

**GA-1322**  
**(Sense-of-the-Assembly)**  
**HEARING ACCESSIBILITY FOR PARTICIPANTS**

**Adopted by the General Assembly**

**WHEREAS**, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) affirms the inherent worth of every person; and

**WHEREAS**, the Identity Statement for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) states "...we welcome all to the table as God has welcomed us"; and

**WHEREAS**, there are those who are culturally deaf (born into the deaf community or becoming deaf at a young age and whose first or primary language is a signed language such as American Sign Language) and those who are physically deaf (those for whom hearing loss came as a result of illness, injury or age); and

**WHEREAS**, many of our congregations' facilities are not fully accessible to those with hearing needs, who can be helped with hearing assistive technology and other means;

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Orlando, Florida July 13 - 18, 2013, make a commitment to equip our Assembly gatherings with hearing assistive technology for those who may be helped by such technology; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that all regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) be encouraged to make their regional meetings fully accessible, as outlined above, to those with hearing loss; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Disciples Church Extension Fund be encouraged to provide information about loans for those congregations that want to make their own facilities more accessible to those with hearing loss; and

**FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED** that congregations be encouraged to report methods they are using to address this issue to the OGMP and these be among those included in a workshop at the 2015 General Assembly.

Christian Church in the Upper Midwest

## **Background**

### Who are the deaf and hard-of-hearing?

Normally, when we think of hearing loss, the first and sometimes only thing that comes to mind is people who are born deaf and who use American Sign Language, rather than lip reading or speech. This is also referred to as cultural deafness. The number of culturally deaf people is around one million.

By far the larger number of people needing communication assistance is those with some hearing loss, a number which increases with age, illness or injury. This is known as physical deafness. Currently, "1 in 5 Americans have hearing loss in at least one ear. This is 48 million people and far exceeds previous hearing care industry estimates of approximately 25 million."<sup>1</sup>

This much larger group is routinely overlooked when we look at welcoming people with special needs into our local communities of faith. While a very small number of people who are physically deaf may be able to use an ASL interpreter, most cannot. There are several technologies that provide greatly needed assistance for almost all of those with hearing loss regardless of how that loss occurred.

## **Current Technologies**

### Communication Action Real-Time - or CART

With CART, everything that is said is "captioned" live for deaf and hard of hearing clients. In fact, it can be thought of as captioning for non-broadcast settings, such as classrooms, churches, meetings, and conferences. The captioning may be on a small screen that can be read only by one deaf person or the CART captions can be displayed on an overhead (for a small group), broadcast on a large screen, on the internet, or broadcast via satellite. There is also the possibility of off-site real-time captioning that can be done through the internet, rather than having a live captioner at the location.

The benefit of this technology is that anyone who can read, be they deaf or hard-of-hearing, can read the same captioning, so it can be used by both these communities. The drawback is that it is an ongoing expense, as would be hiring an ASL interpreter.

### Looping/telecoils

The hearing loop (also called an audio or induction loop) is a wire that takes a feed from a PA system and transmits it through a wire loop around a room. The hearing loop creates a magnetic field which provides a wireless signal to a telecoil receiver or T-coil which has been placed in a hearing aid or cochlear implant. In order to hear, all the person with a hearing aid or cochlear implant has to do is activate or turn on the telecoil.

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<sup>1</sup> Hearing Health Foundation (<http://hearinghealthfoundation.org/85>)

There are also individual receivers with headsets that can be used by those who do not have a T-coil. A T-coil, or telecoil, is a small copper coil in a hearing aid that functions as a wireless antenna that picks up the magnetic field from the loop, delivering customized sound to the hearing aid wearer. It is an option on most hearing aids and is generally in all cochlear implant processors.

This technology has been used successfully in Europe for decades for a wide variety of venues, even taxicabs, buses, airplane terminals, check-out counters, pharmacies, museums, churches, etc. It is now making headway in the US as “the” technology preferred by those with hearing loss, as the FM systems that a few churches have are woefully inadequate and rarely either maintained or used.