



United Methodist Committee of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Ministries

A BRIEF GUIDE FOR HOSPITALITY FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING VISITORS

Making Deaf and hard-of-hearing people feel welcome in church should be the mission of every church staff member who has an interpreted Deaf ministry. Most churches start out with an interpreter and one or two Deaf or hard of hearing people attending and grows over time. As Deaf and hard of hearing members increase and with God's leading, the church may provide clergy who sign and have a dedicated service just for those who want to worship solely in ASL. Here are some ideas for churches who feel led to begin the journey of welcoming, and depending on their needs, ministering to the Deaf and hard of hearing in their community.

1. An interpreter who is trained, preferably certified, is familiar with Deaf culture, knowledge of Methodism, and knowledge of the Bible.
2. If possible, ask for money to be included in the church budget that includes compensation for the interpreter, money for monthly Deaf socials, purchasing Easy to Read Bibles for the Deaf and hard of hearing, and other equipment or materials that might be needed.
3. Provide basic or "survival sign language classes" for staff or others in the community interested in communicating with Deaf and hard of hearing people.
4. Set up a FaceBook page that both a staff member and the interpreter can manage to make announcements of church events that will be interpreted as well as Deaf socials.
5. Set up a once-a-month fellowship time and invite Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, their families, Deaf or hard of hearing students, parents, interpreters, and anyone who is interested in Deaf culture. The socials should be open to the public and not necessarily for church members only. This should be an outreach activity for the community at large. Plan the activities for a 12-month period so everyone can "save the dates." Suggested themes could be Fall Roundup, Back to School, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas Cheer, Game Night, Sweetheart Night, St. Patrick Fellowship, April Showers, May Picnic, Summer Fun, and others. Fun, food, and fellowship is the goal!
6. Create a mailing list of Deaf and hard of hearing people in the community and send flyers to everyone announcing the upcoming fellowships and include at least one contact person who has VP or text messaging. Not everyone has access to the internet and not everyone has a computer.
7. Purchase a movable sign that can be set outside the building or near the door where Deaf and hard of hearing individuals will enter for the activity.
8. Make sure there is a designated area in the front of the sanctuary for the Deaf to sit for worship services. All greeters and church staff should know where the special seating is and respect the use of that space for the Deaf and hard of hearing individuals.



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9. Plan a special “Deaf” worship service/Deaf Ministry Sunday/Deaf Awareness Sunday once or twice a year. The speaker or clergy would be signing as well as other participants in the service. Make announcements and send flyers notifying the deaf community at large of the event. A pot-luck social could follow the service.
10. Include any Deaf and hard of hearing people to assist in other community and church mission projects. This helps others to see that Deaf and hard of hearing people are mission minded and desire to serve alongside of those ministering to those in need.
11. Ask for Deaf or hard of hearing volunteers to visit nursing homes and retirement centers where older Deaf and hard of hearing people live. Get them involved in their Deaf community.
12. Get to know each Deaf or hard of hearing person attending church personally and find out where they are in their life journey with God.
13. Other links for resources:
 - *<http://deafmissions.com/>
 - *<https://www.deafbiblesociety.com/>
 - *<https://www.facebook.com/deafcommunity/>
 - *<http://llumc.org/>
 - *<http://www.christdeafchurch-umc.org/>
 - *<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/glossary-american-sign-language-videos>
 - *<http://www.umcdhm.org/>
 - *<http://www.umcd.org/>