# Church for the deaf
DeafSpace concepts

DeafSpace Project was initiated in 2005 by
architect Hansel Bauman and Gallaudet
University. They developed DeafSpace
guidelines with different architecural
elements for deaf and hearing impaireds
experinces in the built environment.
The different elements are divided in to five
categories:
acoustics, space and proximity, mobility
and proximity, light and color and sensory
reach.

Acoustics

As there are different kinds and degrees of hearing loss in the deaf community, many using cochlea implants or other hearing aids, the acoustics is a vital part of creating good architecture for deaf people. They need to be able to separate relevant sound sources from background noise. It is therefore important to have a short reverberation time inside the church. This limits the material choices for the interior of the church, as smooth and hard materials increase reverberation times. The soundproofing is also important to avoid background noise both from outside the church and between the different rooms inside the church.
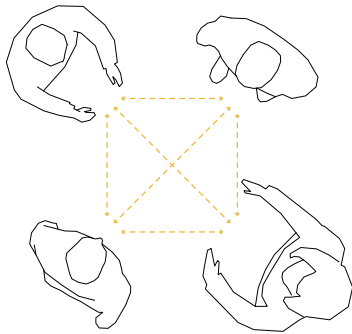
Space and proximity

Sign language requires a distance between the people speaking that is great enough that they can see the entirety of each other's signing space and facial expressions. Which means that a conversation in sign language often requires more space than a spoken conversation. The more people participating in a conversation the more space is required, so that everyone can see everyone. At the same time there is a maximum distance from which one can read sign language, which is about 10 meters. This limits the length of the nave. To make sure the congregation or audience can see the person signing, the choir should also be raised. If the distance between the person signing and parts of the congregation is greater than 10 meters there is a need for visual aid for those sitting in the back.
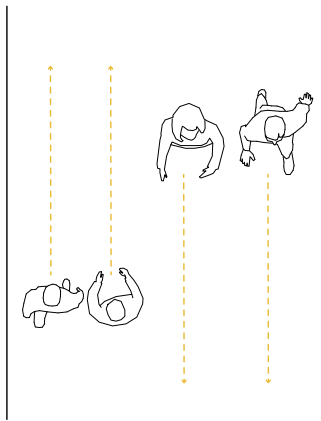
Mobility and proximity

Just as when standing still, a conversation in sign language while walking requires more space. Hallways should be wider, so that two and two people can pass each other while signing. Building should be designed so that people can move around easily.
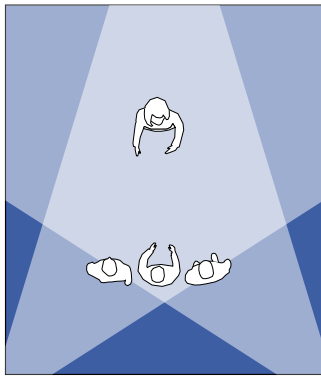
Light and color

Glare, shadows, backlighting and other poor lighting conditions makes visual communication difficult, and can cause loss of concentration and fatigue. And although dramatic lighting and stained glass windows are popular in churches, this is not ideal in a church for deaf. There needs to be a way to control the daylight and good electric lighting. Colors can be used to create contrast. Colors can also, in addition to the texture of the walls, help to avoid glare.
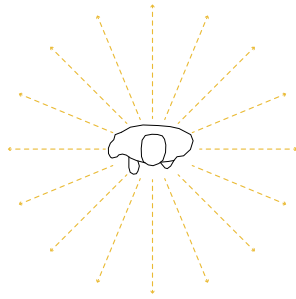
Sensory reach

As they are not able to orientate themselves through hearing, deaf people read their surroundings through shadows, vibrations and the movement of others around them. Rooms should be designed so as to facilitate spatial awareness and make it easy to orient themselves.

Dangermond Keane Architecture (2018) DeafSpace. Hentet fra http://www.gallaudet.edu/
campus-design-and-planning/deafspace
Dangermond Keane Architecture (2018) DeafSpace. Hentet fra http://dangermondkeane.
com/deafspace-design-guide