



# *The Deaf Lutheran*

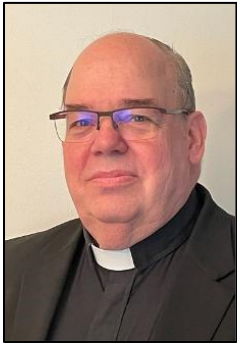


Official Publication of the International Lutheran Deaf Association and the Lutheran Deaf Mission Society

Summer 2025

St. Louis, MO

Vol. 114, No. 3



## **Pastoral Advisor Rev. Daryl Gehlbach**

Since 1865, the United States Secret Service has the responsibility to stop counterfeit money. So, how do agents learn to recognize counterfeit money? They study authentic US currency – the paper, the ink, the style of printing, the watermarks, specific details, etc. The more an agent knows authentic money, the better they are able to spot fakes.

Jesus warns us that in the time before His coming again false christs and false prophets will appear (Mark 13:22). Like counterfeit money these fakes can seem very real and trustworthy. We need to recognize these spiritual imposters so that we don't go astray and risk losing our faith. We must see these frauds for who they are and avoid placing our faith in counterfeits. This means we must learn to know the true Christ, Jesus. The more we know our blessed Savior, the more we can spot and avoid the frauds and imposters, the fakes and counterfeits.

So, where do we learn about the Authentic Christ? The Bible, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament. Here in God's inspired Word, we find the Christ who came down from heaven and became flesh. Here we find the Christ who suffered and died for our sins. Here, we find the Christ who arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Here, we find the Christ who sends forth His Spirit into the world and promises to come again.



Indeed, the world is filled with false christs and false teachers (including our Old Adam), each competing for our hearts and minds. If we want to avoid their snares, we must know and trust the Authentic Christ. In this way we can see and hear Him in this spiritually noisy world. How do we do this? We read, mark (remember), learn and inwardly digest His Word. Only then will our faith have a sure foundation. Only then can we stand calmly upon the Rock of our salvation.

We must remain vigilant and aware. The false christs of this world learn and adapt. They become more sophisticated with their cleverly devised tales. Thus, we need to continually study God's Word. We should, as St. Peter urges us, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). In this way, we may hold fast to the hope set before us.

Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word. Amen.



## **President Brian Byer Summer Reflections and Looking Ahead to ILDA 2026**

As summer is upon us, many of us have plans—traveling, relaxing, or spending time with loved ones. In the midst of our busy schedules and activities, let us not forget that Jesus Christ is always with us, no matter where we go. This season also offers us a valuable opportunity to reconnect with our families,

taking a break from the demands of school, work, and everyday life. Most importantly, it is a time to reconnect with Him—our Savior and source of strength.

Last June 5th 2025, I underwent open-heart surgery to replace my aortic valve, which was no longer functioning properly. I am currently in the recovery process and undergoing therapy as I regain strength. I am incredibly thankful to the wonderful medical team and especially to my wife, who cared for me tirelessly during this journey. I have been away from work for three months to focus on my health, and I continue to place my trust in God as I heal. I will be looking forward to return to work after Labor Day weekend full time.

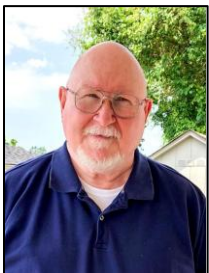
Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV): “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.”

As we look forward to our Biennial ILDA Convention scheduled for June 11–14, 2026, in Florence, Kentucky, I want to remind everyone of the importance of these gatherings. They allow us to grow in faith, fellowship, and service. However, as of now, we have not yet received any bids to host the 2028 convention. I encourage all of us to pray that God will move the hearts of a willing church or community to step forward and host. It is a special opportunity to share His Word with our brothers and sisters in Christ from across the nation.

Isaiah 40:31 (ESV): “But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

Psalms 73:28 (NIV): “But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.”

May your summer be filled with rest, renewal and the ever-present love of Christ. Psalm 46:10 [NKJV]: “Be still, and know that I am God.”



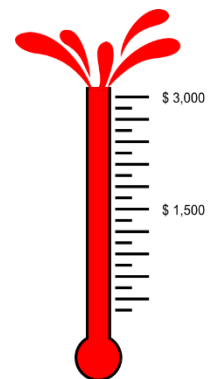
### **Treasurer John Mason**

Mission project donations have met the goal of \$3,000 for the LDMS—Kenya mission request. Extra donations of \$479 (and accumulating) will be decided by the ILDA Executive Council prior to the 2026 ILDA convention in Florence, KY. Either the additional amounts will be given to the Kenya mission or carried over to the 2026-2028 mission projects, presuming we will have a 2028 ILDA convention.

As of July 1, 2025, I am preparing to send membership forms out for those who haven't renewed their member dues. A new membership form will appear in the Deaf Lutheran newsletter Fall 2025 issue. The Deaf Lutheran paper subscription for eight (8) issues for \$5.00 has expired. It is now four (4) issues for \$10.00.

Donations for the ILDA 2024-2026 Mission Projects can be sent to: John Mason, ILDA Treasurer, 6721 Deep Run Parkway, Elkridge, MD 21075-6557. Make your check or money order payable to “ILDA” and put “Mission Projects 2024-2026” in the memo line. Your prayers and donations help ILDA to continue our work in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the United States and foreign countries.

God bless!



## In Memoriam



### **Judith Loehr**

B: 10/30/1954

D: 5/15/2025

Judith was on the host committee of the 2024 Dearborn, Michigan convention and a member of Our Saviors Deaf Church.



### **Sandy Pittaro**

B: 5/9/1941

D: 2/22/2025

Sandy was a former ILDA member and traveled with the Ghana mission team back in the late 2010s.

## **Mark your calendars!**

**Plan to attend the next ILDA convention scheduled for June 11-14, 2026 in the Florence, KY area**

## ILDA OFFICERS

### **International Officers (2024-2026)**

President—Brian Byer

President-Elect—Tim Kearney

Secretary—Becky Catchpole

Treasurer—John Mason

Pr. Advisor—Rev. Daryl Gehlbach

### **Central Region (2018-2020)**

President—vacant

Vice President—vacant

Secretary—vacant

Treasurer—vacant

Pr. Advisor—Rev. Bud Palmer

### **Great Lakes Region (2025-2027)**

President—Nancy Bergstresser

President-Elect—Jeff Padon

Secretary—Karen Beiter

Treasurer—Larry Blout

Pr. Advisor—Rev. Andy Petajan

### **Midwest Region (2018-2020)**

President—Sara Hale

Vice President—vacant

Secretary—vacant

Treasurer—vacant

Pr. Advisor—Rev. Paul Tessaro

## **Lutheran Deaf Mission Society update**

Written by Rev. Edwin Bergstresser, Executive Director, in the May 2025 LDMS newsletter

### **Deaf Institute of Theology**

We also thank God for the seven deaf students enrolled in Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who are preparing to become pastors and deaconesses! Two Deaf men are currently in their fourth and final year, and one man is in his second year, preparing for pastoral ministry in Concordia's Ethnic Immigrant Institute of Theology (EIIT). Four women are also enrolled in EIIT's deaconess training program. Four more women are slated to begin their studies this fall.

Along with the International Lutheran Deaf Association, we continue to provide financial aid for these students when needed. We especially strive to give them the study resources they need for their classes. Since 2019 the seminary has been in the process of rewriting the entire curriculum. We are working to keep up with these changes, providing translations and resource materials for Deaf students. Our ongoing goal is to support the students and help prepare them to serve God and His church.

## Mission Stories

(written by Becky Jungklaus, ASL Lead Evangelist Trainer of the LCMS Texas District)

One Sunday, a friend shared something that stirred my heart deeply: Avery, a young, deaf man, had never been baptized. I immediately reached out to his brother and stepmother. His brother truly wanted Avery to be baptized, but didn't know how to explain baptism in a way Avery could understand.

I prayed, then jumped into Avery's life. Avery had been attending church with his brother for years, but never fully understood the services. There were no interpreters, and even if there had been, English-based interpreting wouldn't have reached him. ASL (American Sign Language) is Avery's first language—his heart language. Like many Deaf individuals, reading English is difficult for him. For too long, Avery sat in pews surrounded by God's Word but unable to access it.



I call Avery a "lost sheep." Just as Jesus describes in Matthew 18:10-12. He had wandered far, but Jesus never stopped seeking him, and I had the joy of being part of bringing him home.

To teach Avery, I signed the story of John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. I used visuals from [FreeBibleImages.org](http://FreeBibleImages.org), a wonderful, free resource especially helpful for the Deaf. Showing pictures alongside ASL storytelling makes Scripture come alive. Avery's eyes lit up. For the first time, he saw and understood God's love and the meaning of baptism.

Avery was baptized at Lifebridge Community Church (LCMS) in Sealy, TX, on June 1, 2025. I was the signer for Avery. Pastor Scott Heitshusen led the baptism.





## 2026 ILDA Convention News

Written by Nancy Bergstresser, Convention Chairperson

Greetings in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! The Great Lakes Region committee is working together in hosting the ILDA 2026 convention in Florence, KY. It will be held at the Hilton-Cincinnati Airport Hotel on June 11-14, 2026. The hotel is not far from the airport and has a shuttle bus service that will bring you to the hotel and back to the airport for your return home. More hotel details will be in the Fall issue of the Deaf Lutheran newsletter.

We are working on tours. On Friday, June 12, there will be an Ark Encounter Museum tour and/or the Cincinnati Underground Railroad Museum tour. The host committee is working on gathering more information and registration materials will be sent out in September or October. This information will be printed in the Fall issue of the Deaf Lutheran so watch for it! I am looking forward to seeing you all there in Kentucky!



Richard Belling, top right, was a participant in a video produced by the South Wisconsin District and shown at its recent convention. Churches in Harmony was established as a partnership between four churches in the Madison, WI, area for the purpose of working together to serve the Lord. Belling teaches sign language classes on Wednesday evenings. Pictured below is Pat Monroe (left) and Lynda Nix (right) interpreters for the convention.



Becky Jungklaus, representing Deaf Outreach, is pictured at their booth at the Texas District convention.



# ILDA Membership Enrollment Form

**John Mason, ILDA 2024-2026 Treasurer**

Type of Membership	<u>Active*</u>	<u>Associate**</u>	<u>Supporting***</u>
Your membership dues \$35	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Spouse membership dues \$35 (if applicable)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Your God's 1000 Club, add \$20 (optional)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Spouse God's 1000 Club, add \$20 (optional)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Zacharias Fund	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
ILDA Mission Projects Fund for 2024-2026	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
General Donation for _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Deaf Lutheran Subscription	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
\$5.00 before May 31, 2025. (8 issues)			
\$10.00 after June 1, 2025. (4 issues)			
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

First Middle Last

(Please print clearly. Thank you)

**\*\*Associate members** are hearing people of an LCMS congregation, or LCMS pastors (deaf or hearing), or Deaf Lutheran people who are members of a non-LCMS congregation and will have limited voting privileges.

\*\*\***Supporting members** are non-Lutheran Christians and have no voting privileges.

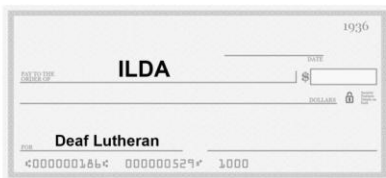
**Thank you for your support!**

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☐ Additional donation -- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please select: \_\_\_\_ Renew \_\_\_\_ New

Make your check or money order payable  
to "ILDA" and  
put **Deaf Lutheran** in the memo line.



All subscriptions should be sent to the  
address below. Thanks!

**John Mason**  
**6721 Deep Run Parkway**  
**Elkridge, MD 21075**

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### From the Deaf Lutheran Editor

If you have any photos or articles  
of interest to print in the  
newsletter, please let me know!  
Deadlines for the next issues are:

Fall issue.....October 15, 2025  
 Winter issue.....January 15, 2025  
 Spring issue.....April 15, 2025

Please send photos or news  
articles to: [JGehlbach@aol.com](mailto:JGehlbach@aol.com)  
or mail to:

Janet Gehlbach  
 305 Liberty St. NE  
 Fridley, MN 55432

Thanks!

### 2025 District Convention attendees

#### Pastoral Delegates

Rev. Edwin Bergstresser, Ohio District  
 Rev. Tim Eckert, Iowa East District  
 Rev. Daryl Gehlbach, Minnesota South District  
 Rev. Bud Palmer, South Wisconsin District  
 Rev. Joshua Reinke, Montana District  
 Rev. John Rushton, Eastern District

#### Lay Delegates

Richard Belling, South Wisconsin District  
 David G. Brown, Ohio District

#### Visitor:

John Szupica, South Wisconsin District

#### Interpreters:

David Bush, Ohio District  
 Lynda Nix, South Wisconsin District  
 Pat Monroe, South Wisconsin District

#### Booths:

Becky Jungklaus, Deaf Outreach, Texas District  
 (Editors note: This list might be incomplete)

*The Deaf Lutheran* newsletter  
Janet Gehlbach, Editor  
305 Liberty St. NE  
Fridley, MN 55432

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Summer Issue 2025

