



ELDA

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Evangelical Lutheran Deaf Association
a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)



From the President
Mark Koterwski

Merry Christmas everyone!

Advent is here!!! We have been waiting for Christmas time!!! When and what is Advent? It started around 40 AD. Advent is waiting and preparing for two reasons - 1) to celebrate the Nativity of Christ at Christmas 2) the return of Christ at the second coming.

How did the Advent wreath start? It originated from the German Lutherans during the 16th century. The shape of the wreath (A) was created during that time. The designation of the wreath has changed 300 years later.

A



B



Mark Koterwski
ELDA President

Christmas Facts:

- When Christmas was canceled: From 1659 to 1681, the celebration of Christmas was outlawed in Boston, and law-breakers were fined five shillings.
- Christmas was declared a federal holiday in the United States on June 26, 1870.
- The first eggnog made in the United States was consumed in Captain John Smith's 1607 Jamestown settlement.

**INSIDE
THIS
ISSUE:**

***Spiritual
Article***

***New Digital
Resources
from Pastor
Russ Rockwell***

Ministry News

***And much
more...***

President's Report

Continued

- Poinsettia plants were named after Joel R. Poinsett, an American minister to Mexico, who brought the red-and-green plant from Mexico to America in 1828.
 - Rudolph, “the most famous reindeer of all,” was the product of Robert L. May’s imagination in 1939. The copywriter wrote a poem about the reindeer to help lure customers into the Montgomery Ward department store.
 - Construction workers started the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree tradition in 1931.
 - How to say “Merry Christmas” in 10 different languages
 - French: Joyeux Noël
 - German: Frohe Weihnachten
 - Spanish: Feliz Navidad
 - Italian: Buon Natale
 - Portuguese: Feliz Natal
 - Dutch: Vrolijk kerstfeest
 - Romanian: Crăciun fericit
 - Polish: Wesółych świąt Bożego Narodzenia
 - Swedish: God Jul
 - Czech: Veselé Vánoce
- Credited History.com

You all have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!! Please stay safe by wearing a mask and keep 6 feet social distance.

Mark Koterwski

ELM MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

Mission Statement: “In the Presence of Jesus Christ, with mutual love and respect, the Episcopal Conference of the Deaf (ECD), the Evangelical Lutheran Deaf Association (ELDA) and the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf (UMCD) partner together to inspire and transform the lives of Deaf people.”

Vision Statement: “Together as one, with God’s help we strive to build a spectrum of ministries with Deaf people, passionately engaged in creating and supporting diverse ministries, outreach, communication, worship resources, and leadership development that show the love and grace of Jesus Christ to everyone we meet.”

THE ELDA MISSION STATEMENT

The Evangelical Lutheran Deaf Association (ELDA) is a national Lutheran organization of Deaf ELCA congregations, interpreted ministries, and their members which supports a core value of ASL and American Deaf Culture. ELDA advocates Deaf spirituality and empowerment, Deaf global missions and youth outreach, interpreter training, and a biennial conference.

Spiritual Article

by Donald Rosenkjar

We have heard from leading doctors, such as Dr. Fauci, Dr. Birx and others that we expect a dark winter as Covid-19 continues to spread like wildfire. Many of us are worried about this. I think this scripture from the book of Matthew is an important one for us all to read carefully and prayerfully. It is what Jesus asks of us to examine our hearts and keep our focus on the Kingdom. So as long as we practice, with great care, social distancing, wearing face coverings and avoid crowded spaces, this scripture is helpful to keep our minds at peace. My dear readers, read on!

Matthew 6:25-34:

I tell you not to worry about your life. Don't worry about having something to eat, drink, or wear. Isn't life more than food or clothing? Look at the birds in the sky! They don't plant or harvest. They don't even store grain in barns. Yet your Father in heaven takes care of them. Aren't you worth more than birds?

Can worry make you live longer? Why worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow. They don't work hard to make their clothes. But I tell you that Solomon with all his wealth wasn't as well clothed as one of them. God gives such beauty to everything that grows in the fields, even though it is here today and thrown into a fire tomorrow. He will surely do even more for you! Why do you have such little faith?

Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these. But more than anything else, put God's work first and do what he wants. Then the other things will be yours as well.

Don't worry about tomorrow. It will take care of itself. You have enough to worry about today.

ELCA Deaf Ministries

Director's Report



Dear ELDA Friends--
It's been a crazy year for all of us...the surging global pandemic, the murder of George Floyd and others resulting in social protests for justice, the increased wildfires and hurricanes roaring through our landscape, the economic depression and impact on jobs and businesses, and the continuing election crisis.
Sometimes it feels hopeless!

The Church season of Advent is about waiting, preparing, being alert, and having hope. No matter how we feel, God is here working among us. It may be hard to see or feel sometimes but God is working through His people like the dedicated frontline workers who continue to give their time and energy especially at the hospitals, the people who paid the overdue electricity and rent bills or prison fines for others in their community, the restaurants and musicians who donated food and music to people in long election lines, the teachers trying to keep students involved and learning, the farmers who donated food they could not sell to feed those at food cupboards because restaurants were closing, AND the scientists who worked around the clock to develop vaccines for all of us. Hope is around us and God is at work!

Our prayerful support, our money gifts, and our volunteer time are God's work with our hands!



Speaking of hands, one of our former pastors in Deaf Ministry, **Rev. Gisele Berninghaus**, just retired November 22 from Faith Lutheran Church in Marshfield, WI. Previously, she served 13 years at Hands of Christ Deaf Ministry in Appleton, WI which was an ecumenical ministry supported by the ELCA, Episcopal, Presbyterian, United

Church of Christ, and Methodist denominations. Many old timer ELDA members will remember her with fondness. She is married to Tim Van Eyck and has a grown son and daughter.

Another one of our former pastors in Deaf Ministry, **Rev. Joseph Varsanyi**, also retired at the end of 2019. His first congregation was St. Philip's in Philadelphia but he also helped start Christ the King Deaf Church, West Chester and served part time at Word of Life, Lancaster and Zion Lutheran, Harrisburg. All these churches are in Pennsylvania. He served many hearing congregations as well.

The **ELCA churchwide offices in Chicago are undergoing another redesign.** Discussion for this started BEFORE the pandemic and resulted from the ELCA's desire to serve the changing Church and bring in a diversity of people and ideas so that we can grow our outreach and mission. My good friend, Carol Johnson, will be leaving her work as the coordinator of the ELCA Disability Ministries to enter a year of Lutheran studies at the seminary. The ELCA and the ELCA Disability Ministries Advisory Team will be searching for a person with disability to lead this desk.

And, last but not least, **Mill Neck Family of Organizations is offering us their ASL Bible Story books.** There is a series of seven books they are offering at a discount price or as a thank you for donations received. Kindly check out their website www.millneck.org/donate if you are interested. Churches may receive up to ten sets of books free to share with Deaf children. Check out the flyer in this newsletter.

May your Advent be filled with hope and joy. May your Christmas be filled with light and peace.

Pastor Beth Lockard
ELCA Deaf Ministries

Photos from Haiti

Haiti Deaf Academy



Welcoming back the students with a meal.

Photo of Keith and Meredith Henderson, co-directors of Haiti Deaf Academy



The students have grown so much in these past three years - physically, linguistically, spiritually, and emotionally! Please help them continue to grow as they start a new school year. #Haitideafacademy www.haitideafacademy.kindful.com We are so thrilled to have time to share the Gospel, a sign language class, and a meal with the parents as they brought their children back to HDA.

Digital Books

Pastor Russ Rockwell develops new resources

Not long ago, I created a neat and one-of-a-kind resource – a digital book. And then I made another! Both my books teach about faith. I made them from actual Bible studies I gave at WOLD. Going through my books is a lot like going to an actual Bible study.

In my books, there are videos of me explaining what's printed on the screen – just like what happens when I present Bible studies at church using a computer & video projector. In my book, what you see onscreen makes better sense after watching what I say in ASL in the video – just like what happens in Bible study. You can see a demo of the books “in action” at faithsignsllc.com.

I am happy to say that I've updated both my books, AND they are now available for both Apple and Android devices! Previously, my books were limited to Apple.



Photo Courtesy Lancaster online

An ASL Guide to What We Believe



THE BASIC BELIEFS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
EXPLAINED IN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

Russell A. Rockwell

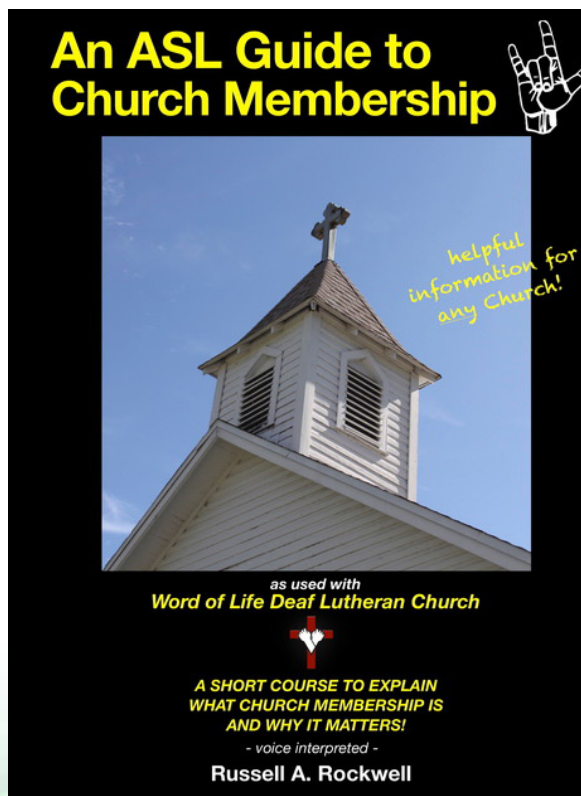
(includes voice interpretation)

BOOK 1 – “An ASL Guide to What We Believe”

In ASL videos, I explain the important, basic beliefs of the Christian faith. It can be used for individual learning, tutored instruction, or with Bible study groups, or for Confirmation. All videos are voice interpreted.

BOOK 2 – “An ASL Guide to Church Membership”

Again, in ASL videos, I explain what church membership is, why it matters, and what it means to be a church member. Some information in the book is specific to WOLD and to Lutherans, but much in the book applies in general to any church. All videos are voice interpreted.



If you have an iPad, iPhone, or a Mac computer, open the Books app. Search for “ASL Guide” (without the quotes). You may have to scroll a little through the

search results, but you’ll find both books.

If you have an Android phone or tablet, or a (Kindle) Fire Tablet (3rd Generation & above), go to Amazon’s website. In the Amazon search bar, click on “Kindle Store,” then search for “ASL Guide” (without the quotes). You may have to scroll a little through the search results, but you’ll find them both.

“An ASL Guide to What We Believe” costs \$8.99 on both the Amazon and Apple stores (I was charged a hefty licensing fee to display the scripture verses I used; this helps defray my cost).

“An ASL Guide to Church Membership” is free on the Apple bookstore, but costs \$2.99 on Amazon (this is Amazon’s requirement for hosting the book for download).

These digital-only books are great resources, and I hope to make them available to the wider church. There is a need for ASL-based resources like these, which is why I decided to publish them.

Go to Amazon and look up my books – when you find them, you can say, “I know him!” How many books can you say that about on Amazon’s Kindle bookstore?

Peace to you all,

Pastor Russ Rockwell
Word of Life Deaf Lutheran Church
Lancaster, PA

Ministry News-

Word of Life Deaf

Lancaster, PA

WOLD continues to worship fully online at wordoflifedeaf.org/home-worship. Our online worship is shared with Christ the King Deaf church in West Chester. Pr. Russ & Pr. Beth take turns giving the sermon every week.

Since the pandemic, online attendance to our worship service has been consistent. The average number of visitors (worshippers) to our website on Sundays is 29. When you compare WOLD's & CTK's pre-pandemic worship attendance numbers, the online average is "about right." It is nice to know that the members of both our churches are keeping their souls fed through this long-lasting crisis!

Because many WOLD members are in the "high risk" category for the coronavirus, the church council has decided to "play it safe" and not put anybody at risk by having in-person Bible study or worship. So far, there is no online Bible study because the in-person experience - what WOLD members are used to - is so much better.

Thankfully, no WOLD members have come down with COVID-19, so the church council's strategy is working to help keep people safe.

At this writing, it is up in the air whether WOLD will have its annual Christmas banquet or not. Pennsylvania has seen

a recent surge in COVID-19 cases, and that is making people less willing to venture out.

Our online All Saints' Sunday service was as nice as an online service can be, but nothing beats real candles in a "live-and-in-person" service. Our Christmas Eve service will be online (like everybody else's); we will try to make that as nice as it can be, too. Pr. Lockard will have the sermon for Christmas Eve.

Bread of Life Deaf

Minneapolis, MN

A couple of things I want to be sure you know NOW, so you can mark your calendar and spread the word. Attached is a flyer you can easily share with others so they have the dates and the website addresses to get to our worship and devotion videos.

1. BOLD will have Blue Christmas/Longest Night worship service on Monday, December 21 at 6:30 p.m. This will be ONLINE, but will be a time to gather and name our grief and losses, and to reflect on the truth of faith and life that good things can prepare and begin to grow in the dark times (think of seeds).

<https://www.youtube.com/user/BreadofLifeDeaf>

2. BOLD will have Christmas Eve worship, also ONLINE. This will be available on Thursday, December 24 at 4 pm.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/BreadofLifeDeaf>

Please note that you can participate in our worship anytime after the initial premiere of the service is done. So, if your family wants to “go to” Christmas Eve worship at 6 pm instead of 4 pm, you can do that this year!! And even though we will be in separate places this year, we can all still attend worship together.

Peace to you,

Pastor Michelle

Heartland Ephphatha Ministries

Sioux Falls, SD

HEM continues to serve the best we can during the pandemic. Online worship is available to see at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/921054994735699>

We also have Zoom Bible study every 1st and 3rd Sunday at 10:30 am (CT). Contact Jason Andera jason.andera@gmail.com if you would like to join us.



Interpreted Worship at Peace Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD by Heartland Ephphatha Ministries

The Forgotten Giver of Christmas

He can get lost among the shepherds, pushed aside by wise men, overshadowed by the angels, outshined by the star over Bethlehem. You won't see him standing in nativity scenes, hanging on trees, velcroed onto Advent calendars, or printed on wrapping paper. He's absent from many carols. Has any figure in the Christmas story been more marginalized, or even forgotten, than God the Father?

“Has any character in the Christmas story been more marginalized, or even forgotten, than God the Father?”

The longer one stops to reflect on the common oversight, the stranger it becomes. The Father sent his Son to make his worst enemies into beloved children, and yet he's crowded out by other, more earthly details — the kind of details that can be finely painted on ornaments. No one, however, played a more significant role in Christmas — not Joseph or Mary, not prophets or wicked kings, certainly not shepherds or magi. Even Jesus himself could only be the Son that first Christmas because God is also eternally, unavoidably, almost inconceivably Father.

And he is gloriously the Father “all the way down.” Michael Reeves writes, The fact that Jesus is “the Son” really says it all. Being a Son means he has a Father. . . . That is who God has revealed himself to be: not first and foremost Creator or Ruler, but Father. . . . He is Father. All the way down. Thus all that he does he does as Father. That is who he is. He creates as a Father and he rules as a Father. (Delighting in the Trinity, 21–23)

Advent reminds us that we have a Savior, a Redeemer, a Brother and King, but also that we have an almighty Father of infinite wisdom and relentless love, a Father who authored that first Christmas and every one since.

Only Son from the Father

If we sometimes forget the Father during Advent, the Son surely does not. Nowhere is this more evident than in his prayer the night he was betrayed. “Father, the hour has come,” he prays. “Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:1–3). Why mention that the Father sent him? To emphasize, all the more clearly, that he truly is the Son of God who came from the Father, to bring us to the Father, for the glory of the Father. And Jesus doesn't mention the sending just once. The whole prayer centers around this burden: that the world would know that the Father sent the Son.

“I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me” (John 17:8).

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20–21).

“O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me” (John 17:25). As Jesus prepares to die, as he faces the horrors of betrayal, injustice, torture, derision, and crucifixion, he prays, over and over again, Father, I want them to know that you sent me.

Article by
Marshall Segal
Staff writer, desiringGod.org

Full Article :
https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-forgotten-giver-of-christmas?fbclid=IwAR2AfTRkhc3WV_9vfNQulps7URFhnlgu3xEnmpoYIDWOAroIP7tm0bKc



BIBLE STORIES FOR THE DEAF

A CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS

The Lutheran Friends of the Deaf at the Mill Neck Family of Organizations believe in giving and sharing our blessings with our community. In the spirit of Christmas, we would like to donate 10 sets of ***Bible Stories in American Sign Language*** to your church. There are 7 books per set. We hope you will share them with your deaf and hard of hearing congregations and also with children who want to learn American Sign Language while learning about the Gospel.

To receive your free 10 sets of the ***Bible Stories in American Sign Language***, simply email your request to Deaconess Phyllis Yee at phyllis.yee@millneck.org



If you would like additional sets, please consider a donation to the Lutheran Friends for the Deaf. To receive additional books as gifts for your donation, please go to www.millneck.org/donate and state in the message where you would like the books to be sent.



MILL NECK
FAMILY OF ORGANIZATIONS

ELDA Donations for this year

Christ the King Deaf Lutheran Church,
West Chester, and Philadelphia, PA

Word of Life Deaf Lutheran Church,
Lancaster, PA

Chicago Deaf Ministry,
Chicago Metro area, IL

Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran Church,
Minneapolis, MN

Trinity Lutheran Church,
Reading, PA

Luanne Bartens, PA

Dorothy Sparks, MN

Linda Fairbanks, MN

Lori Fuller, FL

Thank you! Merry Christmas!
Jeff Panek, ELDA Treasurer



ELDA Online

Remember our website is www.ELDADeaf.org
our facebook page is:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ELDADeaf/>

NEWS

Please help our newsletter! Send me your pictures and stories about your ministry. We'd love to put it in our next newsletter.

September, December, March and June

This is your newsletter; we want to know what topics and articles that you want to see in the newsletters. If there is a person, a church or something of interest that you want us to spotlight on, let us know! Feel free to send your feedback to Linda Fairbanks, lindafairbanks22@gmail.com Thanks!