



*The United Methodist Committee on*

## *Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Ministries*

### DEAF AWARENESS SUNDAY

A typical Deaf Awareness Sunday highlights deafness, Deaf culture, and includes Deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, and Deaf-blind individuals in the service, which might include hearing individuals who are proficient in sign language. A Deaf Awareness Sunday will also include aspects of accessibility, a Deaf-friendly worship service, and teaching moments.

#### Accessibility

Ideas include:

1. Have a captionist.
2. Have a sign language interpreter.
3. Include the ASL manual alphabet in the bulletin.  
Here is a link to it: <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/fa/bb/70/fabb7087b0cffe30530e7df9ec1d0b88.jpg>
4. Announce the church offers an assistive listening system/device and/or include its availability in the bulletin.
5. Offer large print bulletins for any Deaf-blind individuals. Include a blurb in the bulletin that they're available.
6. Share briefly or highlight Deaf etiquette and/or how to work with an interpreter.  
Two resources are Deaf etiquette: [www.theabilitycenter.org/docs/Deafetiquette.pdf](http://www.theabilitycenter.org/docs/Deafetiquette.pdf) and Working with an interpreter: [www.dcf.state.fl.us/facilities/fsh/docs/HHSInter.pdf](http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/facilities/fsh/docs/HHSInter.pdf).
7. Touch on the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), churches aren't legally required to follow, but push as an example of the justice to which we are called.

#### Deaf Culture

Ideas includes:

1. Highlight sign language throughout the service.
2. A 1-2 minute history of ASL during announcements.  
Here is a link to its brief history: <http://lifefprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/history1.htm>.
3. Explain the distinctions between Deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, and Deaf-blind people.  
Here are definitions: <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>.
4. What the Deaf community is like or aspects of it. Include a short list of some Deaf and hard-of-hearing celebrities. Here's a list: [www.startasl.com/famous-deaf-people.html](http://www.startasl.com/famous-deaf-people.html).
5. Emphasize some differences between hearing culture and Deaf culture (perhaps through role play).

#### Deaf-friendly Worship

Ideas includes:

1. Use the sound system consistently so hard-of-hearing and late-deafened people are able to hear or better hear.
2. Teach a song or a prayer in sign language (e.g. Jesus Loves Me in the children's message or the Lord's Prayer to the congregation).
3. Have a Deaf person help lead worship and/or sign the scripture reading. Have a sign language interpreter from the pew voice out loud what the Deaf person is signing.

4. A sermon that speaks to including all people, while emphasizing Deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, and Deafblind people. This can be the regular pastor who preaches with an interpreter or a preacher who is Deaf or who signs.  
Sermon Tips: Mark 7:31-37 touches on Deaf people or being open to Deaf people.  
1 Corinthians 1-11 touches on the spiritual gifts of Deaf people. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 touches on the diversity of the body of Christ.
5. Make the service more visual that might include the use of multimedia, a Christian drama, and/or liturgical dancing.
6. Have a soloist or a choir (or a few members of the choir) sign a song or two, like a children's choir or a youth choir.

## Promoting the Event

Be sure to promote the Deaf Awareness Sunday in your community. Ideas for promoting it include:

- Hearing Aid Centers
- Ear, Nose, and Throat doctor's offices
- Audiologist offices
- Public libraries
- Announce it on the church sign
- Post a flyer on the bulletin boards
- Announce it each week in the bulletin 3 to 4 weeks in advance
- Other Deaf ministries in the community
- Any schools that have a sign language class (a high school or college)
- On the church website (in case guests look up the church's website prior to it)

## DEAF MINISTRY SUNDAY

A Deaf Ministry Sunday is often planned and led by the Deaf ministry of the church (or its committee). It also includes aspects of a Deaf Awareness Sunday (accessibility, Deaf culture, and a Deaf-friendly worship service). In addition, it can bring attention to what your Deaf ministry is doing for the church, and can emphasize any involvement in the community. It can include:

1. A preacher who is Deaf or a hearing person who is proficient in sign language.
2. Hearing a testimony or two of some of the ministry highlights (or a short video that has ministry highlights).
3. A sign choir that includes your Deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, Deaf-blind people, and hearing people. Or, invite a Deaf/signing choir.
4. Teach a few signs or sign phrases during the announcements or during the children's sermon.
5. Consider asking Deaf, hard-of-hearing, late-deafened, and/or Deaf-blind individuals to be ushers who will pass out bulletins and/or take up the offering.
6. A children's sermon that has the game "red light – green light" and then after you have a winner, explain to the children how we all need to take the time to slow down (not be in a rush), so we can learn sign language and have relationships with Deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Be sure to teach a few signs as well. (Details of how to play the red light-green light game is found here: [www.gameskidsplay.net/games/sensing\\_games/rl\\_gl.htm](http://www.gameskidsplay.net/games/sensing_games/rl_gl.htm)).
7. A combination of your traditional service with aspects of your Deaf ministry can be done as well.
8. A resource table during coffee/donut hour that offers brochures about deafness, accessibility, and/or information about your Deaf ministry.  
Deaf-blind resources can be found here: [www.cadbs.org/fact-sheets/](http://www.cadbs.org/fact-sheets/).  
Hearing Loss Association of America brochures can be found here: <http://hearingloss.org/content/order-materials>
9. Announce any new missions the Deaf ministry is implementing or is currently involved with.
10. Invite special guests or headliners who can make the worship service even more enjoyable or worshipful.

11. Try to include Deaf culture, Deaf people, and the Deaf experience throughout worship.
12. Host a special lunch after worship that includes a Q and A about Deaf ministry, ministry highlights, or a guest speaker.

Reference

Yates, L. (2018). *Deaf Ministry: Ministry Models for Expanding the Kingdom of God, 2nd Ed.* Charlotte, NC: Create Space, Inc.