



# Lutheran Deaf Mission Society

deafjesus.org

## Models of Deaf Ministry

Introduction.....	2
Basic Assumptions.....	2
Models of Ministry .....	4
A. Deaf Congregations.....	4
B. Preaching Stations .....	5
C. Missionary-at-Large .....	6
D. Dual Parish: Deaf & Hearing .....	10
E. Part-time Deaf Ministry .....	11
F. Bi-vocational Ministry .....	13
G. Multi-staffed, Multi-directional Ministry.....	14
H. Lay-led Deaf Ministry .....	15
I. Interpreted Ministry.....	16
J. Real Time Captioning .....	17
Online Resources .....	18

## **Introduction**

For most of the 100+ years that The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has been active in mission and ministry to Deaf people in the United States and Canada, one model of missions has been used in most cases -- a full-time pastoral worker responsible for a congregation of Deaf people and/or a number of preaching stations. A large number of Deaf people, as well as hearing relatives, were led to the Lord Jesus Christ through this model of missions and were equipped to serve their Lord within this model.

This model of Deaf ministry mirrored what had been the standard model of Deaf education through the United States, and throughout the world. In the U.S., each State operated a single residential school, serving most Deaf children in that state. The residential school passed on the language, morés, lore, and traditions of the Deaf culture, and in the centralized residential schools, lifelong relationships were established within the Deaf community. Often students who graduated from the residential schools continued their relationships with each other through their mutual involvement in Deaf clubs and in the church.

The church also was the primary provider for social services to the adult Deaf population, services such as interpreting and vocational counseling.

In 1974, the United States Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142). The effect of this law was to expand Deaf education into local public schools. Nowadays most Deaf students are either been mainstreamed in hearing classrooms, or they are taught in self-contained "Deaf Ed" classrooms based in community public schools, giving the illusion of mainstreaming.

With the enactment of P.L. 94-142, enrollment in residential Deaf schools has decreased; some of those schools have close. The long term sociological effect has been to make the Deaf community more diffused and fragmented. Deaf people are now living in every city, town, village, and hamlet of our nation. And the church is no longer needed for social services, as those functions have been assumed by government agencies.

These social changes in the Deaf community, coupled with changes in the LCMS mission administration, has force us reshape our models and rethink our methods of Deaf ministry.

## **Basic Assumptions**

There are generally three elements which must be in place for the implementation of a fruitful Deaf ministry:

1. Deaf people who desire Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.

### *Models of Deaf Ministry*

2. Resource staff with the communication skills, expertise, and commitment to carry out the ministry.
3. Support from neighboring or hosting congregations and clergy.

An appropriate model for Deaf ministry in a given situation is one that, given the various elements of that situation, will:

1. Be oriented for mission outreach to the community, as well as for pastoral care and for ministry to members of the Deaf church/worshipping community;
2. Be oriented for equipping Deaf people of God to exercise their spiritual gifts within the body of Christ;
3. Be concerned for the Deaf person's entire family (including his Deaf/hearing parents, children, or siblings) and friends;
4. Be within the capabilities of the people served by that mission to substantially support that mission as soon as feasible.

Changes in a given situation can be expected. The population of Deaf people in a community may increase or decrease substantially because of changes in education and job opportunities for Deaf people. A Deaf ministry in that community would likely be affected. Thus, a model deemed appropriate twenty years ago may no longer be appropriate today. A periodic re-evaluation of each situation is necessary.

An ideal model is to have Christian Deaf people organized as a congregation exercising the rights and privileges of a congregation and assuming the responsibilities that accompany those rights and privileges. Situations vary, however; limited numbers and/or abilities of people are two factors that may indicate a mission that does not take the form of a congregation.

Three notes of caution are in order:

First, too often the primary criterion for evaluating and modifying methods of an existing Deaf ministry is strictly financial. Deaf ministry can be the casualty of an administrative business model which seeks to get "the biggest bang for the buck." Deaf ministry models that cost the least in terms of dollars may not be appropriate or effective for the population being served. A method of ministry which may save money may have a higher cost in terms of quality of pastoral care, outreach, and even the eternal souls of Deaf people and their families.

Second, one of the key elements of a fruitful Deaf ministry is longevity. Deaf people in the community have seen short-lived ministries come and go. It is no wonder that Deaf Christians often have a "wait and see" attitude when a new Deaf ministry is implemented. The ministries that earn respect and recognition in the Deaf community are the ministries that in it for the long haul.

Third, an effective ministry in the Deaf community includes Deaf Christians in leadership and

active ministry. We do well to focus our energies in encouraging ministries that are "by" and "of" the Deaf, rather than "for" the Deaf.

## **Models of Ministry**

The options listed below are not the only options possible. However, these models are or have been implemented in the church's mission to Deaf people. Most models assume that the primary staff person is an ordained individual with skills for Deaf ministry. Some models rely on trained lay ministers. And still others utilize the services of the laity (paid or volunteer).

*NO MODEL IS APPROPRIATE IN EVERY SITUATION.* The goal is to find the model that best provides opportunities for Deaf people in that area to grow in faith and in service.

- A. Deaf Congregations
- B. Preaching Stations
- C. Missionary-at-Large
- D. Dual Parish--Deaf/Hearing
- E. Part-Time Deaf Ministry
- F. Bivocational Ministry
- G. Multi-Staffed/Multi-Directional
- H. Lay-led Deaf Ministry
- I. Interpreted Ministry
- J. Real Time Captioning

### **A. Deaf Congregations**

#### **Description**

This has been the traditional approach and model of LCMS missions among the Deaf. It is characterized by *a full-time worker who is responsible for a congregation and perhaps a geographical area, called a field, sometimes with a number of "preaching stations."* Typically, this worker is responsible for the religious education of those Deaf students attending state residential schools for the Deaf in his area, though changes in policies and attitudes of those schools may have reduced this aspect of the mission. In this model, the Deaf congregation has often owned its own worship facility. In other instances, congregations of the Deaf have shared facilities with a hearing congregation.

#### **Advantages**

1. Deaf people feel ownership of THEIR congregation, pastor, and (where applicable) worship facility.

### *Models of Deaf Ministry*

2. The worker's primary responsibilities are to the members of the Deaf congregation and to Deaf people in the community.
3. Deaf people have control of the congregational life, activities, and history.
4. The mission has greater visibility in the Deaf community.
5. Given a Deaf community of sufficient size, this model has the greatest potential for growth.

#### **Disadvantages**

1. This is an expensive model, which usually depends on outside support from the mission program.
2. The National Census of the Deaf Population (1971) discovered that the median income of Deaf individuals was 72% of the median income of individuals in the population at large. Jerome Schein and Marcus Delk, Jr., *The Deaf Population of The United States* (Silver Spring, MD: National Association of the Deaf, 1974).
3. A trend toward "mainstreaming" Deaf students into hearing schools in recent years has reduced the number of children that are "reachable" by this mission, especially when the congregation is located in the small-town location of the state school for the Deaf.
4. In large metropolitan areas, the centralized church of the Deaf, though well located, is too far from the homes of many Deaf people to be effective in outreach.

## **B. Preaching Stations**

#### **Description**

This concept has been traditionally one aspect of model #1 as used in the LCMS. It is characterized by *a worker at a church of the Deaf in a "nearby" city coming on a regular (usually monthly or bi-weekly) basis to conduct worship services and to provide pastoral care.*

#### **Advantages**

1. This model provides occasional mission outreach to Deaf people in their own culture and language.
2. This allows people with communications skills to minister to more people.

#### **Disadvantages**

1. Worship services are generally not frequent enough to encourage spiritual growth.
2. The worker is not immediately available for pastoral care in emergency situations.
3. In-depth spiritual care is difficult.
4. Relatively little outreach occurs with this model.

5. Continuous travel is wearing on the pastor.

### **Frequency**

The wise use of the staff person's time suggests that the following frequency of staff-led services:

Average attendance:

- 1–5 Quarterly
- 6–10 Monthly
- 10+ Biweekly

It is important to remember that monthly (or less) worship services are really inadequate for spiritual growth. Options for supplementing periodic worship lead by the visiting pastor include:

- ☐ Lay-lead Bible study,
- ☐ Lay-lead worship,
- ☐ Video services, and/or
- ☐ Interpreted services.

## **C. Missionary-at-Large**

### **Description**

This model uses *a person who is proficient in sign language and experienced in Deaf missions to develop, encourage, and support local mission outreach to Deaf people within a District or a region within a District.*

1. Instead of this person providing all pastoral care directly within a congregation or preaching stations, this model has the person minister:
  - a. indirectly to one (or more) groups of Deaf people in many cases by training and equipping Deaf lay people to lead Bible study, caring ministries, worship, and fellowship ministries with fellow Deaf people, and
  - b. directly by leading major area-wide worship events and through crisis pastoral counseling.
2. This person will also assist pastoral, professional, or paraprofessional support staff from local hearing congregations to reach out with the Gospel to Deaf people.

Because a pastor is called "to equip the saints for ministry," he primarily carries out these tasks through training, encouraging, and supervising Deaf lay leaders and the staff of hearing congregations.

### **Responsibilities**

1. He trains lay people to:

### *Models of Deaf Ministry*

- a. lead Bible studies.
  - b. share Jesus.
  - c. care for the health and welfare of people.
  - d. lead informal worship.
  - e. plan fellowship opportunities.
  - f. partially train other leaders.
2. He supervises Christian education programs for Deaf individuals:
- a. Religious education classes for children and youth.
  - b. Bible study classes for youth and adults.
  - c. Youth activities with devotions.
3. Working with resource people, he:
- a. Keeps accurate survey statistics on Deaf people in various towns and cities of the area.
  - b. Identifies and encourages hearing congregations to serve Deaf individuals, and helps congregations interested in ministering to Deaf people understand that a balanced program of witness, education, leadership training, and pastoral care are all absolutely essential elements of any mission process.
  - c. Assists interested congregations find appropriate training resources and materials.
  - d. Regularly contacts and/or conducts training sessions for:
    - 1) Host pastors.
    - 2) Interpreters, teachers, and worship leaders.
    - 3) Caring lay leaders (serving as an elder).
    - 4) Plans and implements regular gatherings of all the Deaf members for special worship, education, and leadership training programs.
    - 5) Provides pastoral counseling and care when requested by host pastor for Deaf individuals with major crisis needs.

The vision of a Deaf congregation served by a Missionary-at-Large may be limited to wanting services for itself. One of the tasks of the MAL is to help members of the congregation expand their vision to share Jesus with many more Deaf people, and to participate with the MAL in reaching out to wider community with the Gospel.

### **Costs**

#### **...to the District**

The District directly pays the MAL's salary, housing, medical insurance, retirement (Worker

Benefit Plans or their equivalent) and travel expenses.

**...to the Congregation**

1. Since the pastor (MAL) is salaried by the District, the congregation receives no subsidy. The congregation pays all bills relating to a building, programs, etc.
2. The congregation supports the District mission from its member offerings.
3. The congregation may agree to reimburse the District for some of the District's expenses for the services of the pastor.

**Calling**

While the District is the entity which issues the Call to the MAL, the District and the Deaf congregation need to work as partners in the call process. The Deaf congregation ought to suggest the skills necessary for the MAL candidates and, as appropriate, be involved in the evaluation (interview) process. The Deaf congregation may suggest names of potential candidates and may approve the final call list.

The District then calls or contracts the person as a missionary-at-large and assigns him 1) to share Jesus with unchurched Deaf people throughout the designated area of the District and 2) to assist the Deaf congregation in its balanced program of nurture and outreach.

**Communication**

Also essential is regular communication between the parties involved (i.e., the District, hearing congregations, the Deaf congregation, and the Missionary).

Telephone relay, TTY's, faxes, and e-mail may be used between Deaf and hearing leaders who know each other.

Face-to-face communication is better since letters in the Deaf culture are often perceived to be "scolding."

The District should not use the MAL as the carrier of communication. He will lose his effectiveness with both sides.

The District should communicate with congregations and ministries served by the MAL through a District Deaf Ministry Steering Committee, including those ministries in the preparation of reports, evaluations, and budget proposals. The Steering Committee and representatives of the congregations assist the MAL in preparing a ministry plan including: a core values statement, a vision of ministry, goals, a mission statement, a financial plan, geographic boundaries and location of Deaf centers of ministry, etc.



### **Advantages**

1. This model encourages the use of small groups. These groups
  - a. create a feeling of an extended family.
  - b. encourage people to care for others and love one another.
  - c. emphasize inviting new people to join the group.
  - d. are less threatening to new people coming to learn.
  - e. encourage assimilation.
  - f. allow evangelism, stewardship and other programs to happen in natural settings.
  - g. encourage a feeling of people and groups as parts of the Body of Christ.
2. This model provides many opportunities to serve both hearing and Deaf members of the family.
3. This model provides many opportunities to reach Deaf children/youth who are mainstreamed in local schools.
4. This model overcomes the problems of distance and travel that make it difficult for them to worship regularly.
5. This model provides for regular weekly worship experiences (with local support staff), as well as for pastoral care that may require more expertise.
6. Deaf people feel ownership of THEIR congregation and leaders.
7. Deaf people have control of the congregational life, activities, and history.
8. The Deaf are encouraged to look beyond their own group to other groups of Deaf within the area and to help reach out to for them.
9. Deaf people have access to spiritual care via the staff of the participating congregations in the absence of the resource person.
10. There are fewer problems of ministers learning to communicate or understand the Deaf culture.
11. The District sees many more groups of people becoming involved in missions with Deaf people.
12. The MAL is also available and responsible to sensitize additional congregations and church workers in the District to the needs of Deaf people in their communities.

### **Disadvantages**

1. The groups start slow and require a lot of patience and training to begin.
2. Care of leaders, apprentice leaders, and hosts must be emphasized so that they don't "burn-out."
3. Care must be exercised to encourage the group to reach out and not just become a closed special interest group.
4. It will take considerable work to train the leaders.

5. It will take care and tenacity to find the best lay leaders.
6. Care must be exercised to help the lay leaders understand that they serve with the assistance of and under the supervision of the worker.
7. The worker may have a perceived or felt loss of control. This may be based on an assumption that we are in control only when we personally DO the work.
8. When the Deaf members live far from the church where the worker leads formal worship, they may have limited opportunities to receive the Lord's Supper. They are encouraged to receive the Lord's Supper at a LCMS church near their home. Arrangements should be made in advance.
9. There may not be clear-cut descriptions of activities and time so that all will understand what is happening and who is responsible for what work.
10. The MAL may not be available for pastoral care and counseling when the need arises (especially in emergency situations).
11. There is a potential danger of this MAL attempting to do too many projects with a resulting loss of quality in outreach.
12. Continuous travel is wearing on the pastor.

## **D. Dual Parish: Deaf & Hearing**

### **Description**

A number of variations are possible to this mode, which assumes that at least 50% of the pastoral work time is devoted to Deaf missions:

1. one pastor serving two congregations (in the same or in separate locations);
2. an assistant or associate pastor in a larger hearing church also serving a Deaf congregation (with the same options concerning location);
3. two pastoral workers (2 clergy or 1 pastor and 1 lay worker) serving two congregations as a team (both fully qualified for mission outreach among Deaf people).

### **Advantages**

1. This model provides greater opportunity to serve both hearing and Deaf members of the family (when both congregations are in the same location).
2. This model provides numerous opportunities to reach Deaf children/youth who are mainstreamed in local schools.
3. This model provides the hearing pastoral worker opportunity to work with people of his own culture, as well as cross-culturally with Deaf people. This may provide some additional satisfaction from mission service than when working only in a cross-cultural setting.
4. This model provides a base with more members for the financial support of this mission, thus

reducing the amount of resource sharing that is needed from the District.

5. It is possible that both groups could share the same facilities.

### **Disadvantages**

1. There is a tendency for people in either congregation to feel that the pastoral worker is involved too greatly in the other congregation's mission, especially when one worker serves two churches.
2. Extensive work in two cultures may tempt a person to be too busy to regularly feed himself through studying God's word which might lead to "pastor burn-out."
3. The hearing congregation—which may be seen as the "dominant" partner—often relegates the Deaf congregation to the status of "second-class citizenship."
4. Dedication of the hearing parish to continuing the dual mission outreach whenever there is a change in pastoral workers may pose a problem to the longevity of the mission with Deaf members.

### **Comments**

1. As with any team ministry, care must be exercised to insure a compatible working relationship between staff members.
2. Communication between the two congregations is important. When difficulties arise, a neutral third party may be helpful.
3. Periodic review is essential to insure that each congregation is receiving the mission focus it requires. If either or both grow significantly, additional staff or a division of the dual parish may be required.
4. An average attendance of 100 people in the hearing church and 30 people in the Deaf church may mark the upper limits of the number of people that can effectively be served by one pastor.
5. Essential to the success of this model is a position description with careful delineation of tasks and time allotted for the tasks.
6. Also essential is regular communication between the parties involved (i.e. District, hearing congregations, and the Deaf congregation). This should include minimally quarterly reports and an annual re-evaluation and if necessary redefinition of position description and times allotted.

## **E. Part-time Deaf Ministry**

### **Description**

This model differs from the dual parish only in that smaller numbers of Deaf people being served require smaller portions of the pastoral worker's time (less than 50%). At least two variations are

possible:

1. A pastor in a hearing congregation also serves a Deaf congregation/worshipping community (in the same or in separate locations.)
2. An assistant or associate pastor in a hearing church also serves a Deaf congregation/worshipping community.

### **Advantages**

1. This model provides many opportunities to serve both hearing and Deaf members of the family (when both congregations are in the same location).
2. This model provides many opportunities to reach Deaf children/youth who are mainstreamed in local schools.
3. This model provides the hearing pastoral worker opportunity to work with people of his own culture, as well as cross-culturally with Deaf people.
4. This model provides a base of more members for the financial support of this mission, thus reducing the amount of resource sharing that is needed from the District.
5. This model is well suited for use in smaller communities.

### **Disadvantages**

1. The pastor may not give enough "quality time" to the Deaf people being served.
2. The hearing congregation may not be dedicated to continuity in providing Deaf mission when there is a change in pastors.

### **Comments**

1. Communication between the two congregations is important. When difficulties arise, a neutral third party may be helpful.
2. Periodic review is essential to insure that each congregation is receiving the mission encouragement it requires. If either or both grow significantly, additional staff or a division of the dual parish may be required. A regularly scheduled process of communication of expectations and their effect on time required is necessary.
3. An average attendance of 100 people in the hearing church and 30 people in the Deaf church may mark the upper limits of the number of people that can effectively be served by one pastor.
4. Essential to the success of this model is a position description with careful delineation of tasks and time allotted for the tasks.
5. Also essential is regular communication between the parties involved (i.e. District, hearing congregations, and the Deaf congregation). This should minimally include quarterly reports and an annual re-evaluation and if necessary re-definition of position description and times allotted.

## **F. Bi-vocational Ministry**

### **Description**

This model is characterized by *a part-time worker who supports himself and his family through outside employment*. The worker typically serves a Deaf congregation with little or no District support. (This model of ministry has also been called "tent making" ministry, after St. Paul's method of self-support. The bi-vocational minister may also be referred to as a "worker-priest.") Bi-vocational ministry is usually implemented *by necessity* when financial support from the District is terminated, under one of two scenarios.

The first is that a Deaf congregation experiences a pastor vacancy on the departure of its pastor. In reassessing priorities and resources, the District may use the timing of the vacancy to discontinue ongoing support for Deaf ministry. The Deaf congregation may respond by raising a lay leader up from its own membership. The lay leader may receive special training and certification provided by the District, and thus receive official recognition for his service as a lay minister (or "Deacon") to his home congregation. The lay minister may receive a modest compensation from the congregation, but his primary support comes from his own resources (secular employment, or a retirement pension). (See further discussion of the Lay-Led Ministry Model below.)

The second scenario is one in which the District terminates support to the Deaf ministry while a full-time worker is still serving the ministry. If the worker is either unable or unwilling to leave his field of service, he may choose to continue his ministry with little or no compensation.

### **Advantages**

1. Without the worker's willingness to serve bi-vocationally, there may be no ongoing Deaf ministry at all.
2. Members of the Deaf congregation may meet the challenge of independence by taking greater responsibility for the responsibility, as they:
  - a. contribute to the worker's salary and benefits.
  - b. become more directly involved in the work of the ministry, making shut-in calls, evangelism visits, leading small group Bible studies, leading worship.
  - c. network with neighboring hearing congregations by forming a local Deaf Mission Society, through which they may raise funds and extend the Deaf congregation's mission outreach.

### **Disadvantages**

1. The bi-vocational model of ministry may impede effective ministry to the congregation and mission to the community.
  - a. The time needed for outside employment prevents the worker from giving more than the bare minimum of time needed for ministry. Normal activities in outreach and pastoral

care, such as shut-in calls, evangelism calls, pastoral counseling, and small-group home Bible studies are often a casualty. Bi-vocational ministries tend to function in maintenance mode rather than growth mode.

- b. The worker's outside employment may prevent him from attending pastoral conferences, training opportunities, and ministry related events. This isolates the worker from his normal network of mutual support.
2. The bi-vocational worker and his family may suffer financially.
- a. The worker's time spent in ministry limits his time for producing personal income. A spouse's income becomes a critical factor in the family's financial survival.
  - b. The bi-vocational church worker often is unable to obtain health insurance for himself or for his family (unless he is insured under his secular employment).
  - c. A church worker in Deaf ministry who loses financial support from the church often finds himself without secular credentials for a back-up career. The worker may be forced to incur extra debt for education or job training in a new profession.
  - d. A church worker who goes bi-vocational may experience a significant pay cut in starting a new career at the bottom of the pay scale.
  - e. Upon retirement, the bi-vocational worker may find his retirement benefits substantially lower than those of his full-time colleagues in either profession (church or secular), due to cessation of contributions to the Concordia Retirement Plan.

### **Comments**

When a hearing pastor serving in Deaf ministry suddenly finds himself without financial support from the Church, *theoretically* he has several options, including leaving Deaf ministry to serve in a hearing church. However, a Deaf pastor who finds himself without financial support from the church has very few options. Due to budget cuts which Deaf congregations and District mission programs have experienced, the pastor's chances of receiving a Call to another Deaf congregation are very slim. He typically has no alternative, but to seek non-church employment. And as a committed Christian, he likely will continue ministry as his limited time will allow.

## **G. Multi-staffed, Multi-directional Ministry**

### **Description**

This model is characterized by a *hearing congregation that has a commitment to a missions with Deaf people, so as to provide a staff person (full-time or part-time) who is responsible for this outreach*. This model differs from the preceding two models in that missions to Deaf people is incorporated into the entire ministry of the hearing congregation and the Deaf Christians are viewed as integral members of the hearing parish.

This model differs from the description in Interpreted Ministries, since in this model, the interpreter is viewed as part of the staff.

### **Advantages**

1. This model provides for integration of Deaf people into the life of the hearing congregation.
2. This model provides more opportunities to reach Deaf youth who are mainstreamed in local schools.
3. Programming can be planned—either separate from the hearing part of the congregation or jointly—as best meets the needs of the situation.

### **Disadvantages**

1. The Deaf people, being a small minority in the congregation, may feel overwhelmed by the hearing majority, and thus limit their participation in congregational life and activities.
2. Unless a significant number of caring hearing members in the congregation learn to communicate in sign language, Deaf people will feel isolated because of the communication barrier.

### **Comments**

1. This model depends on the dedication of the congregation to the ministry and on the active support of the entire staff, especially the pastors.
2. As with any team ministry, care must be exercised to insure a compatible working relationship between staff members.

## **H. Lay-led Deaf Ministry**

### **Description**

This model utilizes the services of *trained deaf lay minister, who in most respects functions as the pastor of a deaf congregation*. Training may be provided by the District, a Synodical university, or Synod's Deaf Institute of Theology (DIT). The lay minister is certified for ministry by the District. The title of the office which the lay minister holds varies among the Districts. "Deacon" is presently a popular title for the lay minister.

The Lay-minister often serves under remote supervision of a pastor.

The lay-led ministry model has many advantages and disadvantages in common with the bi-vocational model, with the following aspects unique to Lay-led Deaf Ministry.

### **Advantages**

1. The lay minister is a deaf person who is familiar with the local deaf community. He will typically have a better rapport with the community than would a hearing pastor serving in the same location.

2. This model typically raises up leaders for ministry from within the congregation, effectively utilizing God's gifts for ministry within the Body of Christ.

### **Disadvantages**

1. The quality and quantity of pastor supervision of a lay minister varies greatly. Ideally, the supervising pastor knows Sign and understands Deaf culture, but this may not always be the case.
2. The depth and breadth of theological training which the lay minister receives varies greatly. A lay minister may serve without an adequate understanding of Law/Gospel hermeneutics.
3. Limitations determined by the District and by State Law may restrict some aspects of the lay minister's functions, e.g. performing weddings.

## **I. Interpreted Ministry**

### **Description**

This model is characterized by *a hearing congregation providing an interpreter (paid or volunteer) for worship services and other activities.*

### **Advantages**

1. Those Deaf young people who are (were) mainstreamed in school may feel more comfortable when mainstreamed in church.
2. This model provides for integration of Deaf people into the life of the hearing congregation.
3. This model provides greater opportunity for a congregation to serve the needs of hearing members of the family, particularly deaf children of hearing parents.
4. This model often provides opportunities for deaf Christians to worship and fellowship in a location nearer to their residence than the nearest deaf church.
5. This model provides opportunities for Christian worship more frequently than a monthly preaching-station ministry.
6. This model utilizes unique gifts for ministry which God has given to members of Christian congregations.
7. This model is well suited for serving small groups of people at little cost.

### **Disadvantages**

1. This model generally limits the participation of Deaf people in the life of the congregation to those activities which are interpreted, typically the Sunday morning worship services.
2. Deaf people are dependent upon the availability and the ability of the interpreters for meaningful participation.
3. The language barrier that a pastor experiences when he is not conversant in Sign gives him



and his Deaf members a sense of isolation from each other.

4. Pastoral counseling for Deaf members is prolonged or complicated (and often avoided by Deaf people) because of the "intrusion" of a third party (the interpreter).
5. The interpreter may acquire the role of "assistant pastor" even though he/she is not qualified for that role.
6. Denominations using this model have discovered that little outreach and growth results from this model, with groups remaining generally at ten people or less.
7. Interpreters are often difficult to locate in communities where this model would be most feasible (those with small Deaf populations).
8. Interpreters often do not receive adequate training and support.
9. A large majority of Deaf people do not favor interpreted worship. Just like hearing people, they prefer to receive the Word of God and to worship Him in their own heart-language, rather than constantly receiving only a translated message that was prepared and presented for another language and another culture.

### **Comments**

1. The low cost of implementing this model should not be the primary factor in choosing it for a situation.
2. The congregation must be encouraged to see the needs within the congregation, e.g., a family with a Deaf member.
3. The pastor must be strongly supportive and approachable.
4. The interpreters must continually upgrade their interpreting skills.
5. Opportunity should be provided for occasional separate times of fellowship for Deaf members, including Bible studies and worship events.

For a more thorough discussion on interpreted ministry, refer to **Hearing Congregations Working with Deaf People.**

## **J. Real Time Captioning**

### **Description**

Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) is the technical name for the service which provides hearing impaired consumers written text of spoken material. The system requires a specially trained stenocaptioner, certified through the National Association of Court Reporters (NCRA), utilizing a stenotype machine, notebook computer, and real-time captioning software to display instant speech-to-text translation on a video monitor. Hearing churches which provide real-time captioning of Sunday worship usually display the text on a large screen through a video projector. Some churches which customarily project a video image of the preacher and worship leaders include real-time captions at the bottom of the screen.

### **Advantages**

While Sign Language interpreters only benefit those who use Sign as their primary mode of communication, Real-time captions also benefit people who do not sign. Worshippers who have lost their hearing in old age, folks who are clinically classified as hard-of-hearing, and the small population of deaf people who never learned sign experience inclusion in public worship through real-time captioning.

### **Disadvantages**

1. Usually only very large hearing churches are able to afford to provide real-time captioning for hearing impaired worshippers, because...
  - a. CART services are very expensive.
  - b. The display of captions requires specially installed equipment.
2. Given a choice, many Deaf people prefer Sign translation over real-time captioning, because...
  - a. Many Deaf people who use Sign as their primary mode of communication handle English as a foreign language. The meaning of common English idioms and vocabulary are easily lost.
  - b. Written text lacks the speaker's inflection which can more clearly be presented in Sign.

### **Online Resources**

[www.DeafJesus.org](http://www.DeafJesus.org)

Several helpful resources for Deaf ministry are available through this web site:

- ❑ downloadable text translations of worship materials
- ❑ streaming video clips demonstrating signs for religious vocabulary
- ❑ streaming video of Deaf sermons and Bible studies
- ❑ video and printed resources for Deaf lay-led ministries
- ❑ links to organizations that sell video and printed materials useful in Deaf ministry
- ❑ links to an Email group for Lutheran church interpreters
- ❑ information about
  - the International Lutheran Deaf Association (ILDA)
  - the Deaf Institute of Theology (DIT)
  - the Church Interpreter Training Institute (CITI)