DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD

DIOCESAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

VISUAL AIDS FOR WORSHIP IN CHURCHES

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST PARISHES

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VISUAL AIDS FOR WORSHIP IN CHURCHES

INTRODUCTION

1.1 More churches are now making use of the latest technologies in aiding worship. Such uses not only include sound systems and induction loops but also visual aids. Modern visual presentations have become commonplace in schools, in commerce, in everyday life and that opportunity is now available to help with worship. It is now possible to project pictures, hymns, prayers, films, in fact whole service formats that are visible for a congregation to read. [In at least one church in the Diocese, service books and hymn books have become unnecessary and it has become a "paperless" church. Such a procedure clearly involves weekly preparation and a certain amount of basic technical skill. Most information is programmed in advance into a laptop computer which is then connected to the projection system.]

METHODS OF DISPLAY

2.1 There are various methods than can be used in display:

a. Front projection onto a retractable screen

b. Rear projection onto a retractable screen

c. Display by a large fixed flat LCD screen or screens

The method to be chosen is very dependent on the individual church building and the suitable siting of the equipment both for visibility as well as avoiding obtrusion when not in use.

2.2 a. **Front projections**

This can be from a simple overhead projector, a 'slide' projector, or a computerised projector connected to a laptop. An overhead projector needs to be close to the screen and requires manual operation of acetate sheets. Its position in relation to the audience requires care. Using any front projection screen in bright daylight conditions needs to be considered when positioning it to avoid 'white out' conditions reducing clarity.

2.3 b. **Rear projections**

Rear projection has the advantage of producing a screen of more intensity because the image is lit *through* the screen and not *reflected* as with front projection. The projector can also be sited in a less conspicuous position.

2.4 c. **Flat LCD screens**

Large flat LCD screens have the advantage of not needing a projector nor a retractable screen and can be directly activated from a laptop computer using DVD and other recording media. They need to be fixed in position and have fixed wiring connections to a control desk. Their siting can be very sensitive in a church setting and they must be relatively unobtrusive when not in use. This is an important advantage. An additional advantage is that more than one monitor/screen can be used e.g. relaying in other areas of the church or to a church hall.

THE EQUIPMENT

Retractable screens

3.1 Where manual operation is impracticable, many screens are available that can be rolled up and down by remote control. When not in use it is essential they are as unobtrusive as possible. In many cases, the screen can be suspended from a hinged arm that allows it to be swung back at right angles when not in use into an unobtrusive position. An alternative is high suspension from the top of a chancel arch, the retracted screen being relatively unobtrusive if its folded colour is carefully chosen to merge with the background. Rear projection screen material is specialised and does not easily lend itself to being rolled but there are such manufactured screens available.

LCD monitor screens

3.2 Where LCD screens are a practical solution for visual display, their position and size are critical. In a small church they can be an effective means of display. However, for viewers sitting at the rear of a large church or in a side aisle, to be able to see such a screen adequately it needs to be very large indeed. Smaller locally positioned monitors would overcome this problem. Again their siting would be a sensitive issue. Loss of sight of the Altar or Holy Table should be avoided.

Projectors

3.3 As referred to previously, overhead projectors need to be relatively close to the screen and in front of the audience. They are best sited in a position to allow viewing on either side or, alternatively, the screen should be set high enough for viewers to see above the projector. For front projection onto larger screens, the position of the larger type of projector also needs to avoid intrusion into the sightline of the audience. Bracketing from nave walls or from column capitals can be unsightly and unacceptable. An alternative projector position can be at high level at the west end using a long throw lens. Another position can be from suitable roof members. Most modern projectors have adjustment for parallax, i.e. the projector does not need to be central to the screen. For rear projection, the projector can be sited at high level, e.g. in the chancel where it can be more visually acceptable.

Operation

3.4 For overhead projectors manual operation is essential. For slide projectors, most can be operated by remote hand control. For the more sophisticated computerised projector, these can be controlled from a lap top which in turn can be operated by remote control either handheld or directly from a mixing desk and coupled to a sound system. The mixing desk can be permanently fixed or portable.

* It will be harder to obtain a Faculty from the Chancellor if it is intended to fit brackets or other fittings to columns and pillars.

EXAMPLES OF THREE TYPES OF INSTALLATION

Front projection screen folded and retracted behind chancel arch.

Rear projector and retracted screen.

Large rear projection screen suspended in chancel arch. Note projector just visible above altar hanging. Screen is retracted above arch by remote control.

POLICY

1. Specialist advice should be sought before undertaking installation of a visual system.

2. Screens and projectors should be unobtrusive when not in use.

3. All exposed wiring should match the colour of the surface to which it is fixed. Plastic trunking is to be avoided. All wiring is to conform with IEE regulations.

4. The control equipment should be housed in a lockable desk or cabinet which matches the church furniture.

5. DIY installations are not recommended.

6. The DAC is willing to give advice on visual installations.

This is one of a series of guidelines published by the Diocesan Advisory Committee.
Copies can be downloaded from the Diocesan website: - (www.chelmsford.anglican.org)
or can be obtained from the
DAC Secretary at the address below.

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