



# ELDA

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



**Mark Koterwski**  
**ELDA President**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Mark Koterwski*

Easter is coming around soon!!!

What does the Easter Bunny have to do with Easter? The symbol of a rabbit was related to the animal's high reproduction. As for eggs, they were



symbols of fertility. And Spring is the symbol of a new life and rebirth. According to History.com, Easter eggs represent Jesus' resurrection. The documented information showed that the first Easter bunny legend started during the 1500's in Germany. The Easter Bunny started in the USA around the 1700's when German immigrants settled in Pennsylvania. It soon followed the tradition which started with decorated baskets with colorful eggs, candy, treats, and several of gifts. Of course, children love to hunt for colored eggs during the Easter egg hunt in their house or backyard. The report was from the Center for Children's Literature and Culture.

Regarding the Coronavirus, the churchwide organization recommends the following for churchwide staff: Wash your hands, stay home when you are sick, wear a mask if you have symptoms and consult your medical provider. Bishops and pastors will provide guidelines for worship and church gatherings. Luther also reminded his people and us

that we should trust God's faithfulness and promises, particularly the promise of eternal life. Paul writes: *"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's"* (Roman 14:8).

More information can be found on [www.ELCA.org](http://www.ELCA.org).



I am sure all of you may have concerns about the ELM Conference especially with Coronavirus is around. The ELM Conference committee had called for ELM Seeds (Episcopal (ECD), Lutheran (ELDA), and Methodist (UMCD)) meeting with their recommendations that we should cancel the ELM Conference this year. ELM Seeds contacted the three denominations to see

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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

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their thoughts and concerns about canceling the ELM Conference. I contacted our ELDA Board members to see what they think about this. All the Board members agreed that we should cancel it. ELM Seeds received responses from all dominations with 100% support to cancel the ELM Conference. If you have any concerns or questions about the ELM Conference cancellation, please contact me at [mkoterwski@gmail.com](mailto:mkoterwski@gmail.com).

ELM CONFERENCE 2020 IS CANCELLED. Stay Healthy and God bless you all!

Mark Koterwski  
ELDA President

## THANK YOU THANK YOU

By: Linda Fairbanks

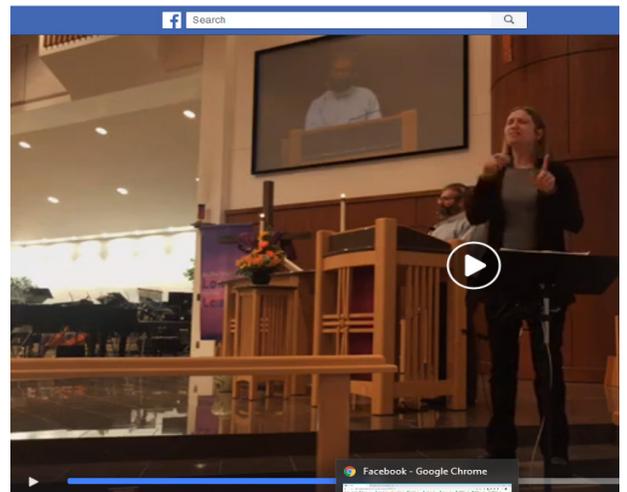
I would like to thank the area churches and ministries that were able to provide live streaming or any sort of videotaping of church services and had them shown on Facebook on Sunday, March 15th. We all needed to be safe and stay home, due to the coronavirus that has quickly swept from country to country, worldwide.

Thanks to Pastor Russ Rockwell for developing videos for the corona virus home-worship event. The videos are nicely done in ASL with script to read along. Thank you! Check them out on [www.wordoflifedeaf.org/home-worship](http://www.wordoflifedeaf.org/home-worship) and "click your way" through the worship service.

Here are the churches that live-streamed their worship services (with interpreter or with a signing minister and assistants. HEM- Peace Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls has been providing live-streaming with interpreter every Sunday for quite some time. The other churches have started doing so in the past few months or recently started doing it:

**BOLD-Minneapolis, MN (Bread of Life Deaf Lutheran)**  
**St Matthews Deaf Ministry, North Hollywood, CA**  
**St Thomas Deaf Episcopal, St Louis, MO**  
**HEM- Peace Lutheran Sioux Falls, SD**

There may be other churches that I missed. Again, thanks to the churches for all you have done. I also would like to thank the governors of several different states for providing Interpreters or certified deaf Interpreters, (CDIs) during their news coverage on the coronavirus. I was able to watch both the Minnesota and North Dakota governors. Again, thank you! We will get through this event, hopefully sooner than later. Stay safe and healthy!



# SPIRITUAL ARTICLE

## SPRING CLEANING BY DON ROSENKJAR

Ahh, the flowers are blooming, the air is getting warmer. Spring time! It's time, for many of us to do Spring cleaning, doing things that we normally don't like; washing windows, scrubbing walls, discarding expired canned goods. After we're done, it's a wonderful feeling that our house is in better shape. Ahh, spring cleaning happens during Lent. So, Lent is a wonderful time for us to do "Spring cleaning". We take a deep look at ourselves, and find ways how we can do things better, how to make people happier, how to make the earth a better place. But before we start thinking, put "WWJD" in your mind, etched deeply in your soul. What is WWJD? Well, let's solve this puzzle when you go to church on Sunday, and ask around what the heck is "WWJD"? With WWJD in mind, the path for you in becoming a better person, your angels all around you will smile with joy with your thoughts and deeds — based on WWJD.

At your church, I hope you can start a conversation — a serious conversation with your people, and find ways on how to be a better person. Visit a nursing home? Making regular donations to your church? Or increase your offerings. Form a prayer circle? Bring food and clothes to those in need? Visit Deaf folks in prisons? There are many ways you can start, starting during Lent, and continue beyond Easter.

I'd like to share a simple story when I was 18 years old. I was at Gallaudet University, and it was Christmas time. Almost everyone on the campus went home. It was my very first Christmas without a

decorated tree, without smelling the fragrance of burning logs in the fireplace, without sipping egg nog, without this and without that. I was really depressed. I had a package I wanted to send, and went to a nearby post office. It was raining. All the windows in the post office were opened, with long, long lines. I felt lonely and miserable. While waiting in the line, a black boy around 12 years old came in and he had a stack of Washington Post newspaper to sell. He asked every single person there if he/she would buy a paper. I observed him, and realized not a single person bought one. He was shivering, and soaking wet. So, I motioned him to come to me. I gave him a quarter (at that time, the paper cost a dime), and he reached his pocket to give me change and I told him to keep the change. He then handed me the paper, and I said I did not want it. He shouted and every person in the post office turned their heads and looked at us — and smiled. I could not understand what he said (in case you don't know, I'm quite Deaf) but I was astounded by the reaction of everyone there - smiling. That turned out to be one of finest, best Christmas. It was kindness.

Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness". Start a conversation with your friends at church next Sunday and let ELDA know how that went through this newsletter.



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.  
**Galatians 5:22-23**

# ELCA DEAF MINISTRIES DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Dear ELDA Friends:  
God's grace and peace be with each of you.

As I write this, the world is experiencing a pandemic of COVID-19. As of March 14, over 155,423 people have been infected in 131 nations and more than 5800 have died. The United States has

announced 3010 people infected but there are probably many more. Many of us will get this infection before the pandemic ends.

It is easy to feel confused and afraid. It is easy to panic and become paranoid. It is easy to think only about



taking care of ourselves and loved ones.

We need to hold onto God's promises:

*"I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to take care of you and not to harm you, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call to Me and pray to Me, I will hear you." (Jeremiah 29:11-12)*

This pandemic will hurt the most vulnerable people in our world: the countries and regions that do not have good hospitals and doctors, the people without health care, the homeless, the disabled, older people, and people with other sicknesses such as diabetes, lung and heart conditions.

God challenges us to remember we are ALL God's people. We are brothers and sisters together. God wants us to "shine our light" and each church to be a "city on the hill." Now is the time to show love instead of blame, kindness instead of selfishness. We need to

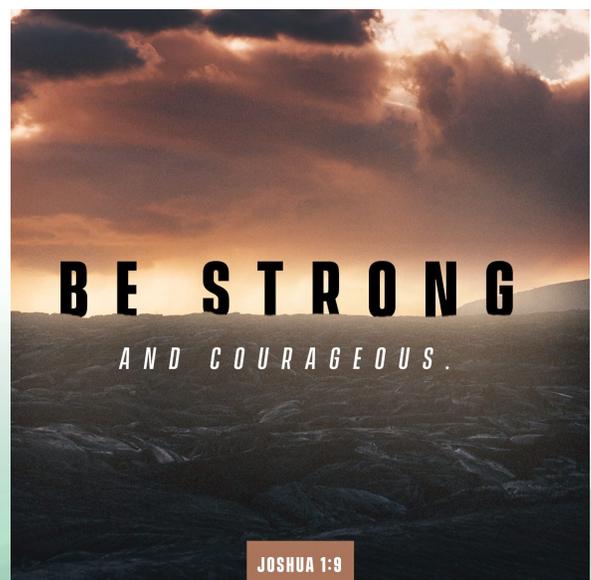
slow down and appreciate each other. Be aware of those who may need assistance and respond. We are connected!

China reported that when so many people were sick, their factories slowed down, the pollution disappeared, making the sky clear and blue. It became more quiet and they could hear the birds again. People in Italy quarantined in their homes, opened their windows and began to sing together.

When we are sick in body, let our hearts be well with love and joy to share. We will get through this together with God's guidance.

*"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord Your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)*

Peace and prayers,  
Pastor Beth+  
Director, ELCA Deaf Ministries



# ELCA DEAF MINISTRIES DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## MILL NECK

As part of my work with ELCA Deaf Ministries, I serve on the Board for Mill Neck Family of Organizations which is located at the Mill Neck School for the Deaf on Long Island, New York. Last fall our Board was busy with several meetings to select the new CEO of the school. We interviewed the top candidates, chose three and interviewed them again. After prayer and discussion, we chose Mill Neck's first female CEO who accepted our offer in December and began February 2.

Dr. Asiah Mason has a Deaf brother and is a fluent signer. She has more than 20 years of experience working with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. She served as a professor of

Psychology and Director of International Relations in the Office of the President at Gallaudet University. Areas of her experience and expertise in working with the D/HOH include Education, Mental Health, Community Based Services, Developmental Disabilities, Treatment Foster Care, Emotional Intelligence, Youth Leadership, and International Exchange.

I recently returned to Mill Neck campus for more Board meetings plus Dr. Mason's installation and reception. Guests came from NYC, Gallaudet, and other places. I was thrilled that Dr. Mason required the Board to learn ASL and they had fun!! As I left town, coronavirus moved into Long Island and the school closed a week later. We pray for health, safety, and new life for Mill Neck and their new CEO.



Left to Right: Board Member William Charon, Bishop Derek LeCakes, Board Member Pastor Beth Lockard, Board Member Leslie Schnake, Dr. Asiah Mason CEO Mill Neck Family of Organizations, Chairman of the Board of Trustees Pastor David Benke, Board Member Pastor Timothy Yeadon

# PRESS RELEASE FROM MILL NECK

PRESS RELEASE  
For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Jillian Michaelson  
Director of Events  
516.628.4241

13 March 2020  
Mill Neck Leaping to a Mission-True Future  
with  
New CEO Dr. Asiah Mason

The Mill Neck Manor house held a historical event Friday, March 6th. The Mill Neck Family of Organization's Board of Trustees hosted an installation and welcome reception for the new Chief Executive Officer Dr. Asiah Mason. Dr. Mason is the first CEO in the history of Mill Neck that is a female as well as person of color. The evening began with Bishop Derek LeCakes officiating the Lutheran installation service for Dr. Mason in the Mill Neck Manor Chapel. Senator James Gaughran presented Dr. Mason with a Proclamation. It is significant to note that all of the evening's speakers were Deaf leaders: Dr. Julia Silvestri, Principal of Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf; Catherine Barlick Alumni, and Dr. Michelle Smith Clinical Director of HMS for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The theme throughout the evening was Mill Neck once again becoming "Mission-True" and a pillar of the community. Under Dr. Mason's leadership the core values of Mill Neck are once again the focus. Mission, faith and community.

Community leaders Senator Carl Marcellino, Mill Neck Mayor Peter Quick, Bayville Mayor Robert DeNatale enthusiastically supported the new CEO's strategic plan to make Mill Neck an asset to the community and for the community to feel as part of the Mill Neck family. Alumni Catherine Barlick from the first graduating class of 1959 flew in from Florida to participate in this historic occasion. Other alumni's and retirees became emotional "coming home" again. The members of the Board of Trustees surprised all attendees by introducing themselves in American Sign Language. A Deaf Board of Trustee member Pastor Beth Lockard stated that this was the first time she felt as an equal to her fellow Board of Trustee members. Under the leadership of Dr. Mason the Board of Trustees has promised to continue learning American Sign Language. Our local businesses Mill Creek Catering, N.T Designs, Elite Tent & Party Rental, and Oyster Bay Brewing Company generously and enthusiastically co-sponsored the event.



\*LEFT TO RIGHT: DR. MICHELLE SMITH, DR. ASIAH MASON, DR. JULIA SILVESTRI\*



\*LEFT TO RIGHT: BISHOP DEREK LeCAKES, DR. ASIAH MASON, PETER QUICK MAYOR OF MILL NECK, PASTOR DAVID BENKE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES\*

# MINISTRY NEWS-

## WORD OF LIFE DEAF, LANCASTER, PA

During the Epiphany Season (Jan. 6 - Feb. 25), WOLD members enjoyed guessing the color of each week's candle for the Epiphany Star. A picture of last year's star is included. During Lent, the Epiphany candles will be placed on the altar to remind us of everything Jesus gave us during His ministry on earth.

For the Ash Wednesday service (Feb. 26), WOLD again used ashes made from the burnt palm branches leftover from last year's Palm Sunday service. Many WOLD members keep their palm fronds throughout the year just for this purpose. It helps make the Ash Wednesday service more meaningful.

Again this year, WOLD & CTK members will enjoy a "pulpit exchange" for Lent. Pr. Beth Lockard from CTK will come to WOLD twice during Lent to lead worship and preach, and Pr. Russ will do the same at CTK. This year's preaching theme is "The Mercy of Jesus." Bible texts will focus on "The Adulterous Woman" and "The Raising of Lazarus" in John's gospel, "Raising the Son of the Widow of Nain" from Luke's gospel, and Jesus' separate encounters with "Tax Collectors" and "Blind Men" in Matthew's gospel.

The study of "Bible Stories to Know" continues on Wednesday nights. By Easter, WOLD members might reach 70 stories studied! These Bible studies will continue during Lent.

In Lent, WOLD members will join the midweek Lenten services for interpreted worship on Wednesday nights. WOLD & St. Peter's members both enjoy very much having the opportunity to worship and fellowship together. WOLD will have its own Good Friday worship service.

Perhaps the "biggest news" at WOLD is that Pr. Russ will be going sabbatical for part of the spring and summer.

## 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.*

# MINISTRY NEWS-

## WORD OF LIFE DEAF, LANCASTER, PA

The months of March and April will be spent preparing for Pr. Russ's time away.

A grant from the Lilly Foundation was awarded to WOLD to cover the costs associated with the sabbatical. Almost all of the grant will be used to provide for coverage during Pr. Russ' absence. A retired pastor, the Rev. Jeff Pretz, will lead WOLD's Sunday worship, and interpreters will sign the services. Pr. Pretz is a member of WOLD's "host" church, St. Peter's. The grant money also provides money for pastoral care coverage. "Minor" needs will be met by St. Peter's pastoral staff, and "serious" needs will be met by Pr. Beth Lockard from CTK. Information about the Lilly Endowment's grant can be found at [www.cpx.cts.edu/renewal](http://www.cpx.cts.edu/renewal).



Unlike many who travel during sabbatical, Pr. Russ will be staying at home. His goal is to create video resources for use in Deaf ministry. WOLD members gave him suggestions of resources he can make. Through the sabbatical, Pr. Russ will scratch some "creative itches."

There is so much that can be done with today's technology. Unfortunately, there isn't enough time in the week. A sabbatical gives Pr. Russ the \*time\* it takes to develop computer & video resources that can be used in Deaf ministry. The hope and goal is that these resources can be shared.

In addition to making resources, Pr. Russ plans to attend worship in a variety of settings: Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, and "mega-church" services. Pr. Russ expects this aspect of sabbatical will be personally enriching. As an added "bonus," Pr. Russ will be able to worship with his wife, Brenda, at these services (Brenda is normally involved with the music leadership at a different church.). Pr. Russ' sabbatical runs from May 1 to August 31.

As always, you can check out WOLD's website for the latest at [www.wordoffifedeaf.org](http://www.wordoffifedeaf.org).



PICTURED:

WOLD's Epiphany Star in 2019

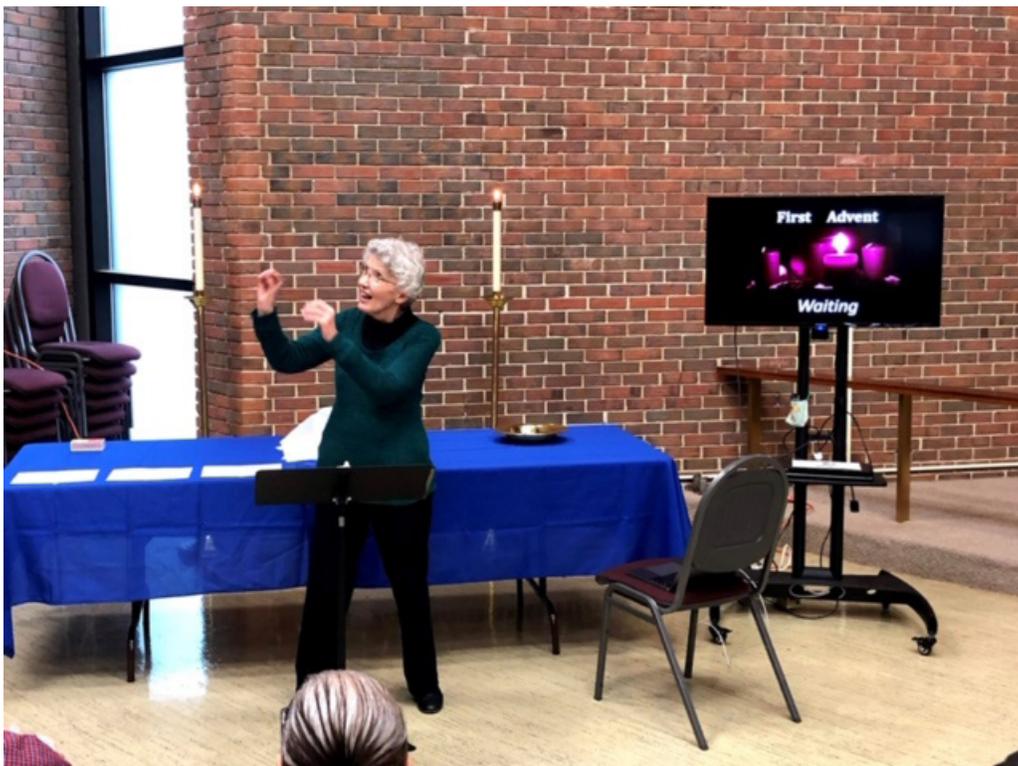
# MINISTRY NEWS

LUTHERAN DEAF MINISTRY (METROPOLITAN CHICAGO SYNOD)

LDM has finally settled into a ministry plan after Pastor Dayton's retirement. We now worship once a month at two different sites: Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Downers Grove, IL and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Schaumburg, IL.

First, we worship with their hearing congregation at an interpreted worship service. Then, we have a short coffee break (and sweets!) and move into another room where we repeat the Gospel, but this time in ASL. After that, we have a lively discussion without voice as much as possible.

Then once every three months, we are blessed to have Deacon Dorothy Sparks travel from Minnesota for our quarterly ASL Worship Service. Everyone loves Dorothy, and this event is well attended. After worship, we have time for lunch and visiting before she must return to the airport for her flight home. This is definitely the best of LDM!



Our other news is that Robert Radtke, son of Ann & Bob Radtke has graduated as a Physician's Assistant and is now working as one of only SIX deaf PA's across the United States. YEAH ROBERT! Needless to say Ann & Bob are two VERY proud parents, along with his whole Deaf LDM community. I have had the pleasure of watching Robert grow up since he's been an infant. What a great advocate for the Deaf. He spends his time helping hearing people understand the Deaf community and taught his classmates sign while attending PA school.



Bonnie Osborne & Robert Radtke, Co-Chairs, LDM

# MINISTRY NEWS

## HEARTLAND EPHPHATHA MINISTRY

Every year we write an annual report, this is the 2019 report from HEM.

Heartland Ephphatha is the ministry for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the South Dakota Synod and our headquarters are at Peace Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD. We make worship, fellowship, service and community available to those who use America Sign Language.

You may notice that we have an interpreters every week at the 9:00 am service but you might not know that we do so much more to make the faith-life of the deaf more fulfilling. This year we had members go on a mission trip to Red Bird Missions in Kentucky to help repair low income housing for community residents.

We also hosted our annual Deaf Awareness Sunday at Peace Lutheran Church. We made a sign choir video that we shared at worship. We also presented on our mission trip and took an offering to support our ministry.

We continue to offer free sign language classes at Peace. This year over a dozen new students took advantage of our classes.

We also do a service project at least once per quarter and we love to serve.

Thanks to all who support us in prayer and finances.

Jason and Sarah Andera



HEARTLAND  
EPHPHATHA  
DOES SERVICE  
PROJECT SEVERAL  
TIMES A YEAR



# GOD:) WINKS

## MY JOURNEY TO THE ORDINARY.

On the 9th January 1989 was the arrival of young men and women who heard the call of God like baby Samuel to Dahen.

It is worth noting through that after we all graduated from the seminary and having observed the one year mandatory internship. And by God's special grace all these young men and women who were called by their various districts and ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Lutheran church of Christ in Nigeria.

The saying in the scripture that God chooses ignoble things for his word turning it into using things for his glory and blessing of humanity has come true in the lives of those of us. We all come from humble backgrounds but we are nurtured by God and turned into useful instruments in both the church and the wider society, with shared determination and commitment, we all have furthered our studies at various levels. This group had produced two PhD holders, six master degree holders (some in progress) and first degrees holders. God had blessed us and kept us in various positions of responsibilities such as Bishop, Lecturers, Heads of Departments (HOD), Deans, Vicars and District Pastors to mention a few. We give God the glory for all the great things He has done through us and in us since day one to the present.

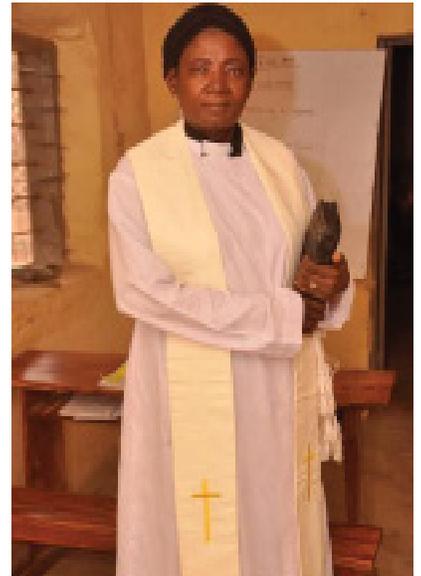
Suffice it to say the journey had not been smooth all

the way. We have had many serious challenges, like the gender, but with God's grace and mercy we were enabled to overcome them. We the 1989 group had remained united all through these 27 years and we have not had any cause to go our separate ways.

I, Rev Ruth Ulea am a deaf woman pastor in charge of the LCCN deaf center and church for the deaf. I attended the Lutheran seminary in Mbamba 1989-1992. I became the first deaf female pastor in the Lutheran church of Christ in Nigeria. I am married to Mr. Paul Silas Ulea who is a hearing person and we are blessed with five male children.

When I (Ruth) began to lose my hearing at the age of 11, I felt bitter and angry at God, but just when I lost all hope I heard, something more beautiful that I could ever imagined, and I have become grateful for my deafness. This terrible thing had become a precious gift from God.

God bless you all,  
Pastor Ruth Ulea, (Nigeria)



## 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

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!