

BLESSINGS

- by Pat Gardiner

"For so many years, Jenni sat silently in a church, never hearing a word, never really being able to participate. It was heartbreaking," was the quote in a Dallas News article that immediately caught my attention.

I read further, and discovered that Jenni is an outgoing 16-year-old high school student who reads lips pretty well, but when you're sitting in the congregation, the pastor's mouth is pretty difficult to see. If you have a pastor who doesn't stand still behind the pulpit, and walks around a lot, the difficulty becomes even greater.

During a church service, Jenni's parents, Katherine and Jim Harrison, tried pointing things out to her in the church bulletin or in the hymnal to help her keep up, but that wasn't enough.

It got to the point where if the Harrison family couldn't find a place where Jenni's needs could be met, they just weren't going to attend church anymore. Such were the thoughts and feelings of Jenni's parents as they went to a variety of churches near their home in Dallas, Texas.

In their search for a church, they often heard the following responses: "Well, we don't have a deaf [or captioning] ministry. We really wish we did. Maybe someday we will. We'll have to discuss that."

They almost gave up, but then came across Prince of Peace Lutheran Church (in the Carrollton area). There a greeter asked them two questions: What are you looking for in a church, and what are your needs? The Harrisons gave the church their answer.

The church's response? The church was eager to accommodate their daughter, and Andrea Green, CSR, RMR, CRR, was asked to provide CART for the 9:15 a.m. service that has an average attendance of about 550.

After reading the Dallas News article, I couldn't wait to contact the CART provider, Andrea! Please tell us more about yourself, and give us your thoughts on providing CART for a church. I included a few questions she might like to answer.

Andrea explained that she started reporting in 1981, when she was 20 years old. She is married, and has a four-year-old daughter, Annie. Andrea says "Annie is the reason I became interested in CART. I was looking for more of a structured schedule so I could be available for her."

"What do you get out of providing CART for the church?" I asked. "My experience so far has been nothing but positive with providing CART to the church," Andrea answered. "It doesn't feel like work providing CART in church. I enjoy the music, the sermon, and being in an environment where people come together by choice, (not Subpoena). It's a blessing to be able to use my skill to help others hear the word of God. And, in the meantime, I am inspired and recharged for the week by the material I am writing."

"What is a highlight for you?" I asked. Andrea said, "The highlight for me is each time someone

new discovers CART. The church asked me to provide CART for an all-day prayer seminar, but nobody was using it. Just as I was convinced it wasn't needed that day, I saw a gentlemen sitting in front of the TV and reading every word. We ended up having lunch together, and he told me he was a retired pastor and had been unable to hear a sermon for quite some time.

"On Easter Sunday, the sanctuary was so full, I was trying to figure out how to wade through the people to turn on the TV when a young man asked me if there was anything available for the hearing impaired. It seemed like a miracle that he asked me, and I was able to tell him about CART."

Any challenges? "The challenge for me was the new terminology, after 2 years of court and deposition work. The last few years, I've been providing CART in different settings, but I've still had to do a lot of dictionary input. The church e-mails the bulletin to me, and it has an outline with Bible verses. I look up the verse and put in the names and places referenced. They also send me a prayer list with ten to fifteen names. Refining and expanding my dictionary is now a big part of my job, but I enjoy doing it."

Do you get to speak with the ones you are captioning for? "After church, over coffee and donuts outside the sanctuary, I always talk with the original family that requested CART. We enjoy discussing how to get the word out about our 'hearing ministry', and ways to improve the setup. They are very excited about it and give me nothing but positive feedback. Even when 'Amorites' comes up 'am rights', sins translates as 'since', and other conflicts occur that I'm still trying to forget, they tell me what a wonderful job I've done."

Andrea says, "There has been some discussion about using CART for the 11 o'clock service in the future. When I started, Jenni needed the CART, and now my audience has doubled. There are two relying on it. But there is interest from the congregation in having CART for the 11 o'clock, so there may be more out there needing it."

Yes, now Jenni can participate in a church service and, from a CART provider's perspective, what a blessing to be able to give and receive all at the same time! Blessings for both Jenni and Andrea!

FAQ

A frequently asked question is how do I build my dictionary? Try this amazing program by Monette Benoit and Robert W. McCormick! The Professional Advanced Drills series of CD-ROMs are application programs that are designed to give you a variety of practice exercises containing specific categories of information relating to specific topics. One of the topics is religion, and can be used alongside Monette's book, "The Universal Religions, Ethics, and Philosophy Handbook". If you want a way to build up your religious dictionary, this is it! It is an easy to use program, easy to read manual, and a fun way to learn. There are drills that you can practice in three separate modes -- flash mode, dictation mode, and jumble mode. You can even create your own drills that you need to practice. You can control the speed; you build, you expand! It is much more than lists of words. To order contact Monette at monettebenwah@sprynet.com or www.CRRBooks.com.

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