

Video remote interpreting: A new avenue to communicate with the deaf

By Matthew Buchholz, member of the WELS Mission to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Growing up, I attended church services even though I have a severe to profound hearing loss. The key to receiving a clear understanding of the message is “visualization.” My personal preference was a printed sermon. Without it, I had no idea how much I missed. With it, I realized that God’s Word was powerful and inspiring! I was stunned at how much meaning my pastor delivered in every sermon.

Imagine how difficult it is for someone with a severe hearing loss to get everything being said. “I wonder how much I missed? Have I understood the full meaning of God’s Word?”

Technologies such as FM systems, hearing loops, and real-time captioning can help, but communication barriers still exist for people with hearing loss. They may receive a limited portion of the message, but still feel like outsiders in a hearing world.

Sign language interpreters at every service would be ideal, but most churches do not provide them. Now there is a solution. It’s called VRI (video remote interpreting), and it allows you to connect to sign language ability in real time. You’ll need high speed Internet access and a laptop, tablet, or smart phone with a webcam.

Video remote interpreting is set up like video conferencing technologies, such as Skype, Google Hangouts, or FaceTime. VRI is an answer to providing an interpreter for your worship service, and to ensure that the Word can do its work successfully.

Once the online connection is established, a skilled interpreter can remove the barriers between the speaker and the person with hearing loss. The deaf user simply watches the interpreter on the screen, translating in sign language. Communication is two-way: the deaf person can sign back to the interpreter, and the hearing person will hear the interpreter’s voice translating sign into spoken English.

Interpreters can be arranged for the sermon only or for the entire service, or counseling and other uses.

To find out more on video remote interpreting, go to www.openvri.com. You can request an interpreter at www.purple.us/vri or at www.codabrothersinterpreting.com.

Here are some of the highlights of VRI.

- Skilled or certified interpreters
- Arrange a meeting time in advance
- Affordable price per minute
- No travel cost for the interpreter

VRI opens new opportunities to reach people in your community who are deaf or who have significant hearing loss. Will your congregation offer this new way of communication?

Be knowledgeable, be friendly, and be open with your congregation members today.

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