

Dear Editor,

I would like to begin by applauding the Adventist church for taking this step to reach our special needs population here in the United States. With that said, I pose the following question: is there more we could, and should, be doing for our brothers and sisters with special needs? I am a senior social work student at Southern Adventist University and have a calling to work with individuals with special needs. In your article, you mention many steps that can be taken by our churches to improve our accessibility for those with special needs. While this is wonderful and a first step, I believe that there is more that could be done.

One specific population that I have connected with during my time here at Southern is our deaf community. While going out and inviting them to church is a beautiful thing, are we providing skilled interpreters at our local churches and schools to assist with the communication barrier? In the Chattanooga area we are lucky enough to have Pastor Jeff Jordan as not just a pastor and brother in Christ, but as a friend and advocate for this population. But we need more.

As a social work student, I am trained to help and advocate for those who are in need and provide them with the necessary resources. Why is it then, that there is not one Adventist University in the United States that offers an interpreting degree? If we truly want to reach this population, do we not need to first break the language barrier? It is very disheartening as a young member of our church to see that this is not something available to us. On top of that, have we made our universities and schools special-needs friendly? If a blind or deaf student wanted to attend my university, would the school provide them with the necessary resources for them to gain the best education they could? I believe that if we could train and equip this rising generation with the correct tools needed to reach this population, that we could then spread the Gospel even further.

I truly believe that we need to be doing more than just inviting this population to church, we need to be developing life-long relationships. I would like to challenge the Adventist church to go further during this next “Year of Evangelism” and recognize and respond to the basic needs that individuals with special needs require.

Sincerely,

Karissa Goodman

Article Link: <https://www.southerntidings.com/suc/people-of-disability/>