



## Captioning at New Life Church in Milton, Ontario, Canada

- by *Pat Gardiner, CSR, CRI*

When you have spent 26 years of your life sitting at a stenographer's machine, taking down what is said in courtrooms, depositions, meetings, conventions, et cetera, one wonders how or if God could ever use the talent you possess.

In 1996, after hearing a message entitled "Use What's In Your Hand", given by my pastor, Pastor Dan Rogge, at New Life Church in Milton, Ontario, Canada, I wondered if somehow there could be an opportunity to use my professional court reporting skills for God's purposes. At the time I had just completed a short course on captioning, taking my court reporting skills a step further. There is no denying God's timing and how He prepares us for what the future holds.

Some time later I shared with Pastor Dan what God was possibly speaking to my heart. I didn't know much about captioning at that time, but was willing to allow God to use me in whatever way he desired.

After dreaming of ideas together, Pastor Dan and I realized that there was not one church in Canada meeting the need of reaching the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community through captioning church services. No models, no mentors. Oh, no! The challenge was great, yet God proved so faithful and, as He began to open one door after another, I walked through each one, with the support and encouragement of my pastor.

It wasn't long before I found myself sitting in the front row of the sanctuary on Sunday morning, desperately trying on my steno machine to keep up with the rapid pace of the sermon. Fast announcements were even more challenging, not to mention those sermons with the names of Old Testament personalities and places. I just wanted to yell out, "Slow down! And how do you spell 'Nebuchadnezzar', anyways?!"

Despite initial challenges, though, the dream of a captioning ministry was beginning to unfold. It was even profiled coast to coast on a television program, "100 Huntley Street". We were all excited at what God was doing! Then, about a month after our television appearance, I began to feel numbness in two fingers on my left hand. What was this all about? Surely it will pass.

But as time progressed and after months of medical visits and tests, I realized that this could very well be a permanent mark on my profession, and even more devastating, an end to the church captioning we had started. Questioning God and His timing filled

my days. Why me? Why now? What about those who cannot hear and need to see those sermons on the screen? If I can't do it, who will?

Once again, God came to the rescue! All I did was share the dream with other professionals in the workplace, and God did the rest. He spoke to their hearts and fueled the passion within them. One by one, captioners began to commit their time and talent to the work God had started at New Life.

Looking back, I see that God's hand was in each decision, circumstance and so called 'coincidence'. I remember specifically praying for God to lead me to the people I should include, people that He was already preparing, and those whose lives would be touched by their involvement in this ministry.

Today, at New Life Church, the captioning team consists of seven people, six captioners and myself as coordinator. Denise Agard, Joanne Anderson, Phyllis Doel, Diane LeBlanc, Caroline Sebastian, and Terry Wood are the captioners, and they are the 'cream of the crop'! We all come from different backgrounds – Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Jewish, Lutheran, Pentecostal, and United. Religious walls have come down and, together, we are a team with a vision that all people with a hearing loss will be able to attend a church service and 'hear' what is being said.

Our ministry has grown and now includes captioning New Life's Easter plays and then sending the captioned videos to several countries around the world. It also involves writing articles, encouraging and teaching reporters how to provide CART/captioning for their churches. We have appeared on television, and have spoken as a guest speaker at various functions.

### **How the captioning works at New Life Church:**

As Pastor Dan is speaking, the captioner takes down his words on a steno machine. The code from the steno machine is then translated into English, and the English and live video are put up on two television monitors for at least half of the congregation to see, including people that are Deaf, deafened, and hard of hearing. The 10:00 a.m. Sunday service at New Life is captioned, and we caption special events such as Easter plays and Kids' Choir musicals.

### **For more information please contact:**

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