

Ein Herz für Menschen mit Hörverlust (A heart for people with hearing loss)

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What's up with the German title? Let me explain. Many years ago my husband Bill and I were able to return to Germany with our two youngest children, who had been born there. We stayed with our former landlord, August, and his family. One of their cars bore a sticker that read: "Ein Herz Für Kinder" (A Heart for Children).

I am hoping that my unusual title will draw your attention to the need to have a heart for people with hearing loss. Due to various degrees of hearing loss (which may steadily increase), many people are either discouraged from coming to church or, when they do attend, struggle unnecessarily to "get" what's actually being said. As one whose inherited hearing loss has deteriorated to the point where I am clinically deaf, I speak from experience!

Did you know there's a "fix" for this that's not too expensive for your church and can also be an evangelism outreach to your community? The cost is generally no more than the price of a good set of hearing aids. It's a simple solution that makes it possible for persons with cochlear implants or hearing aid users to be able to hear the sermon crystal-clear – directly in the ears! The fix is known as an Induction Loop System (ILS) or hearing loop.

The majority of hearing aids today have a telecoil (also known as a t-coil or t-switch) built into them, and it's a quick matter for the audiologist to activate them, making it possible to utilize this looping. That's what happened at Cross and Crown Lutheran Church in Georgetown, Tex., on Easter Sunday 2010. It enabled me to walk into church that day and hear every word of the sermon. Awesome! (If you are buying a new hearing aid, make sure it has a telecoil.)

After we moved to California, I searched the Internet. Way north of us, in Santa Rosa, I found three doctors of audiology who had looped many facilities in their area. I asked for help and within days they gave me a referral. By January 2012, we had Zion Lutheran in Torrance "looped." If you need help with looping, contact: mdhh@wels.net.

Bill and I are "alums" of WELS Builders for Christ (active 1995 to 2001), but at the time I had no knowledge of an ILS/hearing loop. Since then, I've tried to spread the word that it's best to include this system when a new church is being built, although it's usually possible to install it in existing sanctuaries.

P.S. – One Sunday after Cross and Crown in Texas was looped, Pastor Eric Hartzell asked a layman to deliver his sermon in his absence. On the way home from church, I remarked: “Certainly was a good sermon.” Bill replied: “I didn’t get much out of it; I couldn’t understand him.” Amazed, I responded: “Really? I heard every word!”

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