



## United Methodist Committee on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries

E-News November 2020

This e-news is provided by the United Methodist Committee on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries. It is intended to share Deaf ministry updates, announcements, reminders, best practices, and resources.

In this issue: Giving Tuesday, Interview with Rob Vaughn, Grants and more.

To subscribe to this newsletter, send an e-mail to [umdeaf@gmail.com](mailto:umdeaf@gmail.com).

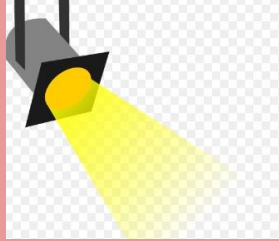
**Giving Tuesday: December 1, 2020**

**GIVE**  
**LOVE JOY HOPE PEACE**

**GIVE TUESDAY**

Giving Tuesday will be December 1, 2020. While you can make a gift at any time through the Advance, this is a time to remember our Thanksgiving gratitude as we look forward to the days of Advent and the birth of Jesus. Remember to use our Advance number 982562 when you give!

## Deaf Ministry Spotlight



**This month's ministry spotlight features an interview with Rob Vaughn, a hearing pastor in the Virginia Conference and has held UMCD officer positions and has supported of Deaf ministry. We start with the question, *"1. A Deaf way of getting another's attention is to tap a person's shoulder. As a hearing pastor, how did God tap your shoulder to become involved with a Deaf ministry? Was there a person, place or event that drew you in?"***

RV: It all began when I was appointed to Aldersgate UMC in Richmond, Virginia in 1986. The church had a deaf fellowship consisting of persons who identified as hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, and some who were part of multi-generational Deaf families. I was totally clueless about Deaf culture – my only knowledge came from several professional colleagues in the education field who taught at Gallaudet or Kendall. They birthed a curiosity about deafness but it was a curiosity I had followed up on. Before moving to Aldersgate, I had no relationships with anyone in Deaf culture. I had asked to move to Richmond to care for my aging parents but found that move offered more than the opportunity to care for my Mom & Dad, I learned about a culture and the challenges and blessings of deafness I never knew about.

Not only had God tapped my shoulder in the move to Aldersgate UMC, God kept letting me know I was not alone in this journey as there were many angels who guided me. In that first year, many times each week, the

church's interpreters and members of the deaf fellowship gave up their lunch breaks to tutor me in not just language but culture and history as well. The local community college and Gallaudet's summer language institute later aided my education but God never quit taping.

The pastor I followed said one of the challenges at the church would be hosting the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf's national gathering. That event exposed me to a United Methodist world of Deaf and deaf allies that continued to shape my ministry for future decade. But that first encounter laid the foundation for a change of attitude in that local church toward Deaf ministry as well as tapped several in our church for leadership in the national focus of UMCD.

**See more of this interview below.**

### Available Grants

The Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Ministries Committee is preparing to accept grant applications that will offer support for churches or ministries to implement or expand their Deaf ministry. Applications can be [found here](#) and [must be submitted no later than January 31, 2021](#). *Grants of up to \$5,000 will be awarded.* Funding is limited and grants should have some aspect of community impact. Contact Rev. Tom Hudspeth at [thudspeth@llumc.org](mailto:thudspeth@llumc.org) for questions or for ministry ideas.



#### *Giving Opens Doors to Worship for Deaf and Hard-of-hearing* By Tom Hudspeth

Three United Methodist churches in three states prayed for opening their doors to those who are Deaf and Hard-of-hearing. La Plaza, the oldest Hispanic UMC in Los Angeles, California had hosted a Deaf Ministry "boot camp" in 2017. Two years later, they proposed making their bi-lingual church a tri-lingual church in offering classes on American Sign Language and Deaf culture. For their hard-of-hearing constituents, La Plaza installed an assistive listening system and captioning on an LED screen. Most innovative, was enhancing their ministry with the homeless, by providing interpreter services for those Deaf needing language access to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. In 2019, La Plaza received a grant of \$5000 from the

United Methodist Committee on Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Ministries (UM-DHM) to fund their “Be Opened” ministry.

West Forest UMC, a thirty-five-mile drive north of Flint, Michigan, recognized the need for providing a hearing loop system for twenty hard-of-hearing members in worship as well as captioning during their bible studies. In 2019, the UM-DHM granted \$4760 to fund not only access, but advocacy for those who are Deaf and hard-of-hearing in the Millington, MI community and in the Michigan Annual Conference.

In Philadelphia, PA, an African-American Church, Grace UMC, hired a culturally Deaf Christian assistant to expand their Deaf ministry in providing support for pastoral leadership, training to church ushers/greeters, and additional activities to strengthen the Deaf ministry at Grace UMC. In 2019, the UM-DHM granted \$3000 to promote the love of Christ to those often overlooked by hearing people.

### **Deaf Ministry Support for Churches**

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries Committee (of Global Ministries) is available to provide support and consultation for churches considering starting a Deaf ministry. Consultation can include how to implement a Deaf ministry, how to promote it, how to have a Deaf-friendly worship service, what resources are available, accessibility ideas, available grants and other funding sources, and among other needs. To consider a grant or read about recent grant recipients, checkout the [committee’s webpage](#). Contact Rev. Tom Hudspeth at [thudspeth@lumc.org](mailto:thudspeth@lumc.org) for your consultation.



### **New Resource**

The ASLV Bible is now available in a variety of formats.  
[Read our announcement](#) to learn more.

## Accessibility Ideas



[Image Description: 10 disability symbols, such as low vision, captioning, large print, and audio description.]

This *edition's accessibility idea* for your Deaf ministry and extended community is to look into hearing loops. You can find guides from Hearing Loss Association of America and others, including stories about installations, at our [web site](#).

## Stay in Touch

Are you following our Facebook page? We post a variety of pieces: stories from churches about Deaf and HOH ministry, stories about Deaf and HOH people, notices about scholarships, news about products, tips and general advice about hearing aids, safety, and similar items. Check them out at our [Facebook page](#) and help our mission! Click “like” and share posts on your own timeline.

We are also on [Pinterest](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

We have a [website](#) where you can find out [past newsletters](#).

We keep a list of upcoming events at <http://www.umdisability.org/event.html>. You can submit information about an upcoming event to [umdeaf@gmail.com](mailto:umdeaf@gmail.com).

Check out our sister committees and organizations:

[DisAbility Ministries Committee](#)

[United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities](#)

[United Methodist Congress of the Deaf](#)

[Mental Health Ministries](#)

**Be a star!** We'd like to make you a star! We're looking for videos of any aspect of Deaf and HOH ministry. Do you sign the scripture readings in church? Would you like to share a short devotion? Is there a Deaf or HOH event or program going on? We'd like to see it and share with other members. You can look at our previous posts at <http://www.umdeaf.org/dvt/>. Send us an e-mail ([umdeaf@gmail.com](mailto:umdeaf@gmail.com)) if you can help.

## *Continuing our interview with Rob Vaughn -*

*2. At the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Oregon, you communicated something from the dais in American Sign Language. Tell us what that was and how that came about and why you did so?*

The worship designer, Laura Jaquith Bartlett, wanted to offer various languages for the reading of scripture. When she asked if I'd sign part of one service, I had encouraged her to find a native ASL signer – I believe it's always better to promote and see native signers. But after repeated requests and recognizing the desire to have a GC delegate participate, I agreed and ended up signing part of a skit and as well as the scripture (while others read the scripture in French and English). At that same worship service, one of my Virginia colleagues, Rev. Illeana Rosario also led part of the service. It was a blessing to receive some good coaching from some of the interpreters as it had been 20 years since I had signed with any regularity.

*3. For many years you held an officer position with the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf. Tell us what you did, and how you saw yourself in that role as a hearing pastor. What were some blessings and challenges in that role?*

As a hearing pastor I wanted to be careful in serving, aware that far too often, purposively or out of some unconscious bias, hearing persons will often unnecessarily try to "take over" an agenda or meeting or work of a Deaf group. Frequently I felt my role to be an advocate and a bridge. For years, members of my congregation offered leadership at UMCD. My role was what any pastor could do – be a supportive, affirming presence. With UMCD's board, I served as an "at-large" member for a while and learned to be a more effective advocate in our own annual conference. For several years, I managed our membership database – it was in the days of labels for post office mailings before there was email.

One of the blessings that emerged was seeing leadership skills develop in persons in our local church fellowship. I was gratified when my hearing church elected a member of our Deaf fellowship to be the lay delegate to annual conference – a first for an individual who was Deaf in the Virginia Conference. Watching the congregation's mindset move from ministry "to" toward ministry "with" was heartwarming. With the help of others in Virginia, our folks were successful in establishing a commitment to interpreting annual conference sessions as well as providing a dedicated CAN system for hard-of-hearing individuals. What a blessing that created. None of what would have happened without the education and awareness raising that UMCD provided.

The challenges were the same of any national church group that grew into an international focus and sought to manage itself with a wide mission. It looked like and

felt like “herding cats” at times! Communication challenges were always present in the era before electronic communication. But the blessing was that a lot did happen. Over the decades, the leadership of the ministries of Christ UMC of the Deaf in Baltimore and Lover’s Lane UMC in Dallas offered a stability through their commitment and membership that was inspiring to many smaller programs.

*4. How would you advise and encourage hearing pastors in the UMC to get involved in ministry with those who are Deaf, late deafened, hard of hearing and DeafBlind?*

Read, learn and then engage with some Deaf, late-deafened, hard-of-hearing and DeafBlind folks. Every congregation has some persons who are challenged by hearing. If it’s important enough to say or to preach, then its important enough to be sure it’s received – which means learning about how communications are received.

There are two groups of people who have most impacted my faith and taught me about the resiliency of faith and one of those groups are my friends in the deaf community. My encounters and learnings from persons in the deaf community have been and continue to be means of God’s grace.

## ABOUT US

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[Image Description: Red and white rectangle image with the words “Make a Gift Online; 100% of each gift to The Advance reaches its intended mission or ministry” with a link to make a donation.]