

Guidance Note

Audio Visual Equipment in Church Buildings



The majority of Anglican churches now use audio visual equipment as part of regular services. The technical specification for any fixed installation is crucial and will depend on your building and usage.

Seek professional advice from an independent adviser, and make early contact with your DAC Secretary to discuss any new scheme. The technical details will be unique to each church, but there are some general principles to consider when looking at new installations which impact on the fabric and appearance of the church.

Speakers

With any sound system the question of what the speakers will look like and where to position them is key.

As always, engage with the DAC at an early stage to seek advice and opinion on what you have in mind.

- Position speakers within the roof wherever possible but avoid fixings into historic timbers.
- Avoid bulky domestic looking speakers.
- Take advantage of slim line products if available and suitable.

Can you spot the speakers in these two pictures?



- Look carefully at positioning. Common solutions are in the roof (see above), on piers or columns,

within window reveals and above capitals.

- Aim for invisibility, use matching colours to the background the speaker will be on.

Sound desks

These are often the only fixed piece of 'furniture' in a church after a major reordering and can become more dominant than is desirable or necessary.

- Where is the right location? Will the chosen location hinder flexibility for other activities such as exhibitions, Alpha suppers or community events?



Is there a gallery or tower room which could be considered?

- How large does the console desk actually need to be? Bigger should not equate to better. Opt for a minimalist approach to design: the technological impetus is towards miniaturisation.

- The same principles apply to sound desks as to kitchens in churches – they shouldn't look out of place when not in use and should not be obtrusive when they are. A well-designed lid or cover can greatly reduce the impact.

- Although clear sight lines are needed, think about whether there are ways of achieving these without raising up the entire console to undue prominence.

- Is historic fabric affected or compromised? Churches often end up utilising existing bits of furniture such as pews, box pews or other woodwork.

Easier to spot in this photo, but see how the colour of the speakers has been matched to the stonework to be as discreet as possible.



Think carefully about whether what you're using to store / house equipment has any significance and whether it is compromised by the new use.

For example, it would be inappropriate to fill the remaining box pew in the church with electrical equipment.

Projectors and screens and monitors

Screen projection of liturgical texts, words of hymns and songs, material related to the sermon and still images or videos for reflection is now common, supplementing or supplanting printed material, and in line with contemporary culture.

Consider the impact of this on worshippers' visual and mental focal points.

The layout of most historic churches doesn't work well with large screens and there are inevitable problems with sightlines and positioning.

Ingenious solutions are often needed to get a professional looking arrangement.

- Do experiment first if you can (providing you don't need to make any fixings into fabric). Find out where a screen works best and make sure it works equally well when the sun is low / high in the sky.

- Don't allow temporary arrangements to become permanent. Speak to the DAC about your faculty application at an early stage.

- Screens should be able to be retracted and moved out of sight when not in use.

- A simple solution that works well in some situations is a screen on a bracket hinged from the chancel wall.

- A more complex option is to position a screen behind the chancel arch and lower and raise it electrically. However, consider how you will access



the screen for maintenance; speak with your Inspecting Architect and DAC for advice about weight and fixing; and also how it will appear when looking from east to west.

- If you have a sufficient area of blank wall (usually on either side of the chancel arch), consider projecting directly onto the wall - a very low impact solution.
- Sometimes additional screens are necessary to enable everyone to see a screen. Think about whether you need these all the time, or just for extraordinary services such as large funerals and special services. If it's the latter then more temporary arrangements could be the best answer.
- Look at both rear and front projection systems to see which is most appropriate for your circumstances and where the best place to position the projector is.



An example of a sound desk which shuts away with a hinged lid.

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- Monitors or plasma screens need not be fixed to the fabric. Sturdy freestanding moveable stands can be used, providing sightlines are conducive and wiring is not overly restrictive.



(Above) Two screens suspended from the roof timbers rather than fixed to the stonework.

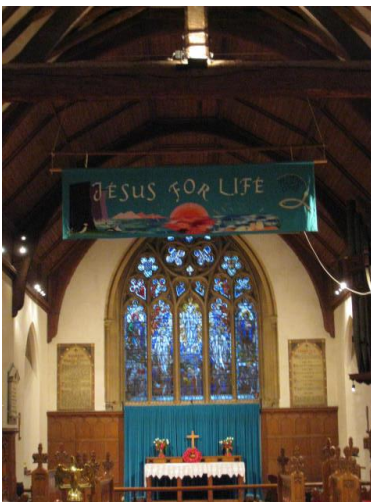
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(Below) Two different ways of disguising projection screens.



One with a hinged mechanism inside a hymn number holder and the other hanging behind a banner.



(Right, sequence of three from top to bottom)

Example of a screen hidden behind a chancel arch – from closed to fully open.

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