



# ELDA

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



*Linda Fairbanks*  
*ELDA President*

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Linda Fairbanks*

For unto you is  
born this day  
in the city of David a  
**Saviour**  
which is  
Christ the Lord.  
- Luke 2:11  
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Thanks be to God! I am pleased to report that the ELDA Pastoral Advisor and BOLD Associate in Ministry **Dorothy Sparks** had been released from the hospital and is done with her therapy. She will continue to have follow-up visits with her specialists. She is recovering at her brother's home in NE. We look forward

to having Dorothy back with us, during our Board meetings. Thanks for Dorothy's help; BOLD church members were able to get the packages for Pastor Ruth out of Dorothy's apartment. Those packages were sent with Jay Johnson who was flying to Nigeria for a month. Jay arrived in Nigeria two days before the church dedication. Thanks to Jay, we have photos on the church dedication in this newsletter.

The ELDA Board has been focusing on our committee work the past two months. We had a meeting on December 8th to go over what we have done and give reports on what we had been doing since our last meeting in September. I want to thank those of you who have submitted articles and photos for the newsletter. The next newsletter submissions are due on or before March 15, 2017.

Many of you have heard a lot about the Standing Rock protest in ND. These native people there have been holding prayer ceremonies, and their request is that it be done peacefully without violence. The camps had grown, as large as 7,000 people and now the numbers are less since some have returned to their homes. There are still a few hundred who are staying through the harsh and very windy North Dakota winters. Remember to include them in your prayers. Also remember those people lost to bombings in other countries and their grieving families. At Christmas, we rejoice at the birth of Jesus and the gathering of families, yet we also need to remember those who are homeless, starving, jobless, grieving and lonely.

The ELDA Board wishes you a Merry Christmas and a blessed new year in 2017! *Joy to the world; the Lord has come! -Luke 2:11*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PICTURES FROM THE DEDICATION OF PASTOR RUTH'S CHURCH IN NIGERIA

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AROUND THE ELDA

AND MORE...

# ST. MATTHEW'S

Representing St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Pastor Stephanie Jaeger and I met with The Rev. Dr. Daniel Justin, Rector of St. Michael Episcopal Church in Studio City, and later on the same day, we met with Rev. Dan Lewis, Associate Pastor of Hollywood United Methodist Church in Toluca Lake. Both meetings were productive. Purpose of those meetings was to discuss the possibility of establishing local ELM, to make Los Angeles area a better place, following the model that ELDA started the ELM movement, in the spirit of collaboration, bringing three mainline denominations together: Episcopal Conference of the Deaf (ECD), United Methodist Congress of the Deaf (UMCD), and Evangelical Lutheran Deaf Association (ELDA). St. Matthew's Lutheran Church will host a gathering to get their people and us acquainted, and build a positive relationship.

On November 21, ELM members met at the University of Nevada Las Vegas, the same site where the presidential debate was held, and

made plans for the ELM Conference in 2018.

In case you have not read it, here is ELM's Mission Statement and Vision Statement:

**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."*

Donald Rosenkjar+

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## TRINITY LUTHERAN



Trinity Lutheran Deaf Senior Center celebrated Christmas in a wonderful way in Reading PA.

One family with a Deaf son and grandson decorated our auditorium for the party. Members from Valley View celebrated with us.

Everyone enjoyed the visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. The Deaf Church will be decorating the live tree in the Chapel on Dec. 21st.

----Dee Horst Administrator of Deaf Congregation.

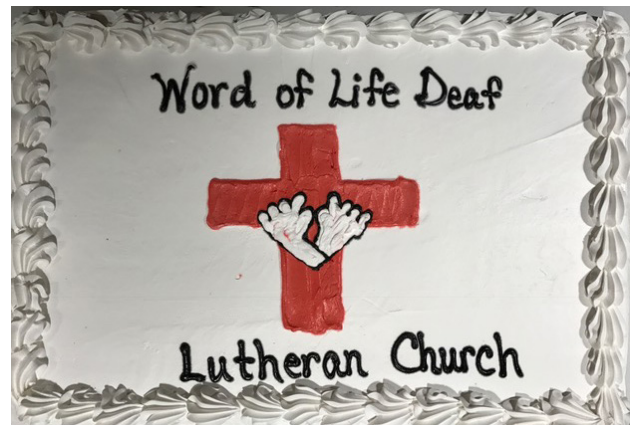


# WORD OF LIFE DEAF

September 21, We went to see the play "Samson" at Sight n Sound theatre (religious biblical play). Not only were 25 people from Lancaster in attendance, but we were surprised there was another large deaf group from Pittsburgh area there. We all sat together and enjoyed the play very much. Full of colorful props, real live animals and cool actions with 2 interpreters provided. We even got to meet the actor who played Samson after the play. He thought it would be cool to interact with us and that we could ask him any questions about the play. It was so awesome and thoughtful of him to spend some time with us. We felt honored. What a wonderful experience. (send photo of me and Gordon with Samson)



On December 11th, WOLD brought 3 full sized cakes to church celebrating the 10th anniversary at St. Peter's. (see photos) Several St. Peter's members were surprised about it being 10 years already. Some came and congratulated us in person! They came and thanked us in sign language! It was meaningful and is a wonderful example of why we value their partnership. - Luanne Bartens





# DECEMBER DEDICATION



At left is part of Jamaica Christian School for the Deaf located in Montego Bay. On December 2, the new Library and Computer Centre rooms (green paint) were dedicated. They are in the front.



Library books brought to JCSD by Lockards

JCSD students get their copies of the ASL Bible story books from Mill Neck Board members

Photos by Maura Burns, Mill Neck



At left, the IT teacher, Pr. Beth, & Mill Neck's International Director Dr. Amy Wilson chat in the library. Still needed are shelves, more books, and the windows.



The Lutheran Friends of the Deaf Computer Centre also needs windows, tile flooring, & computers! Please contact ELDA about the next trip...



At left, JCSD Board chair Rev. Campbell and Mill Neck Board chair Rudy Auslander cut the ribbon of the John and Virginia Eberlein Memorial Library. Mill Neck CEO Michael Killian is on the left and Bill Lockard is interpreting on the right surrounded by school staff. The Eberlein's gift financed the rooms.

# MEET PASTOR MICHELLE OTEKEN



Pastor Michelle was born and raised in Minneapolis, MN and graduated from Minnehaha Academy. Following graduation from Augustana College in Rock Island, IL she returned to Minneapolis to be near family. It was at this time she took ASL classes at St. Paul Technical College, in St. Paul, MN. At first she used ASL in small ways as a classroom teacher and it was years later, after accepting a call to be one of the pastors at Sheridan Lutheran Church in Lincoln, NE, that the joy of signing was renewed. Thanks to a gracious community at Sheridan Lutheran, she continues to learn and practice ASL. Pastor Michelle is married to Rich and has two children Jonathon and Krista.

## 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."*

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## 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.*

## 2016 End of Year; ELDA

Thank you to all of our donors for your generous donations and grants!

Thrivent Choice:

- Dorothy Sparks
- Mark/Angela Koterwski
- Jeff/Belinda Panek

HOPE Fund:

- Word of Life Deaf Church, (WOLD) PA
- Mark/Angela Koterwski
- Offering from the ELDA Conference (for Pr. Ruth)
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading, PA

## Donation Received

General Fund:

- Lori Fuller Family (for Jamaica Mission trip)
- Anonymous

GRANTS RECEIVED:

- Mill Neck Lutheran Friends of the Deaf (for conference interpreters)
- Mill Neck Lutheran Friends of the Deaf (for Pr. Ruth's airfare to America)
- ELCA Campaign Fund (for Pr. Ruth's expenses in America)
- Mt. Calvary Foundation (for Pr. Ruth's visa expenses)



# FROM THE DIRECTOR



Pastor Beth Lockard

Dear ELDA Friends:

This sunny picture does not look like winter time, does it? November 20-22, a group of us traveled to Las Vegas to investigate sites for the 2018 ELDA/ELM conference. The Planning Committee of St. Matthew's Deaf Ministry (North Hollywood) chose Las Vegas as a more cost-efficient place than the higher-priced California. St. Matthew's was represented by lay pastor Don Rosenkjar, Khai Nguyen, and Pr. Stephanie Jaeger. ELDA was represented by Mark & Angela Koterwski (SD) and me (PA). The UMCD was represented by Michelle Menfree (TX).

We spent our time visiting and discussing University of Las Vegas, Nevada (UNLV), the huge Lutheran Community Church, and a hotel near



the airport and "the strip." We also looked into possible field trips for our free time slot and longer trips that could be an option a day after the conference (Grand Canyon and Hoover Dam). We were told Las Vegas in July would be around 120 degrees so we definitely want air conditioning! Please save the third and fourth week of July 2018 and look for a final decision from St. Matthew's in early 2017.

My husband Bill and I also had the

opportunity to join the Board of Mill Neck Lutheran Friends of the Deaf on a November 30--December 3 trip to Jamaica Christian School for the Deaf in Montego Bay. We went to celebrate the dedication of the new library and computer center funded by John and Virginia Eberlein who left an endowment to Mill Neck. They were original founding members of Mill Neck Lutheran School for the Deaf and visited Deaf schools all over the world to encourage them.

Bill and I brought in one suitcase of school supplies and one full of library books. The students were excited to see us and asked about all the team members. I distributed birthday and Christmas cards from our recent mission team. Each child received a dollar in each of their two cards. They were concerned about AIM Dorothy Sparks and promised to pray for her.

We saw that the new rooms were almost the same as when we left in September but shuttered windows had been installed on the back walls. One cement ramp our guys had started had been completed by another team. JCSD will be raising money for the tile floor of the computer center and glass windows on the front side of both rooms and then installing the air conditioners and fans they already have. The next phase will be library shelves and ten computers. I was able to observe one teacher

teach her English classes for the day,

Bill also made some contacts with the hotel Personnel Director who has a Deaf nephew to see if JCSD students could do internships and/or work there after graduation. I was amazed that many hotel staffers greeted us and asked about our mission team. It is good to be remembered positively by these people--relationships are so important!

Please see the picture page and contact Dorothy and me if you are interested in being a part of our next team in September 2017. Your prayers were so important for Dorothy's healing from her stroke. God is amazing and so is Dorothy!

As I write this, the Living Lutheran magazine is doing an article on ELCA Deaf Ministries with a sidebar on our global efforts. Watch for it in a future magazine.

May the Christ of Christmas shine in your lives and hearts today and always.

Pr. Beth Lockard  
ELCA Deaf Ministries

# Hello ELDA!

My name is Michelle Lewis and I am the new pastor at Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, MN. I am also wife to AJ and mom to Kathryn and Zoë.



Kathryn, Michelle, Zoe, & AJ Lewis

My call to Bread of Life has been through a quick (which is unusual) path, but it is being affirmed at every turn, it seems! I graduated in May 2016, was invited to preach at Bread of Life for the summer, interview with the call committee the same day that I was Assigned to the Minneapolis Area Synod, and the congregation voted to call me less than a month after I was assigned!



I come to the Deaf Community with a willingness to learn and an open heart. I am picking up signs every day, and in worship I move so that I can see as much of the service as possible in ASL. The visual language adds such beauty and richness to worship that I am blessed in a new way each time I worship at Bread of Life.

My undergraduate degree is in Housing Studies, focusing on policy, and I have a Masters in Urban and Regional Planning, focusing on housing. I have had the privilege to work for a non-profit housing funder and as an administrator of housing programs for a first-ring suburb of Minneapolis. I have volunteered with my neighborhood association, as a committee member for a housing



developer, and in a variety of ways with the different churches in which I have been involved over the course of my life.

After wondering about pursuing ordination for most of my adult life, I finally accepted that my sense of calling to be a pastor was not going away. I took a leap of faith to enter seminary studies in 2012. I have learned so much in the last four years, and I look forward to learning so much more with you—on the ground and in the community. I was ordained on December 10, and the Bread of Life Sign Choir brought two favorite songs to life for those of us gathered.

My husband, AJ, and I met in college at the University of Minnesota. We played in a worship team together, leading worship at Stadium Village Church. We started dating after a very long trip back from Urbana in Champagne, IL—we were not lost, but we did leave more tracks than were strictly necessary on that drive!

AJ is a Computer Engineer and works for Quantum Corporation. He keeps us in the know about new technologies. AJ loves to learn and when we remodeled our kitchen, he was the one to learn the electrical, plumbing, and housing codes to make sure we completed the project correctly. AJ plays electric guitar and viola; he repairs our broken electronics, has recently taken the girls' birthday portraits, and loves to play video games. AJ is by far the best DDR\* dancer in our family!!

Kathryn is in the midst of 7th grade at Heritage Middle School in West St. Paul. She loves to read—if when you find her reading you need to tap her, say her name, and give her some moments to extricate herself from whatever she's reading [and that is typically anything with words!]. Kathryn is a proud doll owner and spends many hours imagining herself into the dolls' worlds and imagining the dolls into her world. Kathryn is in Confirmation Class and the String Band at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, plays piano. Kathryn is kind and attentive to others, she is dramatic and

passionate; she is a leader.

Zoë is in the midst of 4th grade at Garlough Environmental Magnet School in West St. Paul. She is always thinking and making connections between what she is reading or watching (i.e. movies) and what she is doing. Recently after seeing the “Pirate Fairy” she layered her dresses and skirts to look like the main character, who dressed like a pirate. Zoë is nimble in her play—bounding from one activity to the next. That makes clean-up a challenge, but she is fully engaged in the activity before her! Zoë also loves to read and to involve her dolls in the games she is playing. We have shared many meals with the dollies, as Zoë slipped out to transform into our server or the entertainment at the dinner theater destination known as our dining room.

The four of us enjoy camping, biking, making homemade bread and pizza, and enjoying the home we moved to last November. We look forward to enjoying the harvest from our (yet to be built) backyard gardens. Each day we try to live more in tune with the world around us, leaving a smaller footprint and listening a little closer to the animal and vegetable parts of God’s good creation.

Again, I look forward to getting to know you, to serving with you, and to learning with and from you as we continue to share the Good News that we can fully know God’s generous and overflowing love in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ!!

In Faith, Hope, and Love,

Michelle

\*Dance Dance Revolution!



L to R: Rob Norris-Weber (Pastor at Spirit Garage), Mary Albing (Pastor at Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer), Kris Tostengard-Michel (Pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church Twin Cities), Don Luther (retired), Michelle Lewis (Pastor at Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran Church), Dana Houck (Pastor), Deb Stehlin (Minneapolis Area Synod staff, Director for Evangelical Mission), Mark Vinge (Pastor at House of Hope Lutheran Church), Jesse King (Pastor and Historian in Liberian Lutheran Church), Bishop Ann Svennungsen (Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod), Tammy Jacobson (awaiting ordination), Rebecca Hinz (awaiting call), Carrie Smisek (awaiting assignment), Susan Masters (Intentional Interim Pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church), Larry Koch (Assisting Minister and member at Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer)



# THE CHURCH FOR THE DEAF, JIMETA, NIGERIA

These are pictures from the dedication of the church for the Deaf in Nigeria on November 13, 2016. Photos by Jay Johnson



Front of Church Friday before dedication



From main entrance to the pulpit Friday before the dedication. The fans on the front wall were not planned. They were suppose to be on the back wall.



There are four levels and two rows of benches on each level.





Ringling the bell to start the service. This is an exact replica of the bell at the Lutheran Deaf Church in Copenhagen Denmark. It is rung three times at the start of a service. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



After the service. The men in the Choir uniforms are the Deaf Choir. With local dignitaries and some the Deaf community. Retired Bishop William Lautai is beside Pastor Ruth. He has been a big supporter of Pastor Ruth and for building the church.



Special Dance Presentation by two of the church members. They had their own videographer. I did not get a photo of the church choir I only shot video.



Pastor Ruth performing the first infant baptism at the Church for the Deaf in Jimeta, Nigeria

There are many more high quality pictures you can see at <https://goo.gl/photos/y6n4fQvN2ikCJ3Fj8> that were taken by retired engineer from Minnesota, Jay Johnson.

# SPIRITUAL SIDE:

by Russ Rockwell, pastor at WOLD, Lancaster



## Pictures of Christmas

(note: ELDA President Linda Fairbanks asked me to write an article for the Spiritual Side, which normally comes from Dorothy Sparks, pastoral advisor for ELDA and Associate in Ministry at BOLD. Dorothy was recently hospitalized, and it helps her to have a break from writing an article for this issue. Dorothy—you continue in our prayers for healing!! -RR-)

At Christmas, more than any other time of year, images, scenes, colors, sights, and sounds flood our senses from every corner. Look around and ask yourself, “What’s the focus of Christmas being presented to me?” Here are some possible answers: “Giving.” “Family.” “Love.” “The Perfect Gift.” “Sales!” “Cheer.” “Gatherings.” “Santa.” “Shopping.” “Children.” What’s missing?

If you know where to look, you will see images of the Christ child and the Holy Family. These images and scenes are not normally shown by the secular world’s celebration of Christmas The Holiday Season.

For us, and all who worship God through Jesus Christ, the central focus of Christmas is the birth of Christ. Jesus is “the reason for the season” because He is the fulfillment of God’s word. Christians read Gen. 3:15, and see in that verse the very first promise from God to send Christ. In Jesus’ birth, Christians see Gen. 3:15 (and all other related promises of God) fulfilled.

Through Jesus, God heals our sin by forgiving us. Through Jesus, God saves us from death (sin’s consequence) through resurrection. See Rom. 6:3-5. Through Jesus, God redeems us.

Redemption is as important as salvation.

Salvation is a promise we’re given for the future.

Redemption is the reality of our experience here and now — our lives are changed by Christ; we live differently, better, and more like God wants because of Christ. Read Titus 2:11-14 (this scripture is used in the Christmas Eve service).

The world offers pictures of what this time of year means. Those pictures are different than the pictures offered by the Church. Look around. The pictures offered by the world show only fleeting moments. The pictures of Christmas offered by the Church are of the eternal Christ: the One foretold in Scripture; the Babe born in Bethlehem; and the Lord who will come again.

The world sees no further than this Holiday Season. We, the people of God, look back to Christ’s birth in Bethlehem, and we keep in our minds the picture of the Cross that will come in a matter of months. We see what God did in the past through promising and bringing Christ, what God is doing now through Christ in us by the Holy Spirit, and what God will do at the end of time through His faithful son, Jesus Christ, when He comes again and restores all things to the Father. We see all this in the babe born to Mary, whose birth we celebrate and whose coming again we anticipate.

Look around this Christmas. See Christ, the true Light, in all the Christmas lights. See the brightness that He can bring to weary hearts. Do not only look for these things, but show them as well, as best you can. At this time of year, the world needs our pictures more than we need theirs. Let the babe of Bethlehem, the Christ child, be born in you anew every day this Holiday Christmas season, so that the world may know what this time of year truly means.

Christmas Blessings to you all!

Pastor Russ



# GLOBAL DEAF MINISTRY:

## Greetings Glory

by Pastor Ruth Ulea, The Church of the Deaf in Nigeria

My expression of faith is how the world gets to know who we are as a Church of the Deaf.

The Church had abandoned us in the past. I always say "Do not abandon the deaf as they are part of the Church and needed to be included".

On the day of the consecration and the dedication of the Church was a great and mercy day for me and the Deaf Community in particular to have had a Church like this one. We were all dedicating to the glory of God, for the first time in history.

I lacked words to express my gratitude to the people in America and Denmark. Thank you all for your hospitality and support, during my visit. I cannot forget you all and the pleasant times we had together. My love surrounds you all.  
Ruth Ulea



## Haiti Deaf Academy

I had been to Haiti 4 times on a week long mission trip each year, from 2011 to 2015. Then I finally decide to do full time Missionary work with the Haiti Deaf Academy in Cabaret. I also check on the adult community in Leveque. I offered to do 2 years service from 2015 to 2017. Now I have a little less than one year to serve.



My heart is here to help the Deaf

children to have a better education and life. And also to give them good positive feelings and thoughts so that they are able to do anything in their future life.



Whereas many(not all) Deaf in Haiti are not educated because many hearing parents don't know what to do with them so they kept them at home. Because being "Deaf" is still new to many Haitians. They are still learning the diversity of life.

The most interesting thing, I have learned, is the Deaf children thought Haitians Deaf are the only numbers of Deaf in the world. When I bring Deaf Teams from the States to Haiti, they were jaw-dropped. They did not know that there are many deaf people around the world. Also we have an African-American woman on our team and the Haitians thought she is Haitian. We told them no, she is an American.

by Bob Lindquist

So the children are still learning new things daily. It's nice for them to have me here to share my experiences about life and world cultures.

We were doing fine during Hurricane Matthew and nothing had impacted us at all, just had strong winds and rain.  
Bob Lindquist



# ELDA Online

Remember our website is [www.ELDADeaf.org](http://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

Read through this issue and let us know what you think. 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 President Linda Fairbanks, [lindafairbanks22@gmail.com](mailto:lindafairbanks22@gmail.com) and I will share with our Newsletter Editor. Thanks!