

## ***FOUNDING AN EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE DEAF IN KNOXVILLE***

Want to help start a new church of the Deaf? We do. Here's why:

### ***Background: the Gallaudet Family and the Episcopal Church***

The Episcopal Church has a rich history within the American Deaf community.

- Each year, on August 27<sup>th</sup>, the Episcopal Church honors the Reverend Thomas Gallaudet and the Reverend Henry Winter Style as sainted persons who helped bring the presence of Christ to those who are Deaf. No other church in America honors its ministry to the Deaf in this way.
- Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, founded the first school for the Deaf in West Hartford, Connecticut in 1817. The American School for the Deaf is now the oldest permanent school for the Deaf in the United States. It is the birthplace of American Sign Language.
- The Reverend Thomas Gallaudet, son of TH Gallaudet, was an Episcopal priest who has been rightfully called "The Apostle to the Deaf." He established Bible classes for Deaf persons and founded St Ann's church for the Deaf in 1852. St Ann's Episcopal Church became the national center for spiritual outreach to the Deaf in America.
- The Rev. Thomas Gallaudet encouraged Henry Winter Syle, a brilliant Deaf student, to enter the priesthood. Syle became the first Deaf person to be ordained a priest in the United States.
- Edward Miner Gallaudet, the younger brother of Rev. Thomas Gallaudet, helped start Gallaudet University and was its first President.

### ***Why Start an Episcopal Church of the Deaf in Knoxville?***

- There are no Episcopalian churches serving the Deaf in Tennessee.
- The Episcopal Church values scripture, tradition and reason.
- Episcopalians take scripture seriously but not necessarily literally. We value two thousand years of church tradition but we believe that ancient understanding is not the only guide to the truth. And most significantly, we regard human reason as a gift from God, to be used to seek and to know God.

- The Episcopal Church believes all questions are valid, all seekers are welcome and doubt as an important means to a faith worth having.
- The Episcopal Church regards God as a mystery and the search for God in human life often involves more questions than answers. Sometimes answers are not black and white.
- Not every hearing or Deaf person looks for a church that invites questions and doubts and uses reasoning as a means to a Christian life. For those who wish to search for God in a community that welcomes freedom of opinion and diversity of belief, the Episcopal Church is unique among Christian churches. This uniqueness is just as important for Deaf persons as for hearing.

*Want to Help?*

- We are a hearing community who believe, through the occasional visits of one Deaf person and the unexpected appearance of a committed interpreter, that we may be called to help the Deaf worship in their own signed service and within their own community.
- **From August 22 until Thanksgiving, 2010 we will offer an ASL interpreter at the 11 AM service Church of the Good Shepherd, 5337 Jacksboro Pike, Knoxville, [goodshepherdknoxville.org](http://goodshepherdknoxville.org), telephone 687-9420, [cotgs@bellsouth.net](mailto:cotgs@bellsouth.net)**
- If, as we hope, 3 or more persons come on a regular basis in the fall, we will continue to offer an interpreter through the spring of 2011. Our goal is to begin a fully signed service by August 2011. The Episcopal Conference of the Deaf can provide money, training and other resources if the Knoxville church attracts committed members.
- Your thoughts, advice and prayers are invaluable to us. Please contact Anna Bass at [annaebass@gmail.com](mailto:annaebass@gmail.com) if you would like to help with this important mission.

**Please join us for worship on Sunday, August 22 at 11AM!**