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Success Story

Helping churches spread the Word

"Churches should look at it as a battle. The secular world is using every tool of technology to get its message across, so why can't churches use the same technology?"

That's the suggestion of Scott Tomashek, a Camera Corner/ Connecting Point Audio Visual Systems Consultant, whose specialty is helping churches, and other clients, find the technological mix to get their messages across.

Tomashek, a former church technology director, found himself preaching to the choir when consulting with Pathways Church in Appleton, Wis. en route to a deal worth nearly $200,000. Pathways was moving into a new facility in need of some serious upgrades. The church purchased a Yamaha M7CL Digital Mixing Console, a dbx DriveRack and extensive video-equipment upgrades.

Pathways Church in Appleton uses three screens and two video mixers for things like putting up the lyrics for members while also providing a mood-setting background behind the worship team.

"We replaced them all"

Pathways Communications Pastor Aaron Randerson started by replacing eight analog (audio) processors. "For a very reasonable price, we replaced them all with a DriveRack," he said.

The DriveRack is a digital signal-processing unit which provides a level of control impossible with the units it replaces. Randerson and his staff – he needs eight to stage a full Sunday service – can control 31 band equalizers, multi-band parametric equalizers and have the luxury of being able to recall settings.

The unit is IP addressable. A wireless router allows for remote control of the DriveRack, which is mounted way up in the church catwalk. "Quite a hike away," Randerson grins. "I can log into the laptop, walk around and mess with anything I want from anyplace I want."

The Yamaha Digital Mixing Console which feeds the DriveRack replaced a 48-channel analog console. "Today, we have more channels and about 10 times the processing power, yet it takes up only one-third the space," Randerson said. "Yes, it was expensive up front, but the amount of analog equipment it would take to replicate what it can do would be more expensive and ridiculously cumbersome. You'd need a room full of analog gear to do what this one three-and-a-half-foot console does."

The most visible part of the installation is the three-screen setup in the 1,500-seat worship space. Video is controlled by two Edirol V-440HD video mixers capable of integrating standard analog video, high-definition and computer-based sources. The mixers feed large-format, three-chip DLP Panasonic projectors, including one rear-projection unit.

Flexible video palette

"They wanted a flexible video palette," Tomashek explains. "So they decided on three screens. Two smaller ones to be for the congregation, considered 'imag' (image magnification). They can take their video cameras and put up live shots of the pastors and others. The third screen, behind the worship team and pastor, their real desire there was for it to be a digital background."

Pathways also chose a flexible digital signage solution at points outside the auditorium. These LCD flat panels can provide schedules of upcoming events while still displaying the worship service's live feed.

Down in Pathways' Youth Room, the move is toward improving acoustics, something of a passion for Tomashek. "People will spend $70,000-$100,000 on sound, which is all controllable," he says. "But the most critical interaction is what happens between the speakers and the listener. If that isn't right, it doesn't matter how much you spend on the electronics; they will sound terrible."