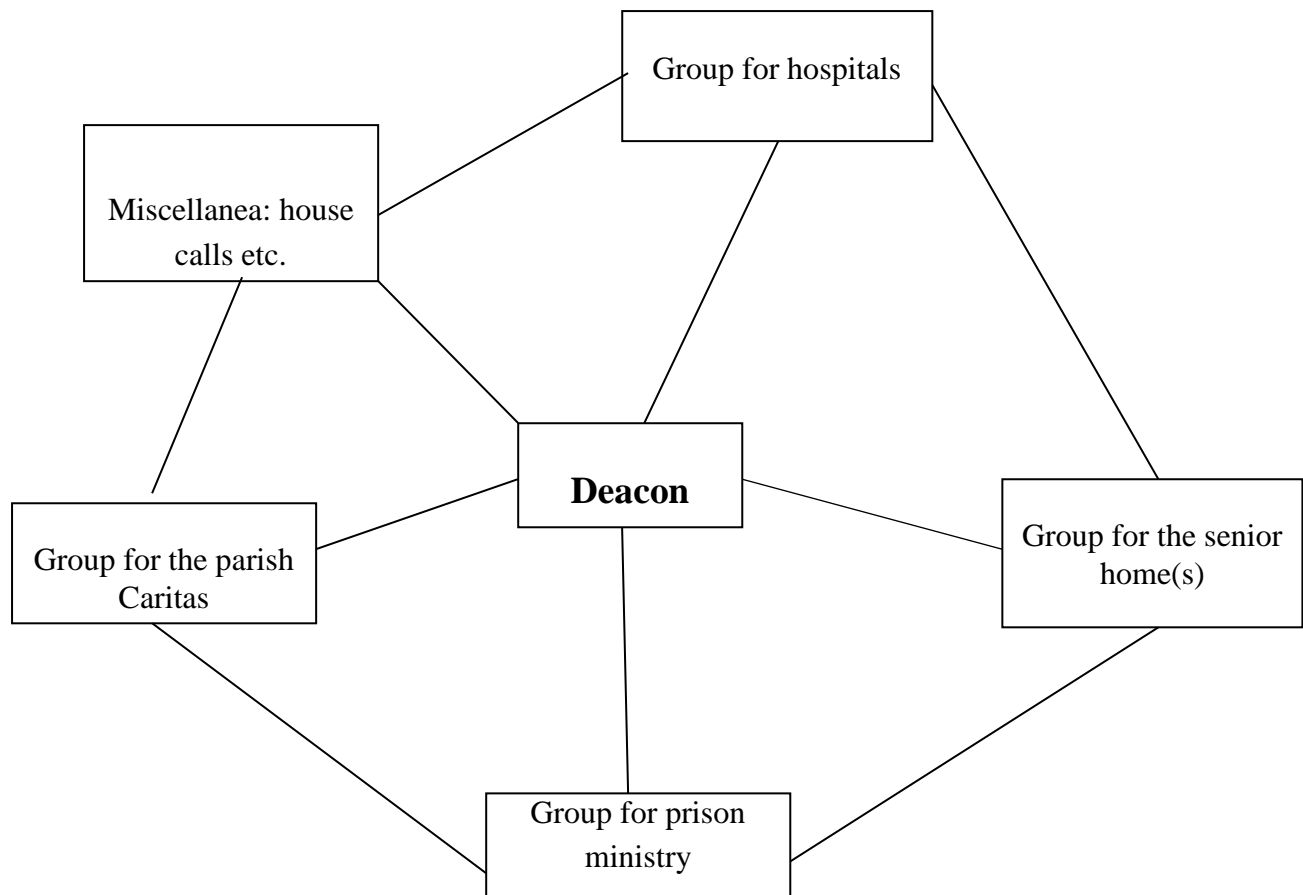
Team – Deacon - Parish



Molnár, Ferenc, graduate theologian, graduate social worker (born 1961), is a deacon with a civilian profession (ordained 2008), married, his wife, Erika is a language teacher. They have three children. Since 1988 Molnár Ferenc is the main formator of St. Stephen's Diaconate Circle in the Archdiocese of Kalocsa-Kecskemét, since 2014 he has been teaching in the diaconal formation programs of the Archdiocese of Esztergom-Budapest as well as in the Diocese of Vác. Since 1996, he has been organizing, together with others, the three-day national meeting of Hungarian deacons.

The ecclesial-social environment and the background of the project:

Diaconal formation in the Hungarian Church could only begin after – or shortly before the political change in 1991. This late start compared to other local Churches around the world has several reasons and also several consequences which have lasting effects until today. In addition to the 20-year delay, it should be noted that the first steps taken at the beginning of the 1990's were not particularly successful because the widespread image of the diaconate was marked by the idea of “replacement priesthood”. There was a great lack of deacons who would focus their ministry in social diakonia. There was absolutely no model in which the deacon would get the parish community involved in the implementation of the Church's ministry of charity. Against this background, the idea came up in 1997 to start a model project in Kecskemét, in which a deacon of a large urban parish (with more than 40.000 baptized!) would be set aside for the special diaconal activities. The social focal points of the parish were in the fields of: hospitals and senior homes, prisons and care for those left without support. The deacon had to first discover and analyse the needs and problems areas, find a competent answer, devise and test working methods; subsequently, he had to motivate volunteers, prepare them for their tasks and accompany them. The original idea looked something like this:



Meanwhile, an unforeseen spectrum of problems arose: in the city, there was absolutely no help for addicts although the problems related to alcohol and drugs as well as gambling addiction were very much present.

The project began with the support of the German charity RENOVABIS in the year 1998 and bore much unexpected fruit. What has become of those beginnings?

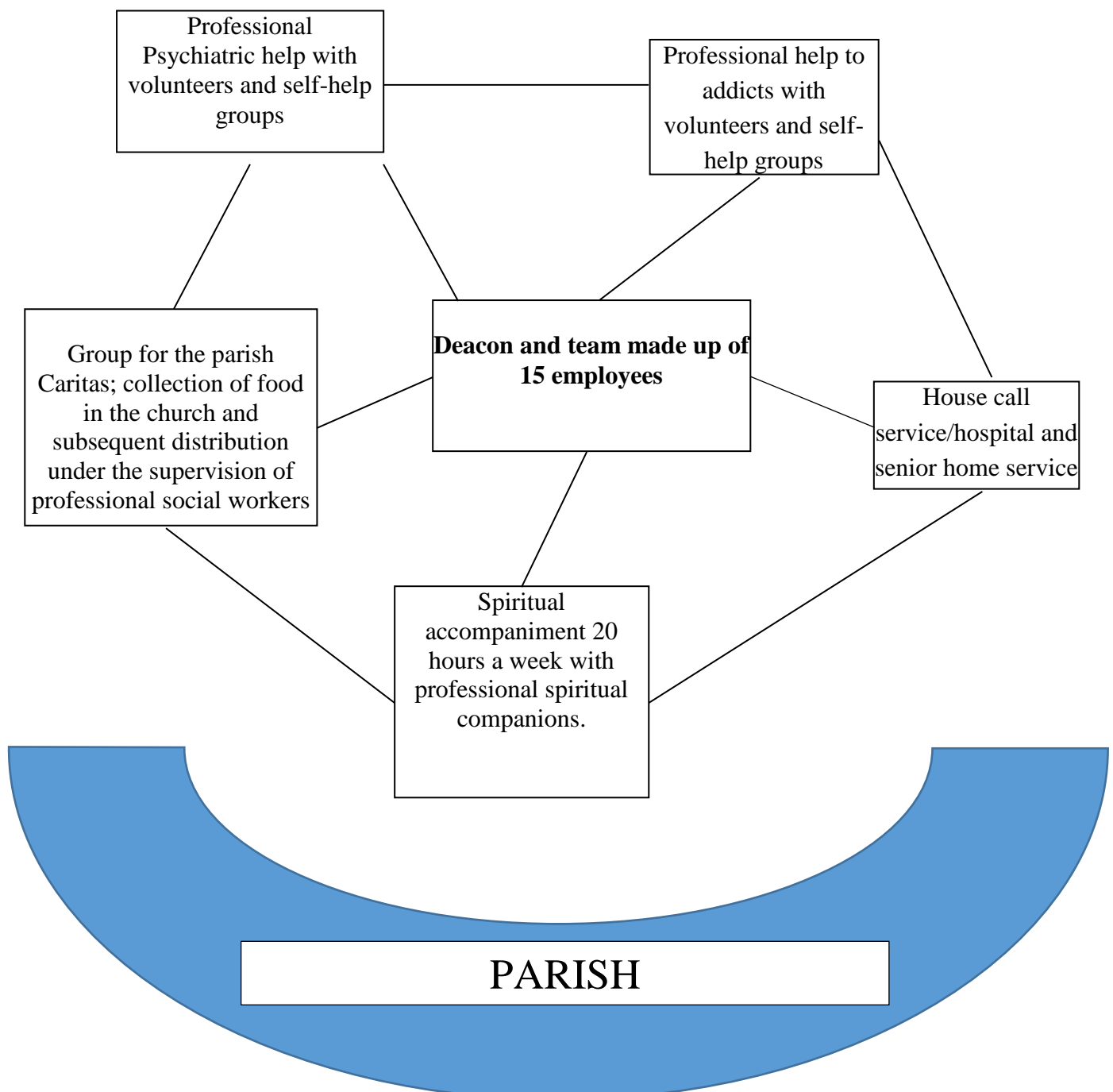
An institution for aid to the addicts was founded in the year 2000. Three people worked for it in a building with an area of 90 square metres: it is called: R v (Ferry) Aid Service. Its main sponsor was the parish Caritas foundation. Meanwhile, this institution has evolved into a large institution with 15 employees and using a building with an area of 450 square metres. The employees are social workers, social pedagogues, psychologists, physicians, helpers, psychiatric nurses, family therapists. At the moment, the institution cares for 150 addicts, 200 psychiatric patients, numerous (150-200) poor families at the same time and also offers spiritual accompaniment. The institution is financially self-sufficient.

The actual implementation presented two big differences with regards to the original plans:

a) The “core” of the whole aid network is not the deacon alone but the team coordinated by the deacon;

b) The parish as a whole was involved much more than originally planned or hoped. On the first Sunday of each month, the parishioners bring food for the poor into the church; this food is then distributed by the employees in house calls during the month. On the Feast of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, the parish invites the poor to lunch. The parish also financially supports different projects. However, the most important aspect is that the volunteers come in the vast majority from the parish. The clients are not seen as merely the “objects” of the work done by the Rév Aid Service, but they are invited into the parish. And, many of them accept this invitation: common pilgrimages are often organized, as are trips for parishioners which are also organized for the sick. In this way, the parishioners become more sensitive and the stigma that the marginalized people bear diminishes.

After the passing of 20 years, the results of the project may be summarized as follows:



Within the framework of diaconal formation in Hungary, this project serves as a “model project” for social diakonia and as such, it is to-date, unique in the country.



The team of full-time employees with the parish priest (supporter)





Work with addicts



Creative work with psychiatric patients