*Takeaways shared at the workshop:*

***A snapshot of ASL:***

* Definition of ASL: A complete, natural language that has the same linguistic properties as spoken languages, with grammar that differs from English. ASL is expressed by movements of the hands and face.
	+ The key features of ASL are:
		- hand shapes. (A \*girl, challenge, science\*; flat B \*donkey, boat, mirror\*, 5 \*gloves, wrestling, moose\*, 4 \*football, battle, stripes\*, 1 \*deaf, hearing, sure, red, opposite\*)
		- palm orientation. (front and back)
		- hand movement. (speed/direction of movement)
		- hand location. (where on the face and body)
		- gestural features like facial expression and body posture.  *(Example: the sign “fine”: excited, ok-ok/“meh”, sad; do you see the eyebrows movement, mouth shapes, etc - tells you more than needing words)*

***ASL Interpreter requests to meet the needs of your local deaf community or participants:***

How to book an interpreter - you must request an ASL (American Sign Language) interpreter with deaf in attendance (even when you don’t know who exactly is coming!).

Best practice is to request an ASL interpreter through an ASL interpreting agency at least 2 weeks in advance, if not more.

* When you request an interpreter, if no one signs up, you have 48 hours prior to the requested date to cancel the request to avoid billing.
* It is best to request and get an interpreter set up and then cancel in that 48 hours window - *does not work the other way around*. You will, very likely, unsuccessfully secure an interpreter for your event at the last minute.
* The bigger the event, the more time out you need to give yourself and the agency to secure an interpreter request.
* Basic “rules”:
	+ If the event is more than 2 hours or an all day event, it needs to be a team of two interpreters.
	+ For 1 to 2 hours, it is okay to have a single interpreter, depending on the content.
	+ AND separate interpreter requests must be made for DeafBlind (1 or 2 interpreters depending on the same criteria as above).
* If it is a job that’s big, has lots of information and prep ahead of time would be available, share that with the interpreter agency.
	+ Having prep information is more likely to help get an interpreter; the interpreters will feel better prepared with notes, and are more likely to be set up for success. You can add in the request notes that you have, or will have, prep available.
* Mentioning that BOLD will be there may help get interpreters. Don’t be afraid to invite us!!

***Deaf Culture!***

* Deaf LOVE to gather for long periods of time! We do not come and go like hearing people do. \*Graduation party example\* Most of us love to stay long, and socialize!
* To get the attention of other deaf people, our community tends to be open to physical touches often; tapping on the shoulder, touching the arm, etc. We will stomp loudly, shout loudly, or slam our hands on the table to grab their attention. We are also big on hugging.
* Hearing people tend to think because we are deaf, we are quiet. It is quite the opposite! We might be loud and proud of it! We are deaf, the world is quiet to us, but we ourselves are not a quiet community.
* Deaf people love to inquire about your history; where you came from, what your family is like, where you went to school, etc.
	+ This is more for hearing people who use ASL and they want to find the connection that you have to the deaf community.
	+ New deaf people meeting other deaf people are often inquisitive about each other’s histories and families as well. It’s normal in our culture!
* We are a very visual-dependent community. Most people are born with five senses, right? For us, one of our senses may not ‘work’ but our other four senses are stronger and work together!
* A strong opinion and value within the greater community is we are NOT disabled, we are different-abled! We can do anything you can except hear.

***Visuals and access are so important!***

* Think of a worship setting and having deaf people attend. Here is what you need to know to include the deaf participants in your community.
* If you have a deaf presenter or are using an ASL interpreter, DO NOT walk in front of them while they are signing! Go around them, find another way around that does not disturb, or wait!
	+ Hearing people can use their ears, while not looking or while doing something else at the same time, and people walking past might not disrupt their avenue of getting information but for Deaf, our eyes and the path of visual information is very important, there must be a clear way to the signer and/or the interpreter!
* Allow deaf to have seats near the front for clear visual access with an interpreter at the front, too, nearby the speaker.
* Dim/dark rooms are NOT accessible for deaf with signing and/or lip reading.

***Do you want to be an ally of our community?***

We often fake it until we make it when we aren’t in our own community. So, if you want to be a true ally and advocate of the Deaf community, we recommend that you follow the following steps:

* If you are hosting an event or a worship service or have deaf attendees at your churches, PLEASE request an ASL interpreter and follow the practice that we discussed in requesting an interpreter.
* If you hear of another event or special worship service either at another church, your own church, at any synod, OR any ELCA events, help advocate for us by asking if they are including an ASL interpreter; if they have requested one yet or not.
* Any videos, movies, or media being shared MUST have accurate, clear captioning included! \*NOT THE AUTOMATED KIND!\* Make sure that this accommodation will be provided and accurately!
	+ If for some reason, captions are unavailable or unable to add, please share the media ahead of time with the interpreter(s)!
* Please wear appropriate contrast colored clothes, depending on your skin color. Doing this helps ease the visual access for Deaf which, if the clothing is not appropriate, we can strain our eyes quicker in a short amount of time.
	+ Light skin: darker-toned solid clothes
	+ Darker skin: lighter-toned solid clothes
* If you or others are aware of deaf attendees, PLEASE take some time to approach them and talk with them! This will help the deaf person feel connected and perhaps put a visual memory and a face to the location/event. Don’t be afraid to talk with us!!
* If you do not have an interpreter available, other ways to communicate are using your phone (notes app), writing on paper back and forth, or simple gesturing. These are not ideal BUT it will show that you are putting in effort to recognize the deaf person and that will mean a lot to them!
* If possible, share a printed copy of the sermon and/or itinerary with them, if they would like one. Some deaf do not have strong English skills so some may turn it down or not use it. Ask first.
* This is very important to be aware of: Dorothy and I often see these words out in the world in articles, online, brochures, etc.
	+ While this description usually applies to the hard of hearing members of our community, hearing impaired is an offensive term to the general community that is used by the hearing world, applying to both deaf and hard of hearing members!
	+ Hearing loss/Hearing impaired - used in two ways.
		- One, systematically used by the medical system as well as hearing impaired. This implies that there is a PROBLEM. We often say, “Look at the PERSON, not just the ear!”
		- Two, used to explain a late-deafened person who perhaps was hearing before and became deaf later in life, therefore, feeling like they had a loss. That is a part of their identity and it is okay to respect that!
	+ Hearing difference - the current younger generation is starting to use the phrase ‘hearing difference’ and this applies more to the members of the community who are hard of hearing, usually.
		- These people do not feel that they lost anything … Most of them have been HOH from birth or for most of their lives. They only feel that they have a difference in hearing levels compared to hearing people.
	+ So, please take into careful consideration when you are writing or working on something that might have a deaf-related event or resource in your community and you’re advertising it.
* If you are hosting something that relates to Deaf community, invite us!
	+ Example: Last summer, a congregation watched the CODA movie together one evening but they had worshiped with us that morning. They did not think to invite us to their movie event, and it truly was a missed opportunity to educate and discuss with them our culture as well as their thoughts and views after the movie!
* PLEASE don’t be afraid to get to know us and learn more about us! We often are very willing to educate and share our experiences, our culture, and our way of life to only result, usually, in not having support returned, uncontinued partnerships, uncontinued alliances, and no true continued effort in understanding our needs and our community. We, honestly, do tire of educating the hearing community BUT only when we do not have a continued reciprocal relationship with those we are educating. Understandable and fair, right? We hope that you will consider a reciprocal relationship with us and/or be a connected ally for us out in the hearing world!
* Best of all, you can be an ally by learning our language and more in depth about our culture! There are often free or college community classes provided throughout the Twin Cities.

Do not be afraid of Deaf people! Even if you don’t know sign language, the effort to greet them may form a connection!

* No interpreter? You can use your phone, paper and pencil, printouts of materials, and gestures!
* It may inspire them and inspire you to grow more together within your community.
* And, you may just learn some signs along the way from these deaf people!

Please reach out to us if you want to learn more, need refreshers, need some advice, or have any questions!

BOLD Deacon Dorothy Sparks: bolddeacon@gmail.com

BOLD Office Communications Coordinator, Janie Barlow: boldoffice1@gmail.com