

Ten Languages

POLYGLOSSIA: Enabling Communication in 10 Different Languages

The diversity of the SBC of Virginia has grown over the last several years. In fact, 25% of the homes in Virginia speak a language other than English, and over 1,000,000 Spanish-speaking people live in Virginia. This growth trend has resulted in the need for and the planting of more churches in Virginia that speak a language other than English. We praise God for bringing the nations right to our doorstep.

The SBCV recently held a church plant training event in Glen Allen where 10 different languages were represented: Amharic, Chinese, Arabic, Farsi, Swahili, Nepali, Creole, English, Spanish, and American Sign Language. How do you communicate effectively with such a diverse crowd?

A technology called Polyglossia was the solution and enabled effective communication simultaneously in 10 different languages. Two church leaders from an SBCV church plant, Hope Valley Church (HVC) in Christiansburg, VA, created and developed Polyglossia.

Heath Kouns, the administrative pastor at Hope Valley, explains: “Polyglossia is a real-time, AI-based transcription and translation service. It was born to meet a real need we faced when planting a new church in Christiansburg. We had a member who was Deaf and would only attend on the weekends when his wife was not working as a nurse. We did not have anyone else to interpret for him, but we wanted to make our service more inclusive so that he could worship every week. The Lord gave us the background and skills needed to create a solution. Our first version of this solution delivered only transcribed text to a tablet that he could read. Later,

when a hearing-impaired person started attending, we only had to hand him another tablet.

A couple years later, we discussed with a friend and pastor the issue he was facing connecting with Ukrainian refugees who had started attending his church. By adding the [audio] translation to the streamed text, we could dramatically improve the understanding of the sermon while making the refugees feel loved and valued.”

At the SBCV church plant training, participants were instructed to scan a QR code that would immediately pull up the translation software on their smartphones. They were able to choose which language they desired. While the presentations were done in English, people of nine different languages watched in real-time as the text was translated into their heart language. Planters noted how seeing the nations represented in one room was such a blessing! ■



Ten different languages were represented at a church plant training event in Glen Allen.

