

A quick guide to deaf ministry

# Can you hear us?

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# Silent Hands

Author: Sandra L. Brooks

Can you hear me?  
Listen, not with your ears  
But with your eyes.  
To you they speak,  
My silent hands.  
Hear me tell my tale.  
Hear me sing my song.  
Learn my language,  
My beautiful native language.  
Hear my hands,  
Hear my music and story.  
Learn my language.  
Speak to me with your hands.  
Share my beautiful language.  
Hear my silent hands.  
We have a tale to tell,  
A song to sing.  
Open your eyes  
And hear me speak.

## Meet My Deaf Family

**M**any say that I grew up in an unique home. Both of my parents are Deaf and we only used American Sign Language (ASL) in our home. Mom and Dad were the most loving parents I could ask for, who cooed to me as an infant with their hands. I picked up ASL almost instantly and this became my first language. Mom will proudly tell you that I "said" my first word at 8 months as I waved good-bye and signed "work" to Dad as he headed out the door. She will also quickly add that I memorized and finger-spelled the alphabet by the time I was a year old. Some of my earliest memories include the many times that Mom asked me to demonstrate this to friends and strangers alike.



*Young Esther's parents are both Deaf.*

I had no earthly idea that my family was different from anyone else's until I was five years old. Mom took me to the local public school to register me for kindergarten the following year. I was in shock and, honestly, terrified as I noticed the other parents in the room were speaking and hearing people. My young mind had assumed that all parents were deaf, that hearing is lost upon having children. I refused to budge from my perch on Mom's lap, despite her encouragement to go play with the other children. Again, I was terrified. The other families were *weird!*

### **Deaf people in North America**

...are members of a completely different people group with their own rich language and culture.

...are at least 2 million strong with 96% who do not attend church anywhere.

...are almost completely unreached with the Good News of Jesus Christ and His last day message.

Despite this revelation, I simply could not understand why most hearing people did not know ASL. For me signing was as much a part of life as breathing. I

could only conclude that such people were just plain stupid and not worthy to be spoken to. If you couldn't sign, I literally would not give you the time of day. Some mistook my silence for the inability to speak and were concerned about my being raised by Deaf parents. So many misunderstandings!

Perhaps these false ideas developed in my mind because I knew a number of hearing people who could sign. But mostly, virtually all of my parents' friends were Deaf.

While most of Mom's family lived within walking distance, my parents seemed much closer to their Deaf friends. Early on, I sensed communication barriers and that my parents were mostly left out of conversations. My parents' Deaf friends were their true family. Whether or not they had much in common, they could communicate fluidly.

They cracked jokes, told stories, shared hobbies and information, and yes, gossip. Both Mom and Dad attended Deaf schools. Dad lived in the same town as his school so he stayed at home, but Mom lived 50 miles from her school so she stayed in the dorm. Back in those days, residential students stayed at school except for a couple of holidays and summers; so fellow classmates seemed like siblings to her.



*The Deaf are a vibrant group of people who work, play, and have needs just like hearing people.*

By default, their Deaf friends became my family too. Since both of my grandfathers had died, I decided to adopt a Deaf man as my Grandpa. I did not even know his name; he was always "Grandpa" to me. He loved me like I was his own granddaughter.

I'm proud of my Deaf family and the Deaf world that nurtured me. I love them so much. They are a beautiful people who know how to have a really good time and how to work. Few on the outside realize that the Deaf world is so rich in history and culture. Deaf people live and interact as a distinct people group. They have their

own customs, norms, habits, language, and common experiences that identify them as a unique culture group. On top of it all, this is a most creative people! Deaf individuals live in a world made up of hearing people. Their many responses to sticky situations show their on-the-spot ingenuity.

With very few exceptions, you will find that Deaf people believe that deafness is not a disability, but rather the quality that unites Deaf individuals into a cohesive, vibrant community. Thus, they prefer to be called *Deaf* rather than *hearing impaired*. The word *impaired* makes reference to the fact that something is broken or not functioning. They do not see themselves this way at all.

It may surprise you that many Deaf people are very proud to be Deaf and would not want it any other way. My parents certainly feel that way. Dad even told me once that he would rather remain Deaf when Jesus comes again. He is that content.

One of the things that irks those in the Deaf World is the misplaced sympathy that many hearing people have. Many times, different people gasped when they learn that my parents are Deaf. They would tilt their heads, tear up, and say, "I am so sorry that your parents are Deaf." My response echoes that of the Deaf themselves, "Don't be. I'm not! I wouldn't change a thing!"

Please note that the tragedy is not deafness. The tragedy is Deaf people have been excluded from hearing the Good News, because of their deafness. There are millions of Deaf people in North America, and only 4% of them are Christians.

That is what this booklet you are holding is all about. Within these few pages, you will learn a few things about deafness and Deaf people. Also, you'll learn a little about some challenges Deaf people face in the church and how you and your church can be Deaf-friendly.

"What matters deafness of the ears, when the mind hears?  
The one true deafness, the incurable deafness, is that of the  
mind." Victor Hugo

## Sign Language Notes

- \* Most Deaf people's preferred language is American Sign Language (ASL).
- \* ASL is not another form of English. Instead, it has its own distinct grammatical structure.
- \* Most people regard ASL as their natural language, which reflects their cultural values and keeps their traditions and heritage alive.
- \* Not being able to hear the spoken language makes speaking and writing English fluently difficult. It remains, at best, a second language for them, while ASL is their heart language.
- \* ASL is more like French Sign Language than British Sign Language.

## How do Deaf people...

**Wake up in the morning?** There are special alarm clocks attached to either a flashing light or a bed vibrator that will activate when the alarm goes off.

**Understand TV?** Nowadays, most television shows/movies are captioned or subtitled, which can be turned on via remote control.

**Drive a car?** Deaf people use their mirrors frequently and rely completely on their eyes for traffic cues, including the flashing lights of emergency vehicles.

**Talk on the phone?** Deaf people have many options. Video phones have allowed Deaf individuals to see their caller face-to-face. If a person on one end does not have a video phone or doesn't know sign language, they may utilize the relay service. Information on how to use relay service can be found later in this publication. Because of new technology, the TTY is becoming obsolete, however they are still in use. The TTY is a machine with a keyboard that transmits electrical signals which travel over telephone lines. A TTY must be at both ends for a conversation. But if the other end does not have a TTY, a relay service may be used to interpret the conversation.

## Myths About Deafness

My entire life, I encountered people who misunderstood deafness and believed a number of myths. You might even believe one. Listed here are some common myths; the truth may surprise you.

**Myth:** Deaf people prefer to be called *hearing-impaired*.

**Fact:** The word *impaired* implies something that a person cannot do. Instead of identifying *hearing* as the normal standard and identifying themselves as unable to hear, they have chosen the term *Deaf* because it implies who they are and that they still live fulfilling lives.

**Myth:** All Deaf people can not hear a single sound.

**Fact:** Most Deaf people have some hearing, degrees varying from person to person.

**Myth:** If a person is Deaf, then they can not speak at all.

**Fact:** Deaf people have voices and many can speak. Some choose not to speak because they cannot regulate the sound of their voices.

**Myth:** Lip-reading is as easy as listening.

**Fact:** No more than 30% of English speech is visible on the lips. Some words look exactly the same. For instance, the words "paddle" and "battle" or "baby" and "maybe" appear the same on the lips. Plus, some people are very difficult to lip-read.

**Myth:** All Deaf people can lip-read.

**Fact:** *Some* Deaf can lip-read with varying abilities.

**Myth:** A Deaf person will hear you if you just speak loud enough.

**Fact:** Shouting actually distorts the speaker's face and makes it more difficult for a Deaf person to read your lips.

**Myth:** American Sign Language (ASL) is universal.

**Fact:** There are many different sign languages used all around the world, just as with spoken languages. ASL is used in the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and several other countries.

**Myth:** Deaf people do not want to be deaf. They are hoping for a miracle cure so they can hear.

**Fact:** Deaf people actually like being deaf; deafness is their identity. Most Deaf people I know enjoy the peaceful silence and their Deaf-World.

**Myth:** Deaf people have below average intelligence.

**Fact:** Deaf people have the same intelligence range as those who are hearing. The lack of hearing does not affect one's IQ. In fact, a large number of Deaf people hold college degrees.

**Myth:** Deaf parents have Deaf children; deafness is genetic.

**Fact:** Deafness has many causes. Genes play only a small part; even still, this does not guarantee deafness in children. In fact, 90% of Deaf children have hearing parents and will have hearing children.

**Myth:** The early use of ASL interferes with a Deaf child's acquisition of good English skills.

**Fact:** Interestingly, Deaf children of Deaf parents tend to have better English skills than those who do not. Research has shown that early ASL use can dramatically increase English skills.

**Myth:** Deaf people are not suitable for most jobs.

**Fact:** The Deaf are very capable and suitable for a wide range of jobs. They can hold competitive positions in a variety of professional and technical fields.

**Myth:** Deaf employees are safety risks.

**Fact:** Numerous studies, such as one done by DuPont, have shown Deaf employees to have equal to better safety records.

**Myth:** Deaf people can't drive cars.

**Fact:** Deaf people can drive cars and are among the safest drivers.

**Myth:** Deaf people use Braille.

**Fact:** Deaf people do not use Braille, unless they are also visually impaired. Blind people use Braille.

**Myth:** Deaf people lead totally different lives from other people.

**Fact:** Deaf people are set apart by only one thing, lack of hearing. As former president of Gallaudet University I. King Jordan stated, "Deaf people can do anything except hear."



## Being Deaf, Religion, and the Church

**A**s stated earlier, I *love* my Deaf family. And I know that my Jesus does too. My heart's desire is for Deaf people to have the opportunity to know who my loving Savior is and how they, too, can have a relationship with Him. I want them with my Lord and I in the kingdom and walk alongside us on the streets of gold.

**Of the millions that are Deaf, we only have 300+ members in North America.** The number is painfully small. Painful not just because of the few in number, but because 40 years ago we saw 700 or so in membership. There are many factors for Deaf people leaving the church and also for not joining the church family. I would like to briefly share with you some of the causes.

Deaf culture has undergone a lot of changes over the last 30 years due to educational choices, technological advances, and rights (as established in the Americans with Disabilities Act). These changes have effected the Deaf community's perspectives of Jesus and the church.

For several decades, primarily hearing people led the Deaf ministry in various denominations without much input by Deaf people, leading to frustrations. Meanwhile, many Deaf grew up without anyone caring enough to fully communicate the love of Jesus to them. They were forced to sit still for a couple of hours during church services in a silent world, feeling imprisoned. These two simple factors and others led Deaf people to feel that God is a "hearing" God who isn't interested in Deaf individuals. Many of them left the church.

Now, the Deaf-World is in a real spiritual crisis. Without Deaf Christian role models, Deaf children and teenagers do not know much about God.

"Then I saw another angel flying high in the air. He had the eternal Good News to preach to those who live on earth—to every nation, tribe, language, and people." Revelation 14:6 NCV

Some years ago, I assisted in a girls' cabin during Deaf Camp at Camp MiVoden in Idaho. I was given the responsibility of having nightly worship in our cabin. I struggled each evening since the girls showed no interest in what I was sharing. I would end the worship by asking for a volunteer to have prayer; but the only response I received were blank stares.

Then, one of the girls, Amy, was feeling sad; I saw an opportunity to share Christ! I told her how I turn to my Best Friend, Jesus in prayer when I'm sad. Amy looked at me with tears in her eyes and signed, "I can't pray because God doesn't know sign language." My heart ached. How lonely it must be to think that the God of the universe understood the prayers of all hearing people, but not those of Deaf people. I signed, "Oh, God knows all languages. He knows Japanese, English, Spanish, German, and even ASL." She was astonished at this revelation. We prayed together right then; she was delighted. That evening, I again asked if anyone would volunteer to pray. Before I could even finish the question, Amy's hand went straight up in the air and she prayed the sweetest prayer I have ever seen.

In reading and talking with others, I have found that Amy was not the only teenager who thought God doesn't understand ASL. Many Deaf youth believe this. How sad is it when youth in America think that God couldn't understand them if they prayed!



So now, we have the challenge of reaching out to this vast group of precious souls. We can not afford to maintain the status quo for Jesus is coming again. **Only 4% of Deaf people in North America attend church of any denomination.** It's been estimated that fewer than 6% of American churches have any Deaf outreach of any sort. Many of these churches generally offer a volunteer signer who has had perhaps a few months of sign language classes and is struggling to interpret the services. These ministries are started and carried on by people who love the Lord. Yet for all their efforts, few Deaf people attend and often seem

disconnected from the fellowship. In most cases, the few Deaf people who do come ultimately drift away.

Communication is a real barrier in the church. Deaf individuals often feel all alone in a room full of people. They feel like they're sitting in a glass fishbowl. They see others visit, sing, laugh, and study together, but they don't know what's going on. Even in churches that were thoughtful enough to provide an interpreter, Deaf members or visitors are simply spectators, not participants. Very few are blessed with a Deaf group in which they can study, pray, and sing together, a place where each person is understood and play a vital part in worship service.

A relationship with Jesus is an awesome experience. How can a Deaf person be nurtured to share in this experience if they, while at church, feel so isolated? An experience is something that belongs to you. You can't claim someone else's experience.

If we are ever going to get serious about Deaf ministry, we have to start thinking like Deaf people. We're going to have to listen to what they have to say and learn how they perceive the world and themselves. We're going to have to put aside our own



*A Deaf choir sings Shall We Gather at the River for a baptism.*

prejudices and our own likes and dislikes. We have to move into a world that, for most of us, is unfamiliar and fuzzy to our eyes. Although this might prove to be uncomfortable or even terrifying, we must. If we don't, the Deaf community will continue to be the largest unreached people group in North America.

Perhaps you want to make your church accessible to Deaf people so they can love it as you do. But realistically, no matter what you do, most Deaf people will never love your hearing church. Nearly everything in your church is very hearing oriented, from the music, an important part of a hearing worship service, to the 30 to 50

minutes of monologue preaching, to the casual conversation in the lobby, and so forth.

In addition to this, some things are lost in interpretation. Signed music rarely comes anywhere close to the quality of what you hear. Just imagine how excited you would be

if you had to sit through songs that were sung in a monotonous, raspy voice, in broken English, missing words, and lacking any sense of rhythm. That is how many songs come across in sign language! Moreover, many things are often lost in translation as two vastly different worlds and ways of expression are being bridged. Because ASL has its own grammar and vocabulary, interpreters have to edit and translate the meaning of the sermons on the fly. Deaf people will never be able to experience a hearing church the same way you do.



*A signing pastor shares a message during a wedding ceremony for a Deaf bride and groom.*

Honestly, Deaf people are not driving past your church every day thinking, "I sure wish they would interpret their services. Then I would attend." No, in fact, most Deaf people are not even looking for a church. With memories of bad experiences in the past, churches are considered "prisons" of stillness where they don't know what's going on half the time. Couple this with the many awkward or bad experiences with hearing people in general, and you'll see why placing a sign on the church lawn announcing ASL interpreters won't bring a flood of Deaf folks through your church doors.

## **Deaf Church**

Many have only known church as a place where they were on the outside looking in through the window of an interpreter. A Deaf church can feel like a breath of fresh air to a Deaf person where they are no longer spectators; they are now part of the action. The set up of the room is designed to enhance the worship

and fellowship experience. Worshipers all sign their praise to God in congregational songs. The message and all information shared are in sign language, their native tongue. Also, Deaf people best learn interactively. In a Deaf church, they are free to ask questions, seek clarification, and discuss meaning together. In the hearing church setting, often deaf people are objects of someone else's ministry. In a Deaf church, each person is free to use their spiritual gifts, talents and passion to serve in the Lord's work. What a better way to learn and share!



*A Deaf pastor reads a passage during Communion Service.*

## **My Mother's Experience**

My own Deaf mom has struggled in the church. She loves Jesus so much and, despite the many obstacles that the evil one has put in her way, she accepted Jesus as her Savior and embraced the Sabbath and many of the other teachings of the Bible.

The spiritual journey has not been easy, however. Like many Deaf, Mom had to slowly learn Biblical instruction. She endeavored to study the Bible, although English is her second language. Very few hearing people have taken the time to study with her. For years, I saw my mom's loneliness in church services. While the church members patted themselves on the back for learning how to sign "Happy Sabbath," my mother mourned that



*The Deaf deeply appreciates seeing a sermon in their own language.*

no one took the time to go beyond a greeting and be her friend. Imagine going to church where people only waved to you, while they are studying, singing, talking, laughing, and belonging. How long would you last? My mother was completely ostracized.

They assumed that all her needs were cared for as long as I, her young daughter, was with her. What they forgot is she needed to feel like she belonged to the family of God.

She now attends an Adventist church where she is much happier. There is another Adventist Deaf woman that she can study and talk with; Deaf visitors also come. I attend there as well, and we have our own Sabbath School class. I also interpret the church services. Church members make every effort to be friends with Deaf attendees. They write to them, are learning sign language, and take a real interest in their lives. Not only have the members truly befriended them, but they have put these ladies to work. They have been given real jobs to do, including being a deaconess, women's ministry leader, and creating the weekly bulletin.

Believe me, Mom's experiences are not unique to her. As I visit with Deaf Adventist friends, I hear the same story over and over, just like a broken record. The names are different, but the experience of loneliness and frustration are the same. **Many Deaf people all across North America are still struggling, all alone, in their spiritual journey.** This shouldn't be.



*Deaf Camp Meeting attendees enjoy a healthy cooking demonstrations.*

“Blindness separates people from things; deafness separates people from people.” Helen Keller

## **How You and Your Church Can Reach Out to Deaf People**

**T**ypically, through the eyes of a Deaf person, there are three groups of people within the Adventist church. The first group is comprised of disinterested people to whom Deaf people are completely invisible. This group will never bring a Deaf soul

to Christ, but then, they don't seem to care. The second group are those who become overly-protective. While these people have good intentions, they take over the lives of Deaf people and forget that these individuals are human beings with true thoughts, feelings, preferences, and capabilities. Then there are the friends who take a deep interest in the lives of Deaf people and treat them as true friends. As you reach out to a Deaf member or visitor, keep your motives in check and be sure that you're a true friend.

## **Personal Friends/ Family**

For the most part, an interpreted program or sermon will not bring a Deaf soul to Jesus. **The best way to bring a Deaf person to Christ is friendship evangelism.**

Just be a true friend to your Deaf neighbor or relative. Over time, share with them the immense love of Christ. Share your personal experiences in this walk with God. Your winsome character and personality and your true interest in them as people will be the most effective way to bring them to Jesus.



*Two children belonging to a Deaf couple are dedicated to God during a Deaf camp meeting.*

## **Resources**

Utilize resources available to you. Our ministry has a variety of DVDs, including a 14-part and a 26-part evangelistic series.

You can place them on our mailing list for *The Deaf Messenger*, our outreach magazine for Deaf people, sent to them. You can also suggest that they sign up for a Bible correspondence course for Deaf people at [www.DeafBibleSchool.com](http://www.DeafBibleSchool.com).

Take a look at our lists of services and resources in the coming pages for additional ideas.

An additional resource is the Easy Reading English Edition of the

Sabbath school quarterly. This edition is edited by those involved in Deaf ministry and with Deaf people in mind. These can be obtained through the Pacific Press. Talk to your Sabbath school secretary about getting copies.

## Accessible Church Services

Your church's services need to be accessible to Deaf people. When obtaining an interpreter, be certain that the interpreter is qualified. If an interpreter is not an available option, don't just shrug your shoulders and leave the Deaf in the cold. Be creative and figure out a way to make something work. Include the Deaf person for coming up with a solution.

## Vital Networking and Friendships

Keep in mind, since only 4% of Deaf people are Christians, it is difficult to have Deaf friends who are likewise Christians. Also, there are such few Deaf people in our local churches. **Thus, meeting and making new Deaf Adventist friends from other places becomes extremely crucial.** They need friends that communicate like they do, like-believers who share similar day-to-day experiences. They are just like you, in need of a support system and friends to share their lives with.

There are several annual Deaf camp meetings and retreats where close friendships and a sense of belonging emerge. These camp meetings are truly a highlight of the year and many travel across the country to attend one. These camp meetings are also highly spiritual.

Additionally, today's technology now allows Deaf people to chat and even study the Bible face-to-face via video phones, laptops, and cell phones.



*Evangelism meetings in ASL help Deaf to grasp Bible truths.*



E-mail, text messaging, and social networking also fosters friendships. Communicating with one another regardless of distance has become easy. Therefore, your member at home can be a part of the large group of Adventists from coast to coast.



*Deaf making memories and lasting friends while rafting on a river during a Deaf camp meeting.*

If you have Deaf members or visitors in your church, **do not hesitate** to find a way for them to network with other Deaf Adventists! To hold back this wonderful world from them would be cheating your members of a wonderful circle of friends which just might make the difference in whether or not you'll see this member in the kingdom. The easiest way to introduce your member(s) to the circle of Deaf Adventists is to connect them with us, Three Angels Deaf Ministries.

## **Your Role in Deaf Ministry**

**T**here are many ways to serve in Deaf ministry. Perhaps God is calling you to the "front lines" of this work, to train, study and immerse yourself into the Deaf culture as a church planter, facilitator, or co-worker with a Deaf leader. Maybe God is calling you to give funds for needed efforts, volunteer your talents and energy to create ministry resources, or to give encouragement. But there is one thing that you can especially do: be a friend. Whatever your place in this effort, whether you are the hands or feet, you could have a role to play in this ministry.

Please do remember this: Within the Deaf community, there is a desire to build meaningful relationships with those who are willing to be true friends. **The key trait for friendship is authenticity, a willingness to treat people as equals.**

The evil one has been crafty in keeping Christians blind to the many souls who perish each year without accepting Christ as their Savior. But even more pointed, Christians have avoided reaching

out to Deaf souls because of communication barriers. We must, with God's grace, increase the number of Deaf people who have a relationship with Jesus. How long before we Christians rise to the challenge? Sadly, for too many Deaf people, it will have been too long. Let's team together, you and I, and make a difference in the lives of Deaf people for eternity. With God's help, we can do it!

## Things to Remember

- **Take an interest in Deaf people's lives.** Find out who they really are and what struggles and triumphs they are experiencing. Get to know them as good friends.
- **Don't be shy, communicate!** Deaf people don't bite and they aren't lepers either, though sometimes they feel as if they have the dreaded disease. Trying to communicate with a Deaf individual can be terrifying, but keep in mind how Deaf people must feel on a day-to-day basis. Also remember that you are not the first hearing person they met that felt awkward. Relax and just take it slow. It's alright if you don't know ASL; try writing. Also, occasional gestures are appropriate.
- **Make sure that the church has materials to meet a Deaf person's needs.** Materials are available to help build faith and help them become strong believers, such as the Easy Reading Edition of the Sabbath School lesson and sermons or studies on DVD in ASL. See the resource page later in this booklet.
- **Print and share.** If possible, run a copy of sermon notes, superintendent remarks, mission stories, etc.
- **Get them involved!** Don't let your Deaf member(s) be mere spectators! Find out what their spiritual gifts are and put them to work! By developing friendships and actively involving Deaf people in ministry, they'll feel less like spectators.



*A Deaf man shares his testimony before being rebaptized.*

- **Socialize!** Invite them to your home for a meal. Make sure they're invited to church socials and make certain they are not sitting on the sidelines like a wall flower finding comfort in the refreshments.
- **Don't isolate Deaf people.** If a Deaf person asks what was just said, don't fall for the temptation to say, "It's not important." Or "I'll tell you later."
- **Assume nothing!** Never assume that the interpreter is taking care of all the needs of Deaf members or visitors. For one, this responsibility does not lie solely on the interpreter but upon the entire church. Ask the Deaf themselves how they would like to be involved in the church. Each person is different, just as you and your friends are different.
- **Do not make decisions for Deaf members.** ASK! Do not try to protect or control them. An all too-common complaint is that hearing individuals engaged in Deaf ministry do not have a real heart for the Deaf, but rather "think hearing" and act superior. Always guard against this.
- **Be a student!** Ask Deaf people about their culture, language, and experiences. Then listen to them. There's no better way to learn than to simply immerse yourself in their world.
- **Develop a heart for Deaf people.** Pray that God will put a special love in your heart. If you are involved with Deaf people in any way, you will experience some friction or perhaps a frustration with the ways of Deaf. This is normal because you are still a citizen of the Hearing World; this is much like visiting or moving to a foreign country. Pray for love and the fruit of the Spirit.

## How To Talk to Deaf People on the Phone

**Relay services** provides a way for the Deaf to communicate with friends, family, or business associates who do not have a video phone (VP) or a TTY. Each call is handled in strict confidence.

### Video Relay Services (VRS)

VRS allows Deaf people to communicate with hearing people

through the telephone system via specialized video equipment and a qualified interpreter. No typing is involved. Using a video phone, a Deaf caller contacts VRS. A VRS interpreter then connects to the party the Deaf individual wishes to call.

## **How to use Video Relay Services**

**Step 1:** Dial the Deaf person's phone number.

**Step 2:** Wait for an interpreter to come on the line. She will then connect you to the caller.

**Step 3:** The interpreter will voice the greeting that the Deaf person signed. Then talk as if you are speaking directly to the person you called. Allow the conversation to bounce back and forth naturally.

**Step 4:** When you're finished, hang up after a quick thanks to the interpreter.

Remember that you are speaking to the Deaf person, not the interpreter. So, do not say, "Tell her that it is very nice of her to call me." Instead, talk directly to the Deaf person, "Jane, how nice of you to call me."

## **Telephone Relay Services**

Today, very few Deaf people use TTYs. But since they are out there, this information is also included. With the Telephone Relay Services, a Communications Assistant (CA) reads the message typed by a Deaf individual to the hearing person at the other end of the call. The CA then relays the hearing person's exact spoken words by typing them back to the TTY user.

To call a Deaf person who uses a TTY, dial 711 and you will be connected to a CA. Give the CA the Deaf person's number. The CA will be happy to give you instructions of how to use the service.

**Note: Don't hang up!** Many hang up on relay calls because they sound like telemarketers. If you answer the phone and hear "This is video relay service, interpreter..." please do not hang up. Congratulations! you are about to talk to a Deaf person!

## **Notes on the Use of Interpreters**

- If you are using an interpreter, speak to the Deaf person directly and pretend the interpreter is not there.
- Speak in a normal regular tone, you do not have to talk slow or take long pauses, keep a normal flow.
- The interpreter is there to translate information from English to ASL or ASL to English. He/she is only there to interpret, not to become a Deaf person's guardian.
- If your church has an interpreter, be sure to have a back up plan in case of illness or vacation, otherwise, no services would be provided for Deaf people that week.
- During church service, you may notice that Deaf individuals may not pay attention to the interpreter at all times. That does not mean that they are disinterested. They are likely giving their eyes a break. Keep in mind that having to pay attention to one spot for a long period of time is very tiring for the eyes.

**Note: having interpreted services, although important, does not mean that your church actually has a Deaf ministry. A Deaf ministry seeks out Deaf individuals to develop relationships, being willing to invest time in them.**

### **Our Mission**

Sharing the Three Angels Messages with the Deaf. This mission includes evangelism among Deaf people and training them to become true disciples of Christ so that they can be equipped to do their part in spreading the Everlasting Gospel.

## **Three Angels Deaf Ministries**

**Three Angels Deaf Ministries (3ADM) is a ministry that is truly for and by Deaf people.** We communicate with Deaf members by holding open forum meetings at Deaf camp meetings. We value their ideas and suggestions. Our bylaws require that the majority of our Board of Directors must be Deaf. Also, our Speaker/Director is Deaf as well.

Three Angels Deaf Ministries came into existence as the result of the closure of Deaf Services at Christian Record Services in 1997. Deaf members and leaders knew that something must be done to coordinate and further the Deaf work in North America so that the Gospel may be taken to ALL the Deaf so Jesus can come. In 1998, bold action was taken by the Deaf members themselves, creating Three Angels Deaf Ministries.

## What 3ADM can do for you!

Outreach and witnessing materials designed for Deaf people  
Free outreach magazine for your Deaf friends and relatives  
Materials to strengthen your Deaf members  
Deaf ministry and awareness workshops and tips...and MORE!

### Our services include:

**The Deaf Messenger**—This is an outreach magazine published quarterly by 3ADM, with articles written especially for Deaf people. This magazine is free to any Deaf person in the USA. These magazines are also online so that Deaf worldwide can access them.



**DVD Materials**—Deaf people have a need for materials in their own language, so ASL programs on DVDs are imperative. We have a number of DVDs for use in Bible studies and evangelism.

**Sermon on DVD Subscription Program**—The majority of Deaf Adventists do not attend a church with a Deaf group, and very often go without interpreters. We have a DVD subscription program with sermons by Deaf pastors or leaders using ASL. During church services, Deaf members can utilize this DVD privately, thus having a



sermon in their language. They can also use them in their homes for small group Bible studies with their friends.

**Expos**—Since 2005, 3ADM had a booth at a large number of Deaf Expos. Each year, 30,000+ Deaf people attend these expos. This is an amazing opportunity to share with Deaf people all over North America. We give away bags of materials, inviting them to sign up for Bible studies and a free subscription to *The Deaf Messenger*.



**Written Materials**—Since English is a second language for many Deaf people, 3ADM has a number of printed materials in Easy Reading Editions, including *Steps to Christ*, *Story of Redemption*, *Margie Asks Why*, and a number of Bible studies.

**Lay Training**—This intensive weekend-long program, along with adapted materials, teach Deaf Adventists how to share Jesus and give Bible studies. This training is vital because other lay training programs have not been accessible to Deaf people nor are they always culturally applicable.

**Bible School**—Deaf people may study the Bible via internet,



*Deaf Bible School instructor studies with several Deaf people around the USA simultaneously using an online video service.*

mail, or video phone. We currently have 300 students enrolled. While these numbers may sound small to some, this is the equivalent to our Deaf membership.

**Deaf Ministry Workshops and Deaf Ministry Sabbaths—**

We provide different workshops that will sensitize the local

church members to Deaf people and help build a bridge between Deaf members and hearing members. Seminars also include the basic concept of Deaf ministry and how to start one.

**Deaf Evangelism**—We also provide evangelistic meetings to Deaf communities.

**Keeping Connected**—Adventist Deaf members receive our newsletters, whether or not they are donors. We see this as a part of the ministry, keeping Deaf people connected to what's happening across North America.



**Representation**—We work closely with the North American Division and represent Deaf people to the church.

## **What Deaf People Say about Three Angels Deaf Ministries**

*"I really love 3ADM who help me. Sometimes my spiritual life goes down but when I get DVDs, newsletters, & magazines, I feel close to God again. Long ago I felt like quitting church because there was only 3 Deaf SDA in my state. You kept me hanging on."*

*"3ADM is my best friend."*

*"I never been baptized because not sure which religion is right but I like SDA because I understand clearly with easy vocabulary like you send me. It makes me more excited and understand. I learned about Jesus everyday thru 3ADM and SDA."*

*"I really enjoy this spiritual lay training camp! I have dreamed about this for a long time. It finally came true! Praise the Lord for this program!"*

*"THANK you for the sermons on DVD. It was like a fresh spring rain, too wonderful to describe. Please, make more!!!"*



*“Three Angels Deaf Ministries is our frontline provider and premier resource center for the purpose of reaching Deaf people with the gospel. We depend on the services of Three Angels Deaf Ministries, and consider them a partner in ministry.”*

Debra Brill, VP of the North American Division

## **How You Can Help Us Reach Out to Deaf People**

- Tell us about Deaf Non-Adventists you know. We will send them our outreach magazine *The Deaf Messenger* **FREE!**
- Tell us about Deaf Adventists you know. We will send them both our newsletter and *The Deaf Messenger* for **FREE!**
- Pray for this Deaf ministry. The work before us is enormous and the workers are few.
- Learn more about Deaf people and their culture; also ensure that your church is Deaf-friendly.
- We are always in need of financial support to fund our projects and staff. You can partner with us in this important way.

**Share the Gospel with a Deaf Friend:  
[www.DeafBibleSchool.com](http://www.DeafBibleSchool.com)**



A special people are scattered across the land among us. What makes them different from most of us is that they cannot hear. This difference is not one to be afraid of but rather to be embraced. In this informative guide, you will get a glimpse into the Deaf World and learn how you can reach out to them. Oh, and by the way, it doesn't matter if you can or cannot sign. Everyone has a role in reaching out to the Deaf.

## Three Angels Deaf Ministries

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