

The following presentation was prepared by  
Rev. Daryl Gehlbach and presented at the  
2017 ILDA Convention held at Indianapolis,

1



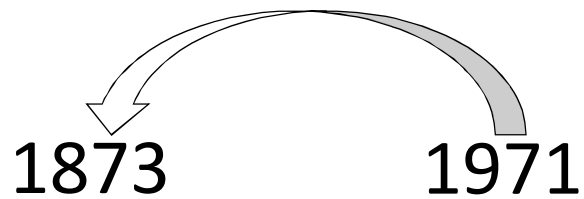
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# International Lutheran Deaf Association

How It All Started

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3

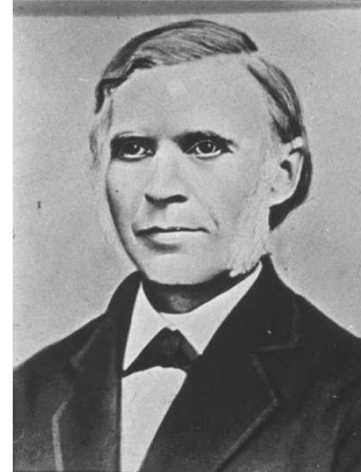


The roots of the International Lutheran Deaf Association go back almost a century (100 years) before ILDA began.

4

## Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit

- In 1873 a group of congregations in and around Detroit established the Evangelical-Lutheran Orphanage and Deaf Institute.
- The first director, Rev. Philip Speckhard, was a former teacher for the deaf in Germany.
- Within 15 months there were more deaf students than orphans.



### **Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit**

In 1873, a group of congregations in an around Detroit agreed to establish an orphanage.

The first director, Rev. Philip Speckhard, was a former teacher of the deaf in Germany.

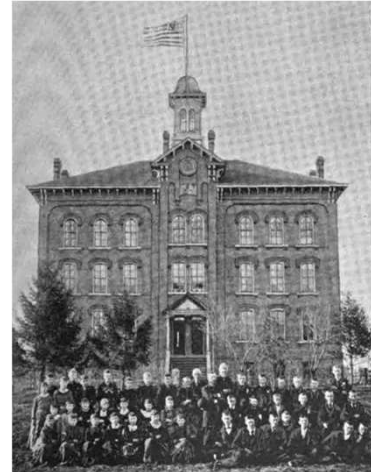
At the time the association called him Speckard was instructing two deaf girls in his congregation at Sebewaing, Michicagn. The parents wanted him to finish their religious education, so he agreed to bring them to Detroit.

The association agreed to operate a school for the deaf together with the orphanage. And in the Fall, the Evangelical-Lutheran Orphanage and Deaf Institute began.

Within 15 months there were more deaf students than orphans.

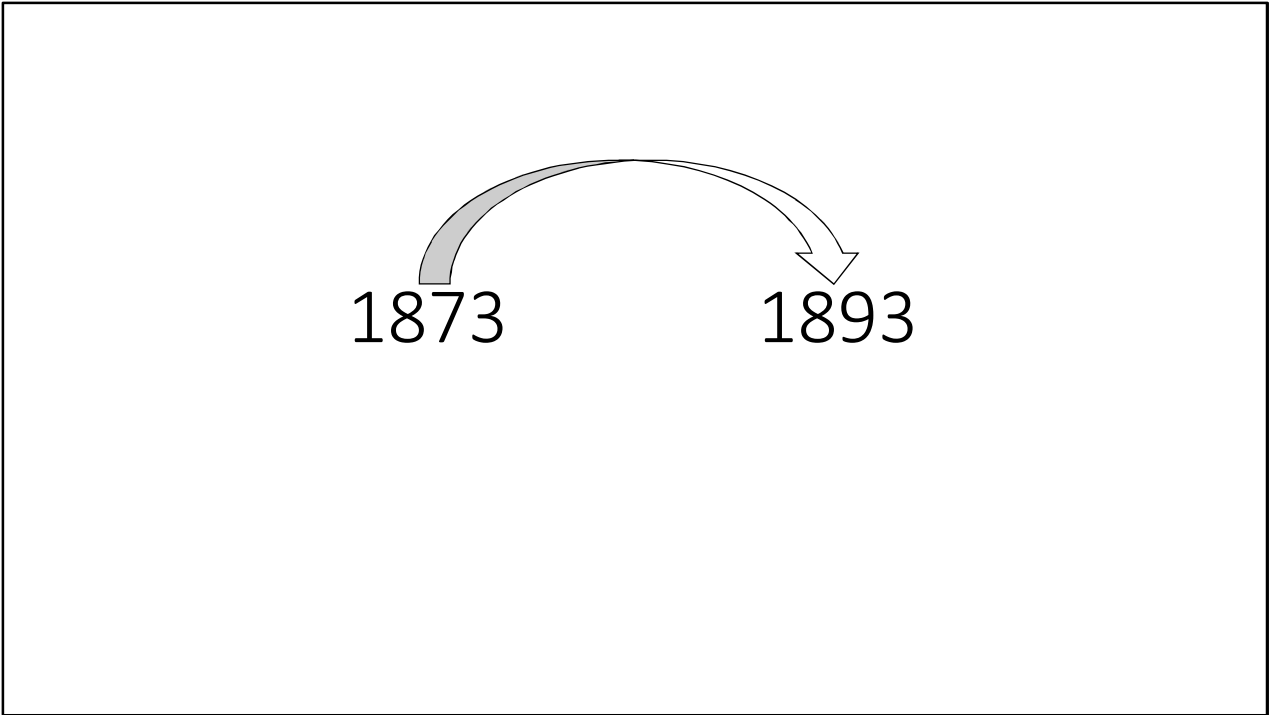
## Lutheran School for the Deaf, Detroit

- In 1875 the orphans were moved to a newly built home in Addison, Illinois.
- The institute became a full time residential Lutheran school for the Deaf.
- Students came from as far away as New York, Nebraska, Dakotas, Ontario – even one from Dresden, Saxony.



The association knew it could not operate the two institutions together. After conferring with synod officials, the association decided to move the orphans to a newly built home in Addison, Illinois. Thus in 1875 the institute became a full-time school for the Deaf.

Students from as far-away as New York, Nebraska, the Dakotas, Ontario – even one from Dresden, Saxony. These students, especially the graduates, became the scattered seed that helped spread Deaf Missions. They often formed the nucleus for preaching stations and congregations.



We now skip twenty years to 1893.

Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Begin

**Edward Pahl**      **Daniel Uhlig**      **August Reinke**

**Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Begin**  
There are three names that you should know –

## Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Begin

- Edward Pahl graduated in 1884 from the Detroit school, and lived in Michigan City, Indiana, near Chicago.
- He wrote to Director Daniel Uhlig.
- He made an impassioned plea for a Lutheran pastor to preach the Gospel to the Deaf in sign language.

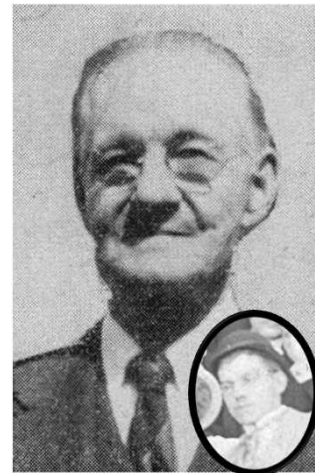


Edward Pahl graduated in 1884 from the Detroit school, and lived in Michigan City, Indiana, near Chicago. He was a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Chicago.

Pahl wrote to Director Daniel Uhlig. He made an impassioned plea for a Lutheran pastor to preach the Gospel to the Deaf in sign language. His letter included the following: [next slide]

## Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Begin

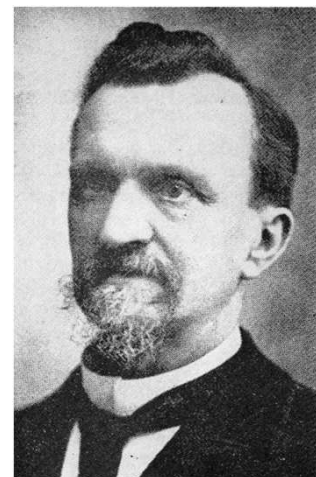
“Jesus says, ‘Preach the gospel to every creature, teach all nations.’ Who preaches to the deaf? Should they remain without God’s Word? Should they go to the Methodists and the Baptists? ... Is it not possible to find a pastor, especially in the larger cities, who would also desire to serve the poor deaf with God’s Word?”



10

## Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Begin

- Director Uhlig contacts Rev. August Reinke, pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Chicago, the largest congregation in Synod.
- Reinke meets with Ed Pahl to learn the sign language and practice.
- March 4, 1894, Reinke conducts the first Lutheran worship service for the deaf in sign language in the USA.

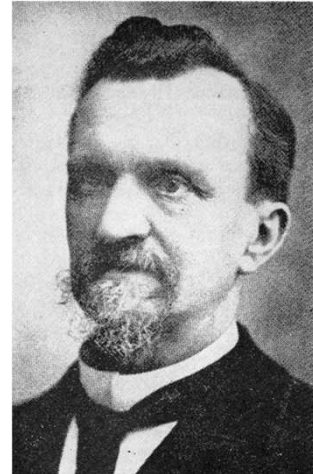


Director Uhlig contacted Rev. August Reinke, pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Chicago, the largest congregation in Synod. He encouraged Reinke to take up the work. Uhlig very clearly stated that if Reinke was unwilling or unable to take up the task, then there was another pastor he would contact.

11

## Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Begin

- For the next two years Reinke travels to other cities and conducts similar services for the deaf.
- In 1896 he addresses the Synod in convention and proposes that Synod take up this work.
- Synod establishes a Deaf Mission Board to supervise and implement the work.



Reinke investigated, and came to understand the genuine need and desire for signed services. He began meeting with Ed Pahl to learn the sign language and practice.

On March 4, 1894, Reinke conducts the first Lutheran worship service for the deaf in sign language in the USA. (In two years, 2019, we will celebrate the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this worship service.)

For the next two years Reinke traveled to other cities and conducted similar services for the deaf. (His itinerary included a service at the author's home town church – Lincoln, Illinois.)

In 1896, he addressed the Synod in convention and proposed that Synod take up this work. In a unanimous vote, the convention agreed. It established a Deaf Mission Board to supervise and implement the work. Augustus Reinke was elected to the Board and became its first chairman.



## Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Organize

- Immediately, after the convention the Board was able to place two missionaries – one at Louisville and the other at Milwaukee.
- Over the next few years more men became missionaries, some left, and a few reentered.



### **Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Organize**

Immediately, after the convention the Board placed two missionaries – Rev. Herman Bentrup at Louisville and Rev. Traugott Wangerin at Milwaukee.

Over the next few years more men became missionaries, some left, and a few reentered. The earliest missionaries included those pictured.

## Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Organize

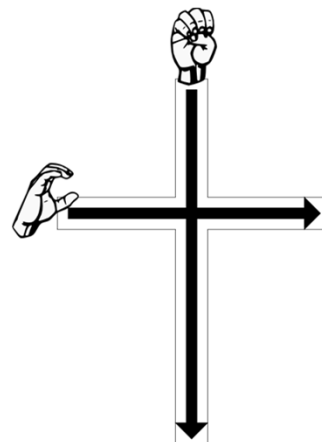
1. Herman Bentrup – Louisville
2. Traugott Wangerin – Milwaukee
3. Arthur Reinke – Chicago
4. Enno Duemling – Detroit
5. Hermann Hallerberg – St. Louis
6. Arthur Boll – Louisville / New York City
7. John Salvner -- Minneapolis
8. Nathaniel Jensen – Kansas City / California
9. Th. Ernst Claus – South Bend, IN



14

## Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Organize

- On May 13, 1903, eight missionaries meet in Chicago and form Ephphatha Conference.
- EC functions like a regular pastoral conference, but the topics focus on Deaf work.



On May 13, 1903, eight missionaries met in Chicago and organized Ephphatha Conference. (The graphic on this screen shows how we sign it – E C.) EC functions like a regular pastoral conference, but the topics focus on Deaf work.

15

# Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Organize

- Occasionally, articles about Deaf missions appeared in various Synod publications, but it wasn't enough.
- In January 1909 the Deaf Mission Board launches a new magazine – *The Deaf Lutheran: A Missionary Monthly*.
- The first editor was Rev. Traugott Wangerin of Milwaukee.

## The Deaf Lutheran.

A MISSIONARY MONTHLY.

Published by the Board of Missions for the Deaf of the Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other States.

Vol. 1. Milwaukee, Wis., January 1909. No. 1.

### THE DEAF LUTHERAN.

In the name of God we launch on the sea of enterprise a new periodical which is to be published monthly in the interest of the deaf of our various missions and will be known as "The Deaf Lutheran." This paper succeeds the special edition of "The Lutheran Pioneer" which for nearly ten years was published in the interest of our deaf. For several reasons this section of the "Pioneer" was found inadequate to the requirements of our mission among that class of people. Some eight years ago we were "Should these issues of the 'Pioneer' prove a service it might serve as a stepping-stone to a more complete edition of a paper suited especially to the spiritual wants of our deaf people."

Here, then, is the "more complete edition" under a new name well chosen. "The Deaf Lutheran" is to contain articles for the spiritual and moral betterment of its readers as well as news items from the various Lutheran deaf circles, thus keeping its readers in touch and sympathy with each other. It proposes to clear away misunderstandings and wrong notions as to Lutheranism. It will show what true Lutheranism stands for, what it believes, teaches and confesses in word and deed. It is to be a Christian herald, a Lutheran instructor with the object of enlightening and improving the religious and spiritual knowledge of its readers. Lutheranism stands for thoroughness, progress and the development of the new man. We are not satisfied merely with numbers. We are not contented to be able to say: "So and so many deaf nominally belong to our church, or so and so many attend our services." Numbers alone can be no guarantee of true, sound Christianity. Our aim is that our deaf should be able to give account of their faith, able to defend it whenever necessary, to know

why they are, should be and remain Lutheran. Our ministers, therefore, not only endeavor to lay a solid foundation to the Christian knowledge of the scholars in their Bible classes by instructing them thoroughly in the chief doctrines of the Christian faith in a period of nine to twelve months, but they endeavor also to build on this foundation by holding regular services and by other means, thus aiming for a deeper and lasting appreciation of a Christian's calling, for a stronger faith in Christ, for a growing love to the Master, for an ever increasing patience in trials and tribulations, for an ever cheering hope of heaven and for true godliness in general among the deaf. To aid in reaching this goal shall be the object of "The Deaf Lutheran." May it accomplish its aim and end. It commends itself, however, also to those of our faith among the hearing friends who take an interest in our mission among the deaf, desiring to which they not only keep posted on the progress in our mission, but also aid in making our undertaking a financial success. And since the price is within easy reach of all, but 25 cents per annum, it is to be hoped that all who are favorably inclined towards our mission become regular subscribers in this periodical.

May the good Lord, then, our Heavenly Father, accompany "The Deaf Lutheran" in its mission, give us strength and wisdom, and crown our undertaking with success, for Jesus' sake.

And as the cause and glory, Lord, are Thine, not ours, do Thou afford Us help and strength and constancy: With all our heart we trust in Thee.

Did you ever try to see how many of your friends can report the Ten Commandments? And how about yourself?

# Missouri Synod Deaf Missions Organize

## Purposes of *The Deaf Lutheran*:

- 1) To provide articles for spiritual and moral improvement of the readers,
- 2) To provide news on mission activities and keep readers in touch,
- 3) To show what true Lutheranism believes, teaches, and confesses in word and deed,
- 4) To recruit financial support for the mission.

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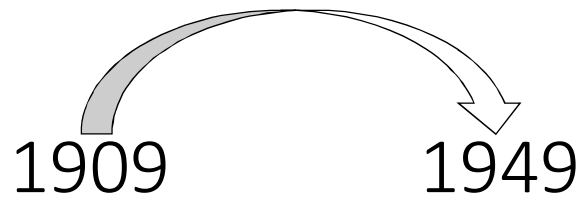
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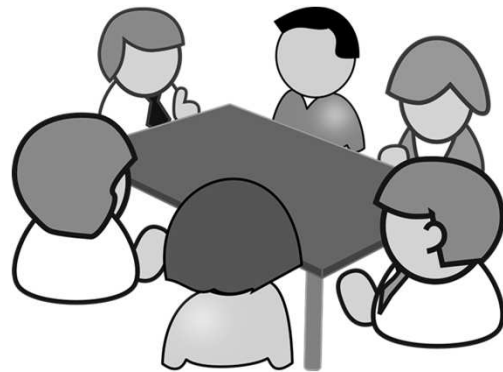


We now jump to 1949.

18

## Regional Conferences

- The suggestion of conferences for Deaf lay people first appeared in the minutes of the 1938 Ephphatha Conference.
- The first regional conference (Dixie) was held eleven year later at Shreveport, Louisiana, on January 29-30, 1949.



19

## Regional Conferences

Objectives of the Dixie conference:

1. stimulation of deaf interest in our Lutheran mission,
2. eradication of an inferiority complex of some deaf,
3. promotion of closer relationship among the deaf and the hearing, and
4. formation of plans for a permanent organization.

As reported in *The Deaf Lutheran*, the objectives of the Dixie conference were

1. stimulation of deaf interest in our Lutheran mission,
2. eradication of an inferiority complex of some deaf,
3. promotion of closer relationship among the deaf and the hearing, and
4. formation of plans for a permanent organization.

The second objective seems odd, but it was addressing the old attitude "deaf can't." These conferences were to be opportunities to promote Deaf peoples' confidence in becoming leaders.

## Lutheran Deaf Mission Society (I)

- Rev. George Kraus approaches other pastors on the East Coast, and together they form the Lutheran Deaf Mission Society in 1951.
- The purpose of the society is to gather funds for doing mission work among the Deaf of foreign lands.



### **Lutheran Deaf Mission Society (I)**

Rev. George Kraus approached other pastors on the East Coast, and together they formed the Lutheran Deaf Mission Society in 1951. (This is not the same as the LDMS that was formed in 2009.)

The purpose of the society was to gather funds for doing mission work among the Deaf of foreign lands.

## Lutheran Deaf Mission Society (I)

- LDMS had a rough beginning with some pastors and Deaf preferring to support national and local missions.
- The society funded a trip to the Far-East, which resulted in the opening of the first foreign deaf mission work.
- LDMS also funded and sent Rev. Gerhold on an exploratory mission trip to Ghana and Nigeria.



### A Push for a National Conference – 1<sup>st</sup> Try

22

## A Push for a National Conference – 1<sup>st</sup> Try

- In 1959 the Midwest Region suggests that a national Deaf Lutheran Conference might be held some day.
- The following year (1960) at EC Rev. Theodore Frederking – the Father of ILDA – leads a discussion on “Should We Initiate a National Convention of Lutheran Deaf People?”
- The Conference recommends that Frederking discuss this matter with the Board.



23

## A Push for a National Conference – 1<sup>st</sup> Try

- In 1961 Ephphatha Conference appoints a committee to study the matter and bring recommendations.
- The committee includes Frederking and two others: Wayne Bottlinger and August Hauptmann
- The committee returns in 1962 with a proposal describing the purposes and structure of a national group.



24

## A Push for a National Conference – 1<sup>st</sup> Try

- The committee put forth the aims of a National Lutheran Conference of the Deaf:
  - a) to support the unity of faith;
  - b) to encourage one another in the work of the Kingdom of God among the deaf;
  - c) to support the cause of the Deaf Mission Society; and
  - d) to exchange ideas and techniques of our church work among the deaf in our various areas.



25



## A Push for a National Conference – 1<sup>st</sup> Try



**1962**  
**Ephphatha**  
**Conference**  
**turns down**  
**proposal.**

Ephphatha Conference discussed the proposal and defeated it. There were no details of the discussions or reasons given for defeating the proposal.

26

## A Push for a National Conference – 2<sup>nd</sup> Try

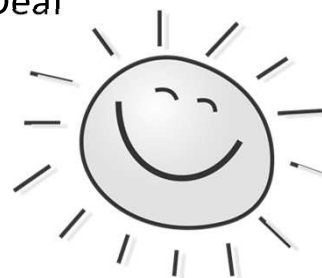
There were changes in the 1960s that forced us to again look at a National Conference of the Deaf.

- Synod dissolved all mission boards and created one general mission board, which began its work January 1966
- Synod decided to transfer supervision and support of Deaf Missions to the Districts.



## A Push for a National Conference – 2<sup>nd</sup> Try

- In 1967, the Synod names the regional counselors as an *ad hoc* committee to study Deaf Mission administration.
- The committee determines that it is important to maintain and nurture the unity among the Lutheran Deaf and to provide opportunities for leadership and training.
- One recommendation was the creation of an International Lutheran Deaf Association.



## A Push for a National Conference – 2<sup>nd</sup> Try

- The 1969 Synod convention finalizes the decision to give Districts oversight of Deaf Missions.
- The Mission Board proceeds with the plan for an ILDA.
- In April 1970 the proposed Constitution is completed and sent to all congregations.



### **A Push for a National Conference – 2<sup>nd</sup> Try**

The 1969 Synod convention finalized the decision to give Districts oversight of Deaf Missions. A resolution that would give convention blessing on the ILDA never made it to the floor for debate, because other concerns took precedence.

The Mission Board itself decided to proceed with plans for organizing the ILDA.

In April 1970, the proposed Constitution was completed and sent to all deaf congregations.

## A Push for a National Conference – 2<sup>nd</sup> Try

- A committee is formed to plan the constituting (first) convention of ILDA to be held at Chicago, July 16-18, 1971.
- It includes the regional advisors and one lay representative from each region.
- It chooses temporary officers and divides the preparation work among the regions.



30

## Publicity & Promotion

- The committee and Synod begins the work of promoting ILDA.
- Articles, pictures and registration appear in *The Deaf Lutheran*.
- A banner contest is planned.
- There is even a contest to create an emblem for ILDA.



Lobby of the Regency Hyatt House  
Chicago, Ill.  
International Lutheran Deaf Association  
July 16–18, 1971

### Publicity & Promotion

The committee and Synod began in earnest the work of promoting ILDA. Articles, pictures and registration appear in *The Deaf Lutheran*. A banner contest is planned. There is even a contest to create an emblem for ILDA.

31

## What is the purpose of ILDA?

- The general purpose of the International Lutheran Deaf Association (ILDA) is to promote the Christian faith and life of Lutheran deaf persons and all the deaf throughout the world.
- A specific goal is to build and support lay leadership among deaf Lutherans in all areas of religious life, faith, activity, and service.
- ILDA shall also develop programs to be used in the church for the spiritual strength and growth of deaf members of all ages.

*TDL, Feb 1971, 22*

### **What is the purpose of ILDA?**

*The Deaf Lutheran* (Feb 1971, 22) explained:

The general purpose of the International Lutheran Deaf Association (ILDA) is to promote the Christian faith and life of Lutheran deaf persons and all the deaf throughout the world.

A specific goal is to build and support lay leadership among deaf Lutherans in all areas of religious life, faith, activity, and service.

ILDA shall also develop programs to be used in the church for the spiritual strength and growth of deaf members of all ages.

## ILDA – Why?

- Unity – to strengthen the church in its mission
- Identity – to be seen and known in mission
- Self-determination – to have a voice in the goals and plans for the future of our mission.

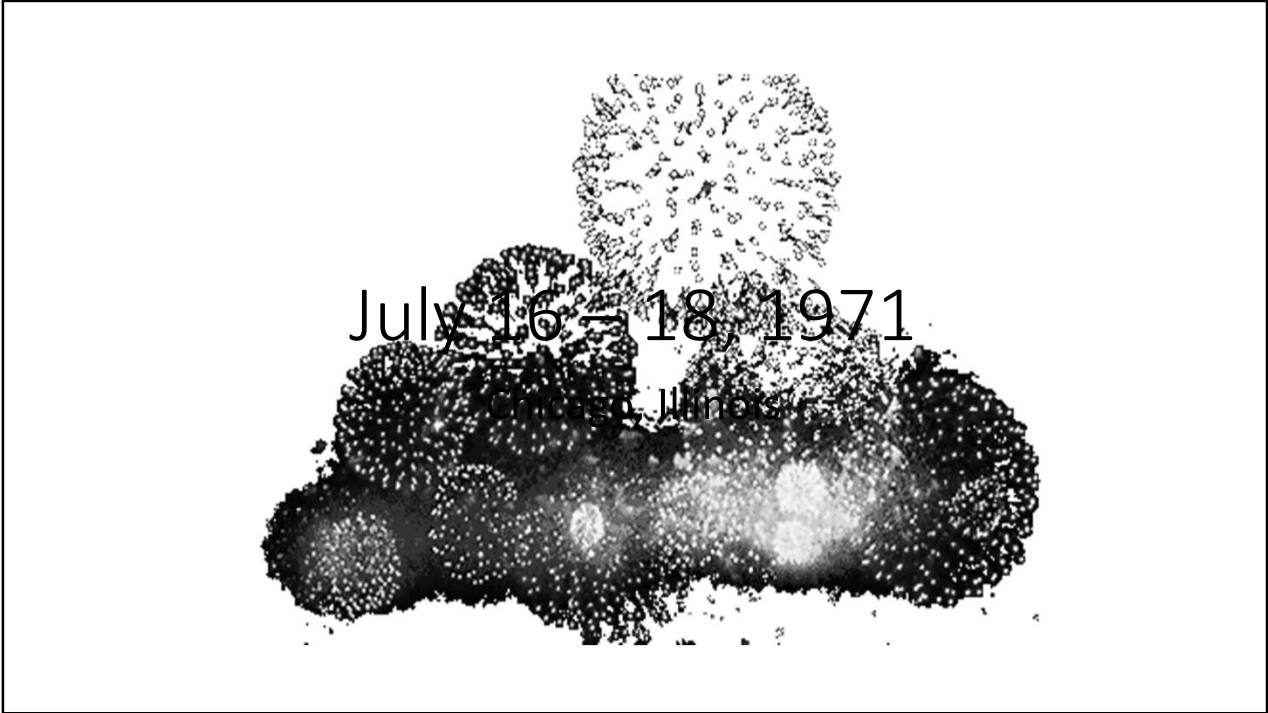
*Rev. Herbert Rohe,  
Secretary for Deaf Missions  
TDL, Feb 1971, 24*

Rev. Herbert Rohe, Secretary for Deaf Missions, also wrote in The Deaf Lutheran (Feb 1971, 24) about why there should be an ILDA.

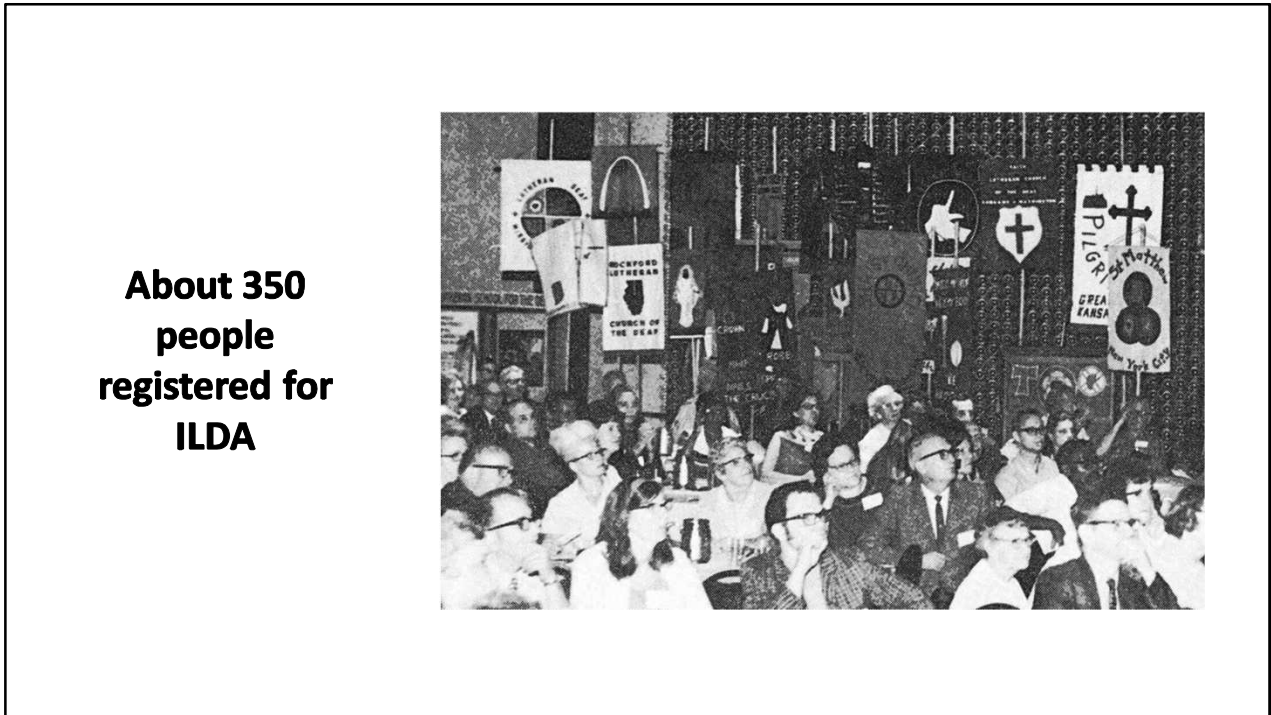
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**ILDA – A Reality**  
July 16 – 18, 1971  
Chicago, Illinois



**About 350  
people  
registered for  
ILDA**

**About 350  
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registered for  
ILDA**



**ILDA – A Reality**  
July 16 – 18, 1971  
Chicago, Illinois

36

**Officers are  
Elected**



37



**An Emblem is Chosen**



Archie Marshall

**ILDA – A Reality**  
July 16 – 18, 1971  
Chicago, Illinois

**A Host of Speakers**



Dr. William Kohn  
LCMS Missions

Pastor Charles Jones



Robert Lankenau  
NAD President



Dr. J. A. O. Preus  
LCMS President

**A Time for  
Worship**



**ILDA – A Reality**  
July 16 – 18, 1971  
Chicago, Illinois

40

**A Time for  
Fellowship  
and a  
Banquet**



## The Work of ILDA

- In addition to its stated purposes, ILDA also became responsible for several other items.
  1. Administering the Lutheran Deaf Mission Society (I)
  2. Editing and publishing *The Deaf Lutheran*
  3. Electing the regional pastoral advisors/counselors
- ILDA became a voice for the Deaf to provide input, guidance and leadership in LCMS mission work – home and abroad.

42

## Concluding Thoughts

- It was almost a century from the founding of the Deaf School in Detroit (1873) until ILDA began (1971).
- We may look back at certain events and decisions with criticism, but at the same time we see the hand of God at work.
- ILDA came about at the right time place, in the right time, for the right purpose.
- As for the future? ... As in the past, the future in God's hands.

43

