



Welcoming People with Hearing Loss or Deafness to Church

1. First Contact

- Greet the person normally — no need to raise your voice.
- Make sure they can see your face clearly.
- Try not to have the light behind you.
- If needed, gently get their attention with a wave or light tap on the arm.
- Ask: “How do you prefer to communicate?”
- If they are with a companion or interpreter, still speak directly to them.

2. Offering Help

- Don’t assume someone needs assistance — ask first.
- Offer options:
 - “Would you like me to speak slowly?”
 - “Would written notes help?”
 - “Would you prefer to sit where you can see the speaker clearly?”
- Respect their communication style — lip-reading, BSL, hearing aids, or none.

3. Communication Tips

- Face the person when speaking; avoid covering your mouth.
- Speak clearly and at a natural pace — not exaggerated or loud.
- Use plain language and short sentences.
- If they don’t understand, rephrase rather than repeat.
- Reduce background noise where possible.
- Offer written or digital information when helpful.

4. Seating

- Ask where they would like to sit — many prefer:
 - Good lighting on faces
 - Clear sightlines to the front
 - Close to speakers or hearing-loop areas

- Let them know if your church has:
 - A hearing loop
 - Headphones
 - Captioning
 - BSL interpretation
- Ensure they can see the preacher, readers, and anyone leading prayers.

5. During the Service

- Make sure the spoken announcements are clear and not rushed.
- If using screens, ensure text is readable and timed well.
- Avoid speaking while facing away (e.g., turning to the altar).
- If something changes unexpectedly, provide a brief visual cue.
- For hymn singing or liturgy, ensure words are visible or available in print.

6. Communion & Movement

- Explain the pattern of movement visually or in writing if needed.
- Use gestures or simple pointing to guide — but check first.
- If the person lip-reads, pause before speaking so they can see you.
- Don't rush; allow time for understanding and movement.

7. After the Service

- Background noise can make conversation difficult — offer a quieter space.
 - Face the person when speaking and keep your mouth visible.
 - Offer to write things down if helpful.
 - Make introductions clearly:
 - “This is Sue — she helps with the music.”
- Don't shout; clarity matters more than volume.

8. Emergency Situations

- Ensure the person is aware of alarms — many Deaf people may not hear them.
- Use visual signals or gestures to indicate evacuation.
- Point clearly to exits and guide if needed.

- Stay with the person until they are safe outside.

9. Please Avoid

- ✗ Shouting — it distorts speech and doesn't help
- ✗ Speaking while turning away
- ✗ Covering your mouth or eating while talking
- ✗ Assuming someone can lip-read
- ✗ Saying “Never mind” or “It doesn't matter” if communication is difficult
- ✗ Ignoring the person and speaking only to an interpreter or companion

10. Remember

Face ~ Ask ~ Include

People who are Deaf or have hearing loss know what works best for them — follow their lead and communicate with respect.