



## **Being Aware of Deaf People in Church**

**How we can help each other.**



**Did you know....**15% of the general population have a hearing loss?

Deafness increases with age which means 41% of people over 50 years and 71% over 70 years have some problems with their hearing.

This means that there will always be a number of people in the congregation who will have some difficulty hearing, whether they are aware of it or not. Many people will use hearing aids, but these do not restore perfect hearing.

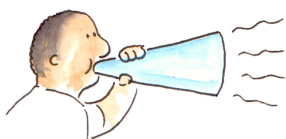
Having problems with your hearing means that communication can be more difficult and many people find themselves socially isolated because some people will not make an effort to communicate with them. By following a few simple rules it is possible to communicate much more easily.



**Speak clearly and at a normal pace**, this makes it easier for those who need to lip-read to understand what you are saying. Be careful not to turn away or cover your mouth when speaking.

**Face the person when you are speaking to them.**

It is important that your face is clearly visible, so you will need to face the light.



**Please do not shout**, this makes it more difficult to lip-read and to understand what you are saying. Shouting makes your face look angry and so will give out the wrong message.



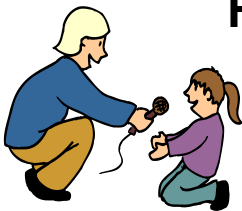
**Do not all speak at that same time.** Be disciplined in how you conduct meetings / study groups so that only one person is speaking at a time.

**Ensure the Loop system is turned on and working.** Loop systems are simple devices that allow a person with a hearing aid to 'tune in' to what is being said through the microphone without any background noise or interference.

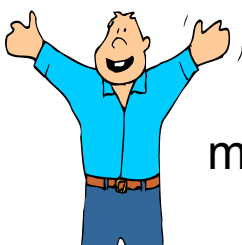
**Always use the microphone,** even if you are a confident and clear speaker. If people with hearing aids are using the loop system they will not hear anything except what is picked up by the microphone.



**Help children use the microphone if necessary,** because their voices are much higher pitched and therefore more difficult to hear.



**If at first you don't succeed...keep trying!** It is very frustrating for someone who cannot hear when you give up trying and say, 'it doesn't matter'. If there are problems with understanding what is said, try repeating it, rephrasing it or write it down.



**Use simple gestures or mime** to help get the message across.

**Provide printed material or visual aids.** A printed copy of the Bible readings, sermon and intercessions can really make a difference to someone who has to listen carefully in order to hear. Lip-reading is very tiring.

## **British Sign Language and the Deaf Community**

About 1 person in every 1,000 will have little or no useful hearing from birth or a young age and will use British Sign Language (B.S.L.) as their first or preferred means of communication. They will usually prefer to use an interpreter rather than written English. This differs from people who have lost their hearing later in life who will usually continue to use English as their first language.

B.S.L. is a visual spatial language with its own vocabulary, grammar and syntax. (*Sign systems such as Makaton, signed English etc. borrow a limited selection of signs from B.S.L. for use in specialized settings.*) It can take many years to learn B.S.L. to an advanced level in much the same way as it would to learn any second language. But we don't all need to sign at an advanced level, learning just a few basic signs can make all the difference in communication and building up fellowship.

### **Printed booklet**

Action on hearing loss produce a booklet with a range of simple signs for everyday use. Try learning the fingerspelling alphabet as this can help those who are lip-reading

### **Internet**

There are opportunities to watch B.S.L. on the internet and even learn basic signs online.

### **Thank God's it's Friday**

Is a monthly B.S.L. class held at King's Cross Methodist Church, Crestfield Street, for students and interpreters who want to develop their signing skills in church settings. A range of B.S.L. tutors and experts in theology and ministry provide high quality teaching. There is £5 donation requested to cover the costs of hall hire, refreshments and teaching. Every 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday 7-9pm (except April, August and December)

### **Qualification Classes**

If you would like to study B.S.L. for formal qualification, then contact 'Signature' for details of a study centre near you or City Lit University.

**Go on... give it a go!**