



ELDA

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DEAF ASSOCIATION
A MINISTRY OF THE ELCA**

**Volume 16
Issue 61**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

MARK KOTERWSKI

Greetings to everyone!

I am sure everyone has experienced anxiety, stress, fear, and many emotions that we faced due to COVID-19. It has been just like a monster since March 2020! Now, we are all wondering if it's safe for us to go back to "normal" life again.

Good news: According to the CDC, the health officials recommend lifting most COVID-19 restrictions for people who are fully vaccinated. That means you may not need to use masks or do any social distancing, indoors or outdoors, if you are fully vaccinated. That means you can start doing whatever you want. The only thing is we are still required is to wear the masks when we are on any transportation such as planes, trains and buses. As for the schools, camps, businesses, shopping in stores, events, and any other gathering places will be determined by their organizations/businesses to still require masks.



I am excited that we will have the ELDA Board members to meet in person in Pennsylvania during the first week of August 2021 for our annual meeting for the first time since COVID-19 started. We will also visit with the Word of Life Deaf Lutheran Church ELDA Conference committee to discuss the possibility to have our ELDA Conference held sometime in the summer of 2022 in Lancaster, PA. We will review the CDC guidelines to ensure that we can get together more safely. We can't wait to have

everyone gather at the conference again after 3+ years since 2018 in Las Vegas, NV. Watch for the ELDA Conference flyer soon!

STAY HEALTHY and
GOD BLESS EVERYONE!!!

Mark Koterwski, ELDA
President

The update of COVID-19 vaccination as of June 13, 2021:

United States

Doses given	Fully vaccinated	% of population fully vaccinated
308M 308,000,000	143M 143,000,000	43.6%

Inside this Issue



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Pastor Beth reports on the realities of refugee and immigrant life especially for those who are Deaf.



Spiritual Report

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Nigeria Report

Pastory Ruth shows us what the Easter Camp has been through over the past 50 years in Nigeria.

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.”

ELDA

MISSION STATEMENT

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.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

PASTOR BETH LOCKARD



Dear ELDA Friends:

Rejoice together as Deaf seminarian, **Lori Fuller, has graduated from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN** with her M.Div. degree on June 6. (You can watch this virtual service by clicking luthersem.edu/commencement) She completed all the requirements for the M.DivX program which was a pilot two-year accelerated program. Even if the pandemic changed some of the goals, she worked hard to find new ways to achieve them. She had an online Bible study group with Deaf participants from different states, a book club with another group, and assisted with worship virtually through **Bread of Life Lutheran Church of the Deaf** (Minneapolis) as well as her home hearing congregation, St. Matthew's Lutheran, Ocala, FL.. Lori also has a website (deafchurch.org).

Now that Lori has completed her seminary studies, she is meeting with her **Florida Bahamas Synod** and had her first call meeting. The approval process will continue and a church has been identified near the Florida School for the Deaf & Blind where her daughter Riley attends. Lori hopes to be ordained in a Deaf congregation or with ELCA Deaf ministry leaders attending. I am amazed as all this started with a conversation in 2018 at our ELDA Conference in Las Vegas! God is faithful!

During the pandemic, a couple more seminarians (hearing) were identified who seem to be fluent in ASL. I am hoping to find out more soon. We are also finding out about one of Pr. Ruth Ulea's Deaf members, **Samuel Dimas, who has been accepted into Bronnum Lutheran Seminary in Yola, Nigeria.** We hope to have more information to share with you in the next newsletter. I know some of our Deaf ministries are seeking pastors!

As I write this, **Christ the King Deaf Church/DeafCAN!** has just helped to host the **World Deaf Refugee Day conference** in Lancaster, PA June 10–13. This models the **June 20 World Refugee Day** celebration. The pandemic was a big unknown as we planned this event and prevented some people from flying in from other countries. For example, the deaf Canadian soccer team could not cross the border and the World Federation of the Deaf president spoke to us through a giant Zoom screen. We were treated to a conversation with **Joel Barish of DeafNation** and watched his documentary on Deaf Rohingya refugees in a huge refugee camp guarded by Myanmar soldiers. You can probably find this on YouTube. About 125 attended the conference.

At WDRD, we heard from one of Mark Koterwski's Bhutanese students from Sioux Falls who also entertained us with mime, President Melissa Dragnac-Hawk of **National**

Association of the Deaf whose Deaf parents came from Peru, a lawyer who specializes in helping deaf refugees seeking asylum, and many other speakers. The Bhutanese Community showed us **Nepali dances.** DeafCAN! provided a couple presentations and a drama by some students in our citizenship classes. We had 16 people from our church and DeafCAN! attending, who represented nine countries outside the USA: Bhutan, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala, Iraq, Liberia, Nepali, the Philippines, and Taiwan. One Deaf woman from Ireland showed us their sign for England and England's sign for them (not very friendly).

One thing was clear: across borders, countries, cultures, and sign languages, the Deaf Community experienced many traumas and losses that can never be erased. It is hard to be pushed from your home, your country, and life into a new place and learn a new language and culture. These people have had to be resilient (strong) to survive.

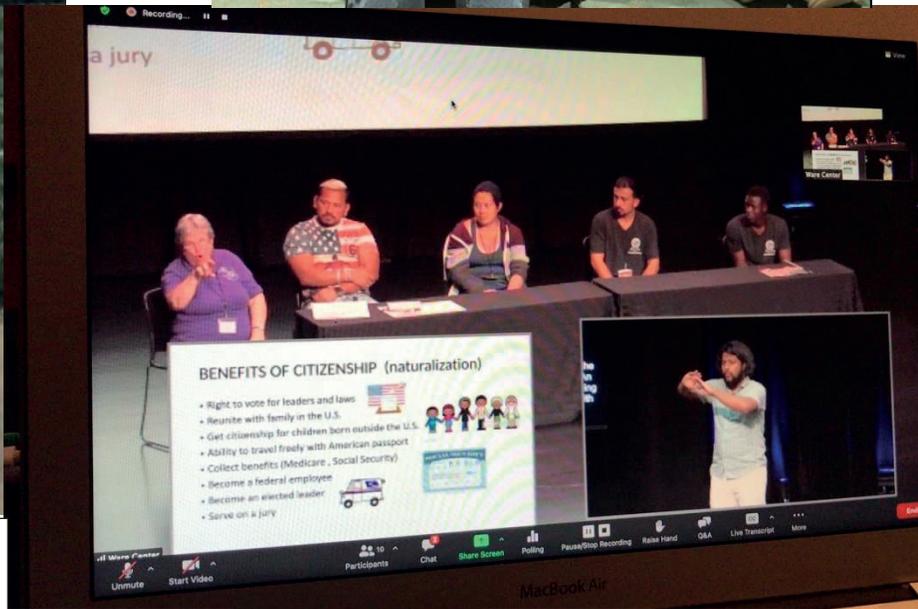
I encourage you to notice refugees and immigrants in your own area and befriend them as the Jews of the Old Testament were encouraged by Moses to care for the "foreigners" among them. This experience will enrich YOU in many ways. Together we are God's children!!

("Do not mistreat or abuse foreigners who live among you. Remember, you were foreigners in Egypt." Exodus 22:21)

Joy in the Lord,
Pastor Beth Lockard
ELCA Deaf Ministries

WDRD 2021...

(L) DeafCAN! drama troupe shows Filipino games; (R top to bottom): John Markowitz, Mohammed Mohsin, Emma Decaro, Mary Grace Asuncion, Arku Jorgbor, Astrid Morales, Uber Gomez, Pr. Beth, and Ruth Joy Darrell, (L) Arku, Mohammed, and Uber play soccer with Ohio team on Game Day & win!



Below: Bhutanese Deaf dancers. (R): How our citizenship panel looked on livestream with PowerPoint and Nepali Sign Language interpreter. Below (R): award winners last night. Bill Lockard in rear right.



FROM NIGERIA

Greetings in Jesus' name from Nigeria,

The Bible reading is from Psalms 105:1-3, I used the verses to encourage us all always to bring ourselves under the mercy of God as it is what kept us throughout all the difficulties faced in the COVID-19 journey and many others. It is by the mercies that everything was possible so we should always be grateful and thankful at all times.

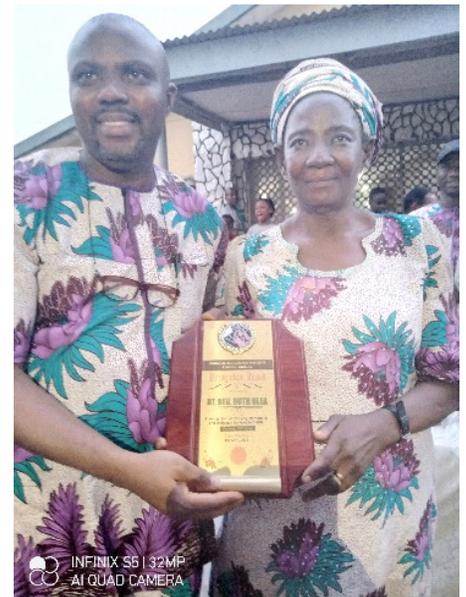
Easter means different things to different people, a time to eat and be merry, a time to have family reunion, or just another holiday to rest at home. The real meaning of Easter, however Christ suffering on the cross and his resurrection, which gives us opportunity to approach God as our father. A day like this should bring sober reflection on the sacrifices of Jesus on the cross at Calvary. On that resurrection morning Christ rose from death and lives forever. Happy Easter! May you be richly blessed in all you do with your loved ones and in your prayers. HALLELUJAH!

Thank you all.
Ruth Ulea

28/3/2021- Wedding of a deaf couple in my village, Gashala, Hong LGA



27/3/2021- Wedding of Miss Helen Ibrahim, our interpreter since 2010 to date.



March 30th -5th April 2021- Leaving for the National Easter Camp in Illorin. An award plague was given to me for my long faithfulness in the service by CMDC at the camp.



6th April-12th 2021, I attended the National Deaf Women conference in the capacity building. The theme: "Choose to challenge with focus on women in leadership achieving a squad future in a COVID 19 world"

50TH EASTER CAMP

By Rev. Mrs. Ruth P. Ulea

The Christian mission for the deaf Nigeria has gone a long way before we have come to this day. It started with its founder the late Dr. Andrew Foster who saw the vision to bring the gospel to Africa and through all problems and the difficulties he meets along his way was never shaken to the extent that gave up his vision.

50 years of annual Easter camp, the 50th years' experience has exposed us to many challenges, but the foremost of them is securing a permanent place of worship for our churches, out of the 32 branches of the CMDC, less than 10 of them are on their permanent sites.

However, the church building is good, the most important of all is the spiritual strength of the church members. We thank God for His caring and we pray to continue to mature spiritually. Before the next decade, it is possible that many churches will have their branches and mostly a permanent site. Also, we must not forget the majority of our branches are located in the southern part of this country (Nigeria). Efforts need to be directed to reach the lost souls of the deaf in part of Northern Nigeria. Only in Adamawa state, we have our sister, Rev. Mrs. Ruth P. Ulea, who is doing her very best in some other states like Jos, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Taraba, Kano, and Maiduguri yet at this special occasion, let us not forget about our founder Dr Andrew Foster, the man God had used to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 29:18. European missionaries were coming to Nigeria before the 1960s with the example of the Brannum Lutheran to Nigeria in 1913 to 1986, with

sister, Emma Stenbjerg Kristensen (Danish Missionary). They started schools and churches, through which many people became Christians. However, those missionaries were not equipped on how to reach the deaf with the gospel. It was this Christian mission for the deaf church founder whom God sent from America to fulfill the prophetic call in Africa in 1960.

The Christian mission for the deaf started schools for the deaf through which gospel ministry began 10 years after that, the annual Easter camp which continues to this day; to God be the glory. Truly, it was a great day not only to the late Dr. Andrew Foster, but also to the deaf church that grew out of his effort, and this is why we still want to continue to remember

this day. The seed has been sown, the tree has grown and there are now many branches, and with God, it will continue to grow much bigger. Today we must not forget to pay tribute to the important service that the late Dr. Andrew Foster had contributed to the nations, and very soon the educational work would be established

and important landmarks were reached in both primary and secondary school education, back then before it was overtaken by the government in 1972. Thanks be to the almighty God that there are here among us a few of the pioneer students of the 1960s witnessing this great occasion. The cake was served. Elder Omolayo Anifowose, Pastor Victor and Rev, Mrs. Ruth Ulea gave brief summaries of Dr. Andrew Foster's life and about when the camp began and how they come in as students. The congregation applauded and gave glory to God. A drama was performed and it was titled "God's faithfulness". Refreshments were served and Award of plaques were given to the past Presidents of the camp listed below:

- **1. ELDER OLIVERAMCHO- -----FIRST PRESIDENT**
- **2. ELDER SAMUEL EBINUM----- ---SECOND PRESIDENT**
- **3. DEACON JEILLI RAIMI -----THIRD PRESIDENT**
- **4. ELDER JONATHAN ERHIAGANOMA.**
- **5. DEACONESS BUNMI JAMES**
- **6. ELDER EMMANUEL ILLABOR**
- **7. THE LATE PETER ASHADE**
- **8. REV. MRS RUTH ULEA.**
- **9. ELDER AMOS AKEJU.**
- **10. EVANG LUCKY NEPE.**
- **11. PASTOR. VICTOR AJAYI.**
- **12. PASTOR, MUNIRU ADEBAYO.**
- **13. EVANG CLIMA UDENYI.**
- **14. ELDER OMOLAYO ANIFOWOSE.**
- **15. MRS. GRACE AJAYI**

SPIRITUAL REPORT

DON ROSENKJAR

WHERE IS GOD?

Several years ago Khai and I visited the Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. At that park, there was a small Episcopalian chapel, called The Chapel of the Transfiguration. Before we visited the national park, I read that there is something at the altar in that chapel that is more beautiful than any great cathedral in Europe. Really? We were really curious, so we visited it. The chapel itself is a plain, small brown wooden building. Nothing fancy. On the altar, there was a small, plain wooden crucifix. But, what we saw, my God! It was absolutely stunning, and so beautiful. Behind the altar, there was a large window. Through the window, we saw an amazing sight of mountains. It reminded us that God created these amazing

mountains. In a powerful way, this church reminded us that God is everywhere. Listen with your eyes. They are the voice of God speaking to you. In order to see God continuing to work in your life, go to church, study the Bible, and pray. Actively look for what God is saying to you, how He wants you to turn your life around, and how He promises to guide you the whole way.

It is trusting God to feed you every day. Yes, every day asking Him to show up and be with you, be what you need, knowing and believing that He is God, so He is capable of showing up and being what someone else needs. Listen with your eyes everywhere. Listen with your heart. Talk with God. . .yes, in ASL. God is really amazing!



CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Travis Fischer on his graduation from Lebanon Valley College, PA. He graduated with a major in Criminal Justice. Travis will be attending Police Academy for six months in July.

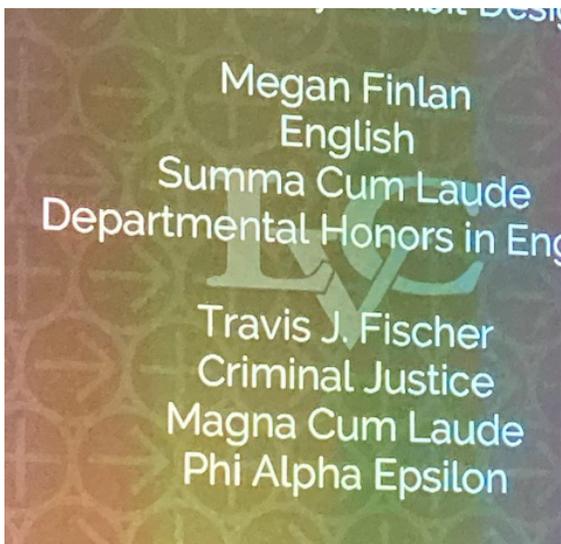
Travis is shown in the picture with his older brother, Dr. Ryan Fischer who is going to be a second year resident at Lancaster General Hospital in Lancaster, PA.

Travis and Ryan are the sons of ELDA Vice President Jeannie Fisher and her husband, John and the grandsons of Pauline Johnston.

Again, our heartfelt congratulations to the Fischer family!



Travis Fischer and brother Dr. Ryan Fischer



MINISTRY REPORT

WOLD is patiently, but eagerly waiting to return to post-pandemic, in-person worship! Our synod bishop suggested 2 indicators for a safe return to indoor worship: (1) when COVID Daily New Cases per 100,000 falls below 20 per 100K, and (2) a positive test rate of 5% or less.

At this writing, our area is almost there – we have number (1) but not number (2). God willing, by the time you read this, we will be back in worship where we belong – TOGETHER! WOLD will return to worship-in-the-building when St. Peter’s, our host site, opens the church back up to indoor worship.

In April, WOLD finally started using Zoom for bible study. The in-person experience of Bible study was something we were willing to wait for, but after a year with no Bible study, WOLD’s council decided we couldn’t wait any longer. As Zoom experiences go, it could be better, but it could be worse. We are looking forward to being back in our classroom for Bible study this fall.

WOLD is hosting the ELDA conference in 2022. Our committee members are getting excited about next year’s conference. After missing last year’s conference, it will be *wonderful* to see everybody and to finally be together, so COME ONE, COME ALL TO ELDA 2022!
Submitted by Pastor Russ Rockwell



Word of Life Deaf Lutheran Church in Lancaster PA. Worships at St. Peter’s Lutheran Church

MORE PICTURES FROM DEAFCAN! →

ELDA



DeafCAN! students from the Philippines, Iraq, Liberia, Colombia, and Guatemala tell their stories with drama including poverty, slavery, domestic violence, war, deaf education, terrorism & bombs, jobs, pregnancy, death of family members, coming to America, learning & dreaming of a better future... Deaf can do!



OUR STORIES

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY!



GOD:) WINKS

As this newsletter was being finalized, ELDA received word that the \$10,000 gift from ELDA donors was sent securely to Pr. Ruth for use in purchasing a used van and gas for LCCN Deaf ministry. An additional \$600 gift was given by Jay Johnson for use with other needs at the Deaf school and church. Deacon Dorothy Sparks contacted Pr. Ruth via video to let her know the good news. Godwink! It was her birthday!!!!

