

## **Providing Sign Language at Liturgy**

*Maryann Barlett, Ministry With Persons With Disabilities*

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You may be asked to provide an American Sign Language Interpreter for a Wedding, Baptism, Confirmation, or a Funeral. My hope is that this article will aid you in this.

You may be contacted by a family member or by the Deaf person. If the Deaf person contacts you, they may call through the Missouri Relay. An operator will ask you if you have used the Relay before, and then they will assist with your call. The Operator will become the voice for the Deaf person and sign or type whatever you say. The Deaf person will read your responses, or watch them signed on a computer screen.

Once the arrangements are made, please call my sidekick (816) 217-8284. I will schedule an interpreter.

If there is a reception, or an interment service at the grave site, please let me know, so I can schedule the appropriate amount of time.

To provide adequate preparation time, the interpreter will need the following as far in advance as possible:

- List of all music
- Prayers of the Faithful
- Readings, including the Psalm
- Name(s) of people involved: Deaf person(s), person involved, and the Priest

American Sign Language is NOT English turned into signs. It is a conceptual language. The interpreter will be signing the meaning, not word-for-word. Music tends to be poetry, and the meaning is not always literal. The interpreter will need time to analyze the meaning and connect the concepts to the scriptural readings.

**On the day of the event**, the interpreter will need a music stand, set up so that the Deaf person is able to see the ambo, the altar, and the interpreter.

The first pew, in front of the interpreter, will need to be reserved for the Deaf person. Since communication is visual, the Deaf person must have an unobstructed view.