

THE INTERPRETER CONNECTION

Issue 3

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Teaming: The Art of Working Together

PART THREE

TIn Teaming: The Art of Working Together we have explored the purpose of a team and what kind of a team you want to have. Now we will discuss the nuts and bolts of teaming.

Teaming reminds me a lot of a vehicle. My car, for example, gets me from point A to point B. When I look under the hood, I see a bunch of parts all held together by nuts and bolts. Without those nuts and bolts, the engine would fall apart. The same thing can be said of teaming. Without knowing your team preferences or figuring out the important aspects of the assignment that day, your vehicle (or the message presented into American Sign Language) won't go anywhere.

What are the nuts and bolts of teaming? This would be all of the information put together. You and your team need to decide what the target language is for the client: the preferred language of the Deaf client that you are interpreting for.



Deaf group from Brazil provides a special song in Portuguese Sign Language for GC Session.

Sometimes this is more English signing, possibly Pidgin Signed English and most of the time it means American Sign Language. You and your team need to discuss where to sit so the working interpreter (the one actively engaged in interpreting) can see the team. Most of the time this is not an issue, but there are times when cramped seating arrangements make it difficult to see one another.

Both the interpreters must discuss how long the working interpreter will be interpreting. Will the time be 15 minutes or 20 minutes? How will you switch when it is time? Will the team interpreter slide out the edge of their seat or will they stand? If the working interpreter is missing information and falling behind, how will the team notify them to switch out early? How will you decide to

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Beginning a Deaf Church Service in Edinburg, Texas

I imagine yourself as far south as Miami but in Texas. That's where the Edinburg church is located, about 10 miles from the Mexican border. If you've watched the TV program "Border Wars," we're in the middle of that area.

At first we would interpret every church service but it just seemed like there were gaps in the service, times of silence during music and sermons that jumped between points so fast it made you dizzy trying to interpret. You couldn't stop the preacher to clarify anything or take time to explain a difficult passage.

"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... Honestly, Deaf people are not driving past your church every day thinking, 'I sure wish they would interpret their services...'"

– Esther Doss, *Can You Hear Us?*

We sometimes casually mentioned, "It would be nice to have a deaf church in our own building." But it seemed a dream that would happen in the far future when we had more members.

How the Deaf Church Started

An evangelist had a series of

meetings at the church and after one meeting he approached me, "Why don't you join me and

interpret as I travel to different cities?"

We discussed the possibility but it wasn't feasible at the time.

It was then that a planted seed started growing, wanting to do something more, right here in the local area.

We had three leaders in our group, Gloria, our main interpreter, Jennifer, a very experienced Deaf leader, and me. "Why can't we have signed church services in our own church, separate from the hearing church?" we asked ourselves.

So we took our plan to the church board and they were very supportive of the idea. I was surprised when the pastor commented, "It's about time you did this." Sometimes I just don't think "out of the box" and need a little prodding to get moving.

We decided to have the signed service twice a month in the library which doubled as a meeting room.

Gloria printed a bulletin and we decided who would do the prayer, offering, sermon and other activities.

"A Deaf church can feel like a breath of fresh air to a Deaf person... The message and all information shared are in sign language, their first language. Also, Deaf people best learn interactively. ...they are free to ask questions, seek clarification, and discuss meaning together."

– Esther Doss, *Can You Hear Us?*

A few minutes before the service started, we set up a Plexiglas pulpit we had found in storage, reconfigured the chairs, and set up the computer, screen, and a newly purchased projector. The library became our sanctuary.

Now we can choose our own sermon subject, adjusting the program to fit our needs.

Now, unlike interpreting in the hearing church where we followed a speaker and the hearing program, we can choose the pace and stop any time and answer questions, or discuss the meaning. A sermon about music is probably not too relevant but now we can choose our

Start Your Own Deaf Church Service

own sermon subject, adjusting the program to fit our needs.

Challenging but rewarding

In organizing a Deaf Service you may become less of an interpreter and more of a lay-pastor. An interpreter may stay somewhat apart from the clients but not so with having a separate church service. You become very involved with the members.

Like any group or church, it is not without challenges. People come and go and conflicts arise that must be met. It requires dedication, work, and perseverance but the benefits are great.

In the preparation of your service you will study and worship more, and, with the goal of sharing the gospel with others. It has changed my life and it will change yours. I thank God for the Deaf and how my association with them has helped my spiritual life.

I very highly recommend trying a Deaf service at your church, even if you only have one or two people attending. Your members may like it so much that your new problem may be to get them to come to an interpreted service.

Think about it. Pray about it. You can do it!

Tim Whitehouse is the Deaf Ministries leader and ASL interpreter from Edinburg, TX and is currently helping standardize religious signs for ASL. He works in his own business developing medical software.

Even if you feel you are shy or not skilled enough to give a sermon or have a church service, you don't need to fear: you can start a signed church service. Here are a few tips from our experience.

- Lose yourself in the love of Jesus and you will forget your shyness and not worry about mistakes you may make. Read in the Bible how the disciples went from fighting among themselves to being humble and feeling the need to spread the gospel and save people. Spend time every day in your personal worship. Focus on whatever it takes to communicate a clear message of the gospel.
- If your presentation is long you may worry about getting through the material before potluck and then you won't cover it well. Shorter is better and leaves time for questions and discussion. You also won't worry about the time so your message will be clearer. Think of it like teaching, with more interaction than a sermon. Adapt your service to your presentation skills and your audience, for example the group's communication level.
- Develop slides with presentation software using many pictures and fewer words. Following the slides makes it easy to remember where you are in the sermon. Make your message simple and whatever subject you present, connect it with Jesus and the cross and that will give your message more power.
- Finding free and non-copyrighted illustrations can be challenging for any preacher. In a Deaf service more is better. Here are some free resources:
 - Bible stories illustrated at <http://www.freebibleimages.org/>
 - Wikimedia Commons at <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki>
 - Many clip-art images are free
- Many old paintings don't have copyrights or it has expired
- Your slide text should be a simple sentence leading into your slide idea. Then you can expand on that in your presentation. Dialog can add interest to the slides and can be done by using call-outs showing who's talking.
- Invest the help of others. Sometimes Crystal, a deaf member, would practice the sermon with me and give me advice on how to better sign a passage, for example, by interacting with the pictures on the screen. During the sermon she would sit near the front and stop me to make sure difficult word meanings and passages were clear, and sometimes re-sign the passage. If you can, have someone else voice so you can focus on signing. If you don't like the idea of standing then be more informal and sit. It's even better if you have a Deaf member who is able and willing to teach.

Interpreting Songs

Live music makes or breaks a public venue. Music is ubiquitous in social events, and our Church is no different. Many of us, being interpreters, try the tantalizing challenge of expressing English songs in American Sign Language early in their careers. We enjoy tackling this challenge as a way to advance our language mediation skills while giving artistic performances. When we get better at interpreting songs, we see that as evidence of our skill advancement.

Music is an artistic expression of ideas and emotions through form and harmony using vocal and instrumental sounds. It sets the moods, facilitates transitions within stories, or tells a whole story. Music as a story-telling tool is gaining ground in some circles within the Deaf community, but it is nowhere as advanced as it is within the auditory-based cultures. For many Deaf people, inadequate access to communication has muddled and detracted from the messages being shared through songs. For this reason, although interpreters are able to interpret the lyrics, many of those songs do not resonate with Deaf people, and there are not many skilled ASL singers.

The cultural context in music is like the turkey and jellied cranberries

The cultural context in music is like the turkey and jellied cranberries for Thanksgiving to an American.

for Thanksgiving to an American. The imagery and content must be relevant to the listener to activate the enjoyment factor. Even if Deaf people have little or no exposure to the concept of music, they appreciate visual music through clearly signed words, emotional expressions on the face, body movements, in addition to vibrations. Some Deaf people are able to process sound with help of assistive technology, but they do not fully address the cultural context necessary to engage the listeners. This task becomes more complicated when we

recognize that nearly all songs are auditory in nature, so the context also needs to be shared. Well then isn't this where we the interpreters come into picture? Sure, if we are willing to go off script to add cultural context relevant to the audience seeking access.

To interpret, we create an equal meaning in the target language expressed in the source language, recognizing the underlying concepts. Yet, when our brains are churning, we struggle with the language or cultural mediation, and falter with the delivery. Or we could

go the other extreme, and become artistic performers who make sense only to the audience members who already have the privilege of access to the auditory aspect of the songs. When I, as a Deaf person, listen to an interpretation of an English-to-ASL song, I appreciate interpretations that directly expresses the concepts represented by symbolic language. The need for context is also true for interpretations of ASL songs into English. It is important to strike a balance between language use and artistic expression and culturally relevant without going off the message shared through music.

The best interpretations of English-to-ASL songs are sung when the signers express the story and articulate its underlying concepts in a way that can be related to by Deaf people themselves. The following are some suggestions on how to sing amazing songs in sign language.

When considering the best way to convey lyrics, keep it simple by going

with the meaning, following basic ASL grammar rules. With choruses, go creative by signing the action verbs in different ways; stick to the movement form, but alternate your choice of words, repeating some

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of them to create a sense of rhythm. Remove prepositions such as "the,"

“a(n),” and use other prepositions as modifiers of verbs. Be conscious of your use of space and the movement of your body. As with any platform interpreting, your signs need to be slightly bigger but do not unnaturally contort your body to make them bigger. Remember also your affect for this sets the tone! If there are no lyrics yet, identify the instruments being played, and describe the beat. If possible, describe also the pitch of the vocal music. As an exercise, try singing the lyrics in ASL without the English accompaniment. Ask yourself afterward, did the story or message being told make sense? With all this, the interpretation of music into ASL becomes complete.

Remember, songs are stories told in the context of our social settings, and when being interpreted, this context needs to be described to engage the audience members. Much like singing,

the art of interpretation lies in the delivery of culturally relevant concepts in a different language. Yet, too often the songs are interpreted in a manner that the meaning behind context is left out, and the word choices where only the hearing listeners are the audience members who appreciate the visual aspect. To do the job right, interpreters must keep in mind the story being told, and articulate that using context that is directly relevant to the Deaf participants. Adapting auditory context to a visual context is an important task that, when developed by interpreters, presents a more accurate evidence of our skill development.

Margie English, a Deaf Interpreter and a long-time resident of DC Metropolitan area, churches at Deaf Evangelistic Adventist Fellowship in Silver Spring, MD. Come and join us when you're in the area!

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let the working interpreter know they are doing a good job? Will that be thumbs up or a head nod? Will the team interpreter and working interpreter use a notebook to write notes back and forth while working? All these things make the teaming scenario a more successful one.

Finally, discussing feeding with your team is important. The term feeding is used when the team interpreter is signing or voicing (if you are voicing for the Deaf client) parts that the working interpreter has missed in their interpretation. In many situations, this means you are signing the missing information back to your working interpreter. Will the working team interpreter just sign it to the working interpreter? How will the working interpreter incorporate that feed back into their interpretation? What if the missed information was something simple such as a chapter in the scripture the pastor said in his sermon? Again, these are all valid questions to ask the person that you are working with before you start working together.

One of the things I enjoy about interpreting at Volunteer Park Church in Seattle is having a fabulous team interpreter who works along with me. It makes the ministry work that much sweeter. You can have the same experience as well! The most important thing to remember is that God taught us in the Bible to love one another. Working with other people is often times difficult and hard to do, but love covers a multitude of sins.

From the Editor



Greetings! I first want to apologize for this edition being a bit behind. I had a death in the family and my life was put on hold for a bit. I had promised an article about Roger Gates in this edition, but I am still working on putting that together.

I hope that this edition will continue to help you, give information about interpreting and/or help to improve upon your skills. Enjoy!

Do you want to contribute? Send all articles or points of interest for *The Interpreter Connection* to

7thdayterps@gmail.com. Thank you for all of your services for God!

—Nohe

2015 General Conference Session

The GC Session took place in San Antonio, Texas July 1 – July 11, 2015. The time spent doing God's work in Texas was phenomenal. The interpreting team was comprised of three individuals: Grace Ann Ashley from New York, Darrell Strait from California, and Nohe Jarnes from Washington State.

We interpreted for morning session, some afternoon sessions, Women's Ministry Meetings, some business sessions, and evening meetings as well as assisted with the Adventist Deaf Ministries International (ADMI) booth. The Alamo Dome (where the meetings were held), our hotel, and the Convention Center were located in different areas, forcing us to walk daily. I calculated that I walked about 3-5 miles daily.



Larry Evans (far right), Adventist Deaf Ministries International liaison, poses with the Deaf group from Brazil



Taida Rivero, an interpreter from Spain, provides sign language interpretation in Spanish for a presentation.

Although a few Deaf joined us in the audience, many more joined us online globally through the Hope Channel live stream. It was a blessed time working at GC Session and

all enjoyed working for God. News about ADMI is getting out and we are excited to see this ministry grow! Please continue to pray for the ministry and those leading out in it.

UPCOMING INTERPRETER/DEAF EVENTS

Are you interested in becoming a professional interpreter? Do you want more information on what an interpreter does on a daily basis? The National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) has a link that you can view to learn more about being an interpreter: DiscoverInterpreting.com.

December 30, 2015 - January 3, 2016 – Planning on attending GYC this year? Given some thought to interpreting at GYC? Interpreters are needed! This year GYC will be held in Louisville, KY and there is a desperate need for interpreters. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact Ariana Brinckhaus the Interpretation Coordinator, at interpretation@gycweb.org. Ariana indicated that certain expenses for interpreters will be covered by GYC.

Interested in becoming a certified interpreter? Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) has announced a credentialing moratorium for one year. More information about this can be found at <http://www.rid.org/rid-credentialing-moratorium-faq/>

Considering taking your NIC exam to become certified? Not sure where to begin to study for the test? Love2ASL has an online NIC study workshop you can take from the comfort of your own home. For more information, prices and dates, go to love2asl.com. On the right, about halfway on the page, are titles for workshops about the NIC test.