

Our church doors lock out over 27 million North Americans?
Our worship services exclude people who are longing to understand?

Our hearts are closed to the communication needs of people different from us?

... We hope not!

It's Time to Listen

to the signs and voices of
**Deaf People
and
Hard of Hearing People**

National Council of the Churches of Christ
Deaf Ministry Committee

Hearing Church Workers

Observations*

We are aware that, despite years of ministry efforts, perhaps less than 10% of the Deaf community are churched.

MANY OF US WHO HAVE WORKED IN DEAF MINISTRY NOW SEE THAT:

- we have lacked the linguistic ability and cultural sensitivity to listen to the Deaf community.
- we have not recognized the uniqueness of Deaf culture.
- we have made decisions for Deaf and hard of hearing persons.
- we have exerted control over Deaf ministry and have imposed a "hearing" perspective on it.
- we have perpetuated a model of Deaf ministry which has had limited success in effectively proclaiming the Gospel.

MANY OF US NOW COMMIT OURSELVES TO LISTEN TO THE DEAF COMMUNITY AND TO HARD OF HEARING PERSONS. WHILE WE LISTEN, WE ACCEPT THAT:

- we will not speak for Deaf or hard of hearing persons.
- we will experience a change in status and a re-defining of our role.
- we will work to stretch current church structures so that Deaf and hard of hearing persons may assume their rightful roles as leaders, envisioners, etc.

*These observations were made by hearing people involved in ministry with Deaf and hard of hearing persons who use sign language.

The NCC Deaf Ministry Committee is attempting to recognize the variety of communication preferences present among Deaf and hard of hearing persons and to encourage more effective ministry with these groups. This brochure is the product of an exploratory, two-year process in which members of each group dialogued about their own needs for meaningful church life. Hopefully, this initial statement will encourage others to seek ways to open church doors and help the Body of Christ to become more whole.

For more information

National Association of
814 Thayer Avenue, Silver
Spring, MD 20910-4500; 301/587-1

National Council of the
Ministries in Christian
Deaf Ministry Committee
475 Riverside Drive New
York, NY 10122/870-2297

National Information
Gallaudet University
800 Florida Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20062/651-5052 tty, 651-

Self Help for Hard of
Hearing
7910 Woodmont, Bethesda, MD
301/657-2249 tty, 657-

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
PO Box 69119, Washington, DC
20251-40381 tty, 51-

There is a videotape (in
signing) available which
contains the information given in
this brochure. It can be obtained by contacting
the Deaf Ministry Committee or your area
representative.

The Deaf Ministry Committee
represents representatives of all
denominations and organizations
and work together to provide
information. The Committee
Ministries in Christian
Deaf Ministry Committee
National Council of the

What do you think of
when you hear the words
"deaf" or "hard of
hearing"?



There are many misunderstandings about who these people are — and the fact that they are not all the same — they have some significantly different needs.

This brochure is an introduction to these differences. It is the work of a different group of deaf or hard of hearing people who are telling us who they are and what they need — for church life to be accessible.

Let us open our ears to hear their hopes for meaningful worship experiences and for support in their own faith journeys.

*Another term is "hearing impaired". This term is not accepted by many people who have a hearing loss. We choose to use the terms which have been widely accepted by the people they describe.

Hard of Hearing People

- spoken and written English (or other spoken/written language)
- hearing cultural values

Members of this group are usually those who developed a hearing loss later in life or who had a more mild hearing loss in the early years of life. Adult members range from mild to profound degree of hearing loss. Members desire to participate in the hearing world, aided by hearing aids, speechreading, and other assistive technology. Very few use sign language.

WE NEED:

- inclusion in the regular life of the church.
- improvement in the quality of sound transmitted to the hard of hearing person via:
 - use assistive listening system in the place of worship.
 - special amplification devices in other areas.
- visual substitutes and supplements to speech via:
 - captioning — by hand, laptop computer.
 - computer-assisted captioning which permits typing onto screen for reading.
 - written copy of sermon or sermon outline prior to worship.
 - announcements printed, not only conveyed orally.
 - best seating for speechreaders and good lighting on speakers.
 - counseling for hard of hearing persons and their families.
 - mixed leaders and congregations, including sensitivity training for church staff.

Deaf People

- American Sign Language (or other indigenous sign language, such as Quebec Sign Language)
- Deaf cultural values

Members of this group are usually those born deaf or those who acquired a hearing loss (called "profound") at an early age. Includes those born to Deaf parents. However, many have hearing parents. Key characteristics are Deaf identity, Deaf cultural values, and use of American Sign Language (ASL). English is often acquired as a second language.

WE NEED:

- separate Deaf worship services.
- pastors and teachers (preferably Deaf) who use ASL, deaf role models, Deaf leadership training programs.
- the Bible translated into our own language, ASL.
- freedom to develop forms of worship that reflect our culture, such as prayer with eyes open, storytelling, drama, and the use of drama.
- freedom and support to develop our own theological understandings, to understand God through our own eyes.
- good lighting, visually accessible seating, and regular use of visual aids.
- opportunities to receive counseling in our own language.
- programming and Sunday School materials for Deaf youth.
- support services and resources for hearing parents with Deaf children.
- churches that will work cooperatively in being Deaf people together as there is a large enough group for meaningful sharing and programming.

Deaf People Hard of Hearing People

- English like signing (or French like signing in Quebec)
- mix of Deaf and hearing cultural values

Members of this group are usually those deafened at a later age (not from birth), whose first language was English, and/or who have a lesser hearing loss. Most have hearing parents. Tend to share values with both Deaf and hearing worlds and to have contacts in both communities, although primary contacts tend to be with other deaf or hard of hearing persons.

WE NEED:

- integrated services. (However, some of us also want the freedom to choose to attend separate Deaf services. The pastor can be deaf or hearing.)
- highly skilled interpreters who sign in English word order with English mouth movements and full, clear finger spelling.
- shared services and opportunities to respond and discuss afterwards.
- a universal symbolbook, so we will have one agreed-upon way to sign words.
- freedom to choose to sign words or to simply watch another sign them.
- a visually accessible, obstruction-free environment with level or elevated pews and focused lighting.
- seating in the front rows, with visual aids near the speaker.
- simultaneous, overhead captioning of what is being said.
- empowerment techniques and leadership training programs geared to Deaf people.
- counseling services for Deaf people.
- education for hearing people about deafness and Deaf people.



Signs of HOPE

DEAF STORIES DEAF TEACHERS

Ella Mae Lentz Mike Jackson Val Dively

PURPOSE
These tapes have two goals: 1) to encourage Deaf people to dialogue with each other about their own experiences, leading to greater self-awareness; and 2) to demonstrate how the message of Jesus is "Good News" indeed for Deaf people.

These videotapes will be helpful to both Deaf Christians and Deaf non-Christians in understanding their own experiences and struggles. The tapes include vivid descriptions of what Jesus taught and did.

PROGRAM CONTENT
Tape One - "Women" (35 min.)
Teacher: Ella Mae Lentz
Tape Two - "Oppressed People" (40 min.)
Teachers: Val Dively and Pat Graybill
Tape Three - "Oppressor People" (36 min.)
Teachers: Val Dively and Pat Graybill
Tape Four - "Neighbors" (30 min.)
Teacher: Mike Jackson
Tape Five - "Anger" (64 min.)
Teachers: Mike Jackson and Val Dively

FORMAT
Each tape includes one or more real-life stories by Deaf people that relate to a particular issue. A "teaching" on each issue is presented by other Deaf people. Each teaching includes a series of questions for Deaf viewers to respond to at various intervals as they view the tape. The stories and teachings are in American Sign Language (with no voice-over).

We recommend prior viewing by group leaders to determine how much group time will be needed. We anticipate that some segments will spark lengthy discussion.

FEEDBACK REQUESTED
These tapes were produced with a fraternal fund grant from Mennonite Mutual Aid Association. Each person or organization that purchases one or more tapes will be asked to evaluate them. We hope to produce more such tapes in the future, based on the feedback we receive. However, before we can make more of these exciting tapes, we will need financial contributions from other church groups and individuals.

STORYTELLERS
Carl Chapman Judy Gough Coletta Winalski
Albert Couthen Lauretta Leith Rick Zimmer
Sandra Frankel Bob Lenderman

How do the teachings of Jesus relate to the concrete experiences and struggles of deaf people?

Patrick Graybill