

jeff's corner

Ask any carpenter and he will tell you that one of the worst mistakes you can make is to buy cheap tools. A drill from Budget-Mart is not likely to give you the years of service that you would get from a top-of-the-line manufacturer and you will probably end up replacing it, which in the long run makes it more expensive than if you bought a decent one in the first place. And that doesn't even begin to figure in the service or warranty factor...or lack thereof.

The fact is that the purchasing power of the super-stores these days means they can literally dictate a price to their manufacturers and suppliers...who then have to design and produce an inferior product to meet the price point. This is true even of brand names you used to be able to trust for quality and reliability.

And that is fine. If you are a homeowner or somebody who doesn't have to rely on that tool's performance for their livelihood. But if you are somebody who needs that drill to perform as advertised on a daily basis or you will lose money, or even worse, customers, you wouldn't want to rely on a Blue-Light Special.

OK, I'll be up front; I'm not talking about a cordless drill here. We're discussing your A/V System. The one you use at least each and every weekend and probably more frequently than that. And I'm worried. I am genuinely concerned that since the big-box stores and mail-order houses have started catering to the "Home Theatre" crowd that you might be tempted to purchase some discount sound or video components from them. Please don't make that mistake. For reliable professional quality sound and video, buy professional grade equipment from suppliers who will stand behind their products.

At least, that's what a carpenter told me...and if you can't trust a carpenter...who can you trust?

Jeff Miller-operations



VOICE & VISION

Spring 2007

A Quarterly Newsletter Dedicated to Audio & Video Issues for Houses of Worship in the Mid-Atlantic



AVG at Work: T.J. checks out a ceiling speaker. We pride ourselves on being reliable and responsive to our church's needs.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER

Obviously, the primary mission of your Church or Synagogue is to get your message across to your congregation and reach out to those who would hear you. Fortunately, today's technology is making that easier to do—if you are not easily daunted by the sometimes confusing arrays and choices of equipment available. The goal of this publication is to demystify, educate and make practical suggestions as to how you can better share your Voice and Vision. We welcome your suggestions and feedback and hope that you find this a useful tool. If, for whatever reason, you no longer wish to receive this, or would prefer to have it sent to you via e-mail, please send a message to jimf@audiovideogroup and we will be happy to accommodate you.

Best Regards.

E.J.



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the soundboard

FIVE PROBLEMS WITH AUDIO SYSTEMS IN CHURCHES

You have heard it often enough by now that you know it to be true and not just a sales ploy to get you to buy into a more expensive system than you really need. Here are some of the problems—and solutions—of your sound system.

Versatility: Most systems are designed for either speech *or* musical performance...not both. You want accuracy and clarity for the talking part of your program but also wider frequency and more power for the musical portions of your service. The obvious solution is to have separate locations or "stations" for the different presenters, or, at the very least, have somebody skilled at the controls.

Hum and Buzz are terrible distractions and can really detract from your message and spoil the atmosphere of a service. Hum and buzz can usually be traced to the improper grounding of wires during installation, or mismatched audio components. Testing to locate the problem can be time consuming so the trick here is to make sure an installation is done properly in the first place. Matched components and tight connections are the key.

Feedback can very quickly and effectively take an attentive audience and get them mumbling, casting their eyes about and holding their ears waiting for the next surprise attack. In a church, this is compounded by the duality of the system (*see "Versatility" above*) and the increased use of mobile microphones which can suddenly find themselves in a feedback zone squealing in complaint. Managing feedback can be addressed by the proper placement of loudspeakers, a stable system and properly trained operators who can manage the open microphones and establish the optimum working distances.

continued inside...



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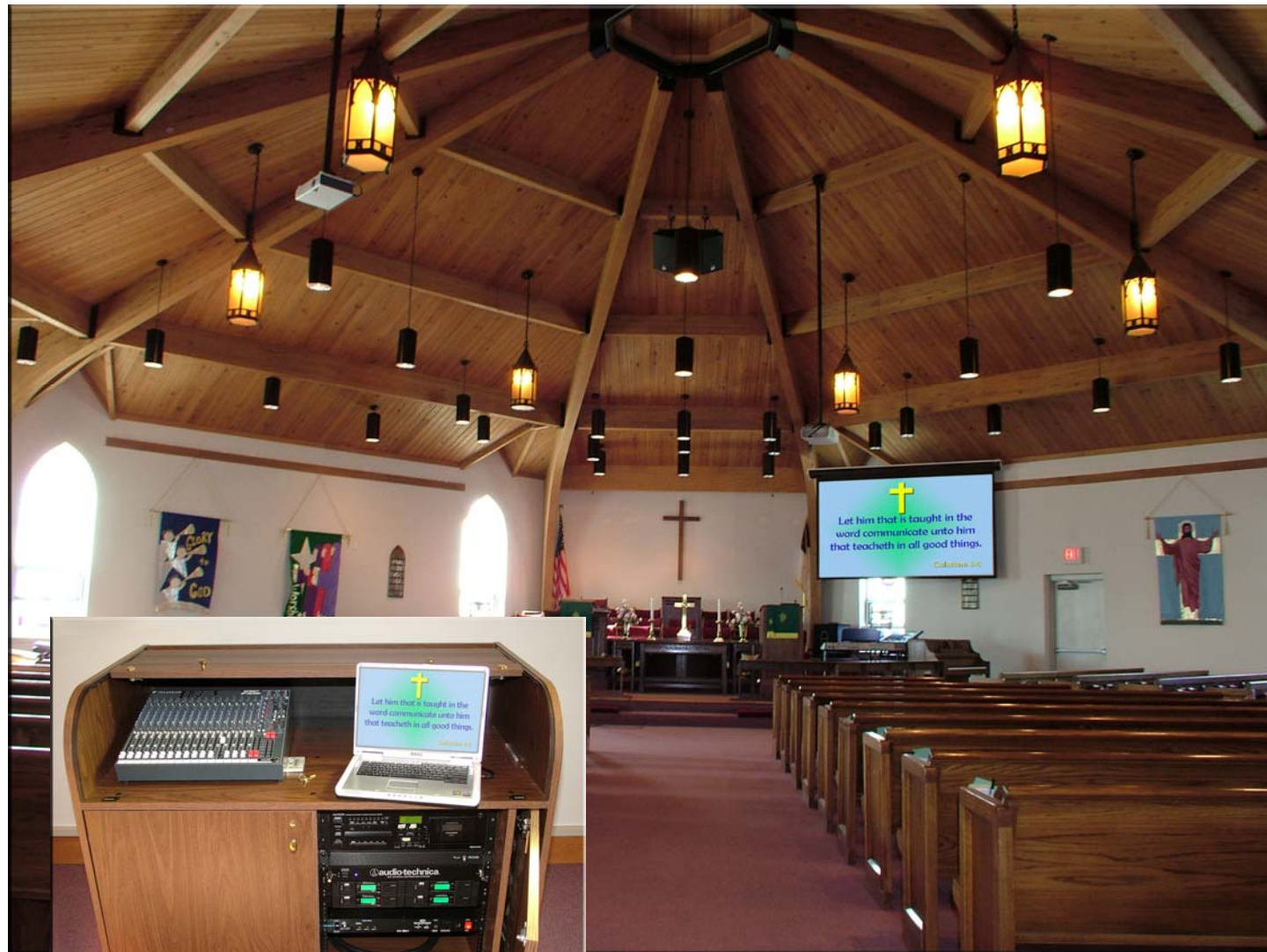
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AVG Puts the Finishing Touches on Deer Park's Sound and Video Systems

"Top-flight professionalism and sensitive understanding of the unique culture of the church are a rarity. The Audio-Video Group combines both. We could not be more pleased with our 'end product.' The Audio-Video Group receives my highest recommendation."

—Rev. Paul Mundy

Audio-Video Group was privileged to be the A/V contractor for this very special project which involved doing the sound reinforcement, video displays and lighting arrangement for this growing congregation. As is true of almost every sanctuary, we faced the challenges of reconciling the acoustics of the room with aesthetics and the varied functions of the sound system. We were able to coordinate with the Church's schedule as well as other contractors to keep everything fully functional and meet a very tight deadline and have the system up and running for the Christmas services.

The hanging speaker array meets the goals of excellent acoustics, attractiveness and safety.

off the rack

Protecting Your System

In my travels as a service and install technician I encounter and deal with a variety of problems on a daily basis and am constantly amazed at how many of them are completely preventable. And, when you consider how much you rely on your gear and how much money you have tied up in your system it only makes good sense to make sure that it is properly protected.

Surge Protection: A lightning strike can produce up to 100 Million Volts of electricity and it doesn't take a direct hit to cause power fluctuations, surges or outages. Any of those can cause serious damage to your very sensitive electronic components resulting in a serious repair bill—if it can be repaired at all. There is a wide variety of surge protection devices on the market today, but that reminds me of what the motorcycle helmet salesman said, "If you have a fifty dollar head, buy a fifty dollar helmet." Seriously, this is probably not the time for a power strip/surge protector from a store in the mall.

Security: We get a lot of service calls that sound like this, "Our system isn't working, we don't understand, it was working fine yesterday!" We head out and typically find that there is nothing physically wrong with anything, but that someone who probably shouldn't have been making "adjustments." The obvious solution to this is to limit access, which is easier said than done, but at least the main gear can be protected by the use of locking doors on the equip-

ment racks. The keys should be distributed only to those authorized and properly trained to make those adjustments. Training as many people as possible is also practical.

Insurance: Unfortunately, sometimes sound and video equipment can "grow legs" or gets damaged when the engineer spills his diet coke on the mixer. AVG always provides our customers

with the serial numbers for the equipment we sell, so make sure your insurance agent is aware of the extent of your system so repair or replacement costs won't come out of your own pocket.

Call us if you need help or advice on how to protect your investment. We can provide expert training, professional grade surge protection and quality security devices...we'll leave the insurance part alone though.



Steve S.

the soundboard (continued)

Acoustical Design: Let's face it. The same elements that make most Houses of Worship so awe inspiring to look at also tend to make them a soundman's nightmare. High, vaulted ceilings, lots of hard surfaces and glass and a typically quieter audience makes for a pretty unforgiving environment. You don't want to hear hissing speakers—and you don't want to hear echoes—and you want to be able to raise or lower your voice without fear—and you want the people in the back to hear as well as the folks in the front rows—and you want it to be easy to use—and you want it to be as unobtrusive as possible. The statistic is that most churches buy four systems before they finally get one that meets their needs. That is a lot of expensive trial and error. The most cost effective solution is to hire a sound engineer to come in and work their magic. They will be able to understand the requirements and take measurements which will allow them to design the optimal system in the first place, and one that is upgradeable as your requirements and budgets allow.

Lack of Qualified Sound Technicians: Most churches probably have one or two volunteers who are sufficiently trained to run the boards for the Sunday service and perhaps during choir practice on Wednesday nights. But what about weddings, funerals, youth groups and other scheduled and unscheduled events? Untrained hands on the equipment can cause big trouble and become expensive if a service call is necessary to set the system back to normal. Of course you can train more people, which may cause more problems than it solves. It is also a very smart idea to mark your components with the proper settings, but that is sometimes impractical on a mixer with 240 buttons and knobs. Another way to simplify the problem is by using a Programmable Audio Multiprocessor. Imagine having one knob, mounted anywhere you want, which would have several pre-set sound mixes for whatever application you want. On Wednesday night the choir director comes in, fires up the system and turns the knob to "Choir Practice." On Thursday the Youth Minister dials in "Youth Group." On Saturday you use the "Wedding" setting and on Sunday you flip it to "Manual" because your techs are on the job and ready to run the mix for everyone.

Simplicity is a good thing!

Call us at 1-800-668-4988 or visit us on the web at www.audiovideogroup.com