

New Hearing Loop Installed in St. Joseph Church

*A conversation with Linda S. Remensnyder, Au.D.,
a local audiologist and active supporter of Hearing Loops*

Dr. Remensnyder, what is a hearing loop?

A hearing loop is a wire that is placed around the perimeter of a room to generate a magnetic field. The wire relays the magnetic signals to a “telecoil” (a small component in a hearing aid) from an amplifier linked to the audio source, typically a microphone or public address system. **The telecoil then enables listeners with hearing loss to link directly into a facility’s sound system by touching a button on their hearing aid.** “It’s like a voice crystallizes in your head.”



Hearing Loop
Switch hearing aid to T-coil

Why are hearing loops needed? Don't hearing aids enable hearing?

Today’s digital hearing aids enhance hearing in conversational settings. Yet for many people with hearing loss, the sound becomes unclear when auditorium or TV loudspeakers are at a distance, when the listening environment is noisy, or when room acoustics reverberate sound. A hearing loop magnetically transfers the microphone (or TV sound signal) to hearing aids and cochlear implants that have a tiny and inexpensive telecoil receiver. **This transforms the hearing aids into in-the-ear loudspeakers that deliver sound customized for one’s own hearing loss.**

Are there advantages to using hearing loops for places of worship and other public settings?

A hearing aid compatible loop system delivers sound that’s customized by one’s hearing aids for one’s own unique hearing loss. It requires no fuss with extra equipment. In public settings, one of the main advantages is that, when not hearing well, people need only activate their telecoils. There’s no need to get up, seek out, and wear conspicuous equipment (which few people with hearing loss take the initiative to do). Additionally, the sound is contained in one’s ear, without bothering others nearby. There is no need to juggle between headsets and hearing aids (during, say, a worship service). And there are no hygienic concerns about putting in or on one’s ear what has been around others’ ears.

How do I know if my hearing aid has a telecoil? How many hearing aids have telecoils?

You should consult with your audiologist. Sometimes, a hearing aid has a telecoil but the telecoil is not enabled. This means that the audiologist needs to turn it on via the hearing aid’s software. Sixty percent of older models of hearing aids and seventy percent of new hearing aids have telecoils. In addition, the greater people’s need for hearing assistance, the more likely they are to have hearing aids with telecoils—as did 84 percent of Hearing Loss Association of America members in a recent survey. New models of cochlear implants also offer telecoils.

What if I don't wear a hearing aid but have difficulty hearing at church or what if my hearing aid doesn't have a telecoil?

Loop headsets are available in the Sacristy; please request one from any usher.

(More information on reverse)

What other nearby places have hearing loops?

Approximately 28 churches of all denominations have hearing loops in our area, a nearby synagogue in Highland Park has a hearing loop, five senior centers have their gathering rooms looped, and the Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire is getting a hearing loop next month. Thirty-three additional churches have received loop estimates.

Are hearing loops a local initiative?

The hearing loop initiative is a national movement. For example, the subway system in New York City expects to have 455 staffed subway booths looped soon, the Michigan State Sports arena is looped, three airports (so far) are looped, some tour buses are looped, and even a Whole Foods checkout line and some restaurants in Sarasota, Florida are looped. The *Get in the Hearing Loop* Task Force, of which Dr. Remensnyder is the spokesperson for Illinois, estimates that more than 1,000 places of worship have been looped nationwide!

Why is a hearing loop needed at St. Joseph Church?

Hearing loss is growing in our country as more and more people over the age of 65 have diminished hearing. Individuals of any age with hearing loss have considerable problems hearing at a distance, in background noise, and whenever reverberation (annoying echoing of sound) is present. Reverberation is very common in rooms with high ceilings, lack of carpeting, and lack of sound deadening—rooms with poor acoustics cause sound to literally “bounce” off the walls. The acoustics at St. Joseph Church are also more challenging for those with hearing loss because those in attendance cannot always see the priest’s mouth, facial expressions, and gestures due to the church’s circular layout. People with hearing loss are dependent on visual cues to help them hear.

Do I have to sit in a particular place in a looped venue?

No, like many hearing loops, the loop at St. Joseph Church is designed to provide the same coverage no matter where one sits. The *Get in the Hearing Loop* task force has been vigilant in making sure that the hearing enhancement provided by hearing loops is uniform no matter what city or country is being visited. Not only are loop installation standards being formulated but also loop installation firms are being certified.

Can my home be looped?

Absolutely. Some hearing loss patients have their living rooms looped for enhanced TV sound reception. Hearing loops perform much better than expensive “surround sound” speakers and Doctors of Audiology do not like their patients to watch closed captioning unless the hearing loss is so severe there is no other option. And rather than plugging one’s ears with TV earphones, the hearing loop allows use of a mic + telecoil (M/T) setting, enabling one to hear the room conversation or one’s phone ringing or doorbell ringing while hearing the TV *right in one’s ears*.

Ask your audiologist for more information.

Dr. Remensnyder, why did you get involved in hearing loops?

“As a Doctor of Audiology, who established my practice in 1980, I have always been frustrated with helping my patients hear in environments such as places of worship and large auditoriums. I also have seen that some of my patients stopped going to worship because of the frustration they experienced trying to hear. It didn’t seem right that my patients would be deprived of spiritual sustenance in the twilight of their lives. For me, the real issue is that the public needs to be informed that hearing aids constitute only a small segment of hearing loss management and additional strategies to improve audibility need to be utilized.”

More information may be obtained at www.hearingdoc.com or www.hearingloop.org.

St. Joseph Parish is grateful to Dr. Remensnyder for sharing her expertise and information on the Hearing Loop and for her active support.