

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

SPIRITUAL NURTURE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED:
IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH

By
CAROLINE 'AYUMA' MAPESA

A Thesis submitted to the Graduate School in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Christian Education

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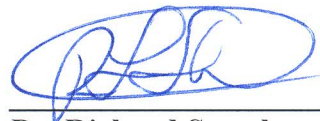
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July, 2002

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Student's Declaration

SPIRITUAL NURTURE FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented here are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed)

Caroline Ayuma Mapesa

July, 2002

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to develop theory about meeting spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired. Two congregations of the hearing impaired in Nairobi were used. The study incorporated interviews with ten members of the two congregations under study as well as several site observations. Three video documentaries were also used.

A three-element phenomenon was ascertained. The first was studying the culture of the Deaf Community to be familiar with it, accept the deaf in their culture and be sensitive to it as one endeavors to nurture the deaf spiritually. The second element was communication issues. The deaf only communicate effectively in their local sign language. Sign language could also be supplemented with interpretation, lip reading, and the written page. The communication of the Christian message in the deaf language led to spiritual growth. The third element was deaf fellowships which participants included deaf churches, children and youth fellowships, school ministry and other deaf forums in which the deaf met for spiritual nurture. The deaf fellowships required deaf leadership in form of deaf pastors, evangelists and other deaf church workers. This ensured conducting of spiritual nurture programs in the deaf language and culture.

A visual model of the entire process of meeting spiritual nurture needs was advanced. Suggestions were made to facilitate meeting of spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired.

To:

The people, Deaf and Hearing, involved in Christian ministry to the deaf for their selfless ministry among the Deaf community; and the entire Deaf community in Kenya and the world whom Christ shed his blood for.

My studies at NEGST would not have been possible without the financial support from Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS-Kenya), Friends, Overseas Council and the NEGST Scholarship Committee

Above all I am forever grateful to God for his strength, wisdom and encouragement, He surrounded me with sufficient grace.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Problem	4
Focus for the Study.....	4
Purpose Statement.....	4
Significance of Study.....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Delimitation.....	5
Limitations.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	6
CHAPTER TWO	
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Introduction.....	8
The Meaning of Children With Special Needs.....	9
Education for the Hearing Impaired.....	9

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	48
Background of the Study.....	48
Findings and Conclusions.....	48
Implications and Recommendations.....	49
Recommendation for Further Study.....	51
REFERENCE LIST.....	52
APPENDICES	
1 DVCAA’S LETTER.....	55
2 LETTER AND CONSENT FORM.....	56
3 INTERVIEW TOPICS.....	58
4 MANUAL ALPHABET.....	59
5 SIGNING SAMPLE.....	61

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	page
1. Elements of Effective	26
2. The Context of Spiritual Nurture of the Deaf.....	27

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

It is established that 10% of a population within a given area is made up of people with disabilities of one type or another (Kabue 2001,12). Approximately one out of every thousand persons is deaf or hearing impaired. “Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, is the home of approximately 3,000 profoundly deaf people, silently among the population who make this city a cosmopolitan city” (Baas 2000). Meeting the needs of people with impairments requires special skills and services [Christian Mission for the Deaf (CMD) 2001, 1].

Disability is not a minority concern; it is part of the human condition, influencing directly or indirectly the lives of hundreds of millions of individuals in all parts of the world. Preventable diseases and natural disasters may cause disability; disability caused in this manner remains unacceptably high (UNICEF n.d, 2). There are other human causes of disability apart from the natural ones.

The United Nations notes that for too long persons with disabilities have been isolated, their right development ignored and their potential contribution to society neglected. The old attitude regarded disabled people as dependent invalids, in need of protection and it understood disability as a stigma, allowing society to marginalize people with disabilities within social (religious) structures (ibid., 3).

However, in the changing times there is a call for a shift in attitude towards people with disabilities. This new attitude stresses abilities rather than disabilities, promotes disabled persons’ rights, freedom of choice and equal opportunities and

Seeks to adapt the environment to the needs of persons with disabilities and vice versa. “It encourages society to enhance its attitudes towards persons with disabilities and assist them in assuming full responsibility as active members of society” (ibid., 3).

Disabled people, as citizens of their societies, should have the same rights and obligations as other citizens. In fact, the United Nations demands that ultimately it is the responsibility of all governments to ensure that people with disabilities:

- Live as dignified and independent lifestyle as possible within a community.
 - Take an active part in the general, social and economic development of society.
 - Receive education, medical care and social services within the ordinary structures of their societies.
- (ibid., 5).

This study was concerned with expressed felt needs of the hearing impaired in the Church, but with concentration on spiritual nurture needs and how they relate to Christian education.

The goal of education should be to provide equal opportunities for all people, including those with special educational needs. In Kenya, “The rapid growth in educational sector since independence has not been reflected in the special education category” [Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training (TIQET) 1999, 97]. Promotion of special education requires provision of special facilities, equipment and human resources.

It is more difficult to integrate the hearing impaired into a normal learning situation than it is learners with other learning disabilities. “Meeting the human needs of the deaf requires special skills and services” (CMD, 1). It should be the goal of society, including the Church, to meet the educational and spiritual needs of those who face these challenges.

However, this goal may not be in proper focus, because deaf people face many barriers to “hearing” the word of God. “Illiteracy, isolation and geographical distance pose communication problems. The very nature of deafness itself complicates the problems since it is not an externally visible trait. Special methods are required to overcome these set backs” (ibid., 1).

The Church should be at the forefront in promoting the breaking of these barriers, and provision of services that make the deaf equal members of the society. Over time, the Church has been virtually a pioneer in the care of people with disabilities. Yet a big question still remains as to how the Church has treated people with disabilities in regard to spiritual care as compared to other needs.

Frequently, the Church is not accessible. The Church remains exclusive in its programs to the people with special educational needs including the hearing impaired. Most churches in Nairobi, unknowingly exclude the disabled and, in particular, the hearing impaired in their educational ministry (Kabue, 10). There are no sign language interpreters for them and the design of the churches is inhibiting.

There is so much attention and resources given to reaching and equipping the able people in the Church at the expense of those with impairments. Consider the hearing impaired,

If all the deaf of the world were gathered together in one place, they would represent one of the largest unreached people groups of the world. Sadly, because they are scattered through every nation, town, village and neighborhood, they remain unreached by the gospel (Baas).

For the physically challenged, the interaction with the Church has been when the Church is ministering the gifts of healing. Those who do not experience healing are left out to be pitied.

In reviewing literature on spiritual nurture for the hearing impaired, the researcher found a dire lack of research about spiritual nurture for persons with

disabilities, especially the hearing impaired. The Church in Africa is significantly inadequate in this aspect. However, the Church in the West has made some progress toward the spiritual nurture for the hearing impaired.

Although spiritual nurture to the hearing impaired may be going on in the church in Africa, no studies have been done to discover how the hearing impaired describe their spiritual nurture needs and whether they are being met and, if so, in what context this phenomenon occurs.

The spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired are unexplored. The hearing-impaired Christians need to voice their needs for spiritual nurture in order that churches might respond adequately

Focus for the Study

This study was about the felt spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired, and the significance of these needs for Christian Education in the Church.

The Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, grounded theory study was to discover the hearing impaired persons' perception of their spiritual nurture needs and the implications thereof for Christian education in the Church. The ultimate purpose was to develop a theory on spiritual nurture needs of hearing impaired as perceived by the hearing impaired themselves. Data was collected through site observations, examining of available Church documents, and semi-structured interviews with ten participants in two congregations for the hearing impaired.

Significance of the study

This study will be significant to the church in the pursuit of a strategic educational ministry to the hearing impaired. The study sought to articulate the felt needs for spiritual nurture of the hearing impaired in the Christian community. The study aspires to motivate the church to reach out to people with hearing impairment.

The data collected for this study helped the researcher develop a theory on spiritual nurture of the hearing impaired and make recommendations to the church about the need for deliberate approach to ministry to the hearing impaired persons. This study should also contribute to the field of knowledge in Christian Education for the hearing impaired.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following central question.

Grant tour question:

What are the felt needs for spiritual nurture of the hearing impaired?

Sub-questions were as follows:

1. How do the hearing impaired describe their spiritual needs?
2. What are the churches of the hearing impaired doing to meet spiritual needs?
3. How do the hearing impaired perceive the spiritual nurture they receive from church?
4. How do the hearing impaired feel their spiritual needs can be met?

Delimitation

The disabled include many categories. This study concentrated on the hearing impaired, their spiritual nurture, and how the church can harness this knowledge so as to meet their spiritual nurture needs. The study focused mainly on spiritual needs

rather than all the needs of the hearing impaired. Two congregations of the hearing impaired in Nairobi were studied. Of interest was how these churches met the spiritual needs of the deaf in their educational program.

Limitations

The ideal way to study the spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired was to be resident among them, be part of the Deaf Community and know their language. This was not possible due to time constraints. The researcher did field research and supplemented with literary research. Observation and interviews were used in field study.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions were used:

Spiritual nurture: The process of training and helping Christians to grow and mature in the faith through love, nourishment and spiritual direction within the Christian community (Pazmino 1997, 47).

Disability: Refers to physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of an individual's major life activities (ibid., 724).

Impairment: Refers to loss or dysfunction of any anatomical or sensory organ (Kabue, 10).

Deaf: Hearing impairment that is so severe that a person is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, which adversely affects educational performance (Sarkees-Wircenski, 724). For the purpose of this research the term deaf will be used to refer to all categories of hearing impairments.

Hard-of-hearing: Refers to a person who generally, with the use of a hearing aid, has residual hearing sufficient to enable the successful processing of audible linguistic information. (ibid., 726).

Hearing Impairment: This refers to the entire range of hearing loss from mild through profound conditions. (ibid., 726). In this study, it will be used interchangeably with deaf.

Church: Refers to people of God, the community or body of Christ. This meaning is assumed in this study where the term is used without an adjective, where particular reference is made either to the deaf or hearing community of believers, the adjectives deaf or hearing are used to describe the term respectively.

Pre-lingual deafness: Refers to deafness present at birth or that occurred at an age prior to the development of speech (Sampley 1990, 22).

Post-lingual deafness: Refers to deafness that occurs at an age speech and language acquisition (ibid., 22).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

“A substantial number of our population is composed of persons variously identified as ‘handicapped,’ ‘exceptional,’ or ‘retarded’” (Grammer 1981, 368). In other terms, this category of people may be referred to as “differently abled,” “people with disabilities,” and “people with impairments.”

People with impairments have a special place in the life of any community, because the community clearly appreciates that they have abilities though expressed in a different way. It is because of these abilities that the society gives them “special” treatment, including identity in reference to terminology as used above, to refer to these people. A debate has ensued among different groups of people who have preferred different terms for people with impairments. Of these terms “disability” is widely used, although those opposed to it argue that a disability is not a property of the individual, but rather a social construction emerging from the people involved and their environment (Kabue, 10). However, today the term impairment is most favored, and this refers to loss or any dysfunction of any anatomical or sensory organ. It is seen to describe the person in the form of what makes him or her different from others “without having to refer to what he or she is seemingly able or not able to do” (ibid., 10).

A greater tendency by the society has been to treat people with impairments with less (sometimes more undeserved) regard than they ought to, but the words of Thomas Jefferson speak to this. “There is nothing more unequal than the equal

treatment of unequals” (TIQET, 97). Treating people with impairments as equals would mean allowing them to access equivalent educational opportunities. Special education, however, is designed to meet the unique needs of people with impairments.

As Grammer rightly suggests, “The Church has a basic directive for concern for the handicapped in the life of Jesus Christ, who in His earthly ministry met the handicapped of His day with love and compassion” (Grammer, 369).

The Meaning of Children with Special Needs

Ndurumo observes that children with special needs are those whose needs vary from those of non-handicapped children in many ways. They include those with speech and language disorder, the visually impaired, the orthopedically and health impaired, the deaf and hard of hearing, the mentally handicapped, the learning disabled, and the emotionally and socially impaired among others. Those with special educational needs include the gifted and talented (Ndurumo 2001, 3). In this study, however, the interest is in the people with hearing impairments. This handicap interferes with their regular learning unless modifications and related services, equipment and specially trained teachers are provided.

Education for the Hearing Impaired

Hearing Impaired Children

Hearing-impaired children include the deaf and hard of hearing. “Deaf children are those whose hearing loss is either severe or profound after all medical or surgical treatment or after trying the use of hearing aids” (TIQET, 98). Obviously, these children have difficulty in understanding normal conversation and this results in a

delay in language and/or speech development, and academic achievement, as well as other educational handicaps. According to educators, the deaf child's development of speech and language is visually based and the child is often instructed in sign language and finger spelling (Kneedler 1984, 179). On the other hand, the hard of hearing children are those "whose hearing loss ranges from mild to moderately severe and interferes with listening and communication thus affecting educational performance" (TIQET, 98). The hard of hearing child has communication handicaps that are auditory based which can be developed through the auditory channel of hearing aids (Kneedler, 179). Of these two categories, the deaf have the greatest hearing loss, and the hard of hearing have a lesser hearing loss. The educational achievements of learners with hearing impairments may be delayed in comparison to the achievement of their hearing peers and this is true of Christian education too.

Causes of Hearing Impairment

There are various causes of hearing impairment. Some of these causes may just place an individual in a high-risk category for hearing impairments. According to the America Speech Language Association, these factors include:

- Birth weight of less than 1.5 kg
- Severe asphyxia (suffocation) at birth
- Congenital or prenatal infection
- Family history of childhood hearing loss
- Bacterial meningitis
- Anatomic malformations involving the head and the neck
- Accidents (Sarkees-Wircenski and Scott 1995, 144)

The Detection of Hearing Impairments

In Kenya, parents or workers in the Kenya Society for the deaf take children to special schools if they suspect hearing impairments exist. Speech therapists and social workers are also useful in identifying deaf children and effecting their enrolment in special schools. Provincial administrators such as chiefs, headmen and community development workers, provide important information that leads to the training of deaf children (UNESCO, 108). The following can be used as clues for identifying individuals with hearing impairments:

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- Lack of attention
- Difficulty following directions
- A habit of turning head to one side to hear better
- A hesitancy to participate in large groups, especially where a great deal of talking takes place
- A habit of constantly asking to have things repeated
- A significant sign is difficulty in acquiring language skills and communication
- Those with fatal hearing impairments will not respond to any audio communication acquisition (Sarkees-Wircenski and Scott, 144)

Learning Styles of the Hearing Impaired Learners

Hearing-impaired children in Africa face two communication problems: one is the language medium and the other involves the receptive-expressive method. To overcome the communication problems requires special skills and services. Andrew Foster recommends a total communication approach, which helps the hearing impaired to rapidly develop a greater language competency and lays the foundation for understanding abstract truths (CMD, 2). The learning methods for the hearing impaired include natural gestures, formal sign language, finger spelling, writing, reading, speech, lip reading and hearing aids (ibid.,2).

Sarkees-Wircenski and Scott (147) suggest five methods used to communicate to learners with hearing impairments. They include:

1. Residual hearing: the degree of hearing ability an individual does have. The learner is trained to “learn to listen” and “learn by listening” by concentrating on the comprehension of necessary sounds.
2. Cued Speech: Coruett in 1974 developed a system called cued speech. This method supplements oral communication by supplying visual representation of spoken language through adding cues in the form of hand signals near the chin. Then, the learner can identify sounds that cannot be distinguished through lip reading.
3. Manual alphabet (finger spelling): different positions on one hand to represent 26 letters of the Roman alphabet.
4. Sign language: a method of receiving and expressing language. Various hand and body movements have been formalized to convey words, concepts and phrases.
5. Lip reading (speech reading): not very accurate because many speech sounds look similar.
6. Total communication: means of receiving and expressing language by using a combination of residual hearing, finger spelling, sign language, and speaking out loud.

Modern technology provides other modes of communication that include electronic communication of written language, visual aids, tactile aids and computers (Powell 1985, 122).

Christian Education for the Hearing Impaired

Meaning of Christian Education

Christian educators have postulated several definitions of Christian Education. We will be looking at three samples of Christian Education. According to Buconyori, “Christian education is the interpersonal process of learning to become Christ like and self-reliant in society” (Buconyori 1993, 12). This is an interpersonal or relational definition and the three aspects of relations pointed in this definition are people

relating to God; people relating to the rest of God's creation; and people relating to fellow human beings. Examining this definition and the three aspects of relations we can assert that the people relating include those with impairments. They relate to God, to God's creation and to fellow human beings with or without impairments.

According to Graendorf,

Christian education is a bible based, Holy Spirit empowered (Christ centered), teaching-learning process. It seeks to guide individuals at all levels of growth through contemporary teaching means, toward knowing and experiencing God's purpose and plan through Christ in every aspect of living. Christian Education equips them for effective ministries with the overall focus on Christ the Master educator's example and command to make mature disciples (1981, 16).

The individuals mentioned in this definition should include those with special needs; hence, the contemporary teaching methods should also include special education teaching methods. We see, Graendorf acknowledging this in his work in which he includes a chapter on: *Special education as an opportunity for the Church* (368-375). Pazmino suggests that,

Christian education is the deliberate, systematic and sustained divine and human effort to share or appropriate the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, sensitivities, and behaviors that comprise or are consistent with the Christian faith. It fosters the changes, renewal, and reformation of persons, groups, and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit to conform to the revealed will of God as expressed in the scriptures and preeminently in the person of Jesus Christ (87).

As comprehensive as Pazmino's definition appears, he fails to recognize in his work the place of those with special educational needs. However, one can observe from his definition that Christian education needs to be deliberate, systematic and sustained in its approach to Christian education for special educational learners.

The Place of People with Impairments: Christian Education in Church

Basically, the Church is a carrier of Christian education, so the Church, through its educational ministry, needs to consider the place of people with disabilities.

In the mission of the Church, concern for the handicapped should be a basic derivative from the life of Jesus Christ, who in his days loved and had compassion on the handicapped. “He healed the leper, cast out demons and made the blind to see, he taught his disciples to likewise have concern and compassion and to follow his example. Matthew 8:9” (Grammer, 369).

The apostles of Christ followed this example (Acts 3:19, 28). Contemporary Christianity should have concern for special education. Such concern should reach the families of learners with special educational needs. “Many parents caring for handicapped persons remain home from religious services because there are no church programs to meet the needs of the handicapped” (Grammer, 369). If special programs were available, they would provide for the instructional needs of the handicapped.

Christ said, “Whatever, you did for one of least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40 (NIV), but one of today’s concerns is the barrier that the Church has put in the way of the handicapped. The cathedrals built today “visualize the people that will come to this room, what they will do there and how they are going to move around in the room” (Fritzson 2001, 3). Most of these structures are exclusively designed for those with no impairments. It is a “statement of an excluding theology” (ibid, 3). These designs do not care for the whole community to which the Church ministers. It is a display of the Church’s prejudices against those with impairments. “The Church needs to be a place of understanding acceptance and integration of persons with handicaps” (Kabue,10). The sobering question is, are

persons with handicaps worth the effort in the extension of the Kingdom of God?

Fully accessible churches should have programs for handicapped people; sign language interpreters should be available for the deaf.

Christian Education for the Deaf

It is encouraging to note that the Church has a lot of initiative for the education of the deaf. This is commendable. However, education alone is not enough for full or good citizenship. "Education without a corresponding reverence for God can have no lasting benefits either for the individual or for society" (Foster 1975, 7). The deaf, like their hearing counterparts, are created in three parts: spirit, mind and body, according to the word of God. All three are essential functions of the whole person. The mind and body are ardently developed while the first (spirit) is often neglected. There is a cry for the Church to minister to the spirits of the deaf.

Scriptural reasons for concern about the lost deaf

"Deafness is a tremendous handicap. It bars countless people from hearing about God's way of salvation. Every Christian should be concerned about their plight" (Foster 1976, 1). From scripture Foster observes the following:

- God made the deaf (Ex. 4:11).
- God, himself, is concerned about the deaf and other physically handicap people (Lev. 19:14).
- Like all mankind, the deaf are lost apart from Christ (Rom.3: 23; 6:23).
- The deaf (and the non-deaf) can be saved only through Jesus Christ (John 3:36; 14:6; Acts 4:12).
- God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).
- The deaf who are cut off from normal communications cannot come to the knowledge of the truth unaided (Rom.10: 13-15a).

- Jesus' earthly ministry embraces the deaf as well as often neglected others (Luke 7:22).
- The deaf are included in Jesus' command to preach to every creature (Mark 16: 15-16).

The Bible clearly reveals God's threefold method for reaching the lost deaf (and the hearing):

- Christians must PRAY for the deaf (James 5:17-18).
- Christians must GO to the deaf with God's word (Matthew 28: 19-20).
- Christians must GIVE sound, biblical witness to the deaf (Luke 6:30). *ibid.*, 1-2).

The Church can meet the spiritual needs of the handicapped in a way that no community program can possibly do. The Church, realizing that the deaf are individuals for whom Christ died, can provide classes in Sunday school for the deaf. Churches can also show concern for the parents of the disabled (Grammer, 370).

Methodological Literature

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Qualitative methods, as opposed to quantitative methods, do not give results that are statistically derived. By definition qualitative research is "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of respondents and conducted in a natural setting" (Creswell 1998, 1-2).

Human situations are complex and do not lend themselves to a quantitative design. The researcher was interested in uncovering the felt needs for the spiritual nurture of the hearing impaired. Thus, the qualitative design was the most effective

method for discovering and understanding what lies behind the unvocalized thoughts representing the needs of the hearing impaired.

Strauss and Corbin suggest that such a qualitative design “can be used to gain novel and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known... and can give the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 19).

The rationale for using the qualitative design lies in the following reasons given by Creswell (17-18):

1. Nature of research questions: The research questions often start with a “how” or a “what” so that the initial forays into the topic describes what is going on.
2. When the research topic needs to be explored; in this case, “variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behavior of participants or their population of study and theories need to be developed.”
3. The need to present a detailed view of the topic. A qualitative study is required when “wide-angle lens or the distant panoramic shot will not suffice to present answers to the problem or the close-up view does not exist.
3. The need to study individuals in their natural setting.
4. The need to write in a literary style: When the writer intends to use the personal pronoun "I" or engages a story telling pattern of narration.
5. Audiences are receptive to a qualitative research. Use a qualitative design to emphasize the researcher’s role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participant’s view.

There are several approaches to qualitative research. This researcher used a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach is research that is “inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon the study represents; that is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis, and theory stated in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss and Corbin, 23)

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The Type of Design Used

Qualitative: For the purpose of this research, the researcher adapted a qualitative grounded theory approach, which involved building theory by interpreting data (ibid., 22). The data were conceptualized and concepts were related to a theoretical presentation of reality.

The purpose of the grounded theory method is to build theory that is true to and illuminates the area under study (ibid., 24). The approach has two main characteristics: constant comparison of data and theoretical sampling of different groups (Creswell 1994, 12). Hence, grounded theory was the qualitative design adopted for this study because, unlike many other forms, it employs a “systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively desired grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Strauss and Corbin, 24). In this study, the findings were expected to converge to explain the spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired.

The grounded theory method has immense popularity among social scientists, and evidently produces outstanding findings. For instance, Susan L. Morrow of the University of Utah and Mary Lee Smith of Arizona State University, in 1995, did a grounded theory study entitled “Construction of Survival and Coping by Women Who have Survived Childhood Sexual Abuse” (Creswell, 297). The findings were applaudable and reported in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 42, 24-33; 1995, published by the American Psychological Association. Dr. Ruth E. Brown of the University of Nebraska at Kearney in 2001 used the grounded theory approach in her

research: "The Process of Community- Building in Distance Learning Classes." The findings were published in the *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN)* vol. 5, Issue 2, September 2001.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. In this study, the researcher began by gaining entry into the site: the two deaf congregations selected. Given that these congregations are almost exclusively for the deaf, the researcher sought permission to conduct research in the two congregations through the church leaders using an official letter of introduction from the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs' (DVCAA) office to the leaders to introduce her to the congregations and help clear any ethical issues involved. She also looked for a sign language interpreter from the congregations to facilitate interaction and communication with the members of the congregations. The researcher explained to the participants why she chose their congregations, what she intended to do at the sites during the study and how the results would be reported. The researcher ensured confidentiality of data collected, use of research and preservation of the anonymity of respondents. The final task was to interpret the data, develop a theory from the research, and report the findings.

Data Collection Procedures

Site Selection

The initial step into this qualitative grounded theory study was site selection. Two of the known five congregations for the deaf in Nairobi were chosen according to their willingness to be involved and reliability of the data they could provide. The two

congregations chosen were the most predisposed to accommodating the research and the researcher. Strauss and Corbin (43) say that “access, available resources, research goals plus your time and energy” determine the sites. The additional consideration which confirmed the decision to use the two congregations were as follows:

1. They had leaders who were literate and easily understood the intentions of the researcher.
2. They were the oldest congregations of the deaf in Nairobi and, therefore, understood the history and dynamics of deaf ministry in Nairobi.
3. They had members from different parts of Kenya and one congregation had members from about seven other African countries. The researcher thought that this diversity would enrich the study and commend itself to a larger audience.

Participants

The second level of data collection was to “purposefully select” (Miles and Huberman 1994) ten respondents, five from each congregation, who could best answer the research questions. Seven of the ten were interviewed through a sign language interpreter, one through writing and two through oral communication. Literate participants were preferred because the researcher could easily communicate with them through writing. The researcher and the leaders identified the ten respondents after a period of familiarization. Apart from the ten respondents, all members of the two congregations participated in the research as they were observed in their natural worship setting and events. Participants’ consent was sought. They signed a consent letter (see appendix 1) before they were interviewed. A homogeneous group of five deaf members, two of which were post lingual deaf, and three were pre- lingual deaf were interviewed in a group. As the theory continued to evolve, selecting and studying a more heterogeneous sample (members who could speak and lip read and respond to written interviews) was used to confirm or disconfirm the causal and intervening

conditions under which the theory appeared to hold true. Miles and Hurberman (1994) call this theoretical sampling. At the end of the study, a stratified sample of three leaders of the congregations was interviewed.

Types of Data Collection

Three basic types of data collection were used to collect data from the participants. These included:

Observations

The researcher joined each of the two congregations on several worship occasions for a period of five months. The researcher gathered notes by conducting observations. Observations allowed the researcher to: have first hand experience with the respondents, record information as it occurred, notice unusual aspects and explore topics that respondents were uncomfortable discussing.

Qualitative Interview

In grounded theory, most data comes from interviews with participants (Creswell 1998, 203). Qualitative, face-to-face interviews were used because of their ability to achieve fuller development of information (Robert Weiss, 3). The interviews used open-ended, semi-structured questions. Sometimes different questions were used on different participants depending on what the researcher thought needed clarifying. Follow-up interviews were done for the sake of attaining fuller descriptions of the situation.

Some questions changed during the process of research to reflect an increased understanding of the felt needs in spiritual nurture of the deaf. Respondents were requested to allow tape recording to ensure accuracy. Interview notes were taken as "observations," descriptive notes, reflective notes and interpretations. Most interviews lasted thirty to sixty minutes.

Interviews were very helpful in obtaining information and allowing the researcher to have control over the line of questioning. See Appendix 3 for a sample of interview topics and questions. The researcher transcribed six 90 minutes tapes, which formed primary database for subsequent analysis. Data analysis involved open, Axial and selective coding occurred simultaneously.

Documents

The researcher examined documents such as service programs, sermon notes, a discipleship booklet and other relevant documents. According to Merriam (1988), documents are a good source of data because they can be accessed at any time convenient to the researcher, they represent data that are thoughtful because respondents have given attention to recording/compiling, and, as written evidence, documents save the researcher time and expense in transcribing.

Data Analysis Procedures

The grounded theory method uses detailed procedures for data analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1990) have provided coding procedures that involve the breaking down of data, conceptualizing it, and putting it back in new forms that can form a theory. The coding procedures include open, axial, selective coding and generation of a conditional matrix. In open coding, categories of information were developed.

Strauss and Corbin (1990, 97) described it as that which “fractures the data and allows one to identify some categories, their properties and dimensional locations.” The language of participants guided the development of codes and categories. These codes and categories were compared and contrasted systematically to yield complex and inclusive categories.

Axial coding followed open coding, and it put data “back in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories” (Strauss and Corbin, 97). This was used to connect the information categorized.

Selective coding was then used. Selective coding is the integrative process of “selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships (by searching for confirming and disconfirming examples), and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” (ibid., 116).

Codes and categories were sorted, compared and contrasted until saturated; that is, until analysis produced no new codes or categories and all data was accounted for in the core categories (Strauss 1987). This process resulted a set of theoretical propositions modified into a theory by selective coding.

Methods for Verification

The following common strategies of grounded theory study, given by Strauss and Corbin (1990), were used for internal validity. They included long-term observation at the research sites (the researcher attended at least five services in each congregation selected), triangulation of multiple data sources, peer participants’ review, and rich, thick description backed by an audit trail.

The criteria for core status in data analysis based on centrality in relation to other categories, frequency of a category's occurrence in the datum, a category's

inclusiveness of other categories, clarity of a category's implications for a general theory, and its movements towards theoretical power as details are dealt with (Creswell 1998, 302).

Member checks were used to verify participants' responses of the group sessions and to revise the emerging theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Data were analyzed using the grounded theory methods noted in chapter three above to discover theory. The purpose of this study was to discover the spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired as perceived by them. The identity of the respondents is concealed for ethical reasons. The following theory emerged from data collected and analyzed.

Theory

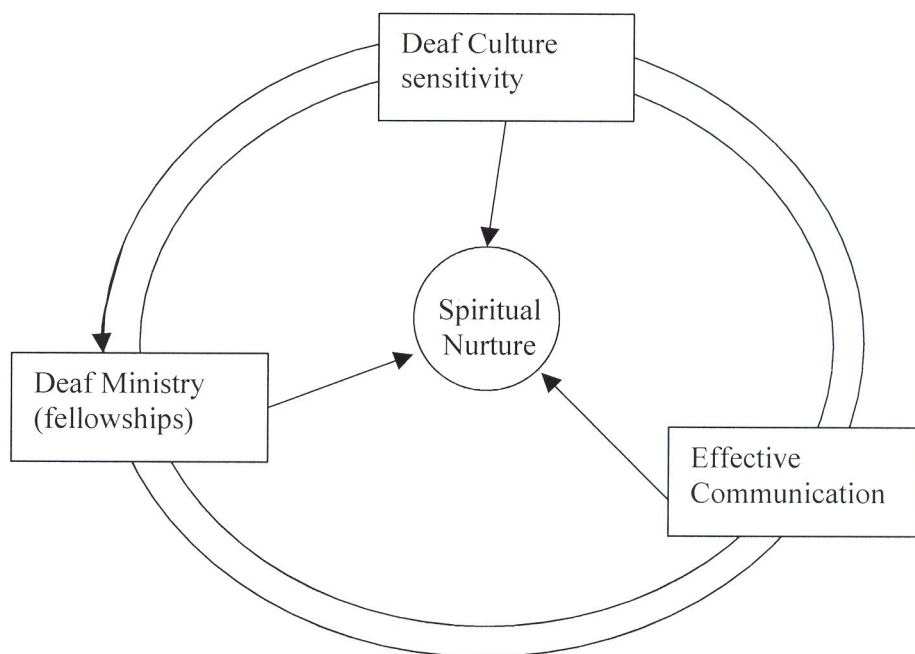
The spiritual needs for the hearing impaired are fundamentally the same as for the general population. However, they can be met only in the context of the deaf culture. Three major elements (Figure 1) were found to be important in meeting the spiritual nurture needs of the hearing impaired. The first one was sensitivity to the culture of the hearing impaired by those ministering to the deaf. This cultural sensitivity will, in turn, lead to effective communication, which is at the second element. Given effective communication, then, one is able to do contextualised deaf ministry (referred to below as Deaf Fellowships), which are necessary in meeting the spiritual nurture needs of the deaf.

Figure 1. Elements of Effective Deaf Culture



These three elements are in interaction (see Figure.2) with each other so that it is difficult to have effective nurturing of the hearing impaired if anyone of them is absent. This process is discussed below.

Figure 2. The context of spiritual nurture to the deaf: interaction of three elements



The hearing impaired are part of humanity, hence, they have spiritual nurture needs similar to those of the general population. However, being a unique community and due to lack of ability to perceive audio information, a relevant ministry is required to meet their spiritual nurture needs.

Need for Salvation

The basic spiritual need of the hearing impaired results from the fact that the deaf are fallen beings in need of redemption like any other human being. This is the beginning point of their spiritual nurture. One respondent said, “They need to be looked at as people who are sinners like anybody else and that they need to confess Jesus Christ as their personal savior and have an encounter with God themselves.”

Several respondents noted that though deaf, they are sinful and most of them lack knowledge of God's word. Another respondent on this issue noted, "Many deaf do not know God."

Need for Love, Acceptance and Knowledge of God's Word

The deaf need love, acceptance and a sense of self-worth lost due to fallenness of man (but may be aggravated by their vulnerable situation). Even after accepting Christ into their lives, they still have a dire need for the word of God so that they can grow towards spiritual maturity. One respondent said, "My need is to grow spiritually in the areas of prayer, Bible reading and fellowship." With regard to these spiritual needs, the respondents felt that the real need is how these needs can be met. This requires a different context or setting (from that of the hearing) if they will be nurtured effectively. To state the gravity of the matter, respondent observed that

When the deaf are born and grow, their mother and father take them to hearing churches. Now, in a hearing church they don't hear when the preacher is preaching... they just look, they don't understand anything. Sometimes they just copy what their parents are doing. When her mother kneels, she kneels, but inside she doesn't get anything. When the deaf go to the hearing churches, it is not good because they don't get anything.

Deaf Culture Context

The context of the deaf culture is cognizant of and has the following elements in place. These elements include:

- Knowledge of deaf culture (cultural sensitivity)
- Effective communication
- Deaf Fellowships (Churches/ Congregations)

The three in relation with each other give rise to contextualized ministry to the deaf in their cultural setting. The spiritual nurture of the deaf can effectively occur in this environment that is culturally sensitive to the deaf and has effective communication such as is offered in deaf (churches) fellowships.

Cultural Sensitivity

Knowing the deaf as a community with a specific culture is a basic element for any effective deaf ministry that meets their spiritual nurture needs. One respondent stressed this need by saying that “the most effective way to deliver a sermon to the deaf people... is to have knowledge of the deaf community and knowledge of local idiomatic expressions of the deaf community.” Yet another respondent strongly felt that without this sensitivity “you can go nowhere” in deaf ministry. The same informant defined culture as “the rules by which the game of life is played.” He went on to say that “deaf people have culture which involves language, values, customs, thought patterns and history” and so spiritual nurture for the deaf should be viewed in this way, and holistically.

For the deaf people, their language is visual and conceptual and this shapes their thought patterns. Respondents who had lost their hearing after several years and those who were formerly deaf and now are hearing noted that the deaf think differently from the hearing people. A unique characteristic of the deaf is that they are a community people. The deaf are very group - oriented. One respondent said, “They make decisions in a group, they talk in a circle, they have stories in a group... more so if they want to achieve something they know as a group they will achieve, they are a consensus community.” Any spiritual nurture intended for the deaf that reaches the hearts and spirits of the deaf must be sensitive of deaf ways. Most of the respondents

felt that the major spiritual nurture need is the recognition of the deaf ways. The deaf culture is due to a unique socialization.

Socialization of the Deaf

Group/ Peer Solidarity

The second major element of the deaf culture is socialization. The deaf are a highly communal people as earlier noted. This means that ‘group think’ is an important element of their culture. They are dependant on each other’s opinions. They respond to and value each other highly. The socialization of the deaf can be used to create a relevant setting for spiritual nurture to take place. In one of the interview sessions the respondents preferred to take interviews in a group rather than individually. In the same setting, as a sign of solidarity to the deaf culture one respondent who could speak declined to do so in order to honor his deaf friends. He said, “When the deaf are here I can’t talk, I have to sign, that is the rule. They need to understand what I am saying.” Because of this aspect of community they pass information among themselves very easily. One of the deaf workers noted, “Even information is passed among each other. That’s how they get informed of news.” For effective spiritual nurture to occur, the communal aspect of the deaf people must be put into consideration.

Deaf Identity and Trust/Suspicion

The socialization of the deaf apparently takes place in two worlds. The world of the hearing (the larger context in which they are born, composed of hearing parents, siblings, and workmates among others) and the world of the deaf community. More often than not, the deaf are inwardly suspicious of the hearing people. This is more so

because of the hearing people's view of the deaf: people to be pitied or the pathological view (the deaf need to be fixed to be well or complete persons) as noted by one of the respondents. The tendency of the hearing people to treat the deaf with pity makes the deaf depend on and trust the deaf community more than the hearing community. The deaf are not ashamed to be deaf and mostly they do not feel they are lacking in any way. One respondent with a smile on his face confidently said, "I have no problem being deaf." Two other respondents said gladly that if God had decided to make them deaf they were okay in their state. All the deaf observed and interviewed looked comfortable in their state and showed great abilities like the hearing in their respective communities. Therefore, the deaf need to be shown love and acceptance for who they are by those who offer them spiritual nurture. The deaf community is characterized by openness in the presence of acceptance, love and genuine concern.



Socio-Economic Status

Another major reality of the deaf community is that most deaf people do not have employment. A few are artisans and employed as laborers but rarely in skilled jobs. The implication of unemployment is the inability to meet basic needs sufficiently. Most respondents noted that this a big area of need and either directly or indirectly affects their spiritual nurture.

One deaf leader noted that the deaf have a lot of expectations from their leaders. The respondent observed, "Unless the basic needs are met, it is difficult to go on to higher needs, including the need for salvation. A person needs tangible things before he can listen to spiritual things." In order for spiritual nurture to occur the need for basic needs and economic challenges must be considered. For instance, one deaf congregation is actively involved in economic projects. The congregation is involved

in farming wheat and sharing the proceeds from the harvest. Some of the money is given as tithes to the church. Such a ministry then can effectively nurture their congregation into disciplines of giving to God and hospitality. In essence then, the knowledge of deaf culture and sensitivity to this culture is an important aspect of spiritual nurture for the hearing impaired.

Effective Communication

Spiritual nurture cannot take place without effective communication.

Communication issues may be a subset of culture, but it needs to be considered separately. These issues include; language issues, educational issues and psychological issues. The primary mode of communication for the deaf is sign language in which 100% of information may be correctly passed. A respondent enthusiastically said that “The deaf use sign language to communicate; they use their eyes, The hearing talk; The deaf use their hands” and yet another partially deaf respondent in responding to why she preferred the “deaf world” said, “because of the way they were signing in sign language, I became so interested.” Other modes of communication are lip-reading, writing and fingerspelling.

Sign Language and its Dynamics

Sign language is varied and defines the deaf as “a unique cultural linguistic group” and this is how they view themselves. Sign language has variations, local sign language, national sign language and international. In Kenya we have the American Sign Language (ASL), Kenyan Sign Language (KSL), Signed Exact English (SEE) and Total Communication, which includes talking and signing at the same time. An respondent noted that,

Sign language and deafness are pillars of the deaf community. So they are important aspects to bear in mind since deaf community is a minority linguistics community. Therefore, to recognize sign language means recognizing deaf persons as humans.

Misunderstandings and differences caused by these sign languages cause misunderstanding and division among the deaf Christians. Hence most respondents noted that knowledge of local sign language is key for spiritual nurture to the deaf. One respondent noted that without knowledge of the sign language, you cannot minister to the deaf effectively and the deaf are not able to minister either.

The sign language for the children is simple and short as compared to the sign language for the adults. With a lot of excitement an respondent who lost his hearing at the age of seventeen after an illness of malaria said that “the sign language used to teach the young one is simple: ...we teach them short stories and show them pictures and stories make the children feel enjoyable.”

The Kenyan sign language does not have conjunctions, like American Sign Language. The KSL is visual and conceptual. The grammatical structure of sign language is different from the grammatical structure of the spoken language. The implications for spiritual nurture are great ministry to the deaf must recognize and use the local sign language. “Knowledge of the local idiomatic expressions is required.” One respondent adds that “the deaf need to do ministry, they can only do it in sign language. They preach, sing and pray in sign language.” Together they worship God with their eyes and hands.

Other Forms of Deaf Communication

Other modes of communication that include lip-reading, interpretation and writing are used but are not as effective. Respondents noted that lip-reading is

difficult because it is associated with sounds that the deaf may not perceive, depending on the degree of deafness. Still, many sounds may be similar hence confusing.

Concerning interpretation, most respondents expressed that it is boring and the deaf lose concentration. Writing requires a high level of academic proficiency, which most deaf in Kenya do not have. Their sentences are simple, hence the hearing may not effectively communicate through writing with the deaf. In-fact, a highly schooled informant and leader noted that the deafs' written sentences might be at grade three level. Another important aspect of communication is that the deaf communicators are highly visually expressive. "The deaf hear with their eyes."

Communication of God's Word

With respect to communicating the word of God, one respondent captured the most effective way to deliver a sermon is to have:

- Knowledge of sign language
 - Knowledge of local idiomatic expressions of the deaf community
 - Knowledge of the deaf community (culture)
 - Knowledge of the Bible and how to present the message in a way that is attractive and captures imagination of the deaf people without diluting the primacy of and intent of the scripture
 - Respect of the Bible and its authorship
 - Respect of the person you intend to bring out of the deaf person
 - Moral spiritual standing of the preacher
- (Respondent).

From this snapshot, it is clear that communication of the Christian message for spiritual nurture regards the context of the scripture, context of the audience, and context of the preacher. In more conceptual terms, proper hermeneutics and homiletics must be applied.

The deaf people are a narrative society. They tell stories and like stories. Most informants noted that they understand the word of God more when it is given as a

story, a play/drama or a song. In fact, one of the sites evidenced a great use of stories. The Bible is taught as a series of stories like a play that has many sequential scenes. This is true of the Bible in fact. The preaching is done by giving a memorized story of the Bible reading, repetition is done for emphasis and the preaching is dramatized. Respondents from this site are very excited about the methodology and confess a depth in their grasp of God's word since joining the congregation. Most respondents preferred short readings and preaching of scripture. "I follow well and understand more when it is short," a respondent said. Several respondents expressed that communication is effective if love, joy and acceptance are communicated. This is more crucial for deaf children. Communication issues are, therefore key for contextualized deaf ministry. This has a bearing on the next element of contextualized deaf ministry.

It is the right interaction of these communication conditions that results in intelligible communication of the word of God to the deaf. The interaction between effective communication and cultural sensitivity occurs in deaf fellowship to result in spiritual nurture for the deaf. It is deaf fellowships that we now turn to.

Deaf Fellowship (Churches)

The expression "deaf fellowship" in this section refers to deaf congregations, churches, small meetings and children and youth fellowships among others. These are the forms in which spiritual nurture is facilitated for the deaf. The research showed that deaf fellowships are for the deaf by the deaf and other (hearing) members of the deaf community. Three major categories of deaf fellowships are avenues of spiritual nurture. These are deaf churches (largely representing adult ministry), youth (school) ministry and children ministry.

Why deaf fellowships?

Several conditions evidence the necessity of deaf fellowships. The first of this is deafness. One respondent who had been hearing before and was a Christian had this comment after he became deaf:

Before I didn't know where the deaf church was so I went to a hearing church, what they preached I didn't understand... Later I went to a deaf school, after learning sign language and understanding it my mind got strong. I met a deaf preacher in a deaf church that used sign language, when the deaf preacher was preaching; I understood everything he said about God.

In most cases the deaf will not benefit from a hearing church for the basic reason that they are deaf, thus they cannot get the communication of the word of God and spiritual nurture is difficult for them. The deaf need deaf fellowships for their spiritual needs for God and his word to be met. In a hearing church, they get frustrated because of the exclusive hearing communication. One teenage deaf informant had refused to attend a hearing church with the rest of his family due to this kind of frustration. When he finally found a deaf church, he was overjoyed. Sign language is a basic tool in deaf fellowships. The Presence of sign language interpreters for the hearing who may visit these fellowships makes it inclusive for the hearing.

Deaf Culture

Deaf culture is another factor for deaf fellowships. As noted earlier, the deaf show a lot of solidarity to each other. A respondent said, "All the deaf meet in one place because they don't want to separate. So that it can be one community." The deaf understand themselves as a social community; hence, as discussed above the best way to meet their spiritual needs is in the context of their community and culture.

Communication and other skills

Uniqueness of deaf ministry makes it necessary for the existence of deaf fellowships. Deaf ministry needs differentiated communication (visual, manual and conceptual), interpretation, skills and tools, deaf preachers and message. One respondent noted, “The deaf can be good leaders in church just like the hearing. The deaf need to have skills to do church work.” These skills cannot be used for active ministry in a hearing church. Another respondent asked, “How do they do ministry (in a hearing church) if they feel called? How do they preach, sing or pray?” The deaf need an opportunity to serve God and reach other deaf people. The best environment for this to happen is deaf fellowships.

Deaf fellowships’ Requirements

The presence of adequate and effective deaf fellowships means the presence of many other intermediate needs. One respondent noted that the deaf population is big and resources are needed to start deaf churches. Some respondents, who were also training for deaf ministry, noted that when they finish training, they will need to start a church. For now, they do not have a church and they need to build a church for the deaf.

Deaf fellowships need deaf ministers. Ministers who “deeply understand deaf leadership, have compassion for deaf and who desire to grow deeply in study of the word of God, prayer and fellowship” (respondent). Towards building a trained deaf leadership, one deaf ministry “trains deaf Christians to be church leaders and church pastors and evangelists. Now what we do is to provide biblical knowledge, but also methods on how they can have Bible studies, Bible classes, have home fellowships. I

mean all the ministries ...” (respondent). Deaf leadership and development should be the responsibility of the church as one respondent said,

So long as we equip them and empower them with the word of God, God through his spirit, he will lead them into what he wants them to do, so our position should be to bring them in, empower them in the word of God, give them that knowledge ... so that they are not persuaded by heresy, they can teach other, and also meet the needs of their own community.

A holistic ministry by the deaf and for the deaf is, therefore, necessary for spiritual nurture.

Children and youth ministries are highly needed. One respondent illustrates this need in saying “Most deaf people don’t have to know the Lord until they are adults. Because first of all they are kept in their homes, they are not allowed to go to churches when they are young or children, and so that way their spiritual needs are not met.” Therefore, spiritual nurture for deaf children and youth is crucially needed. One respondent recommends deaf school ministry to reach deaf children and youth with the gospel. The deaf are best placed for this ministry.

Another side of children’s ministry has to do with deaf parents. One respondent says, “95-96% of the deaf community marriages give birth to hearing children.” However, most deaf parents give their hearing children to hearing grandparents. This gives rise to the need to “encourage parents biblically and to challenge them that they are parents and are responsible for their children given by God and they can’t give them to another person to take care of them.” Hence, the deaf fellowship should have an adult ministry that teaches the parents on godly parenting.

The Deaf Worship Service

The worship service is another important aspect of the deaf fellowships. The deaf services are well and sequentially organized. The worship programs in the two

congregations run almost the same. The basic aspects of the program that succeed each other include: prayer, songs, prayer, devotion, song, Bible story (memorized text narration) or bible reading, preaching (includes a life application story in the congregation), drama, prayer, songs, offering, prayer, songs, introduction of visitors, announcements, and closing prayer. The service runs for two to three hours.

During this service, there are congregational conversations (signing), which a respondent said happens “especially when something that affects individuals has just been said. They start talking about it there.”

There is freedom and spontaneous expressions of worship from the congregation. Members come up with songs in groups and individually. The rest of the congregation joins in the singing and if there is a drum they dance vigorously as they sense the strong beats by their hearts.

The congregation is normally very attentive and visually alert to whoever is signing or leading the service. In the presence of hearing visitors the whole service is interpreted – one hearing person, a member of the deaf community, interprets the service to the hearing visitors. The researcher found it easy to follow the deaf service in the presence of an interpreter. The sermons were made even more explicit by the preacher writing the key points and texts on the chalkboard. The preacher was sequential and there was every indication of thorough preparation of the sermon. It was evident that there is clear elucidation of the word of God, and worship to God in deaf services. This was attributed to the ability to clearly communicate the message, and do proper exegesis of God’s word. In most cases, the texts read cannot be preached by untrained or inexperienced deaf preachers and communicators.

At the end of the service, the deaf members gather in groups and interact for quite a while (about 20 to 40 minutes) before dispersing in groups. One could still meet

them on the streets in Nairobi in groups and conversing, evidencing a great sense of community.

One congregation had a time of interaction over drinks and snacks once a month. This enhances community among the deaf. Bible studies and weekly prayer meetings were also used for spiritual nurture. One of the congregations visited had regular weekly meetings for Bible Study.

It is in the context of interaction between sensitivity to deaf culture, effective deaf communication and deaf fellowship that the phenomenon of spiritual nurtures for the deaf can best be achieved.

Relating Literature To The Theory

The theory that emerged from research data was largely confirmed by the relevant literature. There is little literature on deaf ministry parse though there are various helpful works on deaf culture, community and education.

Cultural Sensitivity

Most anthropologists, sociologists, linguists and psychologists agree, “The condition of deafness creates a community with separate language and distinct culture” (Preston 1994, 11 cf. Sampley 1990, 29). Lane Harlan, the author of *The Mask of Benevolence* (1992, 5) supports this assertion when he comments that scholarly researchers since 1970’s agree to this grouping of the deaf as a distinct culture. He says,

Most people who were born deaf or became so early in life and who grew up deaf as part of the deaf community have a different point of view. They see themselves as fundamentally visual people, with their own visual language, social organization, history and mores. In short, with their own way of being, their language and culture.”

They are a cultural group not because of ethnicity but because of their distinct “language, experiences, practices/activities” (Sampley, 33). The deaf have a sense of shared identity, cultural heritage, and means of communication (Preston, 11).

However, it is expedient to note that it is ultimately, impossible to extract deaf culture from hearing culture; “They exist in a relationship to each other” (Preston, 70). The present study agrees with these conclusions.

Characteristics of The Deaf Culture

One of the unique characteristics of deaf culture is that it “represents one of the rare instances in which peer socialization is the primary event of socialization consistently exceedingly or replacing that of the family” (ibid., 5). Ideally, the deaf children of deaf parents are symbolic if not practically the core of deaf culture.

However, this phenomenon of deaf parents with deaf children is rare. “It is estimated that almost ninety percent of children born to two deaf parents are hearing” (ibid., 11). In other words, “Nine out of ten deaf children have hearing parents” (Lane, 5).

Therefore, the residential school and other deaf institutions like church form an important agent of socializing the deaf into their culture. “Most lifelong deaf adults socialize exclusively with other deaf people” (Preston, 11).

It is notable that researchers agree that the deaf culture and community include those who are “culturally deaf” individuals regardless of hearing status – who participate in and consider themselves members of the deaf community (ibid., 13). Hence, the community and culture include those that are “clinically deaf” – persons with moderate to profound hearing loss (ibid., 13). The clinically deaf maybe: prelingually deaf, hard of hearing, postlingually deaf, or orally deaf. Other members of the deaf community are children of deaf parents and hearing deaf workers with deaf

people (Sampley, 30). Being culturally deaf is interdependent on the individual's identification with the group's evaluation and acceptance of the individual by the group. One has to be culturally familiar: "having a breadth of life experiences associated with being deaf; routinely participating in social interactions with other deaf people; and sharing a similar social behavior, historical traditions and a common destiny" (Preston, 13). The local sign language is regarded as an integral feature of deaf culture. These facts (mentioned above) support the theory because they support the basic fact that cultural sensitivity must shape the attitude of any deaf minister.

Similar core and salient values that researchers of the deaf culture in the West identify according to this study include (according to Lane Harlen, 16-23),

1. **Storytelling.** In America, mastery of ASL and skillful storytelling are highly valued in deaf culture. Story telling develops early in residential schools for deaf children. This research found stories a common practice among the deaf.
2. **Clear communication:** Stories should be rich in detail, start at the beginning and end at the end, and contain plain talk; hinting and vague talk in an effort to be polite is inappropriate and even offensive. The researcher found that the deaf are very forthright.
3. **Endogamous marriages:** "An estimated nine out of ten members of the American deaf community marry other members of their cultural group."
4. **Deaf identity:** Deaf people seem to agree that a hearing person can never fully acquire deaf identity and become a full-fledged member of the deaf community. The hearing members still have divided allegiances. The deaf are members of the same family. "It is by hearing standards, a heterogeneous family: the salience of deaf identity over shadows differences of age, class, sex and ethnicity that would be more

prominent in hearing society.” The researcher found that the deaf socialized and interacted freely in their services regardless of their socio-economic status, education, tribe and age. Even visiting new deaf members of the congregation were instantly assimilated.

5. “There is a penchant for group decision-making, and mutual aid and reciprocity figure importantly in deaf culture.”

6. Deaf people *frequently hug* on meeting and invariably hug on parting – real hugs. Parting can take a very long time. Abrupt departures and even temporary, unexplained departures are unacceptable. This, in few words, describes the scene before and after the deaf services as observed by the researcher.

7. “There is fierce *group loyalty* and this may extend to protectively withholding from the hearing people information about the community’s language and culture.” The researcher as she sought entry into sites, was vehemently denied entry in one potential site and requested to come with a deaf person for any information to be given. Lane says that the deaf see themselves as members of a cultural minority group and believe that one should marry within this minority. “Marriage with a hearing person is definitely frowned upon. The deaf community collectively values deaf children.” This is also true of most hearing communities.

Therefore, deafness should be viewed by those reaching out to and ministering to the deaf not by stigmatization as a bad thing (the infirmity model according to Lane Harlan, 18), but as a cultural identity (cultural model, *ibid.*, 19) which invokes quite a different conceptual framework. Through a cultural approach, one asks, “What are the interdependent values, mores, art forms, traditions, organizations and language that characterize this culture?” (*ibid.*, 19). One can only impact the deaf within their framework. Lane takes the views of anthropologist Boy D’Andrade and convincingly

argues, “Because there is a deaf community with its own language and culture, there is a cultural frame in which to be deaf is an asset in deaf culture; to be deaf in behavior, values, knowledge, and fluency in ‘local’ sign language.”

The implication for ministry is great. For any hearing persons who want to know what it means to be deaf, to become part of the deaf community and to do effective ministry must have understanding and empathy toward the deaf (ibid., 12).

There will be no successful relations between the hearing and the deaf people, no successful education of deaf children, until the extrapolative error (imagining true representation of members of another culture without a change in one’s frame of reference) is set aside (ibi.,12).

By the same strength, no successful spiritual nurture can take place in the presence of this error. Lane (23) recommends that those professing to serve the deaf community should consult the deaf community so as “to let everybody have a chance at self creating to the best of his or her abilities.” “Thus, the deaf people themselves,” he adds, “should be crucial participants in discussion and agreements concerning the lives of deaf children and adults.” The church must also take this heed. One informant was categorical on this by saying, “...the deaf need to be empowered to do their own ministry.”

Communication in the Deaf Community

Sampley (37) in acknowledging how communication is crucial in spiritual nurture for the deaf, poses the question, “...how can the church environment become more conducive to providing spiritual growth for deaf children and hearing impaired people in general?” He illustrates this need by quoting a frustrated mother reciting,

My son ought to have the same opportunity that hearing children do. Must his deafness exclude my son from the opportunity to be taught God’s word? He is ten years old, and we have already waited too long! So many times we have brought our son to vacation Bible school and there is nothing for him. How

many times have we gone to Bible conference and again met the same void. How many times must we attend Christian camps, only to be met with smiling faces? It's not that Christians don't care. They are just unable to communicate, or lack the knowledge that is even needed. Through the years we have been our sons ears, now I am tired and burned out, yet my son is hungry and thirsty for more. We feel alone (38).

These sentiments reflect clearly the frustration of one mother to a deaf 13 years old son before she discovered a deaf congregation. It also reflects the gravity of her joy when she discovered a place her son could clearly hear the word of God. The problem at hand is caused by failure in communication as the mother in question expresses. The deaf in a hearing service is more an outsider than an insider just like "a deaf pupil in a spoken language classroom" (Lane, 25).

Other researchers like the present one acknowledge the fact that sign language is the primary and most effective way of communication with the deaf (Sacks Oliver 1990; Preston Paul 1994 and Sampley De Ann 1990). Other recognizable modes of communication include interpretation, lip-reading and writing.

The present research agrees with Oliver Sacks in his book *Seeing Voices* (1990, 18) on communication difficulties faced by deaf children born to hearing parents. Unlike the hearing, such deaf children are in danger of languagelessness, or severe linguistic incompetence. Such children suffer estrangement even in their own households. The reason is that they need different modes to communicate and they cannot learn this from their parents.

The present researcher concurs with Sampley (87) and Sacks (112-113) that sign language is different from all other audio/oral languages of the hearing people. In particular, ASL "differs from English in many respects, such as, it has its own syntax, sentence construction, grammar, and word order." Most languages are based on sound, and that is where sign language is unique. "It is a language based on sight. It is a visual-spatial language" (ibid., 87). Sign language teachers note that, in learning this

very expressive language, you must concentrate not only on basic hand movements, but also facial expressions, body movements, the space around you, the fingers (ibid., 87). See manual alphabet and sign language in appendix 4 and appendix 5 respectively.

The average deaf adults' ability to read English is at fourth grade level (Ndurumo (1993) says elementary level (p. 151)), but has a twelfth grade comprehension level in native language (Sampley, 87).

“Speech and printed page are the methods most often used to convey the message of Jesus Christ, but this presents a problem for the prelingual deaf person who is totally dependent on sight and the language of signs for spiritual education and growth” (ibid., 88). Meeting the spiritual needs of the deaf requires making God’s message of love and salvation come alive visually. “...make your signs as vivid as pictures, easy to grasp with eyes, and graphic enough to give a clear impression” (ibid., 88).

Where the written page is used, the present researcher agrees with Ndurumo (1993) that, “ the sentences of the deaf are shorter than those of the hearing. The deaf use more simple sentences and that more difficult form are less used by the deaf than by the hearing” (151-2). Where interpretation is to be used to communicate the message, then, the interpreter should be proficient in both sign language and spoken English (Sampley, 62). Sacks notes that hearing children born to deaf parents are in the best place for being interpreters because they inherit both the deaf and hearing cultures (121). Therefore, for effective communication and ministry to the deaf, we need to replace the barrier of ignorance “by taking time to educate ourselves about a new culture and a new language. And most important, we can seek to remove any obstacles that hinder the natural flow of God’s love” (ibid., 50).

Deaf Fellowships

On deaf ministry, Sampley agrees with this present study when she advocates for indigenous churches for the deaf. She notes that, “Today the concept of deaf people reaching deaf people is a trend that is slowly becoming widely accepted” (ibid.,120). She notes that this is effective because deaf people tend to gravitate toward others like themselves. “Certain cultural requirements must be fulfilled for a hearing person to enter the deaf community for ministry” (ibid., 120). These requirements include all that has been already discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Background of Study

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to discover the hearing-impaired persons' perceptions of their spiritual nurture needs and their implications for Christian education in the church. The research was conducted in two hearing-impaired congregations in Nairobi, and data was collected through site observation, examining of available church documents and semi-structured interviews. Ten participants in the two congregations were interviewed.

The study is significant in helping the church and Christian education in their pursuit of a strategic educational ministry especially to the hearing impaired. This research was guided by one main question: "What are the felt-needs for spiritual nurture of the hearing impaired."

Findings and Conclusions of the Study

The researcher found that the hearing impaired have a need for salvation and need to know the word of God. The study also revealed that these needs could effectively be met in the context of the deaf culture. Hence, the following theory evolved out of this study: The basic spiritual needs of the hearing impaired are fundamentally the same as for the general population. However, they can be met only in the context of deaf culture. The context of the deaf the culture includes the following main elements:

- Sensitivity to deaf culture

- Effective communication
- Presence of deaf fellowships

Implications and Recommendations for Christian Education in the Church

In view of the findings the researcher advances the following recommendations for Christian Education:

1. The church should be aware of the presence of the deaf community, which constitutes a significant population (about 15 million deaf and hard of hearing) in Africa and one of the most unreached people groups. The Great Commission also applies to outreach to hearing impaired people, so there is a need for deaf outreach ministries to fulfill this commission.
2. The best way of reaching the deaf is by identifying with the deaf community. The implication of identifying with the deaf is that the Christian ministers to the hearing impaired, especially the hearing ministers, must consider themselves as missionaries to a new culture. As a result they must, of necessity, know the deaf culture, accept and embrace it, and give a Christian witness to the deaf in the cultural context of the deaf.
3. The ministers to the deaf must know the deaf language, which is sign language, its grammatical, syntactical and morphological structures and local idiomatic expressions. For effective communication of the gospel to the hearing impaired.
4. The hearing impaired people need acceptance and love; acceptance to exist as deaf people without being viewed as unable people with a problem to be fixed so as to be complete. The deaf are complete human beings with abilities and gifting to enrich the body of Christ, which must be tapped and used in their own culture. All stigmas and stereotypes that the hearing attach to the deaf must be removed. This

means removing obstacles like lack of communication at home and in the church, inferior education in school and discrimination in employment. Such obstacles are placed before the deaf by the hearing people and help brand the deaf as handicapped.

5. The hearing Christians need to have sign interpreters to facilitate communication between deaf people and hearing people.
6. The best way to reach the deaf and to nurture them spiritually is to have the deaf themselves be at the frontline of deaf ministry. Therefore, there is need for partnership with deaf people by offering financial support for deaf ministries and deaf missionaries.
7. Interacting with deaf leaders to know the needs of the deaf people, and equipping, training and empowering them to minister to these needs.
8. There is need to identify deaf people, especially the children, and direct them to deaf ministries where they can be fed spiritually or starting deaf ministries for such members of the congregations. It is here that sign language interpretation may be necessary.
9. The hearing church should help the deaf fellowship of churches to own a place of worship where members can meet any time and have strong ministry to schools for the deaf. (Deaf schools are the basic agents of socialization for the deaf community).
10. The hearing church together with the deaf community needs to establish counseling programs and have sign language and interpreter training classes.
11. There is great need to start and finance a school for ministry for deaf Christian leaders. The existing schools need strengthening.

12. If the situation in hearing churches is to improve, the Christian community must accept responsibility to lovingly educate congregations about the special needs of the deaf people they may once have shunned. Those that have skills and commitment for the deaf ministry should be encouraged.
13. The deaf fellowships should fully be aware that effective spiritual nurture can only be achieved by effective communication of the message in local sign language. The deaf Christian leaders should also act as a bridge between their congregations and the hearing.

In conclusion, the words of Joni Erickson Tada are worth consideration:

Who will touch the lives of deaf people for Christ? We hope you and your church will. As your congregation becomes equipped and trained to reach out to anyone with any kind of disability, whether visible or invisible, they will discover the joy of caring (Sampley, 53).

Recommendations for Further Studies

The study revealed that there is need for more research in the aspect of the learning material that can facilitate spiritual nurture. Such a study shall strengthen the work of discipleship to hearing impaired and the Christian witness by allowing it to be more effective and relevant to the deaf. It is in this aspect that the researcher recommends further studies.

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APPENDIX 1

DVCAA'S LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

P.O. Box 24686, NAIROBI, KENYA

A Project of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA)

TEL : 254-2-882104/5, 882038

FAX : 254-2-882906

E-Mail : NEGST@maf.org

4th March, 2002

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH WORK

The bearer of this letter, Miss. Caroline Ayuma Mapesa is a student at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology and is doing research towards the completion of the Master of Arts in Christian Education programme. The research is on **“Spiritual Nurture for the Hearing impaired: Implication for Christian Education in the Church”**.

Any assistance that you can give to Miss. Mapesa will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Victor B. Cole

Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs

VBC/mo.

APPENDIX 2

LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Respondent,

Ref: Request for interview.

I am conducting a research on the topic, *Spiritual Nurture For The Hearing Impaired: Implications For Christian Education In The Church*. This is as a requirement for Masters of Arts in Christian Education in Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. For this reason, I request for your participation as an interviewee.

I look forward to your granted participation. Find the description of the research below.

Description of the Research for Potential Participants

My research is interested in spiritual nurture for the hearing impaired. I intend to interview a number of members of the deaf community in two deaf congregations. I am interested in discovering some of the perceptions of their spiritual needs and how these needs affect their spiritual nurture.

I believe that this research will give voice to the hearing impaired need for spiritual nurture in order that Churches might respond adequately. It will also give the church an opportunity to re-examine some of its positions on the Christian education programs for the hearing impaired. Thirdly, this information will also be useful to Christian educators as they seek for an inclusive Christian education ministry in the church.

I am hoping that you will be able to give me helpful information and any other assistance in the process of this research.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to assist me.

Sincerely,

Caroline Ayuma Mapesa

Consent Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone:

Office: _____

House: _____

Mobile Phone: _____

Date _____

Thank you for your letter addressed to me with regard to your thesis. I have read and have understood the nature of the research you are doing. I am willing to assist you in the exercise and consent to be interviewed by you. I will do my best to inform you what I know and feel about the spiritual needs of the hearing impaired. I'm aware that this information is confidential and only for the purpose of your thesis. I may withdraw my participation with prior notice to you.

Sincerely yours,

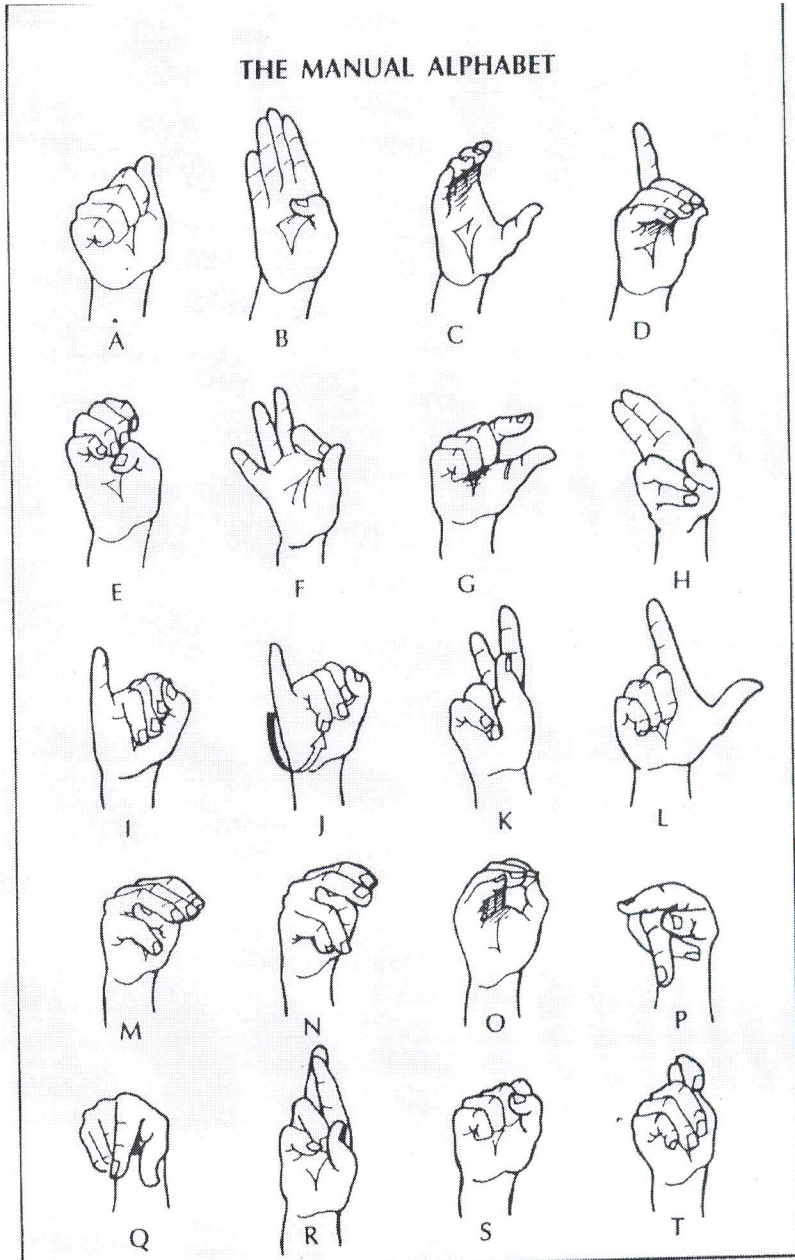
APPENDIX 3

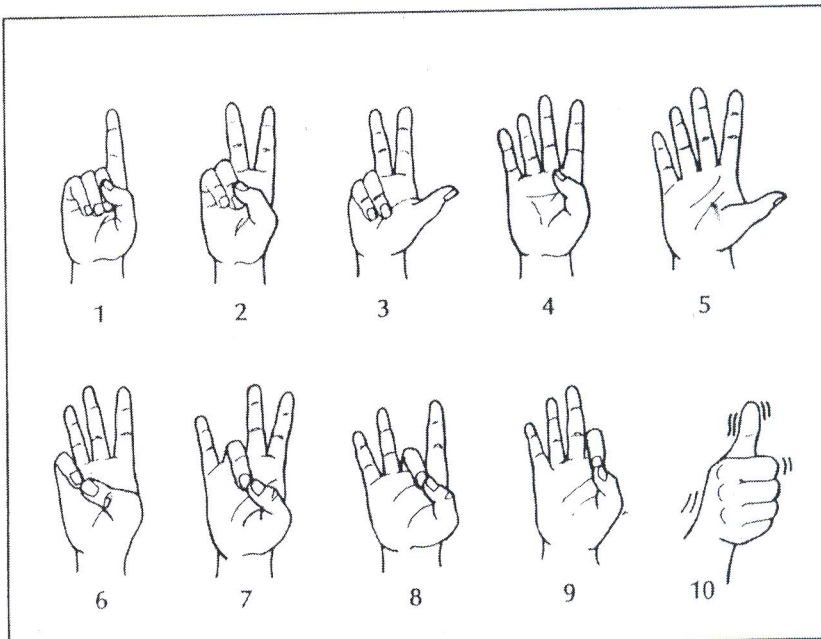
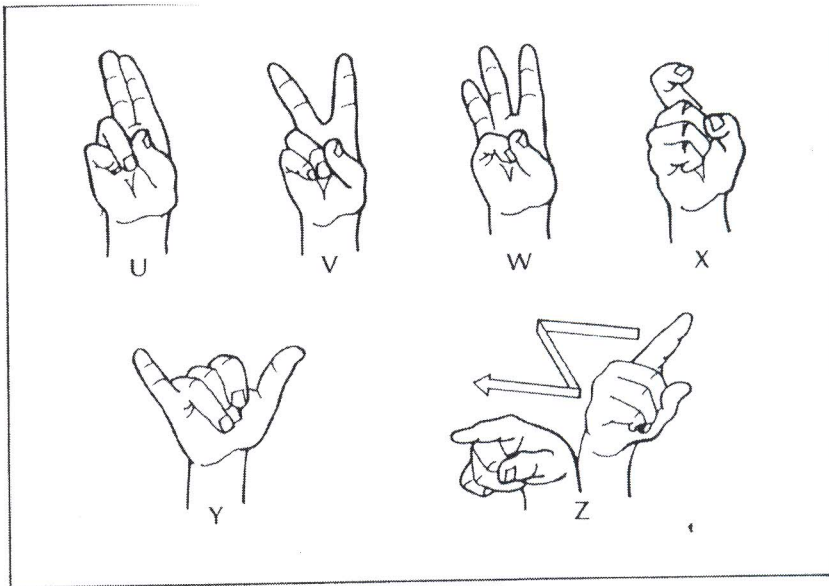
INTERVIEW TOPICS/QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES

1. How would you describe your spiritual needs?
2. Do you think the church is meeting these needs? In what ways?
3. What is your evaluation of the Church's programs in meeting these needs?
4. What would you recommend for your spiritual needs to be effectively met?
5. Do you feel the church leadership is open to improving ministry to you?

APPENDIX 4

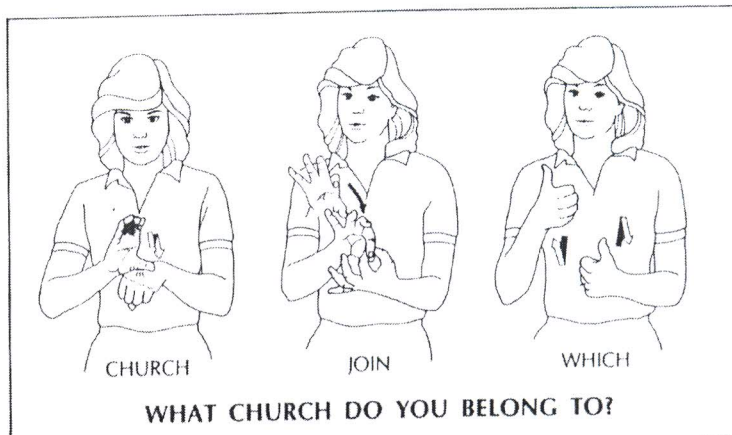
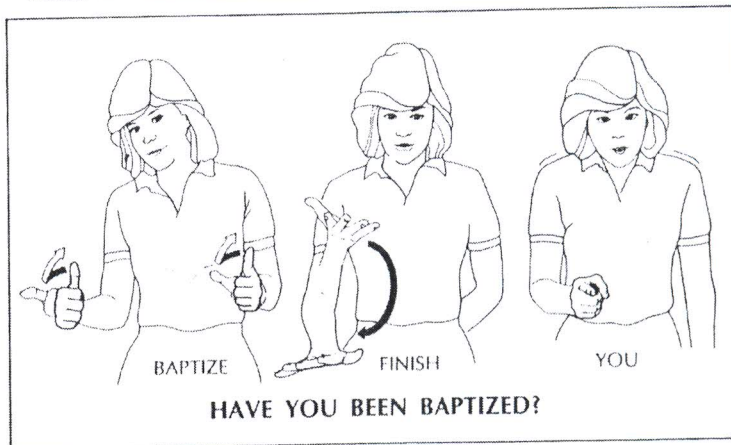
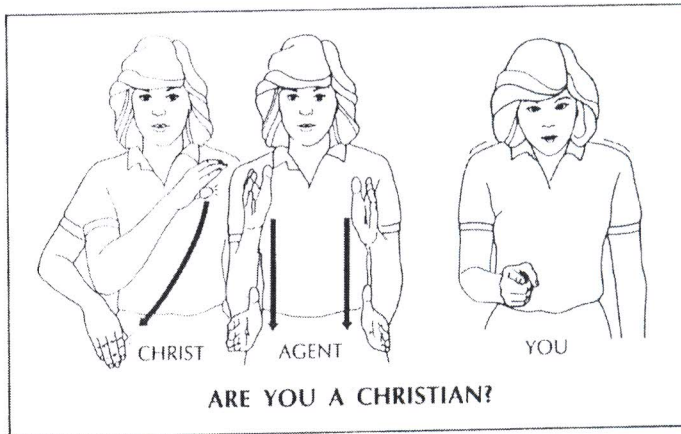
THE MANUAL ALPHABET





(Sampley 1990, 106-107)

APPENDIX 5



(Sampley 1990, 92)

VITA

PERSONAL DATA

Name: Caroline Ayuma Mapesa
Address: Box 2902 Eldoret
Date of Birth: 1976
Gender: Female
Marital Status: Single
Nationality: Kenyan

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

NEGST	Master of Arts in Christian Education (Candidate)	2000 – 2002
Moi University	Bachelor of Education (Arts) Hons.	1995 – 1999
Limuru Girls School	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education	1990 – 1993
Moi Uni. Primary	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education	1982 – 1989

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Campus Staff	Fellowship of Christian Unions	1999 – 2000
Teacher	Bunyore Girls Secondary School	1997