



# ELDA

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



Wow!

Thank you to Heartland Ephphatha Ministry (HEM) for hosting an incredible ELDA Conference this year in South Dakota. THANKYOU! There was so much laughter, learning, and growing as we explored the theme of Paha Sapa, which means “God is the heart of everything.” We explore this concept more by including God as the heart of love, God as the heart of relationships, God as the heart of creation, and so much more.

During these themes, we also learned so much about Lakota people. For example, we had a guest named Deacon Mike Gayton and others from Woyaton Lutheran Church in Rapid City, South Dakota, come and share what they have

been up to in their community. Their mission is spreading love, compassion, and hospitality. They strive to create a community where people can heal, learn, and grow sacred

connections. As a group, we asked these leaders how we could be an ally and support them in their ministries. The response we received was to share their stories. So, my friends, please share their stories with others. To learn more about what they do, please



go to their website, [Woyatanlutheranchurch.org](http://Woyatanlutheranchurch.org), and follow them on various social media platforms for updates. Pejuta Waste O’Tipi shared, “Good Medicine Lodge is a wonderful example of how Woyaton Lutheran Church serves our community and, in particular, the most vulnerable members of our community. This is how we “church.”

Good Medicine Lodge is a ceremony performed by leaders in the community to cleanse and heal the mind, body, and spirit. It means meeting people where they are with full heart.

Thank you, Lakota community, for teaching us that God is the heart of everything.

Lori Fuller  
ELDA Board President

## INSIDE THE ISSUE

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# From the Director

Pastor Beth Lockard



Dear ELDA friends--  
I just returned from the delightful, inspiring, and productive ELDA conference in Rapid City, South Dakota where I spent nine days

for Board meetings, the conference, and pastoral worker's retreat. It was a joy to be with old friends and meet new ones. Heartland Ephphatha Ministries (SD) and the Terra Sancta staff were the perfect hosts! For those who could not be with us, we missed you!

The ELDA Board worked hard to finish tasks and documents with the expectation of transferring our 501c3 status from California to Pennsylvania. The delegates thanked outgoing board vice president Jeannie Fischer (Word of Life Deaf, PA) and voted in Tracy Prince (Palms Deaf Church, FL). We re-elected Mark Koterwski (HEM) as treasurer. We welcomed new pastors with ELCA Deaf ministries: The Rev. Dr. Catrina Ciccone (Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran, MN) and The Rev. Dr. Natalie Benson (St. Matthew's, CA). Special guests included Rev. Ed Kay of ELCA Discipleship and Inclusive ministries which includes Deaf Ministries, and Rev. Jon Vehar, the Deployed Evangelism Mission support for ELCA's South Dakota Synod. At our closing banquet, Bill Lockard (Christ the King, PA) received the Shining Light Award for his work with Deaf and hard of hearing prisoners for the last 30 years. St. Matthew's received the City on A Hill Award for their wraparound work with the homeless population in their area. We are blessed!!

Seven pastoral workers spent two days in retreat sharing resources, joys, and challenges, and prayer with each other. We discussed Deaf Liberation Theology as God's empowering of the Deaf Community to lead our Deaf Ministries in our language and culture.

This conference highlighted the Lakota/Dakota/Nakota/Sioux Indian culture and spirituality with visits from both Lutheran and Catholic Native Americans. We all enjoyed a day at Mt. Rushmore which included a naturalization ceremony for 167 new Americans from 46 countries and visits to Chief Crazy Horse Monument and Custer National Park. We were thrilled when a herd of bison (buffalo) crossed the road near our bus! The next 2026 conference will be hosted by Palms Deaf Church near Orlando, Florida. Watch for more information on this.

Our love and sympathy go to Pastor Ruth Ulea (Nigeria) whose oldest son, Fenyi, died suddenly at age 39 in May. We hope to have her visit our next ELDA conference in 2026. We rejoice with the May graduation of Samuel Dimas from Bronnum Lutheran Seminary. Samuel will now serve a two-year internship with Pr. Ruth. Thanks to all of you who helped ELDA support his seminary costs.

Some of you have been able to see the ASL film by Deaf Missions: "Jesus," which was shown around the country June 20--27. The quality and depth of the actors, historical and Biblical accuracy, special effects, and creative use of our beloved ASL and Deaf Culture was "champ." I encourage your Deaf ministries to show this film in your church or community later in the year so many more people can see it. The link will give you more information. <https://www.christianpost.com/news/deaf-missions-releases-first-ever-film-about-jesus-life-in-asl.html>

In the Spirit of Pentecost,  
Pastor Beth  
ELCA Deaf Ministries.



## NEWS FROM NIGERIA...

The national Easter Camp for the Deaf was hosted in Nigeria from March 28—April 1, 2024, at the Nigeria Youth Camp, Einkorn Ilorin, Kwara State. The theme was “*Keep the Light in Your Heart Daily, No Room for Darkness.*” The national camp, unlike the zonal/regional camp, happens every three years. 95% of the participants traveled hundreds to thousands of kilometers to attend. Our so merciful God brought us safely to the camp and home again with peace and blessings.

In the choir competition, BSN came in second and Yola (Pr. Ruth’s church) won third place and the winners received gifts.

**Dr. Pawlos Abebe from Ethiopia** joined us. He is arguably the most brilliant Deaf scholar in Africa that I know of with more than 15 years of a disciplined and indefatigable spirit-shaped Christian mission for the Deaf in Ibadan where he works and studies in Nigeria. He rose to the position of second in command before relocating back to his home. He is currently lecturing at Addis Ababa University and soon he will be named a professor.

God bless LMF, and grant us peace and prosperity in abundance. We appreciate God Almighty for the success of this year’s national Easter Camp for the Deaf 2024. **Rev. Ruth Ulea**





# SAMUEL DIMAS GRADUATION

We rejoice with the May graduation of Samuel Dimas from Bronnum Lutheran Seminary. Samuel will now serve a two-year internship with Pr. Ruth. Thanks to all of you who helped ELDA support his seminary costs.



WIFE AND SON



LIGHT ON DEAF CHURCH BY PROV



HUG FROM CLASSMATE



THE SECTION OF CELEBRATIES



DEAF PARTICIPATE

# LORI FULLER AT ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

Our own Pastor Lori Fuller took center stage at the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans. She spoke to nearly 16,000 youth, adult leaders and others from the ELCA this July.

If you didn't see her here is a link to watch

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/11BaMitKBljd\\_A36LbVmImwkl-YHIOESg/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/11BaMitKBljd_A36LbVmImwkl-YHIOESg/view?usp=sharing)

We are so proud of you LORI!





# Ministry News

## PALMS DEAF CHURCH UPDATE

As you may already know, Deaf Missions released a movie about “Jesus” in American Sign Language (ASL) to the public on June 20th. Palms Deaf Church members gathered to show support in watching this incredible movie. Check out the picture below.



In addition, Palms Deaf Church also has some upcoming events that we will be hosting, including a beach service and a picnic for all in the

community to come to a local park. We also are planning some fun get-togethers where Deaf teens can meet and be themselves as God created them to be.

Throughout our gatherings, we remember that God is the heart of everything while sharing what we learned from one another. Thanks be to God!



## HEARTLAND EPHPHATHA

A huge thank you to all who traveled to South Dakota for the 2024 ELDA Conference.

The South Dakota crew had fun showing off our state and digging deeper into the fact that God is the Heart of Everything!

A very special thank you to Terra Sancta Retreat Center for making us feel welcome!

Also huge thanks to Woyaton Lutheran Church and Deacon Bill White for speaking to our group.

Here are a couple of pictures to remember the wonderful time together.



## SHARING HANDS DEAF MINISTRY

Celebrating Judy Hoewisch:

Judy Hoewisch and St. Matthew's Deaf Ministry

Judy Hoewisch (April 21, 1951 – March 29, 2024) was a very special person at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, CA. She helped start the Sharing Hands Deaf Ministry. Judy's parents were Deaf, and she lost some of her hearing as a child. Because of this, she understood the needs of Deaf people very well.

Meeting Judy:

28 years ago, Michael Nelson and Steve Jensen, both hearing members of St. Matthew's, met Judy at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, CA. They invited her to St. Matthew's to sign during services. Judy was very excited and agreed to help. She signed the services so the congregation could see what it would be like to have a Deaf Ministry.

Joining St. Matthew's:

Judy began attending St. Matthew's in 1996. She quickly noticed there were no services for Deaf people in the church. Together with Michael and Steve, she talked about how to make Deaf people feel welcome. They decided to have sign language interpreters in church services.

Building the Deaf Ministry:

Judy volunteered to sign during church services even when no Deaf people were there yet. This helped the congregation get used to seeing sign language. Over time, this grew into the Sharing Hands Deaf Ministry, giving Deaf people a place to worship.

Reaching Out to the Community:

Judy and Michael went to the Deaf Expo in

Pomona to tell people about the Deaf Ministry. Judy was very good at signing and talking to Deaf people. This helped bring many new members to St. Matthew's. Judy's ability to communicate in ASL made a big difference.

Judy's Life and Work:

Judy was also an architect who cared about making buildings good for the environment and accessible to people with disabilities. She worked at California State University Northridge (CSUN) and designed a classroom for Deaf students. Judy traveled the world and had many adventures. She loved helping others and was always full of energy and kindness.

Judy's Legacy:

Judy's involvement with St. Matthew's made a big difference. The Sharing Hands Deaf Ministry continues to help many people. Judy's spirit of love and inclusion lives on at the church. Her work taught many people about the importance of being inclusive and welcoming. We are grateful to Judy because without her, there would be no Sharing Hands Deaf Ministry. God bless Judy Hoewisch for her amazing contributions and the love she shared with everyone. Her story will always be a part of St. Matthew's and the Deaf community.



CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF

*Judy Hoewisch*

APRIL 21, 1951 - MARCH 29, 2024



# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO MAKE A WILL?

A will is a legal document that transfers your property to the people and organizations you select after your death. It is your last chance to say what you want to do before you die.

Making a will helps you make sure your wishes are followed after your death and will save frustration and in-fighting for your loved ones during their grief. Your spouse and children cannot argue if you write down your wishes.

If you have no will, your state will decide who to give your property to and who will take care of your children and pets. If the children's other parent is not living or available, the court will pick a guardian. You can plan for a caretaker for your pet. This will give you peace of mind!

You can update/revise your will any time before you die. This is important when you have life changes such as the birth of a new child, the death of a relative (spouse, etc.), or a divorce.



Your will speeds up the probate process (court). It will help avoid legal challenges. If you have no will, the probate court will follow state laws to make decisions. A will can lower estate taxes and reduce inheritance taxes.

You need to pick an organized, skilled, and trustworthy person to manage your will when you die. It can be a family member, your lawyer, or anyone you select.

In your will, you can "disinherit" a person you do NOT want to receive your property. This is important so that your treasured family heirlooms and important possessions do not go to an ex-spouse or relative you do not like. If no will, the court decides who gets your assets.

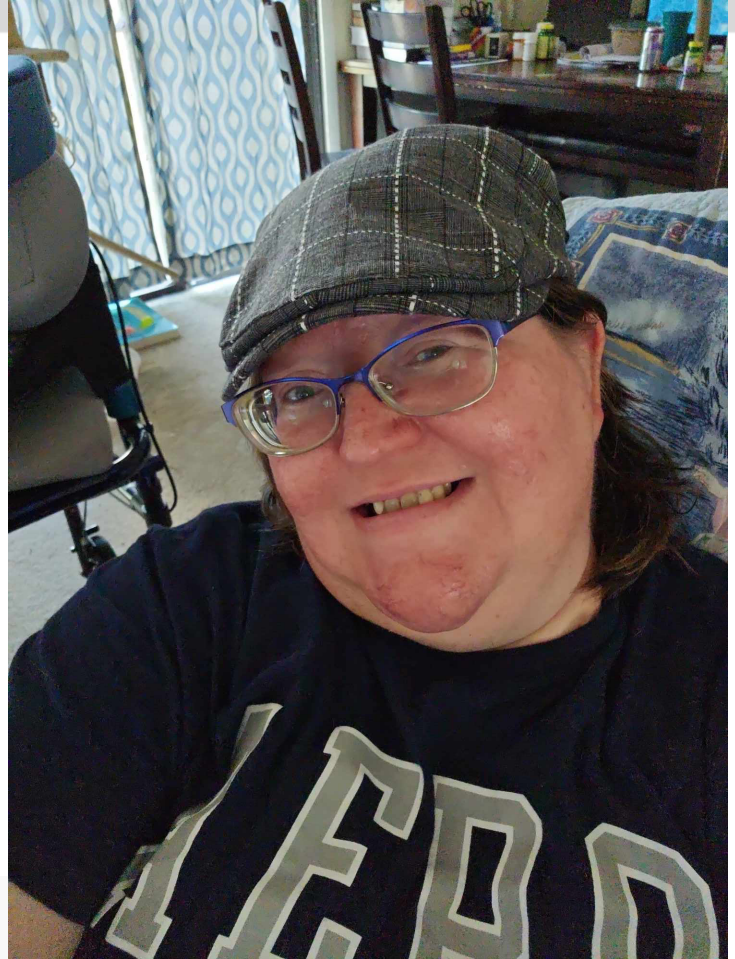
You can make gifts and donations to your church, favorite charities, and organizations such as ELDA. These benevolence gifts are not possible if you do not have a will. If no will, state laws do NOT allow charitable donations.

Do NOT delay. Make a will while you are alive. Avoid additional grief for your family. They will be thankful you planned ahead!





Congratulations to Tracy Prince our  
new ELDA Board Vice President



## NEW ELDA Vision:

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

## 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-Centered spirituality and empowerment, Deaf global missions and youth outreach, interpreter training, and a biennial conference.

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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

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](mailto:lindafairbanks22@gmail.com) Thanks!