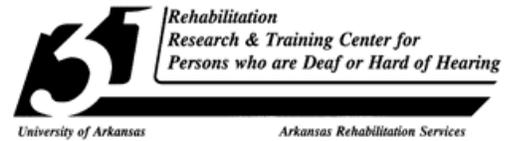




## Selected Proceedings of ALDAcon 2005



### **SPIRITUALITY**

Presenter: GEOFF BROWN  
PANEL DISCUSSION

**GEOFF BROWN:** This morning, we are talking about spirituality. What is spirituality? I don't want to connect this to any particular religious faith. This book on spirituality says that it concerns the quest for a full authentic religious life involving the bringing together of ideas distinctive of that religion. And the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of that religion. I'm not quite sure that it needs to be connected to any particular religion. To me, spirituality involves connecting with something or somebody outside yourself.

Spirituality is something to do with connecting with something or somebody outside your everyday selves. What I will call a transcendental experience, which means rising above your everyday self for a religious person, that means connecting with whatever your religion provides some sort of God. For somebody with no religion, it may be a matter of discovery of yourself. Anyway, what we have for this morning is to discuss how spirituality can help us not so much to fade the definition but to make the most of it.

But before we go any further, I want to introduce the panel. We're going to invite you to ask questions and the panel members will reply. So Doug, if you would like to tell us a bit about yourself.

**DOUG ROBERTS:** Good morning. My name is Doug Roberts. And it's wonderful to have you all here in Salt Lake City. I'm a local member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I'm also hard of hearing and gradually became hard of hearing starting at about age 20 and now at age 62, I'm quite profoundly deaf. However, I have a cochlear implant which helps a lot.

**ANNE MCLAUGHLIN:** Good morning. My name is Anne McLaughlin and I'm from California. Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where my Catholic faith was inculcated to me at home and in a very good Catholic school. That's been my basis of my life and my prayer life is most important to me. My whole life centers around walking

with God as I know it through my faith but I have a lot of common charges with other Christians, too. If you have any questions I can help you about access. I have excellent access in my church. I will tell you about that later.

**CAROLYN PIPER:** My name is Carolyn Piper and I come from Vermont. I grew up in the Methodist church and mostly this happened because we lived right across the street from the Methodist church. I went to Sunday school there. I seemed to have had a natural affinity to pondering the spirituality for myself and in high school, when I had a choice of an elective, I chose Bible history and in college I came very close to majoring in religion. And as time went on, even as questions of spirituality have remained always central to my life. I did not become, nor am I now an attendant of any structured church. Instead, I have read everything on every religion I could get my hands on and I continue to do that. Now, part of this is very definitely due to the fact that I have a hearing loss and I was not able to find accessible services. As I got older, this is especially true as my loss progressed, I never know what I might have become if I had not been deaf. But I suspect, knowing myself and my inner curiosity on the subject, I would have cast a wide net regardless of my hearing.

Anyway, I'm sorry to go on at length but we might as well get it out of the way. Where am I now? I'm really an independent cuss and in time, I've come to see my lack of access to traditional services as an asset that I treasure. It's forced me to personally dig down to discover what things are the most meaningful for me in my life and forced me to find my own path. It forced me to discover what has been called that still small voice within. These days I have the feeling that my own behavior that matters, especially in my approach to all other beings and my attempt to live a conscious life on a minute-to-minute basis: I would identify myself mostly with the Buddhist belief as that system has a responsibility and loving kindness to all being. The modern philosopher, Michael Gasso in his wonderful book, The Final Choice, says that if we listen very carefully we hear from many sources the sound of one melody. I've come to see the similarities in the major religions of the world and to feel that by listening to them all with my heart open that I can honor our common search for meaning.

**CANDIS SHANNON:** Coming to this is a spiritual experience for me I'm one of those people who, I have to get to be pushed in a corner before they ask for help and got help.

I had cancer. Right after that, I lost my hearing overnight from meningitis. Then after that, my marriage fell apart. That took a few years. And I went and got some help. And it happened to be a Methodist counselor but it was kind of like me. I think I have been to all kinds of different churches over the years and always a bit of a skeptic. But he gave me a lot of information. I started really delving in, learning, learning more about different spiritual topics and deepening my understanding. And that's what I needed. I was also raising my daughter by myself. So, I took her to church. We started going to the Methodist church. If you read that bio and all the advocacy work I have done for the United Methodist Church, blame my daughter, because, if it weren't for her, I probably

would have left. And found an easier route because it was not accessible when I first started. But it is accessible now, the church that I go to. And we have done a lot of work at the national level. And I found that advocacy can be spiritual. And I have continued my own personal growth with a program that some of you may be familiar with it. It's called Avatar. So I come from many different backgrounds, areas, whatever, but the core is as Geoff said, it's a spiritual approach to life.

**GEOFF BROWN:** Thank you. Now, several people have mentioned the question of access. Most religions involve a group of people meeting together for worship, praying, meditation, whatever, and access is an important point for us deaf people. But we also need to consider the spiritual aspect, how our spirituality has helped us. I don't want to spend the whole time talking about access, but that is certainly a subject that needs to be discussed. Now, we are open to receive questions from the floor. We have a program on the television in Britain called "Question Time". There is a man named David Bimbie who runs it and he asks questions from the audience. I often wondered what he would do if nobody asks questions. Obviously, he must have something to start the ball rolling.

Let's start with this question of access. Does anybody here who attends a church find it difficult to follow what is going on and what, if anything should be done about it?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** You quoted from a book. Could you tell us a little bit more about that book you quoted from when you gave the definition of spirituality? I was wondering if you could elaborate on that book a little bit more and what it was.

**GEOFF BROWN:** Well, a man named Alistair McGruff calls the book "Christian Spirituality". He sounds like a Scotch man. I didn't want to restrict our discussion to Christian spirituality since we may have Jews and Buddhists among all of us. But the book is worth reading for a consideration of spirituality and you can easily transfer it to your own particular religion. It was published about six years ago. Should be easily available through the major booksellers. It's got the library of Congress catalog and publishing date.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** One of the reasons why I stopped going to church is, when you go there, the sound just echo all over the place and I can't follow what's being said. So it's tough when the priest is lecturing or giving the homilies and you have no idea what's being said.

**ANNE MCLAUGHLIN:** Some of the things you might do would be to go to the priest ahead of time and ask if he writes his homilies up. Chances are he does not. Most of the altar ones don't. Or they have notes. You can just read the readings ahead of time. One very good thing about Catholic worship is that it's very visual. So you don't absolutely have to hear the homilies. I have had a few priests saying to me; think of all the bad sermons you missed because I could not understand them. If there is a deacon in the parish, a permanent deacon, I suggest you go and talk to him.

If I may share that, when I moved to Folsom a few years ago, right after that, we got a deacon who happens to be a retired ear, nose and throat doctor and is hard of hearing. And I've been up to him and I said, deacon Jim, do you write up your homilies? May I have a copy of it? Of course, he was very interested and he said, are your needs being met? And I felt saying, yeah, when were they ever? I've been in the church all my life. He started calling the diocese and I had already met the people in the diocese who were involved in the deaf ministry. One woman said to me, people like Anne benefit more from captions than from an interpreter. She does not sign that well. So, he started pushing for captioning. And the pastor who was a kind man but never thought of anything like this (never in all his years as a priest had anyone confronted him with the problems of the deaf) said, the Holy Spirit works in strange ways. Let's go for it. For a while, they paid a huge sum of money for a professional captioner. And she didn't know that much about the mass. So, it was hard for her. But there was a nice man, a retired engineer, who was helping her. When the parish decided they could not afford this anymore, this man came forward and he offered to create a Power Point presentation of the mass. And that's what he has done. It's what we call a scripted mass and he has everything from the announcements in the beginning of the mass through all the prayers, the readings and, now, he even usually has whichever prayer of the consecration is going to be used.

One of the really good things that I think, for our spirituality is that it gives me the names of people who are sick and those who died. When we pray for each other, I think we grow from that, you know. And this is a wonderful thing. You spend about five hours a week just doing all this and he puts the homilies when he can get it, which is not too often.

I would suggest talking to your deacon if you have a deacon in your church or the pastor and see what they can say. Almost everywhere, you know people who know Power Point. I could do something like this in your religious services. Another thing is to read the readings ahead of time. That helps.

**DOUG ROBERTS:** You might be interested to hear how access is being handled here in Salt Lake City. Many of the churches, including the local Catholic Church, has some access for hard of hearing and deaf people. I know that in our own local LDS ward, that's like a parish, we have FM transmitters and receiver sets such as we are using right now. Those are available to the hard of hearing.

There are, among the deaf, (those who use sign language), mostly they would go to local wards in Salt Lake City and I think there is one in Ogden, one down in Provo and possibly down in St. George. We have several local wards where sign language is used and, in those wards, being mostly a lay church, the interpreters volunteer their time to provide translation and they also have FM transmitter/receiver systems. They even have, when they can get the help, they have C.A.R.T. like we are seeing on the screen here right now. Also, we have a lot of DVDs out that are captioned or use ASL. You

may see some of those on television and those are becoming more captioned. I think all the most recent ones from the last few years have captioning on those.

Other publications, such as the Book of Mormon, are available not only in American Sign Language on video, but it's also translated into 160 different languages worldwide. So I think, much of the energy and resources of the Mormon Church is focused on providing access to as many groups worldwide and various cultures are as possible. If you go to Temple Square, you will probably see that some of the displays are captioned. Some are not but that's a work that's in progress. I'm proud to say I've been somewhat involved in that effort, and I've seen some of the displays becoming captioned. Like I say, some movies are captioned. They certainly have ASL access. If you go to temple square, just simply ask one of the many missionaries walking around with the black tags on their blouse or suit that you would like to have an ASL interpreter and they can quickly fetch one and you can go on to a tour with an interpreter.

**CANDIS SHANNON:** I wanted to add something about access, because access for me was a path of spirituality. And when I first started attending church, we did not have C.A.R.T., and I was not very comfortable with sign language though I was getting there. I was taking sign language lessons. I arrived on the doorsteps, so to speak. And I was not in a position where I really knew what to ask for. And it is interesting, when I look back and see the progression that it actually changed as I grew spiritually. We started with a typist; a person would come and type. And I felt guilty, like I had to ask somebody special to come and help. I still had a lot of anger, too, because I was sitting there and wondering why am I here? I could watch somebody type and if they are a good typist, they would go fast, I might understand it. If the pastor wrote out the sermon, I would get that and I could read that ahead of time.

Then they would play music and I am a trained classical musician but I could not hear it. I kind of watched the organ and, sometimes, felt it. But that was the beginning. One of the first things that we did was apply for a grant for assistive listening equipment. I felt that, perhaps, I could not use it and it could be helpful for others. Then, we talked about sign language interpreters. Oh, my goodness. They cost money. They said that they have to put it in the budget. It is like where I'm feeling these walls and like I felt all of this resistance and people didn't really want to give me access, but I'm here and I can be stubborn.

I was not sure how much was me? How much was my own anger and me? How much was out there? Are people not understanding? I did not really know, again, how to ask or what my own needs were. We found out over the years. And over three, four different pastors and, each time there was a different pastor, it was like I stepped forward. Growth step.

So, we got sign language interpreting into the language. We got an FM system set up. We got a deaf ministry with people who would come in and type. And even had C.A.R.T. for a few times. People became more sensitive to the issues. And some

learned sign. I would teach some sign language classes. Children signed in the choir. We had a signed choir for a while.

Throughout the years, a pastor who was very sensitive to visual, set up visual. Each change was incremental. I noticed now that I look back, each change happened, I was going deeper on my path. Then a sign language interpreter started coming to church. I knew her. She became a member. She started signing. I found out later she was not even charging the church. Things just simply started getting easier.

Another sign language interpreter came a year later. And I had the pleasure of watching them become members of the church. And, again, thanks to my daughter, I started attending a different worship. It was not there when I first started. It was a praise worship. Everything is put up on the screen. All of these changes were helping the rest of the congregation. They liked seeing words. So I went interest having a typewriter on a laptop computer hooking on up to a TV screen saying, oh, that's really nice.

I can get the words, too. Then, we went to C.A.R.T. and sign language interpreters. We don't use C.A.R.T. all the time but people really enjoy sign language interpreters. I find it adds so much to the worship. Then a visual worship with music that is fun to sign to. Everything is up on the screen. This was not there when I first started attending. And each step is just getting deeper. And recently, when I became involved with Avatar, which is self-growth and self-development, well, there was this meeting that I wanted to go to and it's huge. There is a whole bunch of people that go to it. And I was concerned. You know, I can do this. I can do this with a written transcript. I can follow, I can lip read pretty well and understand, but, boy, would it not be nice to have C.A.R.T. I was with a group of Avatar people and the woman sitting next to me said, I'm a C.A.R.T. Reporter. I can do C.A.R.T.. So my point is that, as my spiritual progression, these types of situations become easier. And it's happening inside and outside. I think we are all seeing that. We are seeing that in the world today, too. Access as we are going out and requesting, we are getting a lot better communications.

**GEOFF BROWN:** The situation in England, where I come from, is rather more difficult, because we don't have so many people attending church as you do here in the States. I think someone reckons about 4% of the population are regular churchgoers. That makes it more difficult because you may only have one person in the congregation who is deaf in any way.

In my own church, we normally have about 80 for the Sunday morning service, which is not very many. There are a few hard of hearing people, and for them, we have an induction loop around the church which works very well indeed but it simply is not practical to employ C.A.R.T. or interpreters for one person, me. What we did a few years ago now, was to try putting on a service once a month, not just for our church but also for the whole District. The whole service was pre-planned and the words of the hymn and of the sermon were shown on a screen like this from a Power Point

presentation. It was a good idea and it worked very well, but the trouble is hardly anybody came that really, really made it worthwhile to keep it going. We just let it slip. But it is something we are trying to think of a solution to all the time.

I'm sure most of you came here this morning hoping for something from this workshop. Maybe something you have not already got, so let's have some questions. What do you want us to talk about that we have not already touched on?

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** My church has what our pastor calls ministry by manuscript. He does have his entire sermon or our vicar's entire sermon pre printed before we arrive. He does this for the deaf or hard of hearing but also in large print for those with vision difficulties. That has been wonderful. But that in itself does not help you be a part of the worship to feel involved. Yes, you could kind of follow along, but I'm just wondering if you had any suggestions on how to emotionally reach or emotionally support the individuals who are dealing with these kinds of issues in their life, the vision or the hearing issues? The new vicar has a new student every year. He is into deaf issues and is asking me how to meet my need. I only know my needs and I'm hoping to find out what other needs are and how they can be addressed.

**DOUG ROBERTS:** I think you raised an important issue, the emotional side of being hard of hearing and how do we deal with those ourselves and how would we reach out to help others to deal with that?

I would suggest one-on-one time with individuals. As we go through this process of losing our hearing, we all know how stressful that can be and I've been thinking here, how do I deal with that stress? And I would be curious to hear how the others here on the panel deal with that. I was going to suggest that, as I was losing my hearing, I found it very difficult to say to somebody, I am hard of hearing. I need you to repeat that. Or I need you to face me so I can hear you. It was embarrassing to me to admit that I was hard of hearing because it didn't seem socially acceptable to be hard of hearing. And, so, it was a growth process for me. It was a challenge and I felt that it was essential that I develop my spirituality, rely on the Lord and, so, I found that if I memorized a few key scriptures, it would get me through the tough times.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," which is my favorite, in the New Testament. Philipians.

Another one that I memorized from the Book of Mormon, "If men come unto me, I will show them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."

I'm trying to memorize a few key scriptures and a few hymns. You are familiar with "How Firm a Foundation". I find those words running through my mind. "Fear not, I am

with thee; oh, be not be dismayed, for I am Thy God and will still give thee aid." You all heard that hymn before, haven't you? That's a pretty common Christian hymn. Those are some ways that I deal with the stress of hearing loss. And the question I think was really how do I impart that to others who are struggling? I would suggest, once again, if we just have to get to know those people who are having hearing problems and somehow establish a relationship so we can talk about it together.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** Several years ago, I was a hairdresser and one of my customers asked me, because of my knowledge and background in hearing loss, to come and talk to people at her church. One of the advantages of the situation was that I had a captive audience. They were going to church either at 9 or 10:30 or 11 in the service and so they could come at that hour in between and sit in a group and talk about hearing loss. And they focused on couples but that didn't mean man and wife necessarily. You know, it meant two people or even one was fine. I did that for four consecutive weeks, several times. Just having your knowledge about hearing loss, your spirituality will come into it. But most important is seeing in a group of people and being able to interact with them as we do at these conventions and they speak so you can understand and you can hear them, and you have some appropriate information for them and it's just an eye-opener for a lot of people. They feel less lonely. They feel less isolated. And, oftentimes, one of the couples is the hearing aid for the person with the hearing loss. You can talk about that and people can start to laugh and then the person who is the hearing aid can say, yes, and it's really tiring. So you can get some issues up there. An hour is not very long but it gives us some cohesiveness to these people and they can talk together later.

**CAROLYN PIPER:** I wanted to emphasize what Doug was saying because I agree with him very much in that having a rich inner life is really necessary to amplify and expand the more structured life that participating within a church offers us. We all know what it's like losing our hearing and coping with the emotional adjustment. It took me, I think, ten years to even say the word "deaf".

Our spiritual lives are so important. I got into Buddhism, and the first principle emphasizes acceptance, which, in life, is difficult. And this is important to remember to me. It kind of reflects Doug's Bible verses because it gives me comfort. Give me comfort, because I realize I have not been singled out. Every one of us has an area in our lives that is very difficult. And that we are called upon in life to accept, deal with and develop coping mechanisms. So, while a structured participation is important, so much of learning to cope and of relating to our belief is also within ourselves. And so, when I repeat to myself what gives me comfort, as you do Doug, I realize that while life is difficult, it life does go on. And I was given a lot of blessings in terms of my desire to learn more about my own spirituality and to connect with other people.

**ANNE MCLAUGHLIN:** What I hear Doug and Carolyn saying kind of reflects with me. To the other people that we meet, how do we deal with our lives and especially with our spiritual life? It's an extremely strong force for other people's ability to cope. While I talk

about how much I love my faith and how strong it is, I had a few very deep hurts at times over the years. Things with human beings in the church. My feeling is, all human beings may fail us. God never fails us. You have to look beyond that. For some of us, for some people who lose their hearing, and stop going to church, finding peace, we talk about anger inside, when you lose your hearing, we need to spend some time trying to find forgiveness, letting go of the pain and the hurt that we feel when we first lose our hearing, even forgiveness of ourselves and forgiveness of why it happened. I personally believe that, for whatever reason, God permits me to be deaf. He does not do it himself. He cannot do that cause he is perfect. But he permits it and perhaps for a greater good. I do feel that my spirituality, my growth is stronger simply because of that. He has given me life. He has given me, as Carolyn says, many, many, many blessings. And the way I live this, the way I deal with my deafness, I get this back to him.

When I first started to study sign language, I had so many people praying for me to heal for years. When I first started to sign, I would look for the word healing. And in this old book of religious sign, the signs were, become and strong. And it hit me like a ton of bricks. Become strong. So, now, I tell so many of the people who prayed for me for years, I am healed. I became strong. I accept my deafness. I accept myself.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I grew up Catholic, number 10 of 10 children. So, you can't not be Irish and Catholic. I think they ingrain it in you. So, for me, like Doug had mentioned, you go to the services and, for me, I always knew the priest because that's when nobody else was talking. I could not understand as a young girl, why girls couldn't be priests. And so I think I kind of always struggled. What is the meaning of religion and spirituality? I think that started my path. I did a couple of years of yoga, which is really deep meditation and poses, and then I also read a lot of Buddhist and meditation books and my husband had led me on that path because he is a sociology and would read a book and say, hey, read this one.

I still find I have a hard time keeping up with the search for spirituality and making that connection that I think someone over here mentioned about how you can go to church and you can read something but how do you make the connection? And I think Doug said you may be trying to find someone that's one on one. Sometimes you feel awkward and you could have many more people talk about what led you and keeps you going on the path of spirituality.

**GEOFF BROWN:** Reading and meditation do help you to get in touch with your inner self even if you have no religion.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** You said you had special services for the deaf. I'm hearing but my mom is deaf. I think she would rather be with the normal congregation and the normal preaching rather than having a special service where she would feel more isolated being in a special service where they provide her services rather than being with the normal group.

**GEOFF BROWN:** Well, the type of service would well be a service for everybody. The important thing is, my experience in the Methodist Church, the service is not according to a ritual. It is very free and easy. So in order to make it accessible to deaf people, it has to be planned in advance and you have to stick to every word that you said you were going to say. When I am preaching, I'm off to preaching off of the top of my head but in a case like that, I've got to stick to the script that I made before the service started. But with that limitation, the service is available to everybody and that is what I would like to see. I agree with what you say.

I suppose, if, in a particular area you were to start putting on that sort of service, sooner or later, it will become more widely known and more deaf people would come and join in.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I understand how you feel about having your mother and wanting her to go to a normal kind of setting. Were you looking for a church that has kinds of visual music? I do understand how this woman who was speaking feels about wanting to be in a normal setting. The best advice that I can give is, don't give up looking. I think that we are all looking. I was looking until this summer, recently. I grew up in a very musical family. I'm completely deaf, profoundly deaf, could not hear anything but all of my family members tried to teach me how to play the drums. My brother and his little band, basement band, when I was doing my homework up stairs on the tenth floor, I could feel the percussion from the drums all the way up there on the third floor. And I loved feeling them, the music that they played. My mom played the piano; my sister played the flute and the piano; my father sang.

I didn't want to go to church because I didn't have an interpreter. It was a very small beach town. So, my mother decided to do something about that to kind of help my attitude about going to church. My mom and dad practiced what I would call musical sign language. It was not a sign language; they would just use their fingers.

When they would open up the hymnbook, there would be music going on. You know how the notes go up and down, fast and slow. My mom would kind of hold her finger on the notes and go up and down up and down and it would go along the music and show me kind of how it went. If it was low or if it was high and so I would kind of have to sing with her doing that. I overcame the embarrassment that I had there and I sang with my mom and dad as long as they would do the little finger tricks. But as soon as the sermon started, I didn't want to be there again. And my mom would say, you know, you need to watch the pastor and read his lips and I didn't like that idea. So they would have the minister give me the script and I would read through that and as soon as I was done, I would be bored again.

My mom decided that she would not give me the script before the service started. And whenever the minister started to preach, the assistant would come up and give me the script. And now, remember, I had to sit right in the front of the whole congregation so my mom would say you can read as the preacher speaks. You cannot read ahead.

You have to kind of look at his lips. That was a good way for me to practice lip reading and read the sermon. And I went to quite a few different deaf churches over the years and I still felt a void. Until I just found this summer, I kind of wanted to check it out. There was a new church in South Draper. And it's a lot of musical worship and I really enjoy that. Also, one of you had mentioned about the Power Point presentations. There are two huge screens there with Power Point presentations on them and I don't know if there are any deaf people in the audience. I looked around. I didn't see any. I asked the interpreter, am I the only deaf person in there? She said, yes, you three are the only ones but they had a beautiful Power Point with all the words for the music and I actually bought a balloon so that I could feel the music the next time I came. And we kind of sign the songs and we have a great time.

So for your mother, what I would say, don't stop looking. Find something that you are satisfied with. It's taken me a lot of years but you will find it.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I'm a Roman Catholic and, yes, I had all the problems that we all had with dealing with our hearing loss. In my journey, what I found eventually, you know, through a long process, is that, as Doug said, Anne and the rest of them said is dealing with your inner self. And I do agree 100%. I'm still struggling all my life and I probably will until I die. But one of the things that I did was I feel that spirituality and searching for my inner self is a choice. Whether to do it or not do it. It is up to me. So what I did was, when I was, you know, desperate like many of us have been, I ask God for more faith. I think it depends on your faith, you know. As I did that and asked for more faith, it seemed like everything seemed to fall into place. And, now, I'm at greater peace and have accepted my hearing loss.

**CAROLYN PIPER:** I would like to add something to that, because I agree with you so very much. Faith in God is very, very important. But another thing that comforts me is I truly believe that God has faith in us, in the sense that we are all given a hardship with deafness. I do believe that he has the faith that we all have the ability to reach deep within ourselves and meet that challenge. To me, that's a very positive thought. And what I'm hearing today is really, really, very, very comforting to me.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** When I was in college, I took a sign language course and we had balloons for children and they really enjoyed it. That's a good idea. Maybe there's some other technology for people to feel music. I don't know if there is anything else out. The balloons are a good idea. Also, being hearing, I enjoy reading this, even though I can hear. This brings me more into the conversation, seeing the words. I like this. This is not just for the deaf or hard of hearing. This could be for newcomers that don't know, you know, the process of the sermons or the words.

**CAROLYN PIPER:** I have another thought there. And this is not spirituality. But the use of C.A.R.T. and I think if you can get a C.A.R.T. going and the service, you will find that hearing people like it. And that lessens the feeling of isolation. To give you an example of that, I live in a very, very small town of Vermont, about 800 people. And

every March, we gather together to argue about budgets, school and so forth and so on. One year, we had C.A.R.T. and I want to say I was not the only one watching that screen. And for some reason, what I can't really figure out, that town meeting was the least contentious that I have ever attended. And it went at about half the time we got it done than we did using traditional deaf voice. If you can get C.A.R.T., you will find that hearing people will find a lot of benefit from it.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I have been going through the same thing with my synagogue. I was married in that synagogue and my children who went to Sunday school there and when I lost my hearing, I could not go. I could not take part in any of the services. There is a service called Dardies for memories of people who you lost. I could not attend that. So, I got mad. I said they are spending a lot of money on renovations and all of this. Certainly, they can do something for me. I started to tell them and wrote to five Rabbis. I did not get any results. I went to the Jewish newspapers in Atlanta and I wrote letters to them. No results. I started talking up. And I tried to get somebody to show them what it was to take care of it. They told me, we can't spend a million dollars to rewire this place.

I have been going to ALDA and I have learned about all these things and we have C.A.R.T., we have interpreters in churches and rooms, in motels, in hotels, finally, I got to them. Next week, for the Sabbath, we're going to have the first C.A.R.T. in my reform synagogue. I'm very happy about it and I hope that it will go on. We have four times to do it and we hope that everybody will come and spread the word that the Jewish synagogue in Atlanta, Georgia, is going to have C.A.R.T., thanks to me and ALDA.

**GEOFF BROWN:** It seems to me that is a feather in ALDA's cap as well. Here in ALDA, we are showing what can be done so people do not have any excuse for not doing it. Well done.

**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** I have struggled growing up about the contact with God. Never believed in God. My parents were raised Jewish and decided to have Christmas and Easter and there was no Hanukkah and there was no concept of God in the house. Once I got out of the house, I wanted to explore my Jewish roots. I went to Israel, to a very interesting program where I started struggling with the definition of God and what it meant to me.

What I learned from the experience is that, for me, I don't have to believe in God. But I feel like there last to be a belief inside, whether you don't believe in a God, but there has got to be some connection that I found from inner soul, some group out there. It could be like an inner child, a safe sanctuary. That could be another concept of God. It does not have to be the God definition of God but your own God but it does not have to have the name God without scaring me.

That's for me. And I found that, as I learned more about it and questioned more about it, educated myself what that connection was like, I found that I became closer with

myself and the trust and the faith out there that it's like call on a higher power or whatever name. I found a substitute that I didn't have. I found a substitution really important. And I take that along with that education because spirituality can be -- another example of this, or analogy is education, never stop learning. Never stop learning for yourself or passing that message to others. That's another form of spirituality. That is just kind of going hand-by-hand, side-by-side. Learn about the people out there. There is goodness out there. I just want today say that I thank everyone in this room for sharing those thoughts, what they learned, the gifts and wisdom. It's comforting to hear that I have come a long way and found that works for me, whether I have a God or not but I found my connection in a spiritual way and use it for education and questioning.

**GEOFF BROWN:** That brings us to a very fitting conclusion. You said some important things about spirituality. Thank you.