

Friday, April 24, 2026

# THE WEST WEEKLY

## #13 WHERE ARE THE CHEERS FOR COPS?

### CALLED, TRAINED, COMMISSIONED: 77 INVESTED AS MASTER GUIDES

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## WHERE ARE THE CHEERS FOR COPS?

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# WHERE ARE THE CHEERS FOR COPS?



*Acting Commissioner of Police Glenford Miller addressing the fifth staging of the Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference Annual Security Forces and Youth Mentorship Prayer Breakfast in Montego Bay on Sunday.*

Horace Hines | Observer Writer | April 21, 2026

**M**ONTEGO BAY, St James — Highlighting that the police recorded 162 fewer murders in Area One — Trelawny, St James, Hanover and Westmoreland — last year when compared to 2024, president of the Jamaica Union of Seventh-day Adventists Glen Samuels says he is puzzled why there is little recognition when cops make gains but public protests whenever they are perceived to overstep.

“I know it can be challenging, particularly when here we are today acknowledging the fact that 162 lives have been reduced from the mounting numbers of the past, but there is nobody in St James with a placard saying, ‘Big up the St James and Westmoreland police’,” argued Samuels.

“There is nobody, and I can’t recall seeing it for days in the media. But I dare say to you that if it is that you had acted unwisely in any manner, there would be placard holders shouting, ‘We want justice’ and ‘Down with the police’. Notwithstanding all of that, you must be satisfied in yourself at the end of each day that you are answerable not just to your commanding officer, but there is a higher voice to which you listen,” added Samuels as he delivered the keynote address at the fifth staging of the Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference

Annual Security Forces and Youth Mentorship Prayer Breakfast in Montego Bay on Sunday.

In his charge to the cops, Samuels urged them to be beyond reproach.

“Whether you’re just joining the force or you are senior members of the rank and file, your integrity must have no price tag. If you can’t lead, follow good leadership of integrity; and if you can’t do any of the two, then in respect for the uniform you wear, I would say maybe it’s time then to step aside. Lead, follow or get out of the way”.

“We cannot build a nation without recognising that meaningful mentorship is a critical part and process of the building of a better nation,” he added.

The church leader also strongly condemned motorists who persist in flashing headlights to warn oncoming drivers of the police’s presence on the roadway.

“One good reason to stop that is that you may be saving your own life. Because the person you allow to escape the law enforcement team may well be the person that, sadly, may be the one to cause the death of your loved ones. It is always easier to pay the fine than to pay the funeral parlour,” said Samuels.

In his remarks, Acting Commissioner of Police (ACP) Glenford Miller, who heads Area One, pointed to

significant crime reduction achievements in the four parishes.

Miller confirmed that murders in Area One declined from 297 in 2024, to 135 last year. He credited the reduction to the dedication of members of the police force, and the support of partners, including the Church.

The senior cop pointed out that last year St James recorded 58 murders, its lowest in more than three decades.

Describing the achievement as historic and a result of collective effort, Miller expressed gratitude to all stakeholders whose collaboration he said made the results possible.

“You the police officers in Area One, who promised to serve and protect the citizens of Area One, you delivered on that promise. Thank you very much for that,” he said.

Delivering his address on behalf of Police Commissioner Dr. Kevin Blake, ACP Calvin Allen pointed out that sustainable public safety cannot be achieved by policing alone.

Allen argued that faith-based institutions play a pivotal role in reinforcing moral values, strengthening families, and supporting vulnerable communities.

He added that the Church continues to offer hope, guidance, and stability where it is most needed.

Allen commended the Seventh-day Adventist Church for its outreach initiatives, pointing to mentorship, counselling, youth engagement, and conflict resolution programmes which he said have helped steer at-risk individuals away from crime.

He emphasised the importance of young people to the nation's future, assuring them that both the police and community partners are committed to providing guidance, support, and opportunities for success.

Allen also praised the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference as he said its commitment to service and national development has strengthened efforts to promote peace and security across communities.



Members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force based in Area One listen attentively during the fifth staging of the Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference Annual Security Forces and Youth Mentorship Prayer Breakfast in Montego Bay on Sunday.



President of the Jamaica Union of Seventh-day Adventists Glen Samuels delivering the keynote address at the annual Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference Annual Security Forces and Youth Mentorship Prayer Breakfast in Montego Bay on Sunday.



Corporal Wayne Wallace is a picture of joy during the fifth staging of the Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference Annual Security Forces and Youth Mentorship Prayer Breakfast.



Acting Commissioner of Police Calvin Allen bringing greetings at the Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference Annual Security Forces and Youth Mentorship Prayer Breakfast in Montego Bay on Sunday.



# PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS

Highlight Photos of the Seventh-day Adventist West Jamaica Conference Annual Security Forces and Youth Mentorship Prayer Breakfast in Montego Bay on Sunday April 19, 2026. Photo Credit: Jon-Marc Myrie



[Please click to view more](#)

# CALLED, TRAINED, COMMISSIONED: 77 INVESTED AS MASTER GUIDES



Parish Vice President Barrington Tavares, gives his report to the president of the West Jamaica Conference Master Guide Association, President MG Jevon Smith. Photo Credit: M.G. C. Furze

The West Jamaica Conference Master Guide Association marked a significant milestone on Sabbath, April 4, 2026, as 77 individuals were formally invested into the Master Guide ministry. The investees represented all four parishes within the Conference territory: Westmoreland (20), St. Elizabeth (18), Hanover (12), and St. James (27).

The service was held at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, Davis Cove and brought together Master Guides, Master Guides in Training (MITs), leaders, and invited guests from across the conference for a spiritually enriching and well-coordinated day centered on worship and celebration. Designed to formally recognize individuals who successfully completed the Master Guide training, the service also highlighted the program's core mission of leadership through service and spiritual growth.

Proceedings began at 9:15 a.m. with Sabbath School led by the Hanover MITs under the theme "The Journey - Master Guides Called." Guided by Superintendent Shawn Donaldson-McLauren, the session established a reverent and purposeful tone for the day. Pastor Allan Green, Youth Ministries Director of the West Jamaica Conference, delivered the divine service message. He emphasized the importance of discipline, commitment, and ongoing spiritual development in effective leadership. His message resonated strongly with both investees

and the wider congregation.

Following the indoor service, activities moved to the Cove Primary School grounds for the Parade Inspection. Dignitaries were formally received and saluted before assembling on the saluting dais. The inspecting party included the Association's President, General Vice President and Secretary, along with Area Coordinators, parish representatives, and the Youth Ministries Director of the Conference, Pastor Allan Green.



Master Guide Berkley Daley (right), accepts an award from Pastor Vincent Rose, President of West Jamaica Conference, for 18 years of service to the West Jamaica Conference Master Guide Association. :: Photo credit: Contributed

The march pass was a striking display of precision, discipline, and unity. Master Guides in Training moved in synchronized formation with measured, confident steps. Commands rang out with clarity as each unit executed sharp turns and coordinated movements.

The Investiture Ceremony was hosted by Leonard Carroll, Assistant Vice President for St. James. Key highlights included the President's Report presented by Master Guide Jevon Smith, and presentations and demonstrations by MITs from various parishes reflecting their training and growth. Each of the 77 investees was presented by their respective Parish Vice Presidents and formally commissioned into the Master Guide ministry.

A standout moment was the presentation of Citations of Honour. Master Guide Berkley Daley was recognized for 18 years of dedicated service. When asked about receiving the award, Master Guide Daley responded with characteristic humility and gratitude.

"Honestly, it feels very humbling. I'm grateful to God for allowing me the strength and opportunity to serve over the years. This award represents the many people I've worked with, the leaders who guided me, and the young people who inspired me along the way. It's truly a blessing."

He continued, "It reminds me that service matters, especially when it's done for God. It encourages me to keep going, to keep mentoring, and to continue being a positive influence."



Pastor Vincent Rose, President of West Jamaica Conference presents a Palgue to Master Obryan Falconer (right) in recognition of his 10 years of outstanding service in the area of Drill and March. :: Photo credit: Contributed

Also receiving a Citation of Honour was Master Guide Obryan Falconer, recognized for 10 years of outstanding contributions in drill and march. Known for his precision, discipline, and passion for youth

development, Master Guide Falconer has helped shape many Master Guides in Training through his commitment to excellence and mentorship.

"This award inspires me to continue striving, not for accolades, but for impact: to uplift others, to guide with love, and to keep building a legacy of service rooted in Christ. Truly, this is a milestone that strengthens my resolve and deepens my gratitude to God, my family, and my community," Falconer ended.

Additional awards were presented within parishes, highlighting excellence and dedication among members. Attendees left with a renewed sense of mission to know Christ, make Him known, and serve others. As echoed throughout the day's theme, the journey of the Master Guide continues: Called, Trained, and Commissioned.

West Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists |  
Topaz Lewis-Barrett | April 24, 2026

## WEST WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

*Do you want to keep up with what is happening in our church? If you want to receive our weekly newsletter that features news, inspirational stories, videos, and more, sign up today.*





Please click image to watch

## NEWS FROM THE INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

# Bridging the Gospel to Cuba's Deaf Community

**Yaily Valdés helps translate the Bible into sign language in Cuba while promoting greater outreach and inclusion.**

April 8, 2026 | Havana, Cuba | Libna Stevens, Inter-American Division News

**Y**aily Valdés never expected her life to take a complete turn. Trained as a lawyer and later involved in communication and media ministry, she now serves at the Cuban Bible Society, where she helps lead in translating the Bible into Cuban Sign Language.

"I didn't know any deaf people. I had no connection to this world," Valdés said. "And today, I cannot imagine a single day without them."

What began as an unexpected encounter has become her life's calling.



Yaily Valdés signs the word "God," reflecting her work in bringing the message of salvation to Cuba's deaf community through sign language Bible translation. [Photo: Libna Stevens/IAD]

### An Unexpected Beginning

Valdés's journey into deaf ministry started not with a plan, but with a conversation.

While visiting the Bible Society's library to study, she met members of the translation team and offered legal guidance on a project they were navigating.

"I just helped them as a professional, as someone who knew the Bible," she said.

That moment led to something greater. Shortly after, she was invited to join the team.

"I felt strange at first," she admitted. "I come from communication, from media—but God brought me here."

What began as an unfamiliar experience soon became a calling, as she learned sign language and grew deeply involved in serving the deaf community.



*Yaily Valdés (front, second from right) joins fellow translators from Bolivia, Cuba, and Ecuador, along with indigenous language translators from Colombia and Venezuela, during a recent Bible translation training organized by United Bible Societies in Colombia. [Photo: Courtesy of Yaily Valdez]*

"It has been a time of preparation and deep study," she reflected, "learning alongside a group that for many years has been marginalized and often unseen."

Today, she serves as assistant and general coordinator of the sign language Bible translation project—a long-term initiative that has been underway in Cuba for more than 14 years.

### Translating the Bible Into a Visual Language

The work is complex and deeply intentional, she explained. Unlike written translations, the Bible in sign language is produced entirely in video format.

"We study the text, and then we sign it," Valdés explained. "It's not just translating words—it's translating meaning."

Because many deaf individuals in Cuba have limited access to Spanish in its full depth, translation requires expanding concepts that hearing audiences often take for granted.

"For a hearing person, if I say 'Jesus came,' they understand everything—His birth, His life, His death," she said. "But for a deaf person, I have to explain each part of that story."



*Yaily Valdés (center) joins fellow translators from Venezuela and Bolivia during a recent Bible translation training in Colombia. [Photo: Courtesy of Yaily Valdez]*

Each video segment is carefully crafted, often just a few minutes long, to ensure clarity and comprehension. The Gospel of Luke has already been completed, consisting of more than 100 video segments now being used in churches and shared across digital platforms.

The translation team, composed of two hearing members and four deaf participants, works collaboratively to ensure the message is both theologically accurate and culturally meaningful.

### A Mission Beyond Translation

For Valdés, a member of the Playa Adventist Church in Havana, the project goes beyond language—it is about access to salvation.

"My passion is to bring the Bible and its message of salvation to the deaf community in Cuba," she said.

The need is significant. Of the more than 57,000 deaf individuals in Cuba, only a small percentage identify as Christian.

"They need to know Jesus," she said simply.



*Yaily Valdés (left), project assistant at the Cuban Bible Society, is pictured with Dr. Isela Trujillo (center), a respected anthropologist and biblical scholar, and Disney Ortiz (right), a Cuban Sign Language interpreter, during a translation training event. The logo behind them symbolizes God above Cuban Sign Language. [Photo: Courtesy of Yaily]*

[Please click to view more](#)

# CALENDAR OF MISSION 2026

APRIL

- 19 - 25 Adventist Education Celebration Week - Education and Evangelism Week
- 25 Elders' Baptism & Lay Preachers Mission Baptism Day/ Education Symposium
- 26 Mentor Care & Supervision Session

## May

- 1 - 31 CELEBRATIONS - Emphasis on Beliefs
- 1 - 31 Stewardship - Emphasis on Treasure
- 1 - 31 Child's Month/ Children in Mission Evangelism
- 1 - 31 Drug Addiction & Awareness Month
- 2 Community Services Day/ Lay Preachers & Bible Workers' Federation Rally - St. James
- 3 Communion with God - Hour of Prayer
- 3 Community Services Expo
- 2 - 4 May It Go Well with You - Public Campus Ministries
- 6 Teachers' Day
- 9 Adventist Volunteer/ VividFaith Day
- 9 Men & Beams, and Couples Rally - St. Elizabeth
- 10 Mother's Day Concert
- 10 - 15 Celebration of the Family in Schools - Family Week of Prayer
- 12 Executive Committee Meeting
- 16 Global Adventurer Day/ Church Clerk 7th Sabbath Attendance Count
- 21 Ministerial Development Seminar
- 23 UNASSIGNED

# CONFERENCE EVENTS

APRIL



West Jamaica Conference  
of Seventh-day Adventists

invites **ALL Elders & Lay Preachers**  
to active participation in

# Church Elders' Baptism Day 2026

**EVERY LAY PREACHER / ELDER  
PREPARING 3 CANDIDATES  
FOR BAPTISM**



## April 25

"May the power of the Holy Ghost fall afresh upon you."

# CONFERENCE EVENTS

APRIL



EMPOWERING YOUTH ENGAGING SOCIETY  
West Jamaica Conference Mentorship Initiative

Calling all trained EYES mentors  
across West Jamaica Conference!

## MENTOR CARE & SUPERVISION SESSION

Sunday, April 26, 2026



Registration begins at 9:00 a.m.  
Session begins at 9:30 a.m.



WEST JAMAICA  
CONFERENCE CENTRE

Join us for a special session designed to encourage, support, and strengthen you in your mentoring role.

FEATURING:

Guided discussion, mentor wellness, interactive group engagement,  
and shared learning.

Contact Information: Email: [mentorship@westjamaica.org](mailto:mentorship@westjamaica.org)  
Call: 1-876-656-7800 (Office)/ Whatsapp: 1-876-853-4705 (WJC Mentorship Phone)

# CONFERENCE EVENTS

MAY



West Jamaica Conference  
**Women's Ministries**

*Expressions of Love*

# MOTHERS

· DAY ·

*Concert & Extravaganza*

Date: **May 10, 2026**

Starting Time: **3 pm**

Seventh-day Adventist Conference Center

*Ticket:*

- **\$1500** pre-sold • **\$1800** at the gate
- Children pay at the gate: **\$1000** (12 years and under)

*Giveaways include:*

- Grocery & Health vouchers • Books
- Other prizes & surprises

*MC*

**Mical Forsythe**



**REFRESHMENTS ON SALE**

**PROCEEDS IN AID OF MOTHERS AFFECTED BY HURRICANE MELISSA**

# PERSONAL MINISTRIES

MAY



WEST JAMAICA CONFERENCE

Personal Ministries Department

## LAY PREACHERS' & BIBLE WORKERS' FEDERATION RALLY

THEME: **GROUNDING IN THE BIBLE, FOCUSED ON THE MISSION, RESTORING HOPE**

MAY  
**23, 2026**

Venue: Seventh-day Adventist Conference Centre  
Mount Salem Rd, Montego Bay



Guest Presenter  
Pr. **Jermaine Johnson**  
President, North Jamaica Conference

### EXPECTED ATTENDEES:

Personal Ministries Leaders and Secretaries, Lay Preachers, Bible Workers  
Interest Coordinators and all other Personal Ministries Personnel.

# FAMILY MINISTRIES


MAY




West Jamaica Conference  
Family Ministries Department

# MEN, BEAMS AND COUPLES *Rally*

"ALL FAMILY IN MISSION: GOD'S IDEAL"



*Guest Speaker:*  
**Dr. Roy Dennis**  
Stewardship & Family Life  
Ministries Director – JAMU



**Norman Thompson**  
Family Ministries Director,  
West Jamaica Conference

Sabbath  
May  
2026

**9**  
**9AM**

@ Santa Cruz  
Seventh-day Adventist,  
St. Elizabeth

# CONFERENCE EVENTS

JULY

## WEST JAMAICA CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

### NOTICE THE SEVENTH QUADRENNIAL SESSION FOR WEST JAMAICA CONFERENCE

Notice is hereby given that the **Seventh Quadrennial Session of the West Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists** will be held on **JULY 12 - 13, 2026** at the **Seventh-day Adventist Conference Centre, Mt. Salem Road, Montego Bay. St James.**

Registration begins at 9:00 a.m. at the Noel Frazer Auditorium.

This session is called to:

- ◆ Receive reports from the officers and the various departments.
- ◆ Elect Administrators and Departmental Directors to serve the ensuing term.
- ◆ Consider revisions and changes of the Conference's constitution and by-laws.
- ◆ Discuss and appropriately adopt the strategic plan to guide the activities of the Conference.
- ◆ Transact such other business as may be placed before the delegates

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Vincent Rose, President  
Donovan F. Williams, Executive Secretary  
Marion Barrett-Popkin, Treasurer



# LOCAL EVENTS

APRIL

You're invited to our

# EDUCATION DAY



**THEME:**

“Building Lives for Eternity through Christian Education”

**CHURCHES:**

Mount Salem SDA | Adelphi SDA



DATE:  
**APRIL 25,  
2026**



JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN SHAPING LIVES FOR ETERNITY.

FAITH • EXCELLENCE • CHARACTER • ETERNITY

# LOCAL EVENTS

APRIL



Shepherdess International  
West Jamaica Conference Chapter  
presents

# FISH FRY

**APRIL 30, 2026**

**\$2500.00**

## **MENU:**

Fried Fish  
Bammy  
Festival  
Rice and Peas  
Vegetable



# LOCAL EVENTS

JULY



NORWOOD

SAVE THE DATE

*Putting*  
*God* in the  
Midst of  
**HARVEST 2026**

2 Days for Harvest Celebration 2026.

*Friday Evening Online Vesper Service  
& Sabbath Celebration*

**JULY 10-11**

# LOCAL EVENTS

APRIL

The Youth Ministries Department of the West Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventist in collaboration with the St James Youth Federation presents.

# AFTER CAMP SOCIAL

ONE FAITH  
ONE YOUTH  
ONE MISSION


*One Faith. One Youth. One Mission.*

-  **APRIL 25, 2026 | 7:30 PM**
-  **WEST JAMAICA CONFERENCE, MT. SALEM, MONTEGO BAY**
-  **FREE ADMISSION | REFRESHMENTS ON SALE**
-  **DRESS CODE : YOUR CAMP SOCIAL THEME**
-  **GRAND PRIZES FOR THE BEST CAMP PARADE**

# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

APRIL


Please click to view video content.



West Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

**ONLINE LIVE WORSHIP**  
*Experience*

Online Worship Experience || Morning Session || Sabbath, April 18, 2026



West Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

**REST REFLECTION AND RESTORATION**  
Friday Evening Vesper Service

LIVE ON:  
WCCN f y BLESSTV

Rest, Reflection & Restoration || Friday Evening Vesper Service || April 24, 2026



*The* **BIBLE STUDY** *Hour*

GROWING IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Bible Study Hour || 2nd Quarter || Lesson 4 | April 25, 2026



West Jamaica Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

**HOPE AT THE MERCY SEAT**  
Wednesday Night Prayer Service

LIVE ON:  
WCCN f y BLESSTV

Hope at the Mercy Seat || Wednesday Night Prayer Service || April 22, 2026

# MORE THAN INTERPRETATION

## Deaf and hearing members serving together

Nohelani Jarnes and Esther Doss

# W

hile Nohelani did not grow up Adventist, she became a member as a teenager through an evangelistic program at a local church. From a young age she felt called to become a sign language interpreter, and years later—after joining the Adventist Church—she knew God was leading her to use that gift in ministry.

As a youth she attended Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sacramento, California, where Pastor Doug Batchelor served as head pastor. When he invited her to interpret for an upcoming evangelistic series, Nohelani hesitated. She had only recently begun interpreter training at a local college and felt unprepared for such a responsibility. After prayer and encouragement, she accepted the challenge.

The program proved difficult, and Nohelani quickly realized how overwhelming theological content could be without adequate training. Midway through the series, however, a Deaf woman named Nancy attended. With tears of joy Nancy shared that she had been praying for more interpreters in the Adventist Church—and seeing Nohelani interpret was an answer to her prayer.

Soon after, Nohelani met Jerry, another Deaf church member. Jerry became a mentor, patiently guiding her and offering feedback to improve her interpreting skills. Through this partnership the church became a welcoming space where Nancy and Jerry could fully participate and connect with hearing members because communication access was finally available.



## DEAF MINISTRY

This experience—and others like it—revealed a deeper truth: hearing interpreters alone are not the complete solution. For Deaf ministry to truly grow, hearing and Deaf members must work together—not just through interpretation, but through shared leadership, collaboration, and mutual respect. Interpreters open the door, but lasting inclusion and spiritual growth happen when both communities unite to serve and share the gospel with the Deaf. The Adventist Church is in desperate need of highly skilled interpreters to work alongside Deaf members and support the growth of Deaf ministry.

More than 70 million people worldwide are culturally Deaf and use sign language.<sup>1</sup> They are ordinary people with hopes, dreams, abilities, and God-given talents—they simply cannot hear. Because spoken language is inaccessible, Deaf individuals rely on their eyes for communication. While some can lip-read, only about 30 percent of English is visible on the lips, leaving most of the message to guesswork. For this reason, sign language is preferred for its clarity, richness, and ease of use.

### WHEN ACCESS IS ABSENT

Esther, who was born to Deaf parents, encountered this reality firsthand when she visited a small church in Hermosa, South Dakota. Because it was a small congregation, there was only one adult Sabbath School class, which had already begun when she stepped into the room and chose a seat in the back. As a first-time visitor, she quietly took in her surroundings. Everyone was seated facing the teacher at the front—everyone except for one man. He sat in a folding chair facing the congregation, silently mouthing every word spoken. To some, that might seem unusual, but Esther had a strong hunch that she needed to meet him. During the break between services, she walked to the front and, using both voice and sign, asked one individual, “Are you deaf?”

His eyes filled with curiosity as he followed Esther’s fingers from her ear to her mouth while she signed “deaf.” He nodded and responded, in sign and voice, “Do you sign?”

That was all it took. They quickly became acquainted. The man, Ken, explained that he was skilled at lip reading and that the members were gracious enough to mouth the words spoken each week. Because no one in the congregation knew sign language, that was all they could offer.

Esther couldn’t imagine the strain of staring at someone’s lips for hours every Sabbath morning, trying to decode movements into

meaningful sentences. She admired his perseverance and offered to interpret the worship service in ASL. Ken’s eyes lit up with excitement—“Yes!”

After the service Ken repeatedly expressed his gratitude and wished Esther were relocating to the area. For him, seeing the sermon in sign language was refreshing and far easier to follow than lip reading.

**For Deaf ministry to truly grow, hearing and Deaf members must work together—not just through interpretation, but through shared leadership, collaboration, and mutual respect.**

### MINISTRY WITH, NOT FOR

While Esther’s experience highlights the strain of worship without access, Sam’s story reflects what becomes possible when Deaf members are fully included.

Sam, a Deaf German man living in British Columbia, Canada, was invited to the Ferndale Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Washington Conference (United States) for fellowship with other Deaf members. Wanting to ensure clear communication, Nancy Brown, one of the Deaf members at Ferndale, arranged for an interpreter. During Sabbath School the interpreter voiced Sam’s comments, surprising the hearing attendees and allowing Sam to fully participate.

In the worship service the interpreter’s skill brought the sermon to life—something Sam later said he hadn’t experienced in a long time. Although he deeply appreciated this access, Sam continued attending church even when no interpreter was available. After befriending Mat, a new Polish church member with no sign language skills, Sam encouraged him to become an interpreter. The reason for this seemingly odd request? Sam recognized in Mat something not all interpreters possess: a genuine heart for ministry.



Monica Mack interprets at the 2025 General Conference Session. Photo: James Bokovoy

### More Than Interpretation

Sign language interpreters may receive different levels of formal training, but in church settings there are qualities they cannot learn in a classroom—chief among them a genuine love for Jesus and a deep, selfless love for the Deaf community. They must embrace Deaf culture, recognize the unique gifts within this community, and advocate for full inclusion in church life and mission. Because interpreters are often the primary bridge of communication, they should build real friendships, offering social, emotional, and spiritual support rather than seeking recognition or leadership for selfish reasons. Above all, their highest calling is to clearly communicate and help the Deaf understand the Word of God.

Yet connecting with Deaf members is not the interpreter's responsibility alone. The entire church family shares the call to build relationships and engage with one another. Deaf members bring God-given spiritual gifts that strengthen the congregation and advance its mission, and they should be welcomed as full participants. While some interpreters may lack proper qualifications—and even skilled ones still carry a “hearing accent”—the broader church community must actively support inclusion rather than relying solely on interpreters.

#### A CONGREGATION LEARNING TO LISTEN

The Ferndale church offers one example of what this shared commitment to Deaf ministry can look like. In preparation for an upcoming Deaf Big Day—a special Sabbath gathering featuring a Deaf speaker—hearing members spent months taking sign language classes so that visiting Deaf attendees would feel genuinely welcomed. Their efforts were evident, as Deaf guests felt the warmth of members who communicated directly in sign rather than relying solely on interpreters.

On the Sabbaths that no interpreter is available, the pastor provides a sermon script to their dedicated Deaf member, Nancy Brown, and the song service often includes a YouTube video with music and a sign language interpreter to ensure accessibility. The congregation consistently seeks to include Deaf members and visitors, hiring interpreters when possible and communicating as best they can when one is not present. Their love for the Deaf is unmistakable within this small church community, and visitors immediately sense that care.

#### A MINISTRY FOR ALL

While the Adventist Church urgently needs more sign language interpreters worldwide, hearing congregations can still do much to help Deaf members feel welcome. Some churches have embraced Deaf visitors so warmly that they have stayed—even without an interpreter each Sabbath—because they found genuine love and community.

Churches can learn basic sign language through online resources, greet Deaf visitors warmly even if they do not sign, and sponsor individuals who feel called to train as interpreters.<sup>1</sup> By taking these simple steps, congregations can better support their Deaf brothers and sisters and partner with them in sharing the gospel with one of the world's largest unreached people groups.

<sup>1</sup>

World Federation of the Deaf, Frequently Asked Questions, <https://wfdeaf.org/contact/faqs>  
For resources from Adventist Deaf Ministries International, please visit <https://www.adventistdeaf.org>.

**Esther Doss**, whose first language is American Sign Language, was born to Deaf parents and now serves as the North American Division Deaf Ministries coordinator and a video relay service interpreter. **Nohelani Jarnes** has been signing since age 11 and is a certified interpreter, serving as the volunteer Deaf Ministry coordinator for the Washington Conference and Interpreter Ministry coordinator for her local Seventh-day Adventist church, while also working as a video relay service interpreter.



Esther Doss at the Adventist Deaf Ministries International booth at the sixty-second General Conference Session. Photo: Nathaniel Sebastian Reid / Adventist Media Exchange (CC BY 4.0)

# THE DEAF MISSION GAP

## 83,141,165

estimated Deaf people worldwide<sup>1</sup>

## 400+

distinct sign languages used globally by Deaf communities<sup>2</sup>

## 236

Deaf people groups among the world's 12,348 identified people groups<sup>3</sup>

## 98%

Deaf people worldwide who do not know Jesus Christ, primarily because of communication barriers.<sup>4</sup>

## 1

Adventist pastor is employed to serve the Deaf population of an entire country in at least eight countries worldwide, including Tanzania, United States, Sri Lanka, Poland, Latvia, Ukraine, Nigeria, and Ghana.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.peoplegroups.org>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sil.org/sign-languages>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.peoplegroups.org>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.deafmissions.com/about>

<sup>5</sup> Information submitted by each division in 2025.

# REFLECTING THE LIGHT

*Shine for Jesus*



**E**llen G. White writes in *Steps to Christ*: “Christians are set as light bearers on the way to heaven. They are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ”. This reflection is not optional but the natural result of a relationship with Jesus. She explains that “in every one of His children, Jesus sends a letter to the world”, a letter read by family, neighbors, and coworkers.

White emphasizes that humanity possesses no light of its own. In *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, she uses vivid imagery: “Apart from Christ we are like an unkindled taper, like the moon when her face is turned away from the sun; we have not a single ray of brightness to shed into the darkness of the world”. However, “when we turn toward the Sun of Righteousness, when we come in touch with Christ, the whole soul is aglow with the brightness of the divine presence”.

A crucial aspect of being a light is the attitude we project. White warns that “Christians who gather up gloom and sadness to their souls, and murmur and complain, are giving to others a false representation of God and the Christian life”. Such behavior makes God appear unloving and religion unappealing. Instead, when the Spirit takes possession of the heart, “joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven”.

So as we reflect, don't Originate: your role is to be a mirror for Christ, the true Light. Spend time daily in His presence so His character can shine through you. Let It Shine Naturally: Don't strive to create light artificially.

If Christ dwells in your heart, concealing His presence is impossible. Focus on abiding in Him, and the light will follow.

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