

Committee on Deaf Ministries

The Baltimore-Washington Conference is the only Conference in The United Methodist Church that provides targeted outreach to the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities. There are four facets to this ministry.

Christ UMC of the Deaf in Baltimore has been serving the Deaf community since 1895. Christ UMC of the Deaf seeks to provide culturally appropriate, Christ-centered, indigenous worship in the native language of the believers. Whereas some other centers of faith may have an American Sign Language interpretation of the sermon, Christ UMC of the Deaf breaks down communication barriers by having the sermon in ASL with a voice interpreter for those not proficient in sign. Community ties are strengthened during weekly fellowship lunches which immediately follow worship, as well as the many social events which aim to bring together this diverse group of believers. Not only does the church seek to encourage faith development, but servant leadership as well. The food pantry, weekly lunches, computer lab, and Deaf Shalom Zone all provide opportunities for individuals to put faith into action as servant ministers. Seeing as how Christ UMC of the Deaf highly values a strong sense of community within its members, it also believes in the connectional church and often joins with other churches in worship and mission. The church strives to continually celebrate, connect, serve, develop, and share, with the call to action at the forefront of the ministry.

Christ UMC of the Deaf continues its long-standing commitment of outreach through Christian education at the Maryland School for the Deaf in Columbia, as well as a Bible study at Foxwell apartment complex. Christ Deaf Church also has a partnership with Towson University in an effort to connect students and interns of the Deaf Shalom Zone with the Deaf community in Baltimore. This partnership has proved time and time again to be beneficial to both students and the church. The church continues to be in ministry with other organizations such as the Baltimore Association of the DeafBlind (BADB), Baltimore Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), English as a Second Language programs, Deaf Camps Inc., Deaf Young Adult Camp, DeafBlind Camp, and ROCK. Christ UMC of the Deaf also raised \$20,000 this year for General Conference, as well as traveled to a Methodist Conference in Michigan. Christ UMC of the Deaf shows the spirit of hospitality by welcoming outside groups to use the building for parties, community forums and classes, and mentoring sign language and interpreting students.

Magothy UMC of the Deaf was established in 1975 to serve the Pasadena area of Maryland. The church's commitment to creative and passionate worship has taken its members beyond its walls and out into the community to serve at homeless shelters and soup kitchens. Magothy UMC continues to serve the community through the Door Step Mission, a food distribution program available to local families in need. The church hosts fundraisers as well in an effort to support both local and international Deaf mission work. This year, we were blessed with Pastor Emily Smiley who leads worship at Magothy UMC of the Deaf every Sunday. Magothy UMC of the Deaf strives to be a positive witness for Jesus Christ both in chapel and throughout the community and world.

Magothy UMC Deaf has started a Deaf Senior Program at the urging of the Holy Spirit. As Pastor Leo Yates Jr. attended a funeral for a member of the Deaf community, he and others were struck by the notion that most Deaf seniors live alone and without vital information about the world they live in. Many Senior Citizens are able to attend local events that are catered to those over 50 and what they need to know about health care, depression, interacting with law enforcement, and even elections. Deaf Seniors, on the other hand, rarely have access to this sort of vital information that helps them with everything from controlling their own finances to voting with their conscious and even daily interactions with people who are not willing or able to learn to communicate with Deaf individuals, especially elderly individuals. Magothy Deaf UMC is working very hard as a church to attend to this need.

The Deaf Shalom Zone is a faith-based, non-denominational non-profit that caters to the needs of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities by providing a food pantry, advocacy training and support (ADA rights, literacy and consumer skills,) and other services. Deaf Shalom Zone seeks to support client independence, and is growing as an informational and referral source. We help Deaf and DeafBlind individuals' access programs and technology that decrease their dependence on others for daily tasks, and supporting those in the exercise of skills and abilities already demonstrated. To help us achieve that goal, this year Sydney Palmer was hired as a case manager at Deaf Shalom Zone. We look forward to increased self-determination and partnership with the people who rely on Deaf Shalom Zone.

The United Campus Ministry at Gallaudet in Washington, D.C., offers ministry to the students, faculty, and staff of the only Deaf liberal arts college in the world. Regular Bible study builds understanding and community, and encourages attendees to be engaged in mission on the campus and in the surrounding area of the university. The Methodist campus ministry also works with the Office of Campus Ministries to provide ecumenical worship and service opportunities.