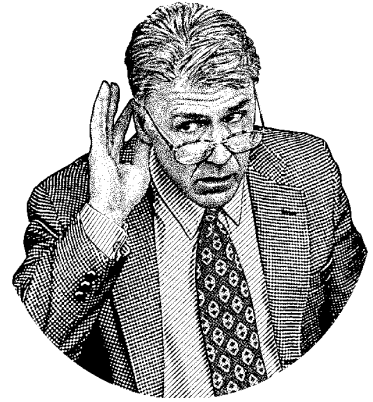


# Breaking The Sound Barrier In Your Church



**Ministry & Mission  
With People Who Are  
Hard of Hearing or  
Late-Deafened**

# Breaking The Sound Barrier In Your Church

## Ministry and Mission with People Who Are Hard of Hearing or Late-Deafened

*Compiled by:*

**The United Methodist Congress of the Deaf  
Standing Committee on Church Accessibility Promotion:  
Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened People**

*To hear and see well is to be desired.  
Might it be even more desirable to see with the mind and hear with the heart?*  
Robert L. Walker, Committee Chairperson (1999-2000)



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Shanti Parker

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# Preface

It is estimated that in the United States there are 28 million children, women and men who live with hearing loss (10% of the population).

Of that number approximately a half million are “culturally Deaf” people who rely on American Sign Language (ASL) or English Signing for communication.

One and a half million (.53 %) are “late-deafened” people, while the largest number is that of “hard of hearing” people (26 million or 8% of the population). Nearly all in these two groups function in the *hearing* rather than the *Deaf* culture. That means their primary means of communication is not by signing, but by use of speech, speech-reading, visual aids, hearing aids and/or assistive listening systems. And, these people are to be found in your church.

To visualize their presence, we suggest that you do a little arithmetic. Multiply 8% (.08) into the number of your church members. That will represent the approximate number of hard of hearing people in your congregation. About one half of one percent (.0053) multiplied into the church membership count gives you an estimated number of late-deafened people in your church. Statistically you might have a culturally deaf member, but realistically, most Deaf people are not in your church, unless you currently provide an ASL interpreter for all church events.



## How Does A Community of Faith SPEAK To Those Who Can Not HEAR?

As an example, in a church of five hundred members, forty members might be hard of hearing while two or three may be late-deafened. The numbers will increase as your congregation ages. One in four persons over the age of 65 will experience increasing difficulty in hearing well. Noise-pollution and other environmental factors are increasingly damaging people’s ability to hear.

It is sobering to learn that other studies indicate some 90% of church members unable to hear well have or are likely to drop out of church participation. And what about those who have never joined the church due to it not being *hearing accessible*? They, too, need to hear the

good news of God’s gracious love, and find wholeness, nurture and opportunities for ministry within a hospitable body of Christ.

It is the conviction of the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf and its Standing Committee on Church Accessibility Promotion: Hard of Hearing and Late-deafened People, that God is calling the United Methodist Church to engage in ministry and mission with hard of hearing and late-deafened people. This booklet is provided to encourage and enable obedience to God’s call in every agency, general board, conference, district and local body of the United Methodist Church.

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## The United Methodist Congress of the Deaf Standing Committee on Church Accessibility Promotion: Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened People

**Committee Members:** Holly Elliott, Laurel Glass (ex officio), Paula Hernandez, Nancy Kingsley, Michelle Martin, Shanti Parker and Robert Walker, Chairperson (1999-2001)

**Note To Readers:** We compiled this booklet in 2001 as an information source for churches wishing to look at accessibility issues for people with hearing loss, but unsure of how and where to start. The booklet is not extensive in scope. Some of the information included is time sensitive. The technologies mentioned are evolving and changing rapidly. We hope this proves helpful as a starting point — but you must do your own research and determine what course is right for your church. God Bless.

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# Introduction to the Problem

This booklet includes articles designed to help agencies and local congregations of the United Methodist Church to remove the barriers to the inclusion of hard of hearing and late-deafened people. There is a common misconception that sign language is a universal form of communication for those who can't hear. In fact, few hard of hearing and late-deafened people know any sign language, and very few of those ever use it fluently. Although hearing loss affects about ten percent of the population, society and the church have lagged behind in providing the appropriate accommodations.

Below is a brief overview about the different groups of people with hearing loss. More detailed information about access for hard of hearing and late-deafened people is provided in the accompanying materials.

**Who has hearing problems?**



**How does being born deaf differ from hearing loss later in life?**



**Why can Aunt Minnie hear noise in the next room, but not the person next to her?**



**There's already a Deaf Church in our town, so are you trying to get the UM Churches to reinvent the wheel?**



- † There are 28 million people with hearing loss in the US.
- † Half a million people are born deaf (unable to understand speech through the ear) or became deaf before acquiring spoken language; members of this group belong to the Deaf community, communicate in American Sign Language, and *consider deafness a culture, NOT a disability*.
- † Ministries and social services for the Deaf community are based on American Sign Language and Deaf culture.
- † One and a half million people are late-deafened (they lost the ability to understand speech through the ear after they acquired spoken language and were raised in the hearing community).
- † Late-deafened people seldom sign and usually require another form of visual input such as real-time captioning or computer-assisted notetaking, both of which are infrequently provided.
- † Twenty-six million people are hard of hearing. Although some are born hard of hearing or develop a hearing loss during childhood, most become hard of hearing later in life.
- † Hearing loss becomes more common with age and affects a third of senior citizens, but 60% of hard of hearing people are *under* age 65.
- † Hard of hearing people can understand speech with the help of hearing aids and assistive listening systems, but they are often ashamed of their hearing loss and unaware of the assistive equipment that can benefit them.
- † The vast majority of late-deafened and hard of hearing people belong to the hearing community and want to remain connected with it. They need technological and psychological assistance in coping with hearing loss and accepting the help they need.
- † Ministries and social services for people who are Deaf or disabled generally do not serve the needs of late-deafened and hard of hearing people, and there are very few services and virtually no ministries designed to assist them.
- † Most houses of worship and public accommodations lack assistive listening systems, although they are reasonable in cost and easy to install.

**NOTE:** Persons who are “deaf-blind” may be members of either the Deaf or the hearing community, depending on which one they grew up in. People who are born deaf or become deaf before learning to speak are generally part of the Deaf community. People who are deafened after they acquired spoken language and are raised in the hearing community usually continue to identify with it although though their hearing impairment may isolate them greatly.

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# Glossary of Terms

## Kinds of Hearing Loss

**HARD OF HEARING:** Refers to people who are able to understand speech through the ear with the help of amplified sound through public address systems, hearing aids and/or other assistive listening devices. Persons may be born hard of hearing, or acquire the condition later in life.

**DEAF OR DEAFENED:** Each term refers to the *inability to understand speech through the ear*; the person may still have some residual hearing.

**LATE-DEAFENED:** Refers to people who became deaf post-lingually (after learning to speak), and were raised in the hearing community. *Most* late-deafened people do *not* learn sign language.

**DEAF:** When spelled with a capital *D*, *Deaf* refers to people who are born deaf or became deaf prelingually (before acquiring spoken language), and use American Sign Language (ASL) for communication. These persons may also be referred to as *culturally Deaf* and/or as members of the *Deaf community*.

**ORAL DEAF:** This term refers to people who are born deaf or become deaf prelingually, but are taught to speak and do not typically use American Sign Language for communication.



**DEAF-BLIND:** Refers to people who have significant, but not necessarily total, loss of both vision and hearing (dual sensory loss). Deaf-blind people may be culturally Deaf, oral deaf, late deafened, or hard of hearing, and their mode of communication varies accordingly. The dual sensory loss may be due to illness, injury, age-related losses or genetically-caused condition.

**USHER'S SYNDROME:** Refers to a congenital condition that causes progressive deafness and blindness from birth. The inner ear's nerve endings atrophy, and retinitis pigmentosa destroys the retina from the periphery to the center. Usually, the condition appears first as a hard of hearing condition in infancy, with blindness being more evident in later teen years. At its extreme, the gradual losses evolve into total deafness and blindness. The condition is inherited genetically from both parents, who are carriers even though neither parent is deaf or blind.

**TIP: Don't SHOUT... it doesn't help. If you are soft spoken, you may need to speak up a little. For the most part, it helps more if you just take time to enunciate clearly – just don't exaggerate this. Communicating with us is like driving in snow. We'll need to concentrate, slow down a bit and expect some slippery spots – but eventually we'll get there!**

## Types of Communication Access

**AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL):** Refers to a visual-gesturing language that has its own rules of grammar distinct from English. It is used primarily by culturally Deaf people.

**ENGLISH-BASED SIGN LANGUAGE:** Refers to sign language that follows English grammar and words, including finger-spelling; mostly used by some late-deafened people, while ASL is the preferred medium for culturally deaf people.

**SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING:** Refers to translating speech into American Sign Language (ASL) or English-based sign language and sign into speech. Translators need to be highly skilled in this art to be effectively understood.

**TACTILE ASL:** Refers to the signing of ASL into the palms of a deaf-blind person's hands, done by a skilled interpreter.

**ORAL INTERPRETING:** Refers to an interpreter mouthing a speaker's message, using phrases that are easy to speech-read (in earlier times referred to as "lip reading"); used by some oral deaf people and some others with good speech-reading skills.

**SPEECH READING:** Refers to interpreting lip and facial movements in order to understand speech (only partially effective); also called "lip reading." Used by oral deaf and some late deafened and hard of hearing people.

**CUED SPEECH:** Refers to a visual communication system which, in English, uses eight hand shapes in four locations in combination with the natural mouth movements of speech to identify each distinctive speech sound. Used by some oral deaf people.

**COMPUTER ASSISTED REAL TIME (CART):** Refers to text display of speech on a computer monitor, TV, or projected onto a film screen or wall, performed by court reporters using a stenotype machine, a computer, and real time translation software to create an *almost-verbatim text* rendition immediately after the words are spoken. Used by late-deafened and some oral deaf and hard of hearing people.

**C-PRINT:** Refers to a computer-aided speech-to-text transcription system developed at the National Technical Institute of the Deaf (NTID), in which a captionist, using special software and an abbreviation system, types a condensed version of the spoken words on a laptop computer and the information is simultaneously displayed on a second laptop computer or a TV. Currently used primarily in the classroom, but has the same potential audience as CART and CAN.

**COMPUTER ASSISTED NOTETAKING (CAN):** Refers to a system in which a typist transcribes a *summary* of the spoken words on a computer keyboard; the words can be displayed on a laptop computer, TV monitor, or projected on a wall or film screen. CAN has the same potential audience as CART and C-Print.

**ASSISTED LISTENING DEVICES:** Refers to hard-wired or wireless transmitting/receiving devices that transmit sound from the microphone directly to the listener, minimizing the negative effects of distance, noise, and reverberation on clarity. The devices transmit sound directly to the ear, but also can employ "teleloop" attachment accessed by the telephone switch in some hearing aids. Used by hard of hearing people.

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# Let All Who Will, Hear!

## A Theological Statement for Hearing Accessibility

*This theological statement was written by Robert L. Walker, D. Min, who lives with Usher's Syndrome (causing hearing and vision loss). Assisting with the paper was Nancy Kingsley, who is late-deafened and a frequent writer in the field of hearing accessibility and spirituality. Much of Nancy's work appears throughout this booklet. Both are members of the United Methodist Congress of the Deaf's Standing Committee on Church Promotion: Late-Deafened and Hard of Hearing People.*

"Oh, no!" said the high school student as she saw a man wearing hearing aids. "I hope I'm not in his small group!" It was the opening afternoon of a week long church youth camp. To her horror, she was assigned to the learning group co-led by two clergypersons, one of whom was the hard of hearing man, who also lived with low vision.

This young person, a daughter of the United Methodist Church, had an attitudinal barrier against hard of hearing people. She is not alone. That emotional wall is found wherever people gather to work, learn, play, and pray.

The wall is found in Scripture as well. The Book of Leviticus, a document that includes the sublime command to love our neighbors as ourselves (19:18), also pronounces harsh rules that exclude many neighbors. Innumerable actions and conditions are named that label persons as unfit for fellowship with God or God's people.

Prominently proscribed are those who live with handicapping conditions. Throughout Leviticus<sup>1</sup>, named for the priestly order of the tribe of Levites, much concern is given to physical perfection. Sacrificial offerings of animals or vegetation must be free of "blemishes"; so also must be the priests who represent and serve the community in its worship of God (21:20).

It's the professional priests and not the lay people who are to be free of "blemishes"; however, even priests are human beings, allowing us to infer that, for Leviticus, anyone is flawed who has a missing, malformed, or malfunctioning body part. Not every possible condition is named; nevertheless, we can infer that for the Hebrew Bible the word "blemish" is a euphemism for anyone's condition that leaves her or him "differently abled."<sup>2</sup> That includes Deaf, late-deafened, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind people.

Given this biblical endorsement of discrimination, it is hardly surprising that persons and their societies everywhere have excluded supposedly blemished people from social and religious community. If God considers those who are Deaf or have a hearing loss to be lesser persons, then how can we fault those who erect or fail to remove social and religious barriers against equal

employment opportunities, adequate schooling, membership and ministry in the church, and more?

But, it must be said, the Bible is inconsistent in its understanding of God's attitudes toward supposedly blemished folk. Moses, the revered leader of what ultimately became the Jewish people, dating from around 1200 BC, had a blemish. He needed the services of a speech therapist (Exodus 4: 10).<sup>3</sup>

While there is no concrete evidence in the New Testament, we can, nonetheless, suppose that the apostle Paul suffered from a partial blindness that escaped healing in his Damascus Road experience. In an interesting conclusion to his Epistle to the Galatians, Paul says, "See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand (6:11)!" His are the words of someone well educated, but suffering from low vision that called for a scribe to write in his behalf; and, when he did take pen to hand, he wrote in large letters in order to see his own script.

Then there is Jesus, noting how scoffers might insist that if he be a physician healing others, then let him heal himself (Luke 4:23). Heal himself of what? Some kind of blemish?

It is Jesus' ministry that, for would-be Christians and their churches, asks us to abandon a spirit of exclusion for one of inclusion. Christ urges us to show hospitality that mimics God's hospitality toward all persons, regardless of their external or internal conditions. We meet this message in Jesus' encounters with people living with an illness or handicapping condition.

One of them was a man born blind (John 9:1ff). It's a fascinating story of theological sparring and of compassion triumphing over condemnation. At the story's end we can only conclude that those who will not see God's all-embracing spirit are blind.

The story exposes the error of supposing that all physical disabilities and ills are God's punishment for sin, either that of the encumbered one or of her or his parents. Conventionally, religious folk assumed that such persons could never be cured or even helped, lest they be guilty of interfering with divine justice.

It was Jesus' good friends who asked him about sin and punishment, wondering whether the fault lay with the blind fellow

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- 1 Tradition attributes authorship to Moses. Modern scholarship reveals that Moses could not have been its author. Most likely the book is the work of the priestly order of Levites, was composed from centuries of oral tradition plus numerous writings, and was edited into this book, one among the first five in the Hebrew Bible that are together called the Torah.
  - 2 There is, here, a problem of semantics. American society labels all "differently abled" people as being "disabled." That word, however, does not properly identify all who live with what may also be called a handicapping condition; nor does it suit persons who were born deaf, blind, or with missing fingers, toes, limbs, or other parts of the body. For our purposes, sensitivity toward this "naming" of a condition permeates this discussion and the other papers in this packet.
  - 3 The verse is: "But Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Opinion is divided over the nature of Moses's problem, ranging from stuttering to pronunciation impediments.



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or his parents (v. 2). Jesus pushed the question aside as irrelevant, since neither the man nor his parents were at fault. For Jesus, the man's blindness called not for condemnation, but for the work of God (v. 3).<sup>4</sup> And, what is that work? Allow us to suggest that God's work is to welcome all of us at the banquet table in the divine household; and for us not to follow God's lead in hospitality is itself our greatest sin (cf. Luke 14:13, Ephesians 2:1ff).

"Sin" means separation from God. A careful reading of the biblical incidents reveals the fundamental insight that all sin involves being loveless. Sin violates the commandment that has two sides to the one issue, namely, to love God and our neighbors (Luke 10:27); hence, to refuse to love separates us from God and neighbor.

Further, sin is the failure to love in the agapic sense of the word, meaning to care and serve the other in whatever is her or his condition, irrespective of whether that love is deserved or returned. Agapic love imitates God's love for us. In the Hebrew Bible, Hosea's remarkable love for his unfaithful spouse is the paradigm for God's love that is unlike humankind's penchant to scrutinize others' fitness and withhold care if they are found wanting (Hosea 11). In the Christian gospels, Jesus' constant rejection of supposed laws that exclude people who are "different" reveals God's dictum that love (agape) is the "will to be in community"<sup>5</sup> with all persons without exception.

Compassionately, Jesus illustrates agapic love with an object lesson featuring the man born blind. He cures the man, demonstrating that God has not barred him from the divine community or life's abundant gifts (w. 6-7).<sup>6</sup> Let it be asserted that Agapic love is God's "work," and ours too. Our Christian and churchly calling is to do the works of love so that all may see.

Also, so that all may hear. Compared to blindness and other illnesses or injuries dealt with in the gospels, we have but one story of curing deafness (Mark 7:32-37). We do, however, have two references to Jesus having healed several deaf folk, cited in his message to John the Baptist's disciples (Matthew 11:5, Luke 7:22).

Mark's story is familiar to persons living with deafness or limited hearing. Difficulty with speech occurs in those born with hearing loss, but also among those who lost their hearing before language skills were fully formed. Curing all degrees of hearing loss is, for the moment, impossible. Electronic aids and cochlear implants help but cannot "fix" the inability to hear well.

It is at this impasse of curing deafness that Mark's story (like the account of healing the blind man) departs from today's experiences. Let it be said, however, that while there may never be a "cure," there can be a "healing."

In her book, *The Irrational Season*, Madeleine L'Engle expresses that thought as she tells of her own blindness. L'Engle was not *cured* — but she was *healed* when she accepted her blindness in the realization that she remained a whole person and a beloved daughter of God.

In Mark's story, Jesus exclaimed, "Ephphatha!" — Aramaic for "be opened!" — to the man who could not hear well. Let Jesus' command be exclaimed now to those who are spiritually deaf to God's love that makes them whole, despite their physical hearing loss.

And let "Ephphatha!" be exclaimed to the church that has not heard the way Deaf, late deafened, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind people hear. Those who are culturally Deaf hear, with eyes and hands, their own unique American Sign Language (ASL). Deaf-blind people may hear with a tactile version of sign language or finger spelling (signed into the palms of their hands).<sup>7</sup> Oral deaf persons hear through speech reading (also called lip reading) and visual aids. Late-deafened people hear with visual aids such as captioning, and hard of hearing people hear with hearing aids, assistive listening devices and visual aids.<sup>8</sup>

The community around the deaf man in Mark's story was itself deaf until it heard, and helped the Deaf man hear, the Good News of God's all-inclusive love. Any church today is remiss in doing the "works of God" when it turns a deaf ear on Deaf, late-deafened, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind people.

Let it also be said that every church is "hearing" when it welcomes the healing of its own attitudinal deafness. With its ears now open, as the Deaf man's ears were opened, that church will hear its own ministry and mission with persons who live, worship, and serve—despite their hearing loss as gifted members of Christ's ever-new earthly body (1 Corinthians 12:27).

At the end of the week of church youth camp, the high school student sought out the hard of hearing and partly blind minister. She told him of her first-day dismay and her desire to have nothing to do with him. She apologized, saying that the week had proven to be the best she had ever experienced in several years of attending church camps. Grace—God's love—transmitted through human grace had revealed and cured her spiritual deafness. Now she had ears that could hear.

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### **In the name of God in Christ, let all who will, hear!**

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4 "Work" is the *New Revised Standard Version's* translation; other versions translate the word as "Glory".

5 The phrase is Daniel Day Williams's, in his *The Spirit and Forms of Love*.

6 On the surface, this story is no more than an account of a miraculous healing. It can be wondered why those born blind or later blinded are not now cured. That the story occupies a large part of the Gospel According to John causes us to look more deeply into the story and see its larger message of naming the sin of excluding anyone from God's grace. That disregard for God's people is the blindness that needs and can receive healing.

7 Depending on the cause and onset of deafness-blindness, some persons living with this condition have residual hearing permitting the use of hearing aids and assistive listening device, as well as some visual aids to hearing.

8 A glossary of terms and articles on helping persons with hearing challenges are found elsewhere in this booklet.

# Understanding The Conditions & Needs Of Hard Of Hearing & Late-Deafened People

*This article was written by Holly Elliott, a member of UMCD's Standing Committee on Church Promotion: Hard of Hearing People and Late-Deafened. Ms. Elliott lives with the late-deafened condition, and is now coping with macular degeneration of the eyes. She is a past president of UMCD.*

The United Methodist Congress of the Deaf, at conferences and other meetings, struggles to become one in the body of Christ and at the same time recognize the heterogeneity and diverse needs of persons who are included among those who have partial loss or nearly complete absence of hearing. According to a survey made by the National Association of the Deaf<sup>1</sup>, approximately eight of 1,000 people in the United States are deaf. Of those eight, one was born deaf, one became deaf before age 18, and six became deaf in adulthood.

A large majority of the born-deaf group become active members of the *Deaf Culture*, communicating freely with each other in American Sign Language (ASL), a language that is as different from English as is Russian or Spanish. This is a culture-proud community. Culturally Deaf people do not consider themselves handicapped — or “hearing-impaired” or “disabled” — but a unique and valid ethnic community, and they may use a capital “D” in “Deaf” to indicate this.

The born-deaf population also includes the oral deaf, those who depend on speech and speech-reading for communication and use oral rather than sign language interpreters.

Of the group that lost hearing before the age of 18, typically those who became deaf prelingually (roughly by the age of 4, before acquiring spoken language) usually identify with the Deaf community. People who lost hearing post-lingually, but before the age of 18, may identify either with the Deaf or hearing community; those raised in the hearing community usually function as late-deafened adults. People who lose hearing as adults usually identify with the hearing community and are considered late-deafened. If they learn sign language, they prefer Signed English, which follows the rules of English grammar and allows them to talk and sign at the same time. Those with some residual hearing find hearing aids useful, but they depend largely on vision for information. Because language was developed before becoming deaf, speech-reading comes more easily than for culturally Deaf people but may still be difficult.

An increasing number of late-deafened people are getting a cochlear implant, which provides an electronic sound and speech that is more understandable to those who mastered language before they became deaf. This group primarily identifies with the hearing community and is known as “culturally hearing” deaf people.

The largest number of people with hearing impairment, probably around 500,000 in the United Methodist Church, are “hard of hearing.” One can be born with this condition, or acquire it later in life. As the environment becomes noisier and the population grows older, this number is increasing.

People who are hard of hearing have useful residual hearing and can benefit from hearing aids and assistive listening devices.<sup>2</sup>

Those who were born hard of hearing often have more difficulty understanding sound and speaking a language, because they have never heard speech in its normal and myriad tones. Consequently, their needs may differ from those of others living with hearing loss. Lip reading (or speech-reading) is easier to understand for those who have experienced normal hearing before becoming hearing impaired than it is for those born hard of hearing. A similar statement can be made about members of the deaf-blind group. Persons born deaf and blind (or became so prelingually) often become proficient in tactile communication and Braille.

Those who become deaf and blind later in life are a varied group, depending on the age of each condition’s onset. A further complication arises from the progression and degree of loss.

In Usher’s Syndrome, for example, one can be hard of hearing from birth with progressive loss of hearing acuity throughout life, and not experience progressive blindness until later in the teen or young adult years. Ultimately, with Usher’s Syndrome, one can become completely deaf and blind.<sup>4</sup>

Technology in the form of reading machines<sup>5</sup>, large print and “document reading” software for computers can be helpful, depending on the degree of loss. Similarly, hearing aids and assistive listening devices are helpful for deaf-blind people who have residual hearing capability.

So the question is: *Can the Word of God be made accessible to all of the above?* The answer to that is: **YES!** But the Church must work actively to ensure that, in fact, access becomes a reality for all who live with little or no hearing.

1 Schein and Delk, 1974

2 An *assistive listening device* (ALD) is an electronic hearing aid that is rented or lent for use in a public area such as a theater or church. A *hearing aid* is one’s personal tool to amplify sounds wherever the user may be. See the Glossary and other articles in this booklet for more information about assistive listening devices.

3 *Usher’s Syndrome* describes progressive nerve damage in the inner ear and a progressive loss of vision caused by *Retinitis Pigmentosa*. The latter disease destroys the retina from its periphery to the center (opposite to *Macular Degeneration* which attacks the retina from the center to the periphery. Usher’s Syndrome is caused congenitally by genes carried by both parents.

4 There are two kinds of reading machines. The most common is a closed circuit TV system, utilizing a tiny TV camera housed beneath a viewing monitor; it films printed matter which appears on the screen in either color, white on black or black on white format. Another, developing machine “reads” the printed matter in synthetic voice.



# An Introduction To Assistive Listening Devices

*The following material is taken from material supplied by Advocates for Better Communication, League for the Hard of Hearing, 71 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10010. Added comments by the UMCD Standing Committee on Church Promotion: Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened People are in italics*



## Infrared (IR) Systems

Infrared systems use harmless, invisible light beams in the infrared range of the spectrum. Infrared light emitters can be connected to the existing sound or PA (public address) system. Sound is relayed to the emitters, which are located at various points in the listening area. There are also self-contained, portable, battery-powered combination microphone amplifiers and infrared emitters. The emitters convert the acoustic signal (e.g., speech) to infrared light and transmit these light waves throughout the listening area. The light waves are picked up by a photocell on the receiver worn by the listener and converted back to sound through the earphones.

*Receivers can be: 1) "Stethoscope" models connected to receivers hanging under the chin, 2) Headphones or 3) Body packs with jacks for use with earbuds for those not wearing hearing aids, or with neckloops or silhouettes for those using telecoils*

*("T" switches) on hearing aids. Direct audio input (DAI), which connects the hearing aid directly to the receiver via a "boot," "shoe," or plug and cord can also be used. Only infrared receivers with jacks can be used by people with cochlear implants, DAI, or hearing aids with "T" switches. A neckloop attachment is needed for use with hearing aids that have "T" switches.*

Infrared assistive listening devices offer impressive clarity and intelligibility regardless of where a person is sitting. Infrared works best in a darkened room with light colored walls which makes it ideal for the theater. It does not, however, work outdoors. Infrared is also unable to penetrate solid barriers, such as walls. Line-of-sight placement of the emitters is preferred, but since IR is like light, it can bounce off reflecting surfaces and fill a room unless blocked by a solid barrier. Infrared is the only system that allows for confidential or private transmission in a closed room.

## Frequency Modulation (FM) Systems

Sound coming through a microphone or PA system is fed into an FM transmitter. The transmitter broadcasts the signal to the listening area utilizing the special frequency FM radio band designated by the FCC for this use.

Listeners have a personal FM receiver and earphones (*or earbuds*) to pick up the signal, adjusting the volume to their individual needs. Hearing aid users set their aids to the telecoil ("T") switch and wear a neckloop or silhouette connected to their individually worn FM receivers. *Cochlear Implant users can use a patch cord to plug directly into the receivers.* Direct audio input is also available for FM systems.

FM systems have excellent sound quality and some are completely portable. *That is, the transmitter can be taken to any room for use with a public address amplifier; or that some FM systems can be purchased with portable units used by the speaker. All receivers are, of course, portable.*

Users can listen anywhere within a several hundred-foot range inside and outside. However, FM transmits through walls and for some distance, so nearby rooms should use different frequencies or channels to prevent interference. For this reason, FM may be inappropriate for private or confidential use. Even though a special FM band has been established by the FCC, there may be interference from a variety of sources over these wave lengths.

## Induction Audio Loop Systems

A loop of insulated wire circling the listening area receives an electrical impulse from an amplifier that has been placed in a microphone or other signal source close to the speaker. In order to use the system, listeners must physically be within the loop area. A magnetic field within the loop is picked up by the telecoil ("T" switch) on the listener's hearing aid(s) or by a separate telecoil-equipped induction receiver with an earpiece and volume control. The magnetic field is then reconverted through the hearing aid to sound. Fluorescent lighting can interfere with transmission and the electromagnetic signal can spill over into adjacent areas or rooms.

Sound coming through a microphone or PA system is fed into an FM transmitter. The transmitter broadcasts the signal to the listening area utilizing the special frequency FM radio band designated by the FCC for this use. Listeners have a personal FM receiver and earphones to pick up the signal, adjusting the volume to their individual needs. Hearing aid users set their aids to the telecoil ("T") switch and wear a neckloop or silhouette connected to their individually worn FM receivers. Direct audio input is also available for FM systems.

# Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs): Their Variety & Where To Get Them

*The following is taken from <http://members.aol.com/centrumweb/als.html>.  
It is offered for your information only. NOTE: Other sources can be found with a little research.*

## Assistive Listening Systems for Public Facilities

### TELELOOP SYSTEMS LA1000

- Large Area System by Oticon.
- MultiCon Small Area/Portable System by Oticon.
- PA/L2000 Integrated PA/Loop System by Oticon.

### INFRARED SYSTEMS

- StarSound 400 Single Channel System by Phonic Ear.
- StarSound 600 Two Channel System by Phonic Ear.
- Alternative IR Systems by Sennheiser, Williams Sound & ALDS.

### FM SYSTEMS

- Easy Listener Large Area System by Phonic Ear.
- Translation & Tour Guide Systems by Phonic Ear.
- Alternative FM Systems by Comtek & Williams Sound.

### RELATED PRODUCTS

- PA/L2000 Integrated PA/Teleloop System by Oticon.
  - Wireless and Conventional Microphone Systems Mixers, Amplifiers, Signal Processors and Loudspeakers
- (From <http://members.aol.com/centrumweb/pscm3.html>)

## Add A New Dimension To Your Listening System: CM-3 Conference Microphone

This unique microphone system has been designed to enhance the pickup range for a wide variety of personal listening devices. With the CM-3, the need for passing a microphone around to various speakers is eliminated. Typical applications include:

- Conference tables
- Panel type setup
- Split-table setup
- Dinner arrangements, etc.

The CM-3 is a so-called boundary type microphone. The direct and reflected sound waves arrive simultaneously at the microphone port. Therefore, any phase cancellations are moved outside the audible spectrum, resulting in a smooth frequency response.

A dense delrin body combined with soft rubber feet prevents skidding on any surface and reduces annoying mechanical noises usually associated with group arrangements. The contemporary compact design (2" x 2" x 5/8", 2.5 oz.) affords discrete setup at any table.

The advantages of the boundary microphone are:

- Consistent tone quality around the microphone (no comb-filter effect)
- Low Vibration sensitivity
- 6 dB increased sensitivity resulting in 6 dB improved signal-to-noise ratio
- Typical pickup range of 8-12 feet. Actual pickup range may vary from 5 to 15 feet depending on environmental conditions and the individual user's discrimination score

The effective pickup range can be expanded by coupling two CM-3 microphones together with a Y-connector. Thus, the microphones can be placed 6 feet apart. In addition, the CM-3 can be supplied with a 6 ft. V-cord which allows for the microphones to be placed up to 12 feet apart covering a 24 ft. long table. This setup is most commonly used in conjunction with panel setups and split-table setups.

CM-3 works with most brand name assistive listening devices employing electret microphones such as: • Personal FM systems • Small area teleloop systems • Pocketalker type devices • Most personal infrared systems • Special XLR adaptors for commercial phantom powered mixers are available.

CM-3 is available with 3.5 mm and 2.5 mm mono jacks. (From <http://members.aol.com/centrumweb/csorder.html>)

### For More Information

Two people who helped comply this booklet report good results using the CM-3 Conference Microphones. Their experience is limited, however, so we recommend that interested parties do more research. Centrum Sound accepts major credit cards and offers a 30 day money-back guarantee on all standard assistive devices and accessories. They also have Demonstration Centers in many hearing aid dispensing offices throughout the United States. Please contact Centrum Sound for more information and details.



For prices and or additional information on specific products,  
or for help with specific applications, send e-mail to:  
**[centrumweb@aol.com](mailto:centrumweb@aol.com)**

Or contact: CENTRUM SOUND SYSTEMS  
572 La Conner Drive, Sunnyvale, CA 94087 USA  
Phone: 408-736-6500 Fax: 408-736-6552  
Web Site: <http://www.centrumssound.com>

# “Hearing” Visually

## Using Visual Aids To Enhance Speech Comprehension

*This information came from Henry and Elsa Ellis, who live in Florida.  
Credit for the idea of the preservice briefing was given to them by Ken Lewis from Punta Gorda, Florida.*

For members of the Deaf culture and some late-deafened people, communication takes place through the use of American Sign Language (ASL) or signed English. But what if sign language is not an option? For most people who are hard of hearing or late-deafened, using the written word to augment or replace the spoken word is the answer. It is not as hard as it may first seem. A little thought, some basic equipment and — voila! — communication happens!

### Large Felt Pen & Newsprint

The simplest, less-costly method is to employ two transcribers, large felt pens and a supply of newsprint paper. The two transcribers take turns at writing the essence of a talk or discussion on the sheet of newsprint. Each filled sheet is posted around the meeting room for follow-up reference.



### Computer-Driven Transcriptions

Computer technology provides several methods by which the spoken words can become written words. Four of these methods are described in more detail below. Basically each employs a computer (either desktop or laptop model), word processing or specialized software and projection hardware that facilitates displays on another computer, TV set or projection on a movie screen or blank wall, all for the benefit of those who hear poorly or not at all. Efficiency is heightened in that some of what will be said in a worship service, class, general or committee meeting, etc., can be entered as files in the computer, and scrolled for viewing at the proper time. Examples are liturgies, Scripture, hymns, anthems, prayers, sermons, agendas, outlines, etc. At the same time, the technology allows a transcriber to insert words “real time,” i.e., as they are spoken by a preacher, teacher, speaker or from the group. An additional benefit is that the entire proceedings can then be printed for the use of those who cannot take notes while keeping their eyes on the displayed words.

### Beforehand Briefing Sessions

A pronounced drawback for a number of persons relying on computer-assisted notetaking technologies is that it can be exhausting. Few of us can read at the speed of the spoken word, and some of what is being transcribed may not get viewed before the computer page scrolls down. Some United Methodists in Florida have come up with a helpful suggestion: hold a beforehand briefing session.

The idea comes from ASL translators. Since church language, theological and liturgical terms and the like can be difficult to translate in an understandable way, the translators and those using their service meet prior to the morning worship service (for instance, during Sunday school). Utilizing the preacher’s sermon manuscripts (or notes), the Order of Worship, or other relevant materials, the translator looks for unfamiliar words, outlines the flow of the service or event, and provides whatever background information may be of use. Persons relying on signing give feedback as to what sign communicates best, and ask for clarification as needed. The result is that having been “prepped,” the recipients of signing are better able to comprehend the flow and content of the worship service or event.

This briefing practice can be useful for churches using one or another of the notetaking media. Meeting beforehand, the hard of hearing and late-deafened people anticipate and quickly recognize words and meanings that are written by the notetaking computer operator.

## What Notetaking Technologies Are Available

### Computer-Assisted Notetaking (CAN)

#### What is CAN

It’s “Computer-Assisted Notetaking” for persons with hearing problems who do NOT use either American Sign Language (ASL) or Signed English. It’s a portable system that can be set up for Sunday morning worship services, other church meetings, classes and other activities.

#### How does it operate?

Basic “equipment” is a cooperative pastor, a helpful church secretary, dependable volunteer computer operators plus a congregation willing to forgive glitches and computer errors—and love us anyway—as the program is set up and operated.

#### What computer technologies are needed?

1. A laptop computer or desktop computer (with a QUIET keyboard) using a standard word processing program, either an IBM-compatible personal computer (PC) or an Apple “Mac” computer may be used.

2. A VGA feed to a TV set, or a computer monitor. Since a TV can be used for a wide variety of activities in the church, we recommend buying a TV set on a wheeled cart for transporting to any room in the church. Also recommended is Presenter-Plus, Model FFM-102 SIN:95.0028 which allows you to connect the computer VGA output through a small adapter box and appropriate wires to the video Input of the TV. (Component can be purchased from a computer store.)
3. A digital projector with a remote control. An example is InFocus 720 Little Pro, a lightweight portable digital projector. Manufactured by CompView (1-800-440-8439). Cost for a digital projector may range from \$4,000 to \$6,000. The digital projector allows projection of an image directly from the computer to the TV monitor and/or to a large (8' x 8') manual or electrically retractable movie screen, or on a blank wall. In a worship or lecture setting, the ideal location of the projected image is to one side of the pulpit or lectern.

(Continued on next page)

(CAN: Continued from previous page)

### What else can computer technologies do?

Videotapes from a VCR and still slides can also be projected through the digital unit. The digital projector allows flexibility of size and focus of whatever images you choose to use. With CAN—and any other means of providing a view of the spoken words—hearing is enhanced. Testimony abounds stating people will understand as never before what is being said in worship services and other church-provided events.

**TIP: Computer Technology is also great for communicating one-on-one! Sit so you can see the screen, and type as little or as much as needed to communicate. Works great in noisy settings too – just as useful on a home visit or during a potluck as in the sanctuary during a sermon.**  
**A great way to communicate with those whose hearing problems isolate them in so many ways.**

## About C-PRINT: A Computer-Aided Speech-to-Print Transcription System

*This article was downloaded from the internet. It has been edited for inclusion in this booklet.  
Addition comments for editing purposes appear in italics.*

### What is C-Print & how does it work?

C-Print is a computer-aided speech-to-print transcription system developed at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) as a support service option for some students who are either Deaf or hard of hearing students in mainstream educational environments. It was developed by NTID researchers eager to improve the classroom experience for students at both the secondary and college levels. Currently, C-Print is being used successfully in many programs around the country.

Research supports the idea that some students who are Deaf or hard of hearing prefer printed text of lectures—the basis of the C-Print system—over sign language interpreters or note-takers as a means of acquiring information. Additionally, C-Print is cost-effective and can be more readily available than stenography-based services (such as CAN or CART) that a university or secondary school may provide. *Its potential usefulness in a church setting for worship, meetings, classes and other events is obvious.*

A typist called a C-Print captionist types a speaker's lecture or talk (and the audience's comments) into a laptop computer. The typed information is displayed simultaneously on a second laptop computer or a television monitor for the audience to read. Afterward, the printed text is available to the audience for review purposes.

The technology used is a laptop computer and specialized software. The software has three major functions: a text display, abbreviation expansion, and remote communication. The captionist receives training in an abbreviation system to reduce keystrokes and in text-condensing strategies. The captionist types as much information as possible, generally providing a more complete representation of what was said than is provided by summary notes alone.

*The statement on CAN is taken from a leaflet prepared for the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Authors of the leaflet are Holly Elliott and Dr. Laurel Glass.*



### What special equipment is needed?

To use C-Print in a classroom *or church* setting, one needs either two laptops (one for the captionist and one for the Deaf or hard of hearing person) OR one laptop and one VGA (computer) monitor for viewing of typed text by more than one student. A TV set may be used. Also digital projector attached to the computer can display text on a wall or movie screen.

*In a church setting, using a monitor or TV set is fine for a class or meeting. It also works fine in a sanctuary, although some who might use it don't want to announce this fact by sitting in the reserved pews close to the screen. A digital projector which projects the text onto a screen or blank wall near the front of the sanctuary allows the entire congregation access.*

### How much does it cost?

Costs of using C-Print vary, depending on what equipment is used; the pay level and hours the captionist works; the work demands; service arrangements; and funding opportunities. Costs for laptop computers, display equipment, and the captionists' salaries will vary.

### Where else can C-Print be used?

C-Print can be used in meetings involving employees who are deaf or hard-of hearing; in community meetings; or in professional development activities or workshops *or for church events*. C-Print may be used successfully with individuals with other disabilities, such as visual impairment or a learning disability.

### For more information:

Contact *Pam Francis*, C-Print Training Coordinator  
Telephone: 716-475-6019 (voice/TTY)  
E-mail: GGNCPC@rit.edu • Website: www.rit.edu/~netac



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# PORTACAP P200

## Computer Assisted Note-Taking System

*This article is adapted from [www.alds.com/portacap.htm](http://www.alds.com/portacap.htm). Editorial comments are in italics*

### What is PORTACAP

PORTACAP is a portable real-time notetaking and visual display system for meetings, lectures, and presentations. *It may also be used for worship and other church events.* The heart of the system is the P200 that connects to the printer port of your PC. The P200 will drive any display device such as a computer monitor, TV, video projection system, or LCD panel. The operation of these hardware components is managed by customized software that also provides a unique operator-friendly interface for the typist.

The PORTACAP concept provides an inexpensive alternative to real-time captioning and experienced typists will be able to use the system with minimal training. The typist controls what appears on the display screen and can manipulate it for optimum audience viewing. *In whatever setting it is used,* the PORTACAP P200 provides inexpensive and effective visual interpretation of speech.

### PORTACAP P200 Features:

- Lower costs than real-time captioning in both equipment investment and operating
- Saved documents are in ASCII format which may be imported into any word processor for easy editing
- Printer port for instant hard copies
- Full control and adjustments of the text for easy viewing by the audience
- Selectable fonts and text sizes for optimal remote screen viewing
- 17 user programmable Hotkeys for fast input of names, commonly used expressions, and long words or phrases
- On-line help system

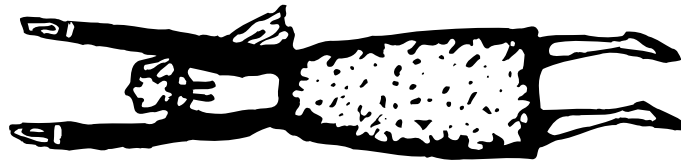
### To learn more:

**Call Toll Free:** 1-800-665-2537 (Voice / TTY)

**Local Calls:** 604-244-0269 (Voice / TTY)

**E-Mail:** [email@alds.com](mailto:email@alds.com) Fax: (604) 270-6308

**Hours Of Operation:** 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time, Monday through Friday.



## VOICE-ACTIVATED CAPTIONING

### Using Speech Recognition Software

*Based on the "Ephphatha Newsletter, July/Aug/Sept. 1998 and Oct./Nov./Dec. 1998; software information has been updated and source information has been added.*

### What is Voice-Activated Captioning?

An alternative way to do real-time captioning is with speech recognition software. The person who does the speaking will need to work with the software program so the PC recognizes/understands his/her voice. If the captioning will be used in church, the software training must take place in the church setting. For a Bible class, the training needs to accustom the software to the acoustics of the classroom. With regular use and training, a high level of speech recognition accuracy can be achieved.

The liturgy and hymns need to be typed on the computer before the church service. A computer operator needs to scroll down, displaying these words on the TV screen, until the pastor offers extemporaneous prayers or preaches the sermon. Then the computer operator turns on the microphone so the speech-recognition software does the dictating. When the pastor is finished, the microphone is turned off and the computer scrolls down until the microphone needs to be turned on again. Organ music interferes with the speech-recognition program, so it

cannot be used for singing; however, the words of hymns and anthems or solos could be typed in beforehand, and scrolled on screen by the operator.

In a Bible class or group setting, the speaker needs to repeat questions, answers, and comments from other participants because the software will not recognize their voices or words.

### Equipment needed:

1. At least a Pentium 133 MHz processor
2. Windows 95 or 98
3. Standard 16 bit sound card or built-in audio system
4. 60 MB free hard disk space, plus additional space
5. 32 MB Ram
6. A high quality microphone for the PC
7. Speech recognition software

### To learn more:

If you have questions about voice-activated captioning, contact Pat Pasbrig at [pasbrigs@smallbyt.com](mailto:pasbrigs@smallbyt.com)

**PLEASE REMEMBER:** These articles are for your information only and the booklet was compiled in 2001.  
**All prices and other time sensitive information are subject to change.**

## Captioning and CART

In recent years, the number of people in the US with hearing loss has risen from 28 million to over 36 million. Captioning and Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) also began to rapidly expand, with a number of houses of worship incorporating this much-needed access into their religious services.

### What is Captioning?

“Captioning is the process of converting the audio content of a television broadcast, webcast, film, video, CD-ROM, DVD, live event, or other productions into text and displaying the text on a screen, monitor or other visual display system.”<sup>1</sup>

Captioning can be either “open” (visible to everyone) or “closed” (visible only when turned on or only to those using special equipment). Typically when we think of captioning, closed captioning on television comes to mind. Yet captioning or subtitles are used for DVDs and online videos as well. The need for this access is so great that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communication and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 was passed to require the captioning of certain Internet audio content, and other possible regulations are being discussed to expand such captioning beyond what this act requires. Houses of worship and ministries that provide online videos, webcasts, podcasts, etc. and DVDs for purchase are encouraged to include captioning or subtitles of their audiovisual and/or audio materials.

### What is CART?

CART (the acronym for Communication Access Realtime Translation) “is a word-for-word speech-to-text...service for people who need communication access...A CART provider uses a steno machine, notebook computer and realtime software to render instant speech-to-text translation on a computer monitor or display for the benefit of an individual consumer or larger group in a variety of settings.”<sup>2</sup> This service is sometimes referred to as “realtime captioning.”

Unlike other speech-to-text options such as Computer-Assisted Notetaking (CAN) or C-Print, which just provide a summary of what is expressed verbally, CART is verbatim and offers a complete rendition of what is being said. It is a valuable form of access for religious bodies to use in worship services, meetings, and conferences.

### What is Remote CART?

Although CART is typically provided onsite, remote CART is building momentum. This allows a CART provider to produce realtime translation via the Internet and a telephone line without physically being at the event, thus eliminating travel time and the cost associated with it.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nad.org/issues/technology/captioning/what-is>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cart-info.org/CARTBrochure.pdf>

## Resources

An excellent website on realtime captioning in houses of worship is [www.captioningtheword.com](http://www.captioningtheword.com).

The Collaborative for Communication Access Via Captioning (CCAC) advocates for the increased availability of captioning and CART; information about its efforts is available at <http://www.ccacaptioning.org> or by contacting [ccacaptioning@gmail.com](mailto:ccacaptioning@gmail.com).

*Information provided by Angela H. with assistance from Nancy Kingsley, March 2011*



# Tiny Tips & Points to Ponder

This was written by Shanti Parker who had normal hearing until she was deafened at age 40 — cause unknown. She thinks her warranty just expired. She had two years of silence during which time she struggled to learn speech reading and sign language. She is now a cochlear implant user.

I never thought about hearing loss until I experienced a total loss and found myself awash in a sea of silence. Here's a small sampling of what I have learned splashing out about there.

## Tulsa, Oklahoma & the Mad Bad Pad

Say "Tulsa, Oklahoma." Really! Say the words, silently if you wish, but feel how each syllable forms. Now imagine yourself trying to read your own lips. *Oklahoma* is right out there, but *Tulsa* is formed with the tongue and hidden behind the teeth.

It is estimated that 50% of spoken English involves little or no movement of the lips. Not exactly great odds, are they? But it gets worse. Now say "the mad, bad pad." Those words all feel exactly the same, don't they? That means they all *look* exactly the same. So factor in the estimate that 50% of all English words have other words which look exactly the same — or at least close enough for confusion. Now the odds are really bad... it's enough to drive you mad... I'm staying here, safe in my pad...

The term Speech Reading has replaced the old concept of lip reading because it simply describes the process better. When people with hearing loss try to pick up clues from watching a speaker's lips, they are engaged in a much more complex process than just *reading* what they see. They are, in fact, very busy mentally processing the bits and pieces of what they do *see* into their larger understanding of English word structure and the topic under discussion. It's an inexact science at best.

General speech reading ability will, of course, vary with the individual. But it will also be impacted by many factors. Is the speech reader tired? Is the lighting poor or the speaker too far away? Some speakers move their lips very little. Others have odd speech rhythm or unusual accents. Mustaches, hands in front of the face, a turned head — all add to the confusion. Once you understand this, you'll find yourself making logical adjustments.

## Hearing Aids and Assistive Listening Devices

It is easy to assume that a hearing aid is for ears what glasses are for eyes. Get one prescribed for your problem, and you'll basically have normal hearing again. T'aint so.

Hearing loss often means a person loses sensitivity to sounds in certain frequency ranges, but not others. I lost the base notes in music before the treble. Turning up the volume so that I could hear the base made the treble painfully loud.

Hearing loss can also be more than just a problem with volume — it can be one of distinction. You might say "My mother was buried," but I might *hear/think* you said "My brother was married." My congratulations would seem odd at best.

Older aids and assistive listening devices could be very hard to tolerate. They might help with the understanding of speech, but could also send the unhappy wearer up the wall when the dog crossed the linoleum floor or their spouse rattled the newspaper.

Fortunately the technology *has* improved and *is* improving by leaps and bounds. Today's computer technology is making great strides toward equipment which is "user friendly." But please

remember many problems still exist. If a member of your committee is using a hearing aid or assistive listening device, resist the urge to tap your pencil on the table and shuffle your papers quietly. Take turns speaking and give visible hints as to who is currently speaking. (I often feel like I'm at a Ping Pong match trying to figure out whose lips are now moving...)

## Can't walk and chew gum at the same time

Living with hearing loss of any degree is tiring. Just following the gist of spoken communication can be exhausting. The more severe the loss, the more concentrated effort is required to stay on board.

I'm lucky to have as much auditory input from my cochlear implant as I do. My comprehension is almost 100% in most one-on-one settings. Use of an FM Assistive Listening Device allows me to function fairly well in a group. But even in the best circumstances, I must concentrate totally on listening. If I drop out for a moment into my own private thoughts, I'll lose the flow of the conversation. If I am driving or chopping veggies, it gets very hard to follow a conversation. I can't walk and chew gum at the same time any more. This is less of a problem for those whose hearing loss is moderate, but is still likely true to some extent.

Bottom line is know your audience. Watch for signs of tiredness and call for a break. Learn to be comfortable with periods of silence. Make sure changes of topics are clearly communicated. If your message isn't getting through, try saying it another way. Move your chair so your listener doesn't have to turn their head to see your face. Find a quiet area for conversation. Ask the waitperson to turn down the music. A little understanding will go a long way toward other logical acts of compassion.

## Do you like the silence?

One of the best questions I was asked after I went deaf was "Do you like the silence?" It helped move my focus away from what I had lost to the possibilities of the life I now had to live. That life was different, but it was still life — excuse the pun. You know, silence is really quite peaceful.

One direction United Methodist ministry rarely takes is that of contemplative practices. It is a shame since meditation and contemplative prayer is one of our richest Christian traditions.

Think about it. One of the hardest disciplines for a beginning meditation student to learn is that of ignoring the distraction of outside sounds. Those of us with severe hearing loss can just turn off our hearing aids/devices and move directly to the next step.

Meditative practices such as Centering Prayer, which is a very old form of Christian meditation, benefit everyone. Starting a class in Centering Prayer or meditation at your church would have the added advantage of providing a rare place where hearing loss can be experienced as an advantage. What a gift!

If you don't know where to start, try the following website: [www.centeringprayer.com/methodcp.htm](http://www.centeringprayer.com/methodcp.htm). A web search on the topic "Centering Prayer" lists several other resources.

# How Accessible Is Your Church?

## Determining The Needs & Resources For Ministry & Mission With Hard Of Hearing & Late-Deafened People

**PART ONE** of this audit focuses on the needs of hard of hearing people who can use Assistive Listening Devices. **PART TWO** focuses on the needs of late-deafened people who *must* have information communicated visually. The needs of the two groups overlap, however, in several areas. Both groups need good lighting and good lip-reading (aka: Speech Reading) conditions — and both benefit from all information communicated visually as well as orally. Incidentally, so will those with “normal hearing” too! That’s a great free benefit to the congregation as a whole when they decide to include more fully for those who hear differently.

When you complete the audit, it will need to be shared with those able to make a difference. We recommend that the audit results be shared with your church’s administrative council (or board), council on ministries, trustees & appropriate committees.

### I. Which Of The Following Sound Adaptations Has Your Church Made To Encourage Participation By Hard of Hearing People?

#### Yes No In The Sanctuary:

- Amplification for the whole congregation? NOTE: This does *not* substitute for an assistive listening system for hard of hearing people or those using cochlear implants.
- Microphone positioned away from speaker’s lips, to accommodate people who are speech reading (also known as lip reading)?
- Lavalier (lapel) microphone worn by liturgists and/or preacher(s) not using a stationary microphone?
- Wireless microphone for use in the nave for sharing of joys and concerns or additional announcements?
- Strategically placed microphone(s) so that persons using assistive listening devices may hear organ/piano, soloists and choir?
- Assistive Listening System (FM, infrared, audio loop)?
- Receivers with jacks and neckloops for the assistive listening system (needed by people with cochlear implants or hearing aids with T-switches)?
- Person assigned to ensure that receiver batteries are charged (or replaced as the case may be) weekly?
- Assistive listening receivers set out on table in or close to sanctuary, making for easier access by hard of hearing people or those with cochlear implants?
- An attendant on hand to assist in selection of proper unit and explain its operation?
- Are posters placed at entry points telling of the availability of assistive listening devices, and where to find them?
- Lighting in front of liturgists, preachers, choir members, to facilitate easier speech reading?
- Using the church’s Yellow Page, website, and newspaper advertisements to tell of its audio and visual enhancements for hard of hearing and late-deafened people?
- When remodeling or building new sanctuary, architect requested to research latest acoustical technology?

#### Yes No In Meeting Rooms:

- Meetings held in rooms with good acoustics (carpets, drapes)?
- Good lighting on speaker’s face? (Should not have the light source *behind* the speaker.)
- Amplification used most of the time?
- Microphone positioned away from speaker’s mouth?
- Microphone used by all speakers, including those in audience during feedback or discussion time?
- All presentations be done from the front (to facilitate hearing and speech reading)?
- Comments/questions from audience repeated by speaker (if microphone is not available to the audience)?
- Semicircular seating arrangement used for discussions to facilitate speech reading?
- FM or audio loop assistive listening system available?
- Receivers with jacks and neckloops available for assistive listening system?
- Videos selected for and presented in closed-captioned version?
- TV sets and VCR units equipped with closed-caption circuitry, remote control available, and instructions or attendant on hand to operate the system?

## 2. Does Your Church Supplement Sound with Sight for People Who Are Late-Deafened In The Following Ways?

**NOTE: These methods also benefit hard of hearing people  
AND the congregation at large!\***

### Yes No In Meetings:

- Written agenda, even for "small" meetings.
- Graphic recording throughout meetings, even small ones
- Overhead projection, especially of action proposals
- Computer Assisted Note-taking or similar system, in "real time," and visible to all

### Yes No During Worship:

**Are the following visible to all worshipers? (Note that most hymnals and pew Bibles are in small print)**

- Words of hymns?
- Words of anthem or solo?
- Litanies, prayers, scripture?
- Words of the liturgies?
- Children's moments?
- Sermon?
- Joys and concerns?
- Announcements?

**Methods used to make the words of worship and other church events seen as well as heard:**

- Handouts?
- Copies of the sermon available in advance?
- Overhead projection to large screen in sanctuary?
- Computer assisted note-taking (CAN or a similar system) projected onto large screen or a TV monitor?

## 3. Are Your Church Staff & Office *Hearing Accessible*?

### Yes No

- Do you have at least one telephone with volume control/amplification?
- Do you have a TTY (telecommunication device for the deaf, also known as a TDD)?
- Do you have a personal listening device available for counseling sessions and home/hospital visits? (e.g., FM transmitter/receiver, Williams Pocketalker, Sound Wizard)



\* When accommodations such as those mentioned in this audit are used, they benefit everyone. In classrooms which accommodate hard of hearing or late-deafened students, the grades of the entire class tend to improve significantly. Church members with "normal hearing" are often surprised to learn that they too benefit from these accommodations.

*"I can't believe how much more I retain!"* is a common response heard from the entire congregation when a number of these suggestions are implemented.

*This audit was derived from a model audit form prepared by Holly Elliott and Dr. Laurel Glass for use in the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Please note that this audit does not address the needs of the culturally Deaf—that is, those who use either American Sign Language or English Sign Language. Many Deaf people might find some or many of the suggestions helpful, but if a local church wants to facilitate mission among Deaf people, then a sign interpreter needs to be added to the program. If there is confusion about terms, devices, etc., used in the audit, you should be able to find clarifying information elsewhere in this booklet.*