

A FORUM FOR PERSONS INTERESTED IN DEAF MINISTRY

signing

October 1984



The air outside no longer has the warm, soft feel of summer and after three long days of rain, the leaves on the tree outside my living room window are beginning to turn yellow and orange. A new season--beginning--a perfect time for this special newsletter.

This is the most important issue of Signing that I have put out. Its importance has nothing to do with me. It is important because of you: you who are deaf; you who have parented a deaf child; you who minister to deaf persons; you who know that God Signs.

This issue of Signing is due to 10 people who have lived and journeyed in the world of deafness and are committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Last June, these 10 people met at the Claggett Retreat Center in Maryland. Here is what Bill Millar (one of the participants) says about the meeting:

There were 10 of us. Women and men. Deaf people and hearing people. Baptist, Catholic, United, Mennonite, Sojourners and others. Our background was very different, but we shared some things in common: We are all committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and dedicate ourselves to work to destroy the injustice and oppression that has injured the lives of deaf people.

We came together to pray, to study the Bible as it touches the struggles of deaf people, and to see how the Good News of Jesus can bring freedom to deaf people.

We worked hard, thought hard, laughed a lot, and felt God alive with us. We wrote a statement (called the Claggett Satatement) to share our hopes and faith.

The Claggett Statement is printed in this newsletter. Before you read it please take the time to read the "Think Pieces" that each person wrote about their personal experiences with deafness, with the gospel and with their struggles in ministry.

Each of these people is special--some of what they will tell you may shock you, some things you may not understand, some things you may disagree with. Do not be put off by these things. Keep Signing where you can read it carefully--even prayerfully.

In my year as editor of Signing I have tried to learn as much as I could (in a limited way) about the deaf community. I have read books and talked to people and I have been amazed by the statements often made by the same people who profess to educate and minister to deaf people. The attitude of many of these people has often brought forth from me two very strong emotions: anger and sadness. But, I have also felt powerless to do very much. Being able to edit Signing, especially this month, gives me a real sense of hope. But my effort and the efforts of Pam, Sheila, Bill, Ella, Jan, Pat, Charlotte and Mary are useles without your effort put into reading and praying about the content of the Claggett Statement.

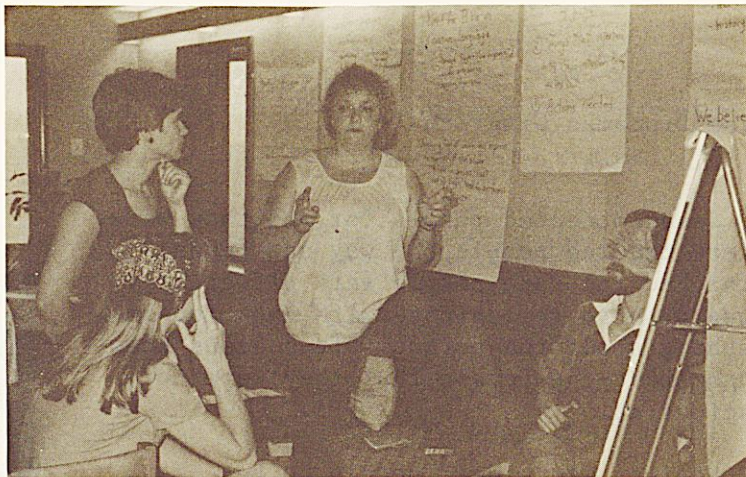
I hope you think of the "breath of the Spirit" as the autumn winds being to blow.

Meet the participants Meet the participants Meet the participants Meet the participants

Jan Kanda (hearing): President, Conference of Interpreter Trainers, ASL interpreter and curriculum specialist. Teaching at California State University at Northridge.

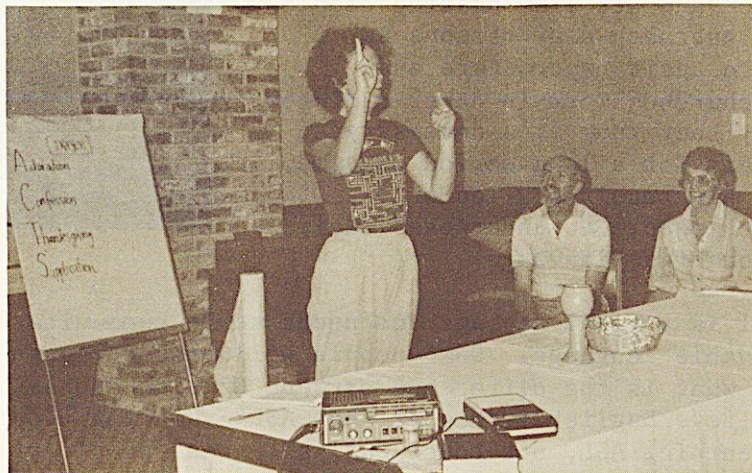
Pam Dintaman Gingrich (hearing): Manager of the bookstore for the Potters House (Church of the Saviour), Washington, D.C. Past director of MBM Deaf Ministries 1981-84.

Charlotte Baker-Shenk, Ph.D. (hearing): ASL Linguist, Gallaudet College. Teacher, researcher, and co-author of texts on ASL.



Ella Lentz (deaf): ASL teacher, translator, poet, actress, seminarian. Living in California.

Patrick Graybill (deaf): Teacher at National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, New York. Actor, director, ASL translator, and deacon of Roman Catholic Church.



Bill Millar (hearing): Pastor, Winnipeg Church of the Deaf.

Mary Weir (deafened at age 7): Theologian, pastor, professor, Vancouver School of Theology.

Interpreters:

Mary Anne Royster: Native ASL signer, teacher, interpreter, trainer.

Susan R. Masters: Seminarian studying pastoral counseling



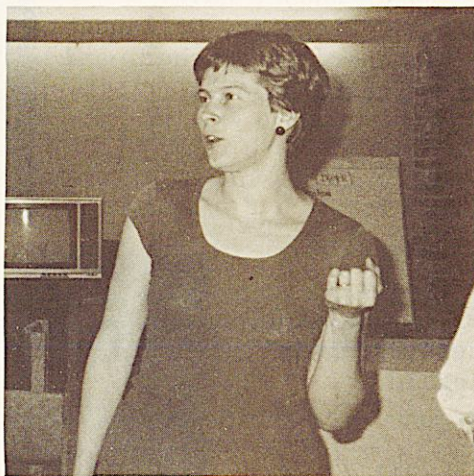
Sheila Stopher Yoder: (hearing, not pictured on this page), Director, Deaf Ministries, Mennonite Board of Missions, social worker

Editor's Note: Each participant at the Claggett Conference wrote a short essay or story about their personal experiences with the Gospel of Jesus and deaf ministry. The following six pages contain parts of these stories and are called "Think Pieces". I hope you take time to think and reflect on their content.

By Pam Dintaman Gingrich

Jesus accepted people for who they were. Society treated people one way and Jesus approached the same people very differently. He was able to communicate with them and knew something about the person--often Jesus knew things about the person that they were not conscious of.

Society wants deaf people to be hearing--to look and act like hearing people. The church can approach deaf persons as persons who have their own culture and language. As churches work in other cultures internationally they know it's necessary to observe and learn for a long period of time, before acting. It requires a lot of interacting with people to understand their values, relationships, language.

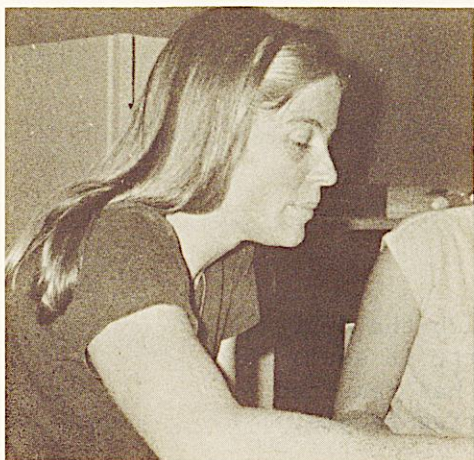


The gospel is a vital message and needs to be communicated in a person's most understandable language. Deaf people will need to learn more about their own language: what is the difference between English and ASL? When do I use each: Do I believe English is higher than ASL? Hearing people will need to work more at learning ASL, not coded English. Deaf people will need to consciously struggle with the Gospel stories and their own realities in the educational system.

Salvation to me is an ongoing process. We begin to open ourselves to Christ's message and open ourselves to other people, to love each other. Often we close off our doors to other people because we've been hurt, we're apathetic, hopeless, and later something (God nudges us to try again, reconcile, carry the hope on. We become aware of our own weaknesses, of our need for God, of our part in some work in God's kingdom.

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By Charlotte Baker-Shenk



I think one part of the good news to deaf people is that--"You are special in the eyes of God; you are especially blessed because God's love has focused on you and has chosen you to bring salvation to all people. You are the oppressed: most of you have been brainwashed to believe that you are less than fully human--and ultimately, that God is Hearing.

But the Truth is that God is Deaf! And a beautiful signer who understands all your innermost feelings and cries and laughs with you. God loves you as you are--deaf--and hopes you will learn how your deafness is a good part of God's creation and a gift.

God the creator sent Jesus into the world to show us how to live in unity with God and how to enter God's Kingdom. Jesus suffered so much. He suffered because He saw how much you and the other people around Him were suffering. He also suffered like you suffer--He was almost always misunderstood, the powerful people got mad at Him and tried to trick Him and hurt Him. They finally even killed Him. But Jesus never stopped loving you. His love was so strong that death couldn't hold Him, and He rose from the dead. You, too, can know the power of God's love and can become free from all the death--the lies and the chains that bind you.

But your freedom has a cost. It will mean that you must learn the Truth. And that will both hurt you terribly and give you great joy. It's a mystery. And the Truth will empower you to become free--which is the way God created you to be."

By Sheila Stopher Yoder

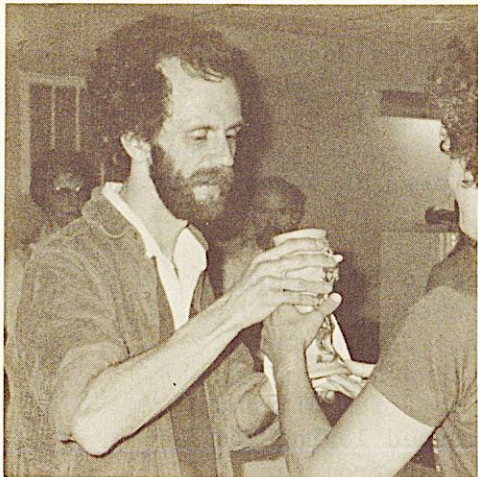
It's interesting that whenever my Christian deaf friends pray they use their best English-like signing slowly and distinctly. Yet, in comfortable conversation they generally use ASL. Do they think God is hearing and frowns on ASL or just the few hearing people that may be in the group.

Frequently I see the gospel being shared with deaf persons via paternalistic hearing persons. Therefore, I had always questioned whether the deaf person could actually be receiving the complete liberating good news. Yet one should not underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit. Cone writes about the black religious experience and the liberation of this



people through their understanding of the gospel. Historically it was the white oppressor who shared this good news (unintentionally freeing the slaves)! Certainly the liberating news of the Gospel can be just that to deaf persons also (in spite of the person doing the presenting)!

By Bill Millar



How does the Gospel touch the deaf community? For the most part, it seems to me, it doesn't. The Gospel has remained largely the property of hearing people.

Ah, but the Gospel cannot be contained. The Spirit will not be stopped. The Spirit blows where she wills. And in our community we have begun to feel the warmth of her embrace (however fleeting). We have felt her blowing on the embers of deaf anger, encouraging flames of outrage.

The Gospel promises freedom to those who are stepped upon, freedom and dignity. The promise comes to the deaf. And we, in our church-community, are stumbling, uncertain.

What is my role? An outsider. That will remain so. But there is a role for outsiders--to listen with my eyes open, to encourage, to witness to Jesus the Christ, to work alongside the deaf in the transformation of social structures.

We have glimpsed the Gospel among us. Glimpsed not grasped. The Gospel remains strangely, painfully aloof...

The Word became poor
and lived among us,
a peasant.
We saw his glory
but did not know
that God himself was poor.

The Word became deaf
and lived among us.
We glimpsed her humanity
but did not recognize
the signs.
We did not know
God could seem so
silent.

The Word became us
and lifted our life.
We saw our own glory
ourselves half-brainstormed
but we hesitated
We did not know
God could be us.

By Mary Weir



I am not really your "typical deaf" person. I am a profoundly deaf person, one who has been making friends with my deafness but who has grown up, been educated by, and works within the hearing world.

It is, therefore, better for me to consider what the Gospel means to me as a deaf person. First, it means that my deafness is good creation. It is a gift--not always a convenient or pleasing gift, but a gift that holds the possibilities for blessing, joy, and richness both for me and the world around. Since gifts can be neglected, misused, misunderstood, it is my responsibility to try to see that this happens as little as possible

because this gift is a precious one with which God has entrusted me. More important, I am given the opportunity to discover and share the beauty of the gift of deafness.

The Gospel means accepting, valuing, and sharing the gift that I am. Often this means living, loving, and acting in ways that contradict society's values.

I have never thought of myself as "oppressed" but I do believe that God is on the side of those who suffer from society's unjust and unimaginative values.

Often it is painful, but alongside others like myself, I must learn to both speak and hear God's Word through who I am.

By Ella Lentz

"I see the good news of Christ as an advocating for deaf persons. It means liberation of fears and embarrassment of ASL and our own culture, a revolution for deaf education and ability of hearing people to respect our differences and we learn from each other. But I realize it is complex. Deaf community is complex. I think the gospel is also good news to each of the types of deaf people: membership, advocating, passing, retreating, and conflict, although the specific are different, i.e. membership people can speak up of their feelings without fears, have clearer understanding of a situation; passing people recognize that although they may not have ASL skills, they will always stand in favor of ASL and not look down on other deaf people; retreating people may realize that they're valuable people to the community--a huge difference from their everyday feeling and especially conflict people will be liberated from their "survive" needs to pamper and perpetrate hearing prejudice and ignorance and "put down" other deaf people.

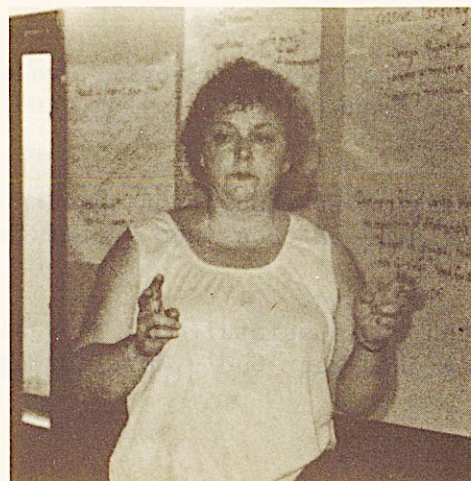


And then the process, I think, should begin in the church--we'll need a vision that includes an affirmation of ASL in everyplace--but not above individual skills (should they be late learners); an agape love and community with Christian people that accepts, challenges, grows in solidarity with each other and that leads to peace within ourselves and with hearing people, too.

By Jan Kanda

God fashioned Adam and "breathed into him the breath of life." Centuries later God's only Son came to earth "that you might have life... more abundantly."

Members of the deaf community need this life... this abundance, yet I see many of my deaf friends turned off by the W.A.S.P. [White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant]-HEARING God to whom they have been introduced. In many cases, God is nothing more than an all-seeing, ever-present dorm parent from the deaf school... Like the dorm parent or early experience, this God doesn't understand ASL, so communication is fake and formal in the form of hearing-style, English prayers and songs. It seems as if He probably doesn't accept the real me... the sometimes angry, sometimes rebellious, oft unsure me... especially if He doesn't understand my language.

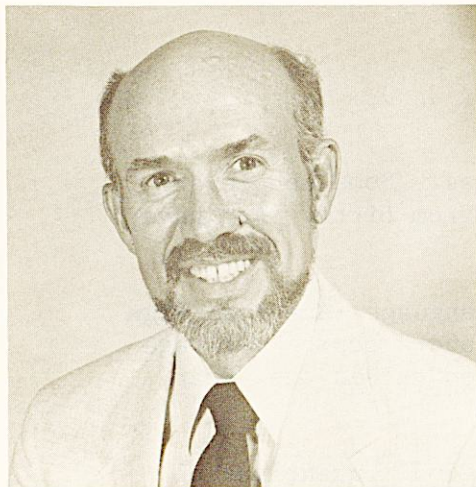


So little is known about the culture... the art forms, the uniqueness of being deaf in a predominately hearing world. Deaf people must come to understand this about themselves first, then attach a natural form of worship to that. In Indonesia, Southern Baptist work really began to be a viable force when Indonesian pastors, and lay leaders took leadership/power positions and began to develop forms of worship based on their native dance, music, musical instruments, and liturgy based on their shared cultural reality. This is what I see as a need in order to effectively spread the word of God among the deaf.

By Pat Graybill

I will give thanks to the Lord with
my whole heart;
I will tell of all thy wonderful
deeds.

Psalms 9:1-2



God is much bigger than we allow God to be. Therefore, a person needs to create a space within himself or herself, a bigger space if possible, for God to accomplish his wish in himself or herself.

Human beings, however, easily respond to other kingdoms or false gods and assume any or all of them will satisfy their hunger immediately. The deaf, among human beings, are caught in the mysterious trap and bombarded by visual media and lured by them to discover quick yet temporary solutions to their hunger for freedom. We deaf are not assertive enough to take responsibility for our own lives.

Instead, we rather attend or employ what is already available as our kingdom. For instance, the Kingdom of God preached by the hearing is the full and final answer to our hunger for salvation. Consequently, we tend to climb our Tower of Babel like lobsters in the bin instead of acknowledging the truth that Jesus is the Liberator. We want to imitate hearing preachers and repeat their lifestyles instead of seeking and discovering the Kingdom of God within our own community of native signers with their own dreams and hopes. Whenever our search for salvation is frustrating, we are angry and force other people to join our wagon and march in protest. What we fail to realize is accept Jesus Christ as our friend and introduce others to him in our own language which does reflect our own community.

I

We believe: God created the world and saw that it was good. God created women and men to live with dignity and self-respect as children of God. God wants people to live together with justice, equality, freedom, and mutual love.

Instead of trusting God's plan, people made themselves into false gods, oppressing each other and creating injustice, wars, suffering, and death.

But God did not give up on them (us). God sent Jesus as a visible sign of God's liberating love.

Jesus grew up poor. He loved and intimately associated with poor and oppressed people. He knew their suffering and their needs. In relationship with these poor and oppressed ones, Jesus showed us God's compassionate love and God's desire for us all to live with justice and freedom.

Instead of accepting Jesus' way, people rejected the Truth. And Jesus suffered the depths of human pain, degradation, and death.

But praise be to God who enabled Jesus to break through the shackles of deceit and death, and raised Jesus to new life. The resurrection of Jesus gives us great hope that we, empowered by the Holy Spirit, too can break through the shackles of arrogance and oppression.

II

We recognize a variety of experiences of hearing loss. Some people are deafened as adults; some as children; and some are deaf from birth. All have suffered.

Many deaf people share a common culture, a common language (American Sign Language or "ASL" in the U.S. and many parts of Canada) and a common heritage of oppression. These deaf people, collectively, are often called the "deaf community."

Deaf people have long been shackled, often by the "good" intentions of hearing people who haven't understood them. Deaf people lack meaningful representation and leadership in the major educational, professional, and political institutions that affect their lives. This lack grows out of both the intentions and ignorance of the hearing people in power and the "successfully oppressed" condition of deaf people who experience themselves as powerless and incompetent.

Beginning at a young age and continuing into adulthood, deaf people characteristically view themselves as intellectually, emotionally, and

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spiritually inferior to hearing people. This low sense of self-worth is widely known in the psychological studies of deafness.

The majority of deaf children have hearing parents who did not want to have a deaf child, and who grieve over their child's deafness. Large numbers of these parents do not accept it. Many, perhaps most, of the medical, social service, and educational institutions which "serve" deaf children and adults encourage the parents to resist acceptance of the child's deafness. They are encouraged to try in every way possible to make the child look and act like a hearing person. This regularly takes one of two general forms: The first is the extreme oralist position of the Alexander Graham Bell Society which insists deaf children can and should learn to hear and speak. The second is the so-called "total communication" position of the majority of educators in the United States and Canada. This second approach tolerates the use of signs because they are considered necessary for the acquisition of "language." "Language" in this context always means "English." The type of signing usually prescribed in this context is some form of signed English.

Deaf children attend school in a variety of educational settings. In residential schools for the deaf, the teachers typically are hearing persons who do not understand the children's peer language, do not know American Sign Language, and believe the children to be intellectually and psychologically inferior to hearing children. The primary focus of their educational program is the acquisition of spoken, written, and/or signed English. Often the children do not understand the teachers. Most "communication" is one-way: teacher to student.

Most deaf children mainstreamed into public schools are partially or completely isolated from groups of other deaf children like them. Thus they do not experience the comforting reassurance of sameness and peer group identity. Most schools do not provide interpreters for these children and they miss much or most of what is being taught/said in their classes. Many try to catch up by frantic reading outside the classroom. Some deaf children do have access to "interpreters." However, most interpreters are not even minimally conversant in American Sign Language. The majority simply try to code the spoken English into a signed form of English (which many argue does not make meaningful sense). Most deaf children have very limited skills in English, and have a hard time understanding a (presumably) signed form of English. However, even those who have good reading/writing skills often say they have a hard time with English-based forms of signing.

Most deaf adults do not understand most "interpreters." But deaf people have become accustomed to not understanding. They tolerate it, usually because they blame themselves -- blame their own presumed ignorance. With so few interpreters fluent in ASL, the majority of deaf people have never seen spoken English properly interpreted into a form of communication they readily understand. Also, because most interpreters are unable to accurately convey the meaning of an ASL message in spoken English, most deaf people have never had the opportunity to express themselves freely in a hearing context, and often have been misinterpreted in important settings. These instances of misinterpretation have furthered the myths that deaf people are inferior, inarticulate, immature, etc.

Most (signing) deaf people marry people who are also deaf, and socialize primarily with other deaf people. The language they use for such social interaction is usually American Sign Language. However, most of them do not believe that their indigenous language is really a "language," but rather that it is an inferior, make-do form of communication. This is what they have been taught by their hearing teachers, counselors, speech therapists, audiologists, and other professionals. ASL is rarely, if ever, taught to any deaf children in school. Instead, they learn it from deaf children of deaf parents, older students, and deaf adults. Generally, deaf people do not realize that their community has a "culture" and a "language" which is central to that culture.

III

Many deaf people reject the Church because its representatives have been as oppressive as their teachers and therapists. "Religion" has become one more place where deaf people feel they are told to stop being "deaf" and try to be "hearing." They must try to fit into hearing forms of worship with its heavy emphasis on music, its wordy English liturgies, and its love for ancient phrases -- all through an interpreter they frequently can't understand.

Unfortunately, even in the separate deaf churches and/or programs, there has been little development of indigenous worship forms that reflect the experience of deaf people. All of this has led to alienation and/or superficial involvement in the Church. Clearly the situation has not encouraged any real understanding of God and the message of Jesus. Exceptions exist, of course, but unfortunately the exceptions are all-too-few.

The Church generally has not looked upon deaf people as a potential gift or resource to the broader Christian community. The Church has considered deaf people to be "handicapped" and, relatedly, has thought deaf people to be intellectually and morally inferior, unable to learn properly and/or spiritually inhibited by the lack of an adequate language. Burdened with such stereotypes, deaf people have not been accepted as equal members of the Body of Christ. The Church has not recognized deaf people as persons equipped with theological and cultural gifts with which to enrich the life of the whole Church.

IV

We believe that the message of Jesus is a message of liberation -- not liberation from deafness, per se, but liberation from all forms of oppression, which include the denial of basic human needs for things like unencumbered communication, healthy human interaction, self-esteem, positive recognition of one's culture and language, and meaningful education.

We do not view deafness as a sickness or handicap. We view it as a gift from God, which has led to the creation of a unique language and culture, worthy of respect and affirmation.

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We believe that it is necessary to stop trying to communicate the Gospel through hearing people's eyes, through their interpretation and understanding of the Bible, and through their methods. Deaf people have a right to know the Gospel in their own language, and relevant to their own context.

We believe that American Sign Language is indeed a language -- and a worthy and powerful vehicle for expressing the Gospel.

We believe the Holy Spirit is leading all of us to work for a new day of justice for all deaf people. We believe the Holy Spirit is leading deaf people to develop indigenous forms of worship that can adequately convey the praise and the prayers of the deaf Christian community.

We stand in solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world. We believe that God empowers the oppressed to become free. By the act of attaining their own freedom, the oppressed can also help liberate those who have oppressed them.

We believe that God is calling the Church to a new vision of the liberation of both deaf and hearing people. This vision is deeply rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and in an understanding of the spiritual, socio-economic, political, and educational struggles of the deaf community.

We believe God has given deaf people a unique perspective and unique gifts. The Body of Christ remains broken and fragmented while deaf people are separate and their gifts unknown and strange to most Christians. We believe God is calling us to wholeness.

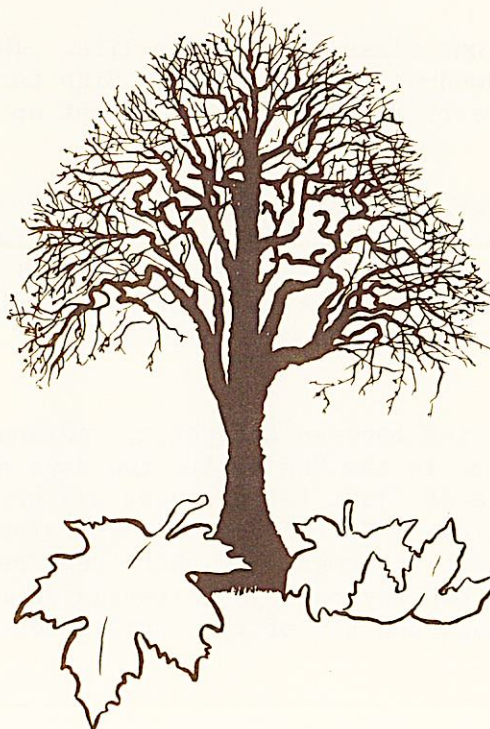
We commit ourselves to this vision, and trust God's Spirit to lead, to strengthen, and to empower us in this task. And we call upon deaf and hearing Christians alike to join together in this struggle toward freedom.

I am the place
 where God shines thru
For He and I are one
 not two.

I need not fret,
 not fear, nor plan.
He wants me where
 and as I am

And if I be
 relaxed and free,
He'll carry out His plan
 thru me.

--author unknown



Sheila Stopher Yoder



"Enabling and educating deaf persons to their own gifts and heritage" is part of Sheila Stopher Yoder's vision for deaf ministry. Sheila officially stepped into the job as director of deaf ministries for Mennonite Board of Missions the first of September, bringing with her a new masters degree in Social Work and lots of energy and new ideas.

Social work and deaf ministry seem to have a natural link according to Sheila as she sees social workers helping people to communicate--and a big part of deaf ministry is helping deaf and hearing people to communicate with one another.

A year of Voluntary Service in San Francisco is what really got Sheila started into social work. While in VS she worked with developmentally disabled adults and

noticed that the social workers she came in contact with "seemed to do interesting things." Things like counseling, teaching classes and helping clients with housing and other necessities of living appealed to Sheila as a life vocation. After completing her year of VS she then moved to Goshen, Indiana to finish work on her degree. During her senior year a class was offered in Sign Language and Sheila enrolled deciding that some knowledge in Sign might be interesting and useful in her career as a social worker.

That one class changed her life. The teacher was Myron Yoder and Sheila followed-up her interest in Sign Language by marrying him. And as Sheila says "to marry Myron was to be caught up in deaf concerns."

Her years of marriage to Myron have been busy with both of them continuing in school as well as enlarging their family by the addition of Seth, now two years old. Besides school and family to keep them busy, Sheila and Myron have conducted retreats and workshops for parents, students and teachers interested in deaf concerns and culture.

Commuting between Lafayette, Indiana and Elkhart, Indiana means that Sheila will be in the MBM office two days a week. She sees her primary job right now as one of "just being around and getting to know people--their needs and concerns." One of Sheila's concerns (stated in her "Think Piece" and the Claggett Statement) is that "deaf persons receive the Good News of Jesus in their own way--not just translated from the hearing world, but in their native language and out of the experience of deaf Christians."

Scholarship awards Scholarship awards Scholarship awards Scholars

Five persons have been chosen as recipients of the 1984 Ephphatha Fund granted by the Deaf Ministries Office of the Mennonite Board of Missions. The fund is a \$100 to \$500 grant given to persons interested in deaf ministry in the Mennonite Church.

Recognizing that the Mennonite Church lacks skilled persons in deaf ministry, the Ephphatha scholarship is an attempt to encourage persons interested in deaf ministry to pursue an appropriate education. As more persons become involved in deaf ministry more hearing impaired individuals will experience Christian community and be a witness to the Gospel of Christ.

The fund is not limited to pastors but is available to all persons interested in allowing Christ to speak through them to deaf persons with whom they come in contact. Where and how that ministry happens is left to the creativity of the individual.

This years' recipients are:

Karen Moore Beitler - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Studying at Bryn Mawr Graduate School of Social Work

"In my present job I am responsible for the deaf clients in our Mental Health services program providing counseling, group therapy and some interpreting. I also provide deaf awareness and Sign language training for the hearing clients in our program...Recently I have discovered the need for competent counselors and therapists who can sign and are aware of the needs that families have when one member is deaf." Karen hopes to have some intern experiences with agencies in Philadelphia which specifically serve deaf individuals and their families.

Doris Eberly - Smithville, Ohio (originally from Fort Wayne, Indiana)
Attending Akron University's Interpreter Training Program

"My interest in interpreting started as a small seed at a Billy Graham meeting where my eyes were glued to the interpreter. Four years later my interest grew under the encouragement and teaching of Myron Yoder. But my seed really grew and bloomed when I entered Voluntary Service and started to use and apply the knowledge I had."

Wanda Rohrer Heyerly - Portland, Oregon (originally from Paradise, Pennsylvania)
Studying at Lewis and Clark College for her master's degree in Deaf Education. Wanda has an interest in using her skills with deaf persons in other countries sometime in the future. She taught hearing children in Pennsylvania before going to Oregon to study for her master's degree this year.

I would like to integrate my skills with sign language and knowledge of deaf culture (from growing up with deaf parents and grandparents) along with my professional education skills."

Lisa King - Gordonville, Pennsylvania
Attending Eastern Mennonite College this fall and Penn State in the spring.

"I am planning to help teach Sign language classes at EMC this fall and my work study program at Penn State in the spring will consist of helping out with Sign language classes also."

Darlene Rohrer - Baltimore, Maryland (originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania)
Attending the University of Maryland where she is studying for her master's degree in social work.

"I am interested in working with deaf persons and their families as a therapist. I feel that deafness has been such a large part of my life since I grew up with deafness in my family."

Changes Changes Changes Changes Changes Changes Changes

The deaf ministries office here at Mennonite Board of Missions has had lots of changes this summer. Most of you are very aware that Pam is no longer here as director--she has just moved to Washington D.C. where she and Larry are attending school--and Sheila Stopher Yoder is now director of Deaf Ministries. But even more has happened. Linda Lehman Thomas resigned at the end of August and is now attending Goshen College. Judy Conrad Miller is now assisting Sheila and me with typing, filing, phone answering, etc. Judy brings great knowledge and ability to the deaf ministry office with a degree in Special Education: Deaf Education. She has taught deaf children ages four to 18 in Iowa and deaf six to 10 year old children in Smithville, Ohio. She also gives private lessons in Signed English. Currently she works at MBM while her husband Ross attends Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.



Scottdale, Pennsylvania

Greetings in Christian love:

First, let us welcome Sheila Stopher Yoder, the new director of Deaf Ministries. May God bless her as she takes over the position left by Pam Dintaman Gingrich. We will truly miss Pam and her great ability in the big task she had. We wish Pam success in whatever she endeavors in the future. Our prayer is with both of you ladies.

We do not have much to report about the monthly fellowship so I will try to put in news about our friends in the area.

Last spring, the father of Patty Smartnick, Stahlstown, Pennsylvania, passed away. His name was John Danko. We are sure they miss him very much. The Deaf and Hearing Fellowship of Scottdale had a cookout at the church, and well attended outdoor picnic at home of Vesta Miller of Herminie, Pennsylvania.

The past year some of our friends have gone afar for vacations. Ferne Savanick spent two weeks in San Antonio and Dallas, Texas in February; Franklin and Della Cole were in Montana; the Reuben Savanick family in Orlando, Florida; Virginia Hodczak went to New Jersey; Vesta Miller went to Europe with a group, (she looked up some relatives in Yugoslavia), and Peter and Olga Lotinsky went to Colorado. There may be more that I did not find out about. Oh yes, in September, Lillian Long of Clearwater, Florida went to Europe with a group of Lutheran members.

Jessie Belle Felgar has moved to Baltimore, Maryland to live with her sister, Esther. Jessie formerly lived with Winifred and Rose Cowan near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She used to live with Paul and Ferne Savanick before going to Cowans. We hope she is happy in her new surroundings.

Wilmetta Steele of Atlanta, Georgia, formerly of North Versailles, Pennsylvania spent about six weeks in this area with relatives and friends. She said it was so good to be "back home." She rode to Pennsylvania with Lillian Long of Clearwater, Florida. Lillian has her summer home in Scottdale. She has been gone most of the summer visiting friends in Ohio, Michigan and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She attended the Lutheran Great Lakes Regional Conference in Lansing, Michigan. Lillian has been re-elected historian of that organization.

The Community Deaf Service members held a successful fund raising flea market at Greensburg, Pennsylvania each weekend during the most of August. Vesta Miller of Herminie is the President of Community Deaf Services.

Gail Noll, Harrison City, Pennsylvania has taken the reins from Alice Kelly of Wexford, Pennsylvania. Gail is now coordinator at the Westmoreland County Deaf Services Office at 110 East Otterman Street, Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Bob Macik, North Versailles, Pennsylvania is the director. This organization is a branch of the Pittsburgh Hearing, Speech and Deaf Services in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Gail says she loves her job very much and is really busy helping those who need counseling, interpreting, legal services and other problems. She also helps coordinate speech reading and

Sign Language classes. Kathy Eisaman, Greensburg and Paul Savanick helped to teach Sign Language classes last winter. Paul had the advanced American Sign Language class (ASL). This summer Bob Macik is teaching Sign.

Ferne Hernley Savanick, reporter

Blumenort, Manitoba

We've had a busy summer season with quite a few activities.

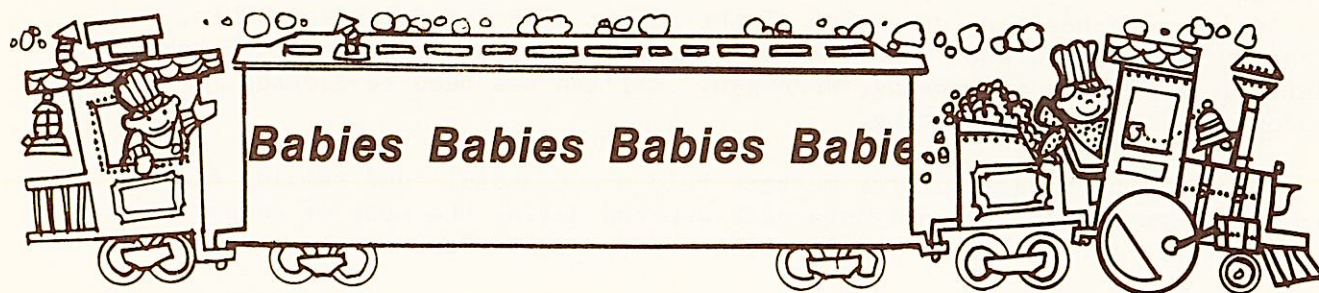
Kathy and Ken Yaremus had the deaf fellowship over for a barbeque and social. Volleyball and tossing water-filled balloons were lots of fun.

We played baseball, did skits and had a devotional at the South East Manitoba Association for the deaf picnic in June. It was lovely weather for the picnic and games.

In July, Shirley Dubber, a missionary from Puerto Rico, showed slides and talked to us. She taught at Evangelical School for the Deaf in Luguillo, Puerto Rico for several years. We enjoyed hearing from her and visiting afterward.

Doreen Penner, reporter

*Editor's Note: We missed those of you who did not send your regular column.
We look forward to hearing from you in November.*



Anya Irene, daughter of Eli and Lynda Kitchens Savanick, born May 29, 1984.

Adam Detweiler, son of Reuben and Marty Savanick, born August 18, 1984.

Pearl Joy, daughter of Nelson and Phyllis Gehman, born September 5, 1984.

SIGNING is a forum for you to raise questions, share information, or state opinions.

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**A forum for persons interested
in deaf ministry**

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