



Preparation Strategies for a Deaf and the Hard of Hearing Ministry

1. Preparing the way

A. An example of the desired *characteristics* of caring church members as shown in *Mark 2:1-5*.

- Faithfulness of friends
- There was a plan.
- Tools/resources were available
- The presence of Jesus was sought
- Time and expense were involved

B. Faith and a spiritual commitment (Mark 2:5)

C. Before you begin?

[\(Biblical Basis for Inclusion\)](#)

- Understand the basics of biblical inclusion
- Assess the needs within your church
- Assess the readiness of your church

D. Getting Started

[\(What We Mean When We Say Our New Church Is Special Needs Friendly\)](#)

- Characteristics of a Possibility Ministries Church
 - “I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God’s test of our character. (3T 511)
 - “In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in

“the beauty of the Lord our God.” Psalm 90:17. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith. In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life.” (Ed 80)

- A Church That Knows It Needs and Reaches Out to All People. (1 Cor. 12:18-20, 27, NKJV)

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body... Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

- A Church That Believes, “All Are Gifted, Needed, and Treasured” (1 Corinthians 12:4, 11)

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”

- A Church That Inclusively Reaches Out to Others and specifically the Deaf and the hard of hearing by
 - Proactively planning to facilitate the inclusion of Deaf and hard of hearing in all activities and outreach programs
 - Providing a budget to implement the desired outcomes for ministry to the Deaf and hard of hearing
 - Proactively researching the availability of current technology, Assistive Listening Devices, and in consultation with hard of hearing and/or Audiology professionals, and develop a plan of action to acquire and install Assistive Listening Systems that cater to the latest technological developments in hearing aids
 - Proactively publicizing the provision of sign language interpreting services and/or programs run by the Deaf, and provision of technical assistance for the hard of hearing.
- A Church That Accommodates the Worship Needs of the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing
 - The Deaf Church Model

Just as any other lingual and cultural group, this model is ideal for the Deaf to have their worship service where they can worship together in their own language and culture. All of the messages presented such as singing, storytelling, scripture reading, and preaching are all done in sign language. The pastor or the elder is to present the gospel messages in sign language. This is a whole inclusive concept where no one is left out.

This model has significant advantages for the Deaf: The order of the worship service is adjusted to fit the Deaf culture. For example, the number of songs used, the use of visual aids, the messages are adapted to fit the proper level of understanding. Furthermore, no time restraint is put on the pastor/elder to expand the concept of God's Word.

- The Interpreted Service Model

This model is ideal for a joint worship service with the hearing church. For the hearing church to include the Deaf, sign language interpreters must be provided. The interpreter's role is to convey information between the spoken language and sign language. They act as a third person to help with communication needs between the Deaf and the hearing who do not know sign language. In the church setting, the interpreter is to be at the front of the sanctuary and on either side facing the audience, with the Deaf sitting in the front on either side watching the interpreted service.

It's important to note that sign language interpreters need to be qualified or fluent in interpreting. Too often the church makes a mistake by finding someone who barely knows fingerspelling and some signs and uses them to interpret the service. As a result, the Deaf miss a lot of information and lose interest in attending church. This must be avoided at all costs.

Closed captioning/subtitles are important! If a screen is used for projections, please have captions or subtitles inserted. They should be always used. This is not only for the benefit of the Deaf but also for hearing people who have difficulty hearing the messages. This, however, should not take the place of the interpreter.

- Accommodating the Hard of Hearing

Amplified hearing devices need to be made available during the worship service for those with hearing loss. Installing the amplified sound system in the building may need to be considered as a benefit to the hard of hearing community. Adding closed captions or subtitles on the screen during worship service would greatly benefit them as well as the Deaf.