

## Assisting those with hearing loss in our Congregations

PIE TALK May, 2026

Effective hearing assistance for churches includes technologies like hearing loops (T-coil), FM systems, and WiFi-streaming apps, which transmit audio directly to hearing aids, cochlear implants, or personal smartphones, ensuring clear, amplified sound. These solutions bridge communication gaps by reducing background noise, with options like [AudioFetch](#) allowing users to stream audio directly to their own smartphones

### Top 5 Picks for Churches

#### 1. Hearing Loops

- **Best for:** Traditional churches with installed systems.
- **How it works:** Uses T-coil in hearing aids (no extra gear!).
- **Cost:** Free if your church has a loop.

#### 2. FM Systems

- **Best for:** Outdoor services or small chapels.
- **Top Pick:** [Williams Sound Pocketalker Ultra](#).

#### 3. Real-Time Captioning

- **Best for:** Tech-friendly congregations.
- **Top Pick:** *Otter.ai* (free app).

#### 4. WiFi Streaming

- **Best for:** Modern churches with apps.
- **Top Pick:** Whichever links your church provides (but listen from your smartphone as you usually would while you are there)

#### 5. External [Hearing Aid](#) Mics

- **Best for:** Podium use.
- **Top Pick:** *Phonak Roger Pen* (It's a Bit Pricey!).

#### 6. Auracast

- **Best for:** Those with the latest Bluetooth feature, Auracast, in their hearing aids and sound speakers.

- **How it works:** The hearing aids make a connection with a Bluetooth speaker or audio system, which anyone can pair at the same time.
  - **Top Pick:** The [product list is evolving](#), but [Aurocast](#) can tell you which product has them.
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### Key Features to Prioritize

- **[Speech Clarity](#):** Hearing loops, Auracast or WiFi streaming for reducing echoes.
  - **Portability:** FM systems let you roam (bible studies hall).
  - **Discreetness:** Captioning apps avoid drawing [attention](#).
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### 3 Mistakes to Avoid

1. **Ignoring Acoustics:** Test [devices](#) during choir rehearsals (echoes matter!).
  2. **Overcomplicating [Tech](#):** Start with simple FM systems before WiFi setups.
  3. **Skipping Advocacy:** Most churches don't know Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) exist—speak up!
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### How to Get Your Church on Board

**Highlight Inclusivity:** Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) help families, seniors, and veterans—not just the deaf.

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### Bottom Line

**Hearing loops** and **Auracast** are the gold standard for installed churches, while **FM systems** offer flexibility for smaller or outdoor services. For tech-savvy congregations, **real-time captioning** ensures no one misses a verse.

Pro Tip: Pair these tools with a front-row seat for maximum impact.

### Church Hearing Aids and Assistive Listening

Churches and other places of worship can be tricky places to properly convey a spoken message and ensure that it arrives to every corner of the audience, even with a proper PA or speaker

system. Sometimes elevated ceilings might get in the way, or it could be street noise leaking in, large columns can be on the way of the floor sound, and this is only accounting for the characteristics of the premises. Other common factors making the adequate audio distribution difficult are the naturally diminished listening capabilities of elderly congregants, rowdy children or crying babies, and possibly slow speaking patterns or the pastor's low tone of voice.

Without the aid of technology, it has become increasingly clear that churches are going to be impeded of reaching a significant portion of the parishioners. These will eventually stop assisting religious services or move on to other houses of worship where assistive listening technology has been implemented.

When it comes to equipping your church with an assistive listening system you will be confronted with many different options across different technologies and price range. The goal of this article is to help you uncloud some of these choices so you can make an informed decision.

### **Which system do I need?**

First, you must determine the kind of technology needed for your venue. There are several kinds employed in assistive listening systems, such as IR (infrared), Wi-Fi, inductive loop, and FM. Each one has its benefits and disadvantages, concurrently some are better for one type of venue and some for others. We are not going to get into the details as well as the pros and cons of each one since we do not want to bore you with too many technical specs, which are really beside our point. For churches and houses of worship in general undoubtedly the best option is a system that use FM radio signals. This is the preferred option due to its range, capabilities, simplicity of installation and use. And this is not only our opinion, but most churches also equipped with assistive listening solutions use FM and yours should follow suit.

FM assistive listening systems consist of an **FM transmitter**, which is usually connected to the main PA or speaker system, or it can be worn around the pastor's waist for a portable solution. This way the device is always transmitting the floor audio in FM, regardless of if anyone is listening. And the other main component are **FM wireless receivers with headphones (or neck loops** for congregants using hearing aids with t-coil). These receivers are lightweight and portable, battery operated and simple to use. The end user only needs to adjust the volume and toggle them ON or OFF. They provide crystal clear sound quality without echo or background noise. Batteries are long lasting so there's very little risk of them running out during the ceremony.

### **Which brand to choose?**

Once you know which kind of system you need the next threshold will be selecting the brand. There are various well-known brands in the market such as Williams Sound, Enersound, Listen

Tech, Sennheiser, to name just a few; each one offering a variety of assistive listening products and bundles. You will also probably come across some lesser-known brands from foreign vendors with no US presence or support. We would advise against these options since the lack of support, local warranty protection, and particularly FCC approval make their use a questionable proposition. During our research for this article, we found that the best option in terms of cost and quality balance, warranty protection and tech support are the [Enersound bundles](#), which come with [4](#), [10](#) and [20](#) FM receivers, as well as headphones, neck loops, FM transmitter and identifying ADA plaque for venues with 100, 250, and 500 seats respectively. Enersound also allows you to customize bundles for other quantities.

Many common problems that can make hearing a frustrating experience – distance, background noise, or poor room acoustics.

Brown

We recognize that a single assistive listening system may not work in all situations. That’s why we use several technologies to help people hear in all situations.

- Hearing loops.
- Wireless FM.
- WiFi.
- Auracast.
- Infrared.
- Sound Systems.
- The Hearing Loss Association of America and the American Academy of Audiology recommend induction hearing loops as the preferred assistive listening system for those with hearing loss. Sound is “broadcast” directly to the users hearing aid or cochlear implant. There is no need for separate receivers and headsets.

Information from internet and vendor information

Brown Audio Video, LLC  
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- Effective visual accommodations for hearing loss in churches include live captioning (CART) projected on screens, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, providing sermon transcripts in advance, and using bright, clear lighting for lip-reading. These solutions ensure full participation for deaf or hard-of-hearing congregants through visual rather than auditory channels. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)]
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In the U.S., 1 in 8 people (13%) aged 12 or older has hearing loss in both ears, with prevalence sharply increasing with age—affecting two-thirds of adults over

- **65.3% (21.5 million)** of people **71 years or older** have hearing loss in the U.S. ([JAMA](#))
- **We're all at risk** of noise-induced

About **28.8 million** U.S. adults could benefit from hearing aids, but fewer than **1 in 5** of those use them.

□ **Age-Related Trends:** Hearing loss affects 5% of adults aged 45-54, 10% of adults aged 55-64, and over 55% of those 75 and older.

□ **Gender:** Men are more likely than women to experience hearing loss; one-third of men over 40 have some hearing loss.

□ Assisting hearing loss without technology relies on environmental modifications, behavioral changes, and non-electronic tools to enhance communication and sound access. Key methods include face-to-face conversations, improving room acoustics, active lip-reading, and using visual or tactile cues, which can significantly improve daily communication. [1, 2]

### **Environmental and Lifestyle Adjustments**

- **Optimize Seating:** Choose quiet spots in cafes or restaurants, ideally away from kitchens or loud speakers, and sit close to the speaker.
- **Improve Lighting:** Ensure rooms are well-lit, with the light source shining on the speaker's face to facilitate visual cues.
- **Reduce Ambient Noise:** Turn off TV/radio, close doors, and use carpets or curtains to minimize echoes and background noise in your home. [1, 2]

### **Communication Techniques**

- **Face-to-Face:** Always look directly at the person speaking to utilize facial expressions and lip-reading, as mentioned in this article from oliveunion.com.
- **Clear Communication:** Ask partners to speak clearly at a normal pace without shouting, notes [the Hearing Loss Association of America](#).
- **Request Repetition/Rephrasing:** Don't hesitate to ask for clarification, or for the speaker to rephrase if a sentence was not understood.

- **Get Attention First:** Ensure you have the listener's attention before starting a conversation, according to the Hearing Loss Association of America. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

## Non-Electronic Support Strategies

- **Lip Reading/Speech Reading:** Practice focusing on lip movements and facial expressions to supplement lost sound data.
- **Sign Language:** Learning basic sign language can be beneficial for those with significant hearing loss.
- **Use Written Communication:** Keep a small notebook or use notes on a phone for important information in noisy situations.
- **Alerting Others:** Simply informing friends and family about your hearing loss ensures they communicate more effectively. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)]

## Non-Electronic Hearing Support [[1](#)]

- **Cupping the Ear:** A traditional technique of placing a hand behind the ear to boost sound collection, which, while simple, acts as a natural ear trumpet to improve hearing, say [this YouTube video](#). [[1](#), [2](#),
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