



# New Media Worship

Learning How to Incorporate Media Into a  
Church Setting

Mike Bausch

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# Common Clergy Concerns About Using Digital Media In Worship

When clergy get together and start talking about the trouble they are having getting a congregation to change, they too often make the assumption that change is blocked by laity. My experience has been that too much change is blocked by the clergy themselves! After leading a number of workshops and seminars around the country, I have found that while clergy are interested in adding media to worship and changing worship practice to make it more relevant, exciting, and attractive, there is little interest in following through to make it happen.

There are many reasons for this: clergy are too busy and already overcommitted with what they must do that adding another new program or innovation will stretch them too thin; some are too set in their ways and are unable to muster the energy to retrain to lead worship and preach differently; some are afraid they will have to change the way they do things; some know they don't work well in teams but are better equipped to develop worship alone; some are afraid they will lose theological control.

Here are some questions, statements, and assumptions that clergy commonly have about using media materials in worship, along with some suggested responses for helping relieve the concerns:

**QUESTION:** How much time will it take to get a media service started?

**RESPONSE:** you can begin next week, or you can take your time and carefully work it through the life of your congregation. Here is what happened at my church, in a nutshell:

☛ For five years I gradually introduced visuals into our worship experience by projecting 2-3 slides during a sermon to show the biblical geography to which I was referring; by adding a photograph to a bulletin insert and calling attention to it in the sermon;

by using "The Art of Christmas" film strip during a sermon to illustrate different aspects of the Christmas story. Doing this required neither special permission from committees, nor money. It's always helpful, however, to alert your worship committee to what you are doing and why, and to hear their responses once you've tried something.

☛ I did receive permission to provide a six-week Saturday afternoon service that used 1) a video clip 2) a work of art and 3) a CD song to illustrate my message. This took no money, and since it was an experiment, there was nothing "permanent" about it to threaten those who don't like change.

☛ It took another another two and one-half years before we began a stand-alone multi-media worship in our church.

☛ That said, another option is to begin now and not delay. Start using visuals in worship to grow your own comfort, and your congregation's comfort.

Moral of the story: take all the time that you need  
Worship Media Work Group Activity:

Reflect on the above timeline with your own church in mind. Develop a sequence of steps toward implementation and projected timeline based upon your congregation's (and minister's) readiness and adaptability to change. Identify the resources that you will need and the people who may be able to provide assistance with the various steps in the chart below.

**QUESTION:** Since, our church committee structure moves slowly, do you need a committee to approve your using an occasional visual in a sermon?

**RESPONSE:** It's always a good idea to consult with your worship group and to tell them you want to make your sermons more interesting by adding some visuals. You could ask if there is any objection to showing a few pictures of the Sea of Galilee the next time you preach about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. After you do that, ask for their response. Did it help the sermon or hinder? Ask if there is any objection to showing one piece of religious art during a coming sermon. For example, use Rembrandt's "Prodigal Son," when you preach about the parable. Or tell them that when you preach your next Communion sermon, you'd like

to show a picture of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," and maybe compare it with the Last Supper painted by Caravaggio, or even Salvador Dali. You're not asking for an "act of congress" here, just bringing them along slowly to experience the power that visuals add to our worship and learning.

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# Worship Media Work Group Activity:

Identify the committees that need to be involved in discussions about making changes to your worship service offerings. Make note of whether this involvement needs to be informative only, or whether permission needs to be obtained through this body. Track the process in the chart below.

Committee	Permission Needed	Informational Only	Meeting Date & Progress Made	Meeting Date & Progress Made	Meeting Date & Progress Made	Meeting Date & Progress Made	Meeting Date & Progress Made
Governing Board							
Worship Committee							
Christian Education							
Other							
Other							

STATEMENT: Technology is a bad word for some people in our church..

RESPONSE: Don't use the word! The issue isn't technology, anyway! The issue is communicating the Gospel. Here's a story for you. When I told my members at a local nursing home that I would bring my computer and projector to show them pictures of what was going on at church, one woman said, "I won't come." I asked her why. She said, "because of computers." She did not want to be in the same room with a computer. Shortly after the conversation with her, I brought the computer and projector to the group and showed pictures of my trip to sites Paul had visited in Greece and Turkey. The woman loved the program. I never mentioned there was a computer in the room. To her, computers represented something bad. What she saw was an old-fashioned slide show. The screen was the same screen the church had used for decades to show film strips and slide shows. What she didn't notice was that the slides weren't in a carousel projector but were on a computer hard drive. The projector connected to the computer used a lens and a bright light, just like the old slide projectors. She never opposed projectors and slide shows. She just doesn't like computers and couldn't articulate what she opposed. It is important to note that the church is not in the business of promoting "technology." What we are doing is communicating the gospel and using what used to be called "visual aids" and "audio visual resources" as we always have done. It is your responsibility as the leader of the church to express the vision as clearly as you are able. You must identify your vision and your purpose. It must be rooted in the integrity of prayer, scripture, and theological reflection. Media in worship is not about technology but about the Great Commission. It's about evangelism, revelation, incarnation, creation, and discipleship. It is not ancillary ministry but it is firmly connected to the core of faith.

STATEMENT: It takes money, and we don't have any!

RESPONSE: No it doesn't. You have available technology in your church closets and in your members' homes. Use what you already have to introduce visuals to worship. Ask your members how you can improve upon it. Borrow equipment or ask them to use their equipment at church. Rent equipment for a demonstration. Plant the seeds for the equipment you will need...identify it and its cost. Put the plea out there. Donors love to provide this stuff. At the present rate of change, they also have used equipment that's perfectly acceptable for our use at church. You could have 5 computers in a jiffy by just asking for donations of equipment in people's basements. Get software at institutional costs. Ask members to install memory chips into your computers. Get your people involved, not your committees, especially if your committees are designed more for talking and less for accomplishing.

# Worship Media Work Group Activity:

Review the list of available resources your team identified in the New (Media) Worship section. Create a wish list of the equipment you would like to purchase within the next 6 months, 1 year, and 5 years. Estimate the projected cost as well as the purpose for each piece of equipment.

Equipment

(

Equipment (What)	Purpose (Why)	Projected Cost (How Much)	Possible Source (Purchase, Rental, or Donation)
Within the next 6 Months			
Within the next year			
Within the next 5 years			

QUESTION: We're a small church and we don't have people around who can do this.

RESPONSE: Two places where you'll find people to help out are in the public school systems and your public library systems. Both places have people familiar with computers and other digital technologies. Several churches I know have father-son teams working with the father coming out of the school system's A-V department and the son knowing all about sound systems, computers and software, and where to find good music. There are also people who are connected to our congregations but who are inactive, because the church just doesn't speak their language. Do you know how many families in your church have digital cameras, digital video cameras, use the Internet, or who watch movies and/or know the latest music? Do you have any art teachers in the congregation, or artists? Many of our visual learners (see the section on auditory and visual learners) just haven't been asked to share their gifts with the congregation. If you still can't find people in your church, there will be someone in the community with whom you could form a relationship to help you get started! Pray about it and see who God sends!

# Worship Media Work Group Activity:

Identify individuals in your church who may be able to offer assistance with each of the following needs. Make your list as extensive as possible, even if you don't know whether they will be willing to assist with the project. Ask other congregation members to name individuals who may have an interest or expertise in each area. For each person you identify, ask them to offer the name of 1-2 other people who may be able to offer assistance in one category or another.

Computer hardware purchases and maintenance

_____	_____
_____	_____

Computer software for worship development

_____	_____
_____	_____

Digital camera

_____	_____
_____	_____

Video camera

_____	_____
_____	_____

Sound System

_____	_____
_____	_____

Carpentry, wiring, and equipment installation

_____	_____
_____	_____



QUESTION: How much time did it take you to do that? (Hidden statement: if you say anything more than one hour, I don't have the time for this!)

RESPONSE: Adding media to worship is a team sport. No one individual can do this alone. Jesus defined a team: "wherever two or three gather in my name..." A team can be as few as two and as many as...twelve (the other number Jesus gave us!). Or more! By sharing the responsibilities and tasks, visual arts can be introduced to worship. There are times when there isn't time, or the team just can't come together or help out, and then you do what you always do: use your oral skills to communicate the message. Just don't give up on a vision of regular and frequent use of visuals during worship and preaching. Another part of this is that clergy need to evaluate their use of time. Clergy know how their time is wasted, or used inefficiently on time-wasters such as extra meetings and non-worship responsibilities. Use the 80-20 rule: put 80% of your time on the thing that is only 20% or less of your week---worship. Worship is when you see the most people in the church, when you have the most impact on the most people, when the community gathers to celebrate, give thanks, and recommit to God, and it is the time when you receive your greatest revenue. If you are putting a majority of your time to worship planning, preparation, development, and presentation, how will all the other things you do get done? Who said the clergy had to do everything? Find ways to involve the congregation in those tasks: train small groups of people and delegate to them some of your responsibilities. Let the church do the work of Jesus Christ, and let the clergy focus on one of the primary responsibilities the congregation has called them to do: prepare and lead worship. Sure, this is easier written and said, than it is done. All things are possible, right?

# Worship Media Work Group Activity:

Reflect on the following questions and record the answers offered by the team in the space below.

How do we answer the question of “how much time is involved?” for the things we need to do?

If we notice the time commitment might be more than a person would care to handle, how might we be able to reduce the time commitment involved?

Who else might be able to assist with this task?

STATEMENT: Only a city church can do this. (Hidden assumptions: because “city people” are smarter? Have more money? Understand technology? Are more educated? Are more inclined to support the arts? Are less conservative?)

RESPONSE: Examine your assumptions! Anyone can do this, not just “city churches.” My experience beginning, developing, and sustaining a multimedia worship ministry was in a church in a small conservative town in rural Wisconsin (population 6,000) where the average educational level was high school or less and where most people had a long experience with traditional church and worship. This is why I say, “if we could do it, you can do it.” We did not budget for multimedia ministries for six years and yet the funds came in whenever we needed anything, because the people caught the vision of what could be done. Whether a church is in the city or the country, what church people don’t want is someone coming in and applying some model for change on them that disrespects their history, tradition, mission, and purpose. As I transitioned a mid-sized rural congregation to accept and welcome the use of visuals in worship, I didn’t use a model for it as much as I found models that worked. My single “model” for navigating change in a congregation grew out of my personal experience in ministry: that congregations can and do resist change, that people and churches like to be alerted to a coming change and be given the reasons for the change while being consulted along the way. This comforts and assures those who need assurance that the change is an organic part of their life and seeks to serve the church’s purpose with a minimum of disruption. Explanation and repeating the explanation goes a long way. So does having a rationale and expressing it frequently, connected as it should be with scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the history and tradition of the congregation. Church leaders and church members respond best when they are consulted, asked their response, given direct experience with some of the changes being discussed, and asked of their opinion. Responsive leaders will make any necessary adjustments along the way. That’s the long answer. The short answer is: work with laity to make change happen, broaden the ownership of the change, and it becomes a part of the fabric of a congregation’s life, no matter if it’s a city church or a country church, a large church or a small one!

STATEMENT: If we let the lay people help with this, the clergy will lose theological control.

RESPONSE: This question shows that some clergy think they have been educated and trained to the extent that they do know more than the laity in their churches, and that their more sophisticated theological experience is the “right” interpretation. They fear that if laity can select imagery to put on the screen, or decide what popular music could be used in worship, that it would be theologically inappropriate or misleading. Other clergy subscribe to Luther’s view in the “priesthood of all believers.” The way out of this is continually dialogue and an ongoing effort to become a “community of interpretation” where everyone has access to scripture, tradition, theological doctrine, ecclesiastical agenda, and congregational experience and shares together in the work of making meaning. The statement shows an orthodoxy or “right-thinking” that must be distinguished from “wrong-thinking.” The answer says we work together, clergy and laity, and provide the “check and balance” of a theological system that invites all believers, clergy and lay, into full communion and community.

# Worship Media Work Group Activity:

What statements in your church's covenant, creed, doctrine, purpose, and/or mission statement support the practice of including lay leadership in providing your worship services? Document below the evidence contained in your church's background documents.

*"If a few people could only stop asking whether this is 'a good thing or a bad thing' and spend some time in studying what is really happening, there might be some possibility of achieving relevance." Marshall McLuhan*

*"As we become a more visual culture, children and later generations of adults will respond more fully to what they see than to what they hear. Or better, they will have difficulty hearing what they do not also see. Protestant churches which ignore this fact will probably become increasingly marginal." John Westerhoff*

*"A church living aesthetically will find itself breaking new ground. There will be a cessation of old, desiccated ways and, perchance, an ecstatic movement toward freedom." John Westerhoff*

*It is your responsibility as the leader of the church to express the vision as clearly as you are able.*

*...people and churches like to be alerted to a coming change and be given the reasons for the change while being consulted along the way.*

# PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN PREACHING WITH THE SCREEN

A common misperception among some clergy in mainline denominations is that using multimedia in worship is something that the fundamentalists or evangelicals do, but those in progressive or liberal congregations would not. There are many reasons for this thinking, among them the Protestant resistance to popular culture, the view that all things media are aligned with consumerist value systems, that critical theological thinking is best done in oral discourse, that church members are over-saturated with media at home, school, and business places and need a refuge from it in church, and so on.

In this section I make the case that progressive, liberal preaching and worship can use the screen to more effectively communicate and promote their theological, political, economic, and social issues. Poverty, war, racism, gender inequalities, consumerism, and global warming are easily illustrated with photograph, art, film clip, and animated graphics as part of a sermon illustration, prayer litany, or invitation to the offertory. Preachers and liturgists can visually show local, regional, national, and global church efforts to reduce the effects of poverty, to protest war, to dismantle racism, to foster cross cultural-communication and competencies, to educate about HIV/AIDS, to eliminate the death penalty, to mobilize efforts to face up to global warming and encourage necessary life-style changes, to affirm a diversity of loving relationships and family systems.



St. Paul with Video Screen,  
St. Peter's Square, The Vatican

# Worship Media Work Group Activity:

Reflect on the following questions and record the answers offered by the team in the space below.

What are the social and political issues that are important to you in your preaching and ministry?

What are the issues your congregation has developed?

What new awareness is necessary for sustainable living into the 21st century?

How can you show these issues on a screen during worship?

How can you illustrate your preaching message with still and moving pictures?

# Examples of Preaching Progressive Social Issues With The Screen:

1) As the Bush Administration developed its case to invade Iraq, we offered sermons about nonviolence as a Christian approach to international conflict. We developed pictures to accompany the U-2 song "Peace on Earth" and showed Iraqi families in their homes and communities, attempting to put a human face on the Iraqi people. As part of the song we posted on the screen quotations from Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nietzsche, and Jesus about non-violence. We found old newspaper articles from the local community during the Vietnam War, where people questioned the role of God in times of warfare.

2) As our state was considering a constitutional amendment to define marriage as solely between one man and one woman, we provided a Valentine's Day sermon that featured illustrations from traditions surrounding Valentine, who was imprisoned by the Roman government for illegally performing marriages of soldiers, who were not to be married while they served Rome. His was an example of affirming loving relationships even when the government had passed laws defining who could marry and when.

3) On a Memorial Weekend we juxtaposed patriotic songs about America with film clips from the film, "Fog of War", featuring audio tapes of Lyndon Johnson and Robert McNamara willfully deceiving the American public about sending more troops to Vietnam, exposing the vigilance people must have when governments threaten war and get more deeply into it.

4) After a local clergy association expelled Muslim and Wicca members of the group (these clergy were chaplains in a state correctional facility in the community), we outlined the necessity of interfaith dialogue through highlighting newspaper articles about the local controversy.

5) On Mother's Day we showed photographs of a local dog who had adopted some orphaned kittens, and then used a song about a non-traditional family composed of two lesbians raising a child together, showing pictures of a diversity of family configurations...including multiracial and same-gender families, and more pictures that of a dog mothering some kittens!

In all of these cases, the screen was effectively used to show the issues being discussed with photographs, artwork, quotations, and film clips. The screen becomes a new window in the sanctuary, a window where with imagination, creativity, and passion, a media arts team can boost the preacher's persuasive appeals from the pulpit.

*"The new technologies are not value-free, but these values depend on our inputs and our goals. If we use the new media unwisely, we risk the dark scenarios that authors of science fiction have painted. Or we can use the new media to gain ever-new insights, to augment ourselves, knowledge, culture, and the world in which we live." Kim Veltman*

*"Perhaps we need a new phrase: Show me something more than money. Ask not what the exchange economy can do for you; ask what you are doing for the gift economy, for gift culture. The news on television and in the papers is always about disasters, about what is wrong, about suffering and death. But what about hope? What are we doing to increase the three cardinal virtues of faith, hope, and charity? Why are we all not using our spare time to work on what is possible?" Kim Veltman*

# Identifying and Overcoming Resistances to the Church's Use of Technology

When introducing worship technologies into church sanctuaries, leaders will want to be aware of the negative criticisms about such technologies, and be prepared to respond to them. What follows is a summary of the criticisms and their responses.

There aren't many congregations left in the United States who worship in caves by candlelight, if there ever were any. Our churches have employed every technological innovation used in the other settings of our lives: electric lights, central heating and air conditioning, padded pews, electronic sound systems, electrically-powered organs and pianos, elevators and chair lifts, fans dropped from ceilings, speaker systems attached to walls and ceilings, stained glass windows, energy-efficient building materials, duplicating and copy machines for worship bulletins, mass produced hymn and prayer books, tape recording systems, compact disc hymnal accompaniment services, and the latest building designs.

Technologies that provide centralized heat and air conditioning on demand are unquestioned, even as precious natural resources are consumed and often wasted in increasing amounts by worship communities.

Where once worshipers customarily stood to worship, bench seating provided a new comfort, and a culture used to soft easy chairs at home now demands cushions in its pews.

Electricity-requiring worship aids such as lighting, sound systems, pipe organs, printing equipment, computers, typewriters, and clocks all play a role in religious sanctuaries.

Similarly, wireless microphones give freedom to clergy and laity who wish to be heard by those with hearing deficits while speaking from various locations in the sanctuary. Soloists who do not have time to rehearse with pianists and organists use recording equipment for prerecorded accompaniments; small churches without piano or organ, or persons to play them, use prerecorded accompaniments for hymn singing and other music.

Technology to make non-fermented juice from grapes allowed churches to respond to a growing prohibition movement working to keep alcohol away from its members. Technological innovation allowed wine to be replaced by grape juice, introducing a new communion practice that replaced 1900 years of tradition.

These examples of the already widespread adoption of technology in the sanctuary lead to a consideration of video technology in the sanctuary as a natural extension of other technologies already in place.

## Typical Objections to Screens and Video in the Sanctuary

- 1) The very presence of a screen is a reminder of the consumerism, commoditization, sexual stereotypes, banal entertainment, and violent action that emanates from its screen 24 hours of each day.
- 2) Using screens and video resources in the sanctuary encourages the shortened attention spans in worship which television and the Internet has already produced at home and in school.
- 3) Using a screen and projecting a video image in worship invites the passivity and non-participatory disengagement of the viewer/voyeur.
- 4) As children and youth are exposed to increasing numbers of video resources in their schools, the church risks its own irrelevancy as it utilizes similar instructional techniques.
- 5) Introducing such resources produces the expectation that they will continue to be used, developing a kind of screen and video dependency in the worship setting.
- 6) Worship is one place where people have traditionally engaged in the orality of speaking and hearing, of reading and responding, of honoring the tradition of hearing the word.



7) The Protestant tradition carries an iconoclastic suspicion of all images, sculpted, painted, photographed, televised, or projected onto a screen.

8) While there may be a new generation of electronically-hungry parishioners, there are also several generations of print-oriented, preaching-oriented parishioners who expect the proclamation of the word from the pulpit.

### Responding To the Objections

These objections can be answered by those who take a less pessimistic view of the use of video technology in worship.

1) While using screens and projected video in worship can be a reminder of all that's wrong with such media in their commercial setting, using them in worship carries a responsibility for purposeful, instructional use. The worship setting itself naturally prohibits showing a television program or commercials--unless these contribute in some fashion, and in a limited time frame, to a specific worship message.

2) Using video resources in the sanctuary does not itself encourage shortened attention spans---if you think about it, most worship in Protestant churches is already a series of different events divided into short time segments. Worship services are divided into distinctive segments such as a call to worship, an invocation, an opening hymn, a children's sermon, a choral anthem, an offering time, another hymn, reading of scriptures, a sermon, a prayer period, a closing hymn, and a benediction. There is a rhythm of standing and sitting, speaking and listening, singing and hearing, sound and silence. Over the course of sixty minutes of worship each of these segments might take three minutes each, with a longer sermon. My point is that worship already breaks up time into discrete segments, and to introduce video into the worship context recognizes that it would be absorbed into this format.

3) While turning on a television set or projecting a video image can invite passivity over longer time periods, when video technology is used in worship, it is used in short time segments of 3-4 minutes. These short periods of time protect against losing attention or encouraging some sort of passivity. Engagement with video would require verbal introduction and explana-

tion by a leader, which would result in greater interest.

4) Parents and teachers report that children and youth are exposed to video resources in their learning settings, and it is true that some parents and schools simply sit the children in front of a program and ask them to watch, without interacting with them to find out their reactions and learning from the program. Better use of video resources encourages dialogue with resources and stopping programs occasionally for stepping back to take stock of what is being said and learned.

5) While it is possible that introducing exciting video resources into worship can produce an expectation that video will continue to be used, the reality is that churches already use a variety of resources in worship on a weekly basis. If the chimes choir plays one week, do we expect them to play every week? If other musical instruments, or dance, or a certain style of sermon presentation are used, we do not automatically expect these styles to be used week after week. Video would be simply an option among many options for calling attention to the messages of a particular worship service.

6) It is important to recognize that worship is a time where people have traditionally engaged in the orality of speaking and hearing, of reading and responding, of honoring the tradition of hearing the word and that...

7) ... the Protestant tradition carries an iconoclastic suspicion of all images, but to fear that the introduction of visuals in worship will minimize or eliminate the oral tradition of lyric, text, and print is mistaken. It is an enhancement that does not replace spoken language. Even as iconoclasm is a part of the Protestant tradition, most churches already contain visual arts including stained glass windows, symbols such as crosses, fabric banners, paraments, and robes for choirs and clergy, altar arrangements, architectural configurations with symbolic meaning, etc. Using video opens a discussion on how a congregation has already demonstrated its commitment to the visual arts by looking at the visual symbols present in any worship service.

8) While there may be a new generation of electronically-hungry parishioners, there are also several generations of print-oriented, preaching-oriented parish-

ioners who expect the proclamation of the word from the pulpit, and this is a good reason to balance word with image, since worship settings will most likely include these different generations with different orientations in a worship setting. Just as the printing press did not eliminate speaking and story-telling, just as television did not eliminate radio, so will computers not eliminate books. Preaching that uses a combination of resources such as illustrative material in worship bulletins, visual aids, and sermon outlines, will find that pictures and moving pictures can also serve the message of the day.

It is clear that our churches have been engaged with a dialogue between technology and theology for some time. To argue against a particular technology, such as using screens and projected visual imagery in the sanctuary, because of the potential evils of that technology, is to ignore how churches have historically employed technologies in the service of God's mission.

*"The new generation, raised on TV and the personal computer but deprived of a solid primary education, has become unmoored from the mother ship of culture."  
Camille Paglia*

*...worship already breaks up time into discrete segments, and to introduce video into the worship context recognizes that it would be absorbed into this format.*



Old Vines, Dry Creek Valley, CA

# AUDITORY AND VISUAL LEARNERS IN THE PEW

When addressing issues of technology and worship, many leaders think that resistance to such innovation is rooted in a discomfort with change itself. While resistance to change is natural and real in many of our churches, those working to change something in the life of a congregation might strengthen their case for a specific change by acknowledging that what is feared is not the change. Rather, people fear that somehow the proposed changes will negatively impact the very heart and soul of the congregation. They do not fear the change so much as that the change might not “fit” the culture of their church. An example of this is proposing to add visuals into worship and preaching. The fear is less about adding a screen and projector to a sanctuary, and more about how this might change the worship culture and practice of a congregation.

Leaders interested in incorporating screens, computers, and projectors into worship sanctuaries must address this fear. While it is important for leaders to learn all they can about screen, projection, computer, and sound technologies, it is even more important to notice what introducing those technologies into worship will or will not do to the heart and soul of the worshiping community.

## EAR-CENTERED WORSHIP

One of the biggest hurdles faced by those wishing to add more visuals to worship is the reality that most Protestant worship has been mediated by the aural arts of music and preaching. This 500-year-old emphasis on speaking and listening has pushed aside the worshipful use of visual arts of painting, sculpture, film, and photography.

The reasons for ear-centered worship go back to Exodus 20:4 and its cautioning against graven images and extend through the Protestant Reformation with its elevation of the spoken, preached, and printed

word as the best means to produce faith. As a result, most Protestant worship today is designed for the ear. Most of what happens in worship—music and spoken words—treats the ear. We take it for granted that our ears are the instruments of faith, and we give them music and preaching that is pleasurable, instructive, and worshipful. One recent study reports that in the U.S. 90 percent of a typical worship service involves listening to choirs, liturgists, and preachers. People come to hear a good sermon and listen to good music.

## AUDITORY LEARNERS AND VISUAL LEARNERS

I remember a faithful member of a congregation I served who closed his eyes during the entire sermon. It wasn't that he wasn't listening....he could tell me specifically what I had said. This auditory learner was simply blocking out all visual stimuli so that he could concentrate on what he was hearing. I imagine that were he alive today, he would oppose any use of film or photography in worship on the grounds that it would be distracting to his concentration.

Age alone does not determine which sense is dominant, as many youth and young adults are also auditory learners. I remember a couple of teenagers in my confirmation class who, instead of watching a class video, sat with their heads on the table, eyes closed, a picture of lazy inattention. When they correctly answered every question I asked, they proved that despite appearances, they were listening very carefully to the video. They were auditory learners and they did not need to see the screen to know what was going on.

Our churches are full of such auditory learners, and since aural content has been the predominant practice of many churches, most worship communities are composed of people who prefer an auditory approach to worship. Many of these church members would find it distracting to look at pictures of any kind. These are the people who, when hearing a suggestion to show a video clip during a sermon, would say, “If I wanted to watch a movie, I'd go to the movie theater.”

Yet, the 21st century provides a new challenge to

communicators of faith. Worship professor Doug Adams has asserted that 60 percent of those under the age of 60—raised on viewing television—remember primarily by what is seen. While statistics vary, studies show that of today’s adults, 70 percent are visual learners, 25 percent learn by hearing, and 5 percent are hands-on learners. Is this true of our worshiping communities? Probably, but given the resistance that many pastors report to attempts to use video clips and other visuals in worship, it might be that the church has created congregations full of auditory learners. What is understood to be resistance to technology and adding a screen to worship might more likely be resistance to introducing the foreign language of visual illustrations to people who are accustomed to experiencing worship with their ears.

Those wishing to gauge the audio/visual orientation of a congregation may well look for clues among people. Studies in neuro-linguistic programming have shown that people use language that reflects their dominant learning sense. “Do you see what I am saying” is a visual learner talking, just as “do you hear what I am saying” is used by an auditory learner. I have a hunch that people who love telling jokes are auditory learners, because they hear a joke and remember it, and have a ready storehouse of jokes and stories to share! People who say they “listen to the television” are auditory learners, while those who “watch TV” are visual learners. Those who listen to NPR or books on tape are certainly comfortable with auditory learning.

## INTRODUCING MORE VISUAL MEDIA IN WORSHIP

What does this mean for those wishing to use more visual media in worship? It might mean starting a new service for your visual learners and to attract those visual learners who avoid worship because they do not listen or learn well by listening. Starting a new service gives everyone a choice and doesn’t threaten the auditory learners and their worship service. Why force a predominantly aural congregation into having to look at visual illustrations when you can provide your congregation another style of worship at a different time? This additional worship service also may increase the number of visual visitors who are among your inactive members, those searching for a new church, or those who are craving worship that includes more of the senses.

That said, many churches have successfully integrated more visuals into historically audio-centered services by projecting visual announcements, words to hymns, images that enhance the sermon, and classical religious art. There is evidence that congregations, even auditory ones, enjoy the pairing of sound with sight when it is done tastefully, sparingly, gracefully, and gradually.

For those who can see and hear, worship will always involve both senses. With projection screens, projectors, computers, and surround-sound systems, it is possible to add more visuals to worship in ways that build a new tradition.

In the church I served, where we developed a weekly visually intensive multimedia service, we heard positive comments from many people over 70 years of age. One woman who visited with other family members said, “I’ve gone to church my whole life but this is the first time I got something out of it. It was because I could see what you were preaching about.” Other long-time members who had attended worship weekly came to prefer the visual service because they could understand more of the message with its combining sound, words on a screen, pictures, religious art, and relevant movie clips. What started as an attempt to reach out to a visually-oriented generation of young people had unexpectedly attracted visual learners of all ages who had grown accustomed to seeing pictures in magazines and who have watched television and movies for most of their lives. Now they are getting the biblical text, sermon theme, and a memorable worship experience through both sound and image.

Introducing visual technologies into congregations accustomed to an emphasis on auditory technology can be jarring. Yet with sensitivity to the audio and visual needs of congregation members, it can be done well. When such changes are harnessed to the purpose of worship—to experience and communicate God’s word, spoken and visible—the change is understood as serving the heart and soul of the worship community.

[This article first appeared in the January 2006 “Clergy Journal.”]

*We see today a “shift away from a basic orality in theology...to a multimedia theology in which the almost total communication ambitioned in electronic technologized culture interacts vigorously with the theological heritage...” Walter Ong*

*This 500-year-old emphasis on speaking and listening has pushed aside the worshipful use of visual arts of painting, sculpture, film, and photography.*

*There is evidence that congregations, even auditory ones, enjoy the pairing of sound with sight when it is done tastefully, sparingly, gracefully, and gradually.*



Concert in San Francisco

# Picky Eaters In the Pew: A Strategy For Changing The Worship Diet

*“Taste and see that the Lord is good.” Psalm 34:8*

*“I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it...” I Corinthians 3:2*

Worship is a matter of taste (“aesthetics”), and by providing tasty foods, we can also, as the Psalmist writes, see the goodness of God. Taste and seeing go together! So do aesthetics, the visual arts, and God! The Apostle Paul also understood that church people grow and change, and that there is a natural “food progression” as we grow from spiritual infancy into spiritual adulthood. Milk serves our needs in our infancy, but as we develop and grow, we need something more solid, and, tastier!

Let’s play with these metaphors and learn how to develop the “visual taste” of our congregations through the gradual introduction of media arts in worship (a pedagogy of theological aesthetics?).

When trying to get a child to eat something new or even unpleasant to the child’s taste, a frustrated parent might simply say, “Just eat it, it’s good for you.” Most of the time, the child may not try it, unless the adult develops a positive strategy. Frustrated parents can turn to any number of child nutrition sites for guidance, including the Mayo Clinic (“...the dinner table can become a battleground...”) and “Getting Past Yech”, a Wall Street Journal article about the picky eater.

It occurs to me that when it comes to worship, the worship leader and/or pastor is just like that frustrated parent trying to get a child to try something new: “Just give this worship change a try, it’s good for you.”

We understand that, like the dinner table, worship can become a battleground, to borrow the Mayo Clinic phrase. This being true, it doesn’t mean that we can’t try to add something to the worship “diet” and even

help parishioners grow in their appreciation for the new “food” of a worship change.

So, borrowing from the “Getting Past Yech” Wall Street Journal article about the picky eater, let’s see how we might apply the same strategies to getting a child to try—and eventually enjoy-- a different food, to the similar task of encouraging a worship congregation to change its diet and try something new. Let’s have some fun with this...and use your own imagination!

*“When introducing a new food, put a small amount on the plate. Do this at least 10 times before giving up.”*

Media and Worship Suggestion: when introducing media arts into worship, do so in small portions, and do it repeatedly. Be careful not to use too much of the screen at first. Show announcements before worship one week. Use pictures to illustrate a choir anthem the next. Show a very short mission message from a denominational video tape or DVD during the offering. Display three or four “Last Supper” paintings during communion. What you are doing is giving the congregation small amounts of media arts without a “full meal” and just enough to grow everyone’s level of comfort and familiarity.

*“Let the picky eater wash, cook, handle or even play with new foods. The idea is to familiarize the person with different looks and smells and to reduce fear of the unknown.”*

Media and Worship Suggestion: notice the family members who take photographs after a wedding or baptism of a member of your church family. Ask if they could email the church a few of those photographs for display on the church screen. Display the photos as part of the announcements within the week or month. Add text to the photo that congratulates the family and identifies the newly-weds or the newly-baptized as part of the church family. You will be connecting the family to the congregation, affirming their use of digital photography, helping them and the whole congregation grow accustomed to the use of a screen in the sanctuary. One message is that the screen isn’t used for something that is “done to them” from the outside, but is a communication medium from within the congregation. No longer is this something from “the unknown” or strange, but a part of the

church family communication system.

*“Try food chaining: identify foods a fussy eater does like, then introduce other times and build from there. If the finicky eater loves chicken nuggets, try breaded nuggets of other meats, and then move on to meat that’s not breaded. If vegetables are the issue, start with crispy vegetable chips, then move on to baked sweet-potato slices.”*

Media and Worship Suggestion: having developed a sense that what is displayed on-screen is imagery from the church families, add a little more. Show pictures of a confirmation retreat, or a recent women’s group meeting, or congregation members working at a food pantry or at another community-based activity. Use these pictures during the visual announcements before the worship, and slowly add them in to places during the worship like the offertory period, or perhaps as an illustration of mission during the sermon presentation. You are using local imagery and pictures of the life of the congregation during the message times of the worship service.

*“Cover new foods with a familiar sauce that the reluctant eater already likes.”*

Media and Worship Suggestion: here is an opportunity to use visual imagery while the choir sings. The anthem is a “familiar sauce” that adds to the “flavor” of worship. By selecting imagery that fits the lyrics of a choir anthem, you are enhancing the flavor of the music, amplifying (in a visual way) the choral contribution to worship by adding visual imagery, and visually offering the congregation another way to experience what they are accustomed to. Alternatively, a preacher might preach the sermon (something the worship community already “likes”) with pictures that individually and visually “anchor” each of the sermon’s points. The congregation is used to a sermon and a preacher’s typical sermon structure; the visuals, when selected well, increase attentiveness, add to understanding, and facilitate retention (remembering what was said).

*“Don’t yell or punish the picky, but don’t cave in and cook them whatever they like either. Allow a fussy eater to go hungry occasionally to learn that his or her pickiness has consequences.”*

Media and Worship Suggestion: once you’ve started to use visuals, and once you start to hear some negative criticisms, don’t give up! While your goal is to help the congregation become more familiar with this “strange new food” of visual arts in worship, after trying “ten times” (see the first suggestion!), you might want to stop for a week or more. People will notice, and some will begin to miss the visual “diet” you have introduced. They will tell you, and begin to make comments like, “are you going to use the screen again?”, or “I miss the screen. You can use it every once in a while, you know.” This “feedback” will help you understand that you’ve begun to change the “diet” of the congregation in a good way, and that they are beginning to enjoy the new flavors while appreciating the nutrition you are offering.

Food advisers tell us that it’s far easier to train a child to try a new food and like it than it is for an adult who has been set in his or her eating habits for a number of years. Maybe this is what Jesus understood when he said, “Bring the little children to me, for to such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven.” Children, youth, and young adults will appreciate your introducing new visual “food” into worship, and, if our experience with worship change is an indicator, the older adults who have trouble with “new foods” will also grow in their taste.

Sources used in developing this article:

[http://www.terrificparenting.com/index.php?section=news&article\\_id=42](http://www.terrificparenting.com/index.php?section=news&article_id=42)

“Getting Past Yech” a Wall Street Journal article about the picky eater

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/childrens-health/HQ01107>

“...the dinner table can become a battleground...”

*How can the church encourage the art of seeing so that the world of faith may be entered? John Westerhoff*

*...when introducing media arts into worship, do so in small portions, and do it repeatedly.*

*... once you’ve started to use visuals, and once you start to hear some negative criticisms, don’t give up!*

# Building Interpretive Communities

There are many fears associated with introducing a screen and projected imagery into worship. I find these fears are based on often unexamined assumptions about the relationship between message and audience.

The church is all about communication. The first verses of the Bible tell the story of God's communication with the primordial chaos: "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep...and God said, 'Let there be light; and there was light.'" In those early verses from the book of Genesis (1:2-3) we find a communicator (God), a message ("Let there be light."), an audience ("the face of the deep"), and a response ("and there was light...").

Jesus teaches his disciples and the gathering crowds with parables, with stories. He communicates a message to an audience and asks response of them. The early churches, and every subsequent generation of Christians, have used various means of communication to tell others the stories of faith and to invite them into a relationship with the love of God in Jesus Christ. The stories, doctrines, traditions, and teachings were shared through oral communication, written letters and sermons, manuscripts "illuminated" with hand-painted illustrations of the text on the page, mass-produced Bibles and pamphlets, visual arts of sculpture, painting, fresco, mosaic, etching, and photography, musical arts of lyric, melody, and harmony, and later, motion pictures and animated stories.

Modern communication theory tries to analyze the various parts of communication, primarily message-sending (the message itself, the sender or communicator, the means of communicating [oral, print, electronic]) and message receiving (the audience, their understanding of the sent message, and their response to the message).

Drawing on the work of Paul Soukup, S.J. in his article, "Understanding Audience Understanding", I want to help us become aware of some of the assumptions people within our congregations may be making about communication process when screens and visuals are

introduced into worship.

The abstract of Soukup's article defines our territory:

"On the one hand, the 'powerful message' construct paints the audience as passive recipients of the meaning presented in the media. On the other hand, the 'active audience' construct places most interpretive power in the audience...A middle position sees audience understanding emerge from an interaction between messages and audience members."

## POWERFUL MESSAGE THEORY

This view of media was developed in the 1920's as mass media were growing in power and it was understood that the audience was merely a passive recipient of these persuasive and effective messages. The assumption was that "if the message was sent and the audience exposed to it, it would have the intended effect." Audiences were understood to be passive, and in some ways, powerless under the effect of a strong "bombardment" of messages. If the communicator carefully constructs the message, it was thought the audience would automatically receive it and understand it entirely.

There is certainly some truth to the idea that there are "powerful messages" that have an engaging, gripping, attention-holding quality to them. Many have concerns about sophisticated, immersive, professional-quality messages that create powerful responses in audiences, particularly unsophisticated audiences such as children or those who choose to be ignorant or divisive in their view of life. Powerful media can display violent, militaristic, racist, consumerist, and sexist programming in a way that is embraced, imitated, and accepted by audiences. These messages and those who communicate them are part of the content of life, and intended and unintended audiences will want to be prepared to address them. This is an aspect of the "Powerful Audience Theory" of communication.

## POWERFUL AUDIENCE THEORY



The other pole of this way of understanding the communication process sees the audience as having the most power, and this was based on a view that the audience selects the messages it will receive, and will create the meaning of the programs “based on their experience rather than on the presented meaning of the media source.” This view of the audience began in the 1970’s and continues to this day with the increasing popularity of audience generated programming on websites such as YouTube, and the decreasing market share of the ABC/NBC/CBS television networks.

Powerful audiences have the remote in their hands, ready to change channels frequently and quickly if the programming or message doesn’t suit their interests or needs. Intelligent audiences know they have the freedom to expose themselves or not to various communicators and their messages. Audiences know they have “psychic shields” that have sensitized them to messages they wish not to experience (such as pictures of starving people, or blatantly sexist lyrics in a song, or violence in any form) and can “turn off” the messenger and the message with a change of channel or a mental shield. The rise and fall of various programs and personalities shows how audience tastes and interests change quickly, always forcing programmers to adjust their messages and means of communication.

## MESSAGES IN WORSHIP AND PREACHING

Traditional congregations accustomed to speaking-listening styles of worship with lots of music and an oration for a sermon will be concerned about the power of the message only as far as how well it is presented. A “good sermon” will be perceived as a powerfully delivered piece of communication from the preacher, and a “boring sermon” will be perceived as having less power. The congregational “audience” wants a powerful message. It is interesting that congregations who are good listeners never understand themselves to be “passive” because they know how they choose to listen carefully to interesting and well-presented messages, and they also know how they “tune out” the preacher when things get slow or uninteresting. How

many times have people confessed to planning out their week while “listening”, or to thinking about the brunch menu, or visualizing their golf putt up the center aisle! In the oral presentation dominant worship, there is an interactive balance between the powerful message and the powerful audience.

However, when screens and visuals are introduced into worship, something different happens. A few critics will be quick to see that screen as no different from a television screen or a movie screen, and give to that church screen the same sort of negative evaluation they give to TV and the movies. They will associate the church screen with the “powerful message” theory they have adopted in regards to the mass media they have seen and heard, and for some reason will not see their generous exclusion of oral presentation from their critical framework.

For these critics, it is perfectly acceptable for the congregation to be considered an “audience” but not to be “spectators.”

## ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE CONGREGATION AS AUDIENCE

- They sit and listen.
- They pay attention.
- They concentrate on what is being said.
- They go inside themselves and process what they are hearing.
- They sometimes respond to music they hear with applause.

Major distraction: listening interrupted by noise from children, loud sounds such as coughing, from traffic outside, or other noises from heat system, etc.

Spoken communication invites intellectual growth. Sermons are “meaty” and provide intellectual food that the mature and educated can digest.

Listeners are active rather than passive.

## ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE CONGREGATION AS SPECTATORS

- They sit and watch.
- They are being entertained.
- They are passive onlookers.

Visuals are the “spoon-feeding” of coddled or powerless children.

Adults can listen, children look.

Listening goes deeper than looking.

Major distraction: looking is interrupted by other visuals such as architecture, the human speakers, and other movement in the congregation.

Visuals invite shallow emotional response.

## A THIRD WAY: THE INTERPRETIVE COMMUNITY

In his article, Soukup suggests that the two poles of communication audience research are extreme positions that help us understand the forces that act upon messages and people. A middle or third way of understanding takes into consideration the fact that messages and audiences are always in relationship, and affect and change each other. As Soukup writes

“Meaning results from the actions of both. Programs/texts do carry meaning, meanings which their creators did in fact intend. Audiences for their part do actively negotiate meaning, based on, for example, their positioning, their prior experience, and their needs. Communities of interpretation offer another means to understand audience understand of programs/texts.”

Messages and audiences interact, whether they are in oral communication settings of speaking and listening, or in visual communication settings including screens and looking.

Worshiping congregations are, at best, communities of interpretation. Good listeners have always known this, but may not have always understood their prejudice against looking and seeing.

## ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE CONGREGATION AS AN INTERPRETIVE COMMUNITY

- They organize around scripture, sacred music, liturgy, and praxis.
- They engage the “kingdom” stories of faith.
- They honor book and ritual.
- They pray and keep silence together.
- They study, discuss, and imagine, constructing alternative visions of life through faith.
- They experience the arts together: paintings, sculpture, music, film, dance, fabric arts.
- They grow in trusting one another.
- They develop means for whole brain learning.
- They formulate ways to engage the world through faithful witness.

Principles Of Interpretive Communities

Interpretive communities center themselves around the scriptures.

Interpretive communities grow in relation to their mutual study of scripture together. They find ways to experience scriptural story and theological theme through commentaries, poems, novels, paintings, films, short stories, sculptures, fabric art, movement and dance. They expose their faith to the arts in all of its forms, and their conversations together create meaning through theological reflection. These communities come to understand their life and faith as lived in the midst of a particular location and community.

Interpretive communities are grown over time.

Those who join with a worship community participate in that particular community's history, tradition, and practice. This is a living process over a period of time. People have come and gone in the life of that community, and the community is always changing through births, marriages, confirmations, deaths, as well as through its participation in its entire social, educational, mission, and worship experience. People grow comfortable in these communities as they spend time with them.

Interpretive communities equip one another to grow in understanding.

Interpretive communities equip one another to construct, present, and interpret the messages of Christian faith through their educational, social, worship, and mission practice. They go to art museums and talk together about what they see; they attend concerts and films to experience, engage, and discuss with hearts of faith; they form book groups to read anything that informs hearts and minds about life, love, theology, critical social issues, or recent biblical scholarship; they select social projects and join efforts to identify systemic injustice, oppose war, eradicate poverty, dismantle racism, and work for gender equity; they develop, present, and evaluate worship experiences that build community, honor and worship God, and send people equipped with faith and purpose out into the world.

## Conclusion

It is easy to fall into assumptions about a world of powerful messages that seem to render powerless their recipients, or that audiences are able to effectively resist and control manipulation or propaganda. A better way might be to consider building "communities of interpretation" which actively engage, interpret, and construct the meanings that a broken world desperately needs.

*"Sustained use of media in worship requires the recruitment, training (liturgical, scriptural, technical, and aesthetic), and ongoing spiritual formation of many people, most of whom may be volunteers." Eileen Crowley*

*"The slide lecture, with its integration of word and picture, is an ideal format for engaging students who are citizens of the media age." Camille Paglia*

*The congregational "audience" wants a powerful message.*

*Interpretive communities equip one another to construct, present, and interpret the messages of Christian faith through their educational, social, worship, and mission practice.*

# Forming A Worship Media Work Group

Before proceeding much further through the materials in this resource, gather a group of 5-6 interested congregation members to form a worship media work group. You'll want this group to represent a diverse group, offering multiple perspectives and insights about media use. Experience with media isn't necessary with this core group. The important criterion is to have a commitment to learning and exploring the unique possibilities this area of ministry can offer your church. They may not ultimately be the group that actually produces media worship, but will form the core leadership for undertaking the process of developing a strategic plan for incorporating media into worship.

Begin to identify the representative areas from which you will select the members of the worship media work group using the matrix below. Under each category, list someone in the church who could represent at least one cell in the matrix. One person may represent more than one category. For example, you might list a middle-aged male in the column under "Leans toward innovation" as well as "Church Council" or "Consistory" or name of your church's governing body. The goal upon completion of the chart is to have a list of 5-6 congregation members, male and female, younger and older, who represent as many of the categories in the matrix as possible. Your list of people to invite to be part of the team, then, might include a representation similar to the one depicted in the example below.

	No Committe Involvement	Heavily involved in church leadership	Leans toward innovation	Leans toward traditional	Technology proficient	No expeirne with technology	Worship Committe	Governing Board	Christian Education/ Youth
	↔		↔		↔				
Male Under 30	Male A		Male A		Male A			A	
Male Middle Aged	Male B		Male B		Male B			C	C
Male Over 50	Male C		Male C		Male C				A
Female Under 30	Female A		Female A		Female A				
Female Middle Aged	Female B		Female B		Female B			B	
Female Over 50	Female C		Female C		Female C				

	No Committe Involvement	Heavily involved in church leadership	Leans toward innovation	Leans toward traditional	Technology proficient	No experience with technology	Worship Committe	Governing Board	Christian Education/ Youth
	↔		↔		↔				
Male Under 30									
Male Middle Aged									
Male Over 50									
Female Under 30									
Female Middle Aged									
Female Over 50									

Proposed Media Workgroup:

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# Using New Media Technologies In Worship

When Thomas Edison showed the first moving picture on a white sheet in 1895, a new communication era began. Life could be captured on film, projected on a large screen, and seen and heard in dramatic new ways. The viewing public loved it, and almost immediately, churches tried to harness the new technology to serve the Gospel. Clergy and laity from a wide number of denominations began to use movies in revival meetings and evening worship services to “drive home the message” and to show the Gospel story on big theater screens. Edison became an advocate for churches to use motion pictures for “instruction and moral advance.”

Since those early days, technical advances with computers, projectors, and screens have made it a lot easier for congregations to add message-enhancing visuals to their worship services. No longer is it necessary to try to thread film into an old 16mm projector or to shuffle through carousels of slides: a computer hard drive easily stores images and video. A small yet bright, lightweight projector can be attached to the computer, and you can display what you want at the click of a mouse.

These technical developments have led to an increasing number of congregations finding ways to effectively use the new equipment in worship services. By delighting both the ear (with music and solid preaching) and the eye (with colorful images and moving pictures), these congregations are discovering how worship becomes a transforming and memorable experience for all generations of visually-oriented people.

Some may say, “this equipment is too expensive for most of us.” Not so! It is possible to introduce visuals into worship without much expense, because most congregations already have the equipment necessary to add visuals to worship now and build support to buy newer equipment later. Many churches have used slides, filmstrips, computer software and videotapes to illustrate church school lessons. These churches are already equipped to bring multimedia into worship with their existing slide projectors, filmstrip projectors, televisions, VCR equipment and screens. Adding visuals into worship does not need to cost a lot of money.

Worship Study Team Activity: Take a walk around your church to assess the resources you currently have available. Using the chart below, make note of any equipment which is useable, as well as potential for future growth.

Resources      In Good Working Condition

Location

Comments

Slide Projector  Yes     No

Film Strip Projector     Yes     No

Overhead Projector

Yes     No

Portable Screen             Yes     No

Television             Yes     No

VCR     Yes     No

DVD Player     Yes     No

Boom Box     Yes     No

Computer     Yes     No

PowerPoint     Yes     No

Sound Board     Yes     No

Speakers     Yes     No

LCD Projector     Yes     No

Video Camera

Yes     No

Digital Still Camera

Yes     No

Scanner

Yes     No

Permanent Projection Screen

Yes     No

Equipment Space in Sanctuary

Yes     No

Electrical Outlets     Yes     No

Other Available Resources:

# Worship Suggestions For Using Equipment You May Already Have

Using a VCR and television: before a worship service begins, show a brief clip of home video of the recent youth retreat, or a minute or two of last week's Sunday School classes engaged in a lesson. During the offering, show a 2-minute video clip of a mission project your church supports. Get a video splitter and cable to connect multiple television sets so you have them in the center aisle and in the side aisles. Put them on wheeled carts so they can be set up and removed easily.

Slide Projector: show pictures of the Sea of Galilee to set the context for a sermon about Jesus' parables. Use religious art collections to display various artists' portrayal of the Last Supper for a Lenten sermon starter. Give the youth group a slide collection and ask them to select and organize slides that illustrate the theme of a favorite musical piece that could be played in a midweek Lenten service or worship service.

Film Strip Art: locate one of the filmstrips in your Christian Education library that shows the life of Jesus, or offers artistic interpretations of the Holy Week/Easter story. Show the filmstrip during the offertory to a musical accompaniment, or use a short sequence of pictures from a filmstrip to introduce a Lenten sermon.

About Screens: adequate screens are found in most church storerooms, while newer and lightweight portable screens designed for video/data projectors may be purchased for several hundred dollars. Permanent screens (a bit more expensive) and motorized retractable screens (more expensive because of the motors) are also available, and can easily be concealed in most church architecture. Some churches simply use a white sheet attached to a wooden frame, or project their images on a light-colored wall until they raise the funds needed for a good screen. Rather than investing thousands of dollars in equipment you might not be prepared to use, start more slowly and use what is available to you, adding better and newer equipment as your support for using visuals in worship grows.



## Using Newer Multimedia Technology in Worship

Today's computer and projection technologies make it easier to do the same thing as the older visual technologies: they can be used to collect, store, and organize images and project them onto a screen. What's different now is that with a computer it is easier to organize and store images. Computers are capable of storing audio, video, digital photographs, scanned images, and data files. They allow vast amounts of storage and easy organization of material.

Where once a church needed separate projectors for films, slides, filmstrips, overhead, and opaque projection, now a single projector plugged into a computer can do all of that. These projectors are capable of showing images from a computer screen, and from either a VCR or DVD machine. The bulbs are very bright (measured in "lumens" as in the more lumens the brighter the projector), allowing them to be used in well-lit rooms. As with computers, projectors have increased in power and decreased in price. They can be plugged into the back of a laptop or desktop computer, and in seconds the images you select can be projected onto a screen.

At the flip of a couple of switches, worshipers can see displays of scripture texts, song lyrics, photographs, reproductions of world-class art, scenes excerpted from motion pictures, and church-produced video as part of a worship service.

Once again, this does not need to cost a lot of money. Church members have access to used computers and refurbished projectors in their workplaces and homes. Public libraries and audio-visual companies are sources of rental equipment and sometimes loan it out on a trial basis. A worship committee could easily borrow or rent a laptop and projector for a couple of weeks. Used equipment is accumulating in members' homes and workplaces, and experimenting with this equipment can help you learn what you need to bring more visuals into worship.

### Adding Visuals to Worship

Most worship leaders are trained to express themselves with words, and to effectively communicate orally. With some practice, these leaders can start thinking visually. Ask yourself, "how could I show this thing that I am talking about?" For example, how could you show some of the announcements that you have printed in your worship bulletin? Could you display a photograph of members for whom you are praying? Could you show pictures of your youth group's recent social activity? Would it help your sermon to display a digital reproduction of Rembrandt's "Prodigal Son" when preaching on that text, or Henry Tanner's "Annunciation" during Advent? Is there a line from a poem you would want to project onto a screen, along with a visual symbol? What short sequence from a recent movie could serve as a call to worship, an invitation to the offering, or an illustration of a sermon point?

There are many points in a worship service where visuals can be added, like showing the announcements before worship begins (and saving everyone the 5-7 minutes sometimes used up in talking about them), displaying a short video clip of a mission project during the offertory, or illustrating a sermon theme with a clip from a major motion picture. Here are some suggestions for inserting visual media in worship:

#### Announcements:

Announcements normally printed in the bulletin can be typed into computer slides. Pictures can be added to these announcements (for example, photographs of the nursery where parents would take their children, the coffee serving crew, the summer camp brochure, the women's circle, the local hospital). Many church members have photographic equipment they could use to take pictures and shoot video. With digital cameras it is easy to take original photographs and video, and store these materials in a computer and show them on a screen with a video/data projector. Intersperse the announcements with slides illustrating the worship theme: sermon points, quotations, or religious art. For those uncomfortable with adding visuals to worship, the pre-

worship announcement time can be an excellent starting point for gaining support for one day using the equipment during the service itself.

#### Liturgical Support:

Display the worship prayers and litanies on screen in a type font large and bright enough to be seen at the back of the worship space. Add hymn and song lyrics so people look up instead of down into their hymnals. Display the scripture so people can read along.

#### Offertory:

Show pictures of ministries that your members' giving supports. Show short 1-2 minute video clips of denominational mission videos or of self-produced video of your educational, service, administrative, and group ministries.

#### Special services:

Confirmations and graduations are excellent opportunities to introduce an occasional multimedia program. Ask parents to bring two photographs of their child, one from infancy or early childhood, and another that is more recent. Scan the photographs into the computer and type in the names of each confirmand or graduate with their pictures. As the photographs are displayed during worship, add music by asking someone to sing a song appropriate for confirmation or graduation, or find a CD version of such a song.

#### Sermon illustrations:

Add visual power to sermons by displaying sermon points, quotations and scripture references on a screen near the preacher. Add pictures or symbols that visually anchor the theme. Find a work of art that communicates the scripture and sermon focus. Locate a video clip to capture attention and help focus the sermon (30-60 seconds is short and to the point, but if you must go longer, get a license to show anything that is beyond 3 minutes in length).

## Give Yourself Permission To Be Creative

There is no set formula for using multimedia in worship. Be inspired by the Holy Spirit. As you add visuals to worship, keep asking the congregation for feedback. You may find widespread support for adding more visuals to worship, especially as they capture interest and help communicate important material.

It is possible for one person to incorporate multimedia into worship, but it is silly to try. Invite church members to share their gifts and talents with photography, film, painting, sculpture and computer-generated graphics. There are many talented people in every congregation who can already skillfully produce and present media arts in worship.

Congregations already know how teams of choir members, instrumentalists, and worship planners can work together to provide high quality music ministries. The same can be true for the media arts. Enlist the art teachers in the congregation, the movie buffs, the photographers and painters to help brainstorm what materials could be used to add visual beauty to worship. Ask your computer whizzes and those who already work with presentation media to help find ways to project the visuals in the sanctuary.

Gather these people together with other worship planners, and encourage them to use their gifts in worship. Ask them to think visually about worship. What would they show to illustrate a future worship theme? What scenes from films could introduce or support the theme, and where are they located in the DVD or videotape? What other visual arts could be used to support the theme? Work with these members to develop guidelines and standards for using visuals in worship.

# Worship Media Work Group Activity:

What are some ways you have already used visuals in worship? For example, think of those times when worship leaders have used sermon props, pieces of art, maps, banners, and other visuals in the past?

How has your congregation responded? What comments did you hear?

Looking back, how do you think the visuals helped convey the message?

What types of visual support are you interested in exploring that would enhance your worship service? Underline or circle ones that capture your interest and which might be possible to easily introduce to the congregation:

Photographic Imagery

Classical Religious Art

Text of Hymn Lyrics, Scripture, Poems, and/or Quotations

Text of Sermon Notes

Symbols or Animations Illustrating Sermons

Announcements in Words and Pictures

Religious Video Imagery

Home-grown Video (such as youth group events, work teams, etc.)

Denominational Mission Video

Video Scenes From Popular Movies

## Why We Begin To Use Visual Arts in Worship

Church leaders understand that today's multimedia technologies are not used in worship because they're "cool" or "glitzy," but because they serve the mission of the Church. They have begun to find ways to utilize today's communication technologies in worship because:

--They know the importance of communicating the Gospel in every age, using the particular communication tools of that age.

--They pay attention to research showing that engaging more of worshipers' senses in worship (eyes, ears, noses, mouths, and body movement) results in higher attention levels, better understanding, and more personal and social transformation.

--They understand that the widespread cultural acceptance of video screens in diverse settings offers a way to effectively deliver information.

--They are willing to incorporate technical communication advances in their teaching, learning, and worship.

Clergy and laity alike are seeing how new media technologies can effectively serve the Gospel in worship, and, as Edison wrote so long ago, for "instruction and moral advance."

[Material from this article was previously published by the United Church of Christ "Lighting The Ways: Advent C" and The Clergy Journal.]

*" I do not think that the powerful forces imposed on us by electricity have been considered at all by theologians and liturgists." Marshall McLuhan*

*Where once a church needed separate projectors for films, slides, filmstrips, overhead, and opaque projection, now a single projector plugged into a computer can do all of that.*

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF “SCREEN” OR, WHAT TO TELL THE BOARD AND ALL WHO ASK

## 1) Hand-shadows and Shadow Puppets as Ancient and Multicultural Storytelling

- Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave”, dating back 2400 years, is based on the idea that fire casts shadows upon a screen (the cave wall) and that a role of education is to help people understand the difference between what is real and what is illusion.
- For at least two millennia, magicians and acting troupes traveled through China, India, Indonesia, Asia Minor, and Europe sharing the ancient craft of shadow puppetry, bringing their audiences new worlds, entertaining stories, and morality tales.
- Some thought the screen to be God’s universe, and the hand puppets characters in a divine drama.

## 2) Origin of the English Word, “Screen”

- The word “screen” is hundreds of years old. It referred to upright panels covered with leather, cloth, or paper and set in front of the hearth to shield people from the heat and form a room divider.
- Imagine children sitting in the space between the fire and the screen, making shadows on the screen and telling stories about them. These screens became a place for playful imagination.
- One of the first light projectors, first written about in the 17th century, was called a “magic lantern,” and it was used to delight small audiences with picture stories shown on walls, sheets, and special fabric or paper screens.

## 3) Screens, Worship Space, and the Holy Imagination

- A screen becomes an “open window” for seeing the world, as the whole world can be shown there.

- A screen becomes a place to dramatize the relationship of heaven and earth with the Light of the World, as God’s universe is displayed.

- A screen is an “open canvas” for the play of the holy imagination as we find ways to show the relationship of God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, with all of creation.

- Some churches place their screen in relationship to cross and altar.

- o The altar is anchored upon the earth, representing the Holiness of God, God’s protecting grace, and our thanksgiving to God

- o The cross penetrates earth and heaven, representing the suffering and passion of the world, the death, resurrection, and life-giving love of Jesus the Christ, and our call to discipleship

- o The screen in relationship to cross and altar becomes the place of liminality, a doorway or a window that helps us imagine and live anew our essential relationship with our faith story.

## 4) The Screen As A Place of Theology and Theophany

- Knowing that God can never be fully imagined, described, or reduced into words, pictures, sounds, or metaphors.....

- Worship leaders are very good at “God-words” (theology) and competent at creatively working to
  - o write and talk about God
  - o to open ears to words and music about God

- Worship leaders are learning about “God-light” (theophany) and creatively working to
  - o imagine and show God
  - o open eyes to God in light, color, form, and image

- The screen is a place for imaginative theology and theophany
  - o showing words and music
  - o showing color, imagery, and moving pictures
  - o displaying stories told fresh and new
  - o opening new forms for meditation, prayer, and instruction

## 5) The Screen and Light Together Become Ser-

vants of God To:

- Attract attention through light...
  - o "...and God said, 'Let there be light.'" (Gen. 1:3)
  - o "...and the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire..." (Ex. 3:2)
  - o "...and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light..." (Matthew 17:2)
  - o "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6)
  
- Grow understanding through conversations stimulated by screen-light
  - o God speaking with Moses to call and clarify
  - o The church's conversation with people who are eager to know more, to learn, and to grow in faith
  - o Our own engagement with the world and the positive influence of the creative arts to sensitize, grow awareness, and develop a passion for ministry
  
- Send out to share ministry in the world
  - o Worship of God feeds our need to be engaged in God's purposes

*"...a screen is comparable to a page of an illuminated manuscript where text and image are intertwined so that image reinforces text, and in the mind's eye the two are indivisible." Gregor Goethals*

*"The screen is a magic medium. It has such power that it can retain interest as it conveys emotions and moods that no other art form can hope to tackle." Stanley Kubrick*

# Theology, Worship, and Revelation

A theological rationale for the use of visuals in worship, including electronically-mediated visuals, is developed through a description of both the function of worship and the doctrine of revelation.

God is at the center of our worship practice. In worship, we gather in awe of God's love, justice, and creative power, and we offer thanksgiving, praise, and devoted gifts to God. In our worship we name our relationships with God, with each other, and with our selves. Paul Tillich wrote that

“Religion opens up the depth of man's [sic] spiritual life which is usually covered by the dust of our daily life and the noise of our secular work. It gives us the experience of the Holy, of something which is un-touchable, awe-inspiring, an ultimate meaning, the source of ultimate courage.”

The imagery of our words and our visual images are in the service of this revealing of God's grace, God's love, and God's relationship to our lives. In 1 Corinthians 14:26, we find Paul's characterization of "orderly worship" to include "a revelation." The Greek *apokalupsis*, "to remove the covering veil," finds its way into the Latin *re-velum*, "to turn back the veil," and into our English "reveal."

Tillich's discussion of revelation begins his Systematic Theology. "Revelation is the manifestation of what concerns us ultimately." This revelation needs "the word as a medium of revelation." Tillich is careful to define this "word." It is not to be narrowly defined as spoken, written, or heard words, but is to accommodate

“...the religious symbolism...which uses seeing, feeling, and tasting as often as hearing in describing the experience of the divine presence...the divine ‘Word’ can be seen and tasted as well as heard.”

This is important as we develop a case for the use of visuals, including electronically-mediated visuals, in the service of God's revelation in worship. Revelation is known through all of the human senses.

Theology disclosed and revealed through the senses is prominent in biblical narrative. The ancient Shema has served as a central affirmation of Israel's faith: "Hear O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." (Deut. 6:4-5) Israel was not only to "hear," but they were to write those words on the doorposts of their homes, and recite and talk about them with their children. The Shema served as an ancient "audio-visual" where hearing and seeing were combined with disciplined reflection and discussion.

In Exodus 3, we find Moses leading his father-in-law's flock to pasture. Suddenly a bush bursts into flame and he sees that it is not consumed. His full attention is captured. He says "I must turn aside and look at this great sight..." (Ex. 3:3) Then the voice of God calls to him from out of the bush, and Moses not only is engaged in seeing and hearing but he responds verbally, takes off his shoes, hides his face, and feels fear. He is fully attentive to God in that moment of revelation through his visual, aural, tactile, and emotional senses.

Our word "attention" comes from the Latin *tendere* meaning "to stretch." To give attention is to "stretch toward." To give our attention is a physical stretching process of engaging all of our senses. Like Moses at the bush, we need our senses engaged in order to turn aside, stretching to become closer to God's revelation in a historical moment. God's revelation to Moses in Exodus 3 occurs through the light of a burning bush and the sound of a voice. All of Moses' senses are engaged in the encounter.

The prophet Isaiah provides another excellent example of theology disclosed and revealed through the senses. As an oral teacher, Isaiah uses sensory language and aphorisms because they maintain the listener's interest. Isaiah uses language that engages the senses and refers to that which is therefore familiar to the listeners.

Through 66 chapters, Isaiah employs references to the senses and the human sensory equipment:

- references to hearing and the ear are made 87 times
- references to speaking and saying are made 245 times
- the mouth is referred to 27 times
- references to seeing and the eye are

made 95 times

- hands are referred to 76 times
- the feet, 19 times
- the tongue, 2 times (it's mentioned

only 9 times in the

entire Bible), and to the tongue licking, once

--the experience of travail, or labor at childbirth, 7 times

- the nose, four times

Isaiah uses sensory language to capture the fullest attention and response of his audience.

Similarly, we find sensory communication in specific stories from Jesus' life. For example, when Jesus gathered with the disciples in the upper room, they were eating together. Taste and smell were added to the visuals of the meal, the table, the gathered friends, the sounds of talking and eating, and the feelings of the moment. Paul gives us the first account of that night, how Jesus

"...took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Cor. 11:23)

In speaking over the breaking of bread and the sharing of wine, Jesus engages the full sensory attention of his disciples and offers the truth of the Psalmist, "taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalms 34:8)

The disciples saw the bread and the cup. They heard the words of Jesus. Their feelings and thoughts were engaged by his telling them to rethink the meaning of the bread and cup and to remember him from that moment on. The Sacrament of Communion was instituted using common, everyday material for divine purpose.

These examples illustrate the importance of engaging more senses in our communication. Biblical narratives demonstrate how hearer and reader are invited into a new reality through language and symbol.

As Tillich asserts, this language is not limited to spoken or written words, but it includes symbol and image. God's Word is more than words. To consciously

or unconsciously limit Word to word is to weaken our relationship with God. Tillich declares,

"...the Word of God often is understood--half-literally, half-symbolically--as a spoken word, and a 'theology of the Word' is presented which is a theology of the spoken word. This intellectualization of revelation runs counter to the sense of the Logos Christianity. If Jesus as the Christ is called the Logos, Logos points to a revelatory reality, not to revelatory words."

In the same way that visual arts have been identified with idolatry, so too can words, doctrines, and verbal constructions be idolatrous when they are elevated at the expense of the visual. This is what Tillich calls, "the Protestant pitfall." To suggest using visuals in worship is a way to balance the mediation of God's revelation to our human senses. Just as God's revelation is not confined to image, neither is it confined to word.

Introducing visuals in worship is a starting point for reclaiming the fullness of the Logos as "revelatory reality."

## Reclaiming the Power of Image In Worship

A typical worship service is saturated with words: hymns, printed prayers and responses, sermon, lyric and anthem. These claim our fullest attention. Even as the eye sees architecture, movement, banners, bread, wine, and water, singers, and speakers, these visuals are deemphasized as words are emphasized. The ear has plenty provided for it but the eye never seems to get enough.

One Sunday morning I illustrated a sermon with a video clip from a trip to France. In it were scenes of members of our church relating with members of another congregation in Paris, with whom we have a sister relationship. As I turned on the television set in order to show the video, I looked out at the congregation and noticed all eyes turned and focused on that blue screen. In that instant I saw eyes hungry for visual feeding.

Harvey Cox has advocated the importance of the



visual arts in general and film media in particular as expressions of "the theological import of the visual world." Recognizing the Protestant emphasis of "the Word at the expense of the Light" he suggests that "it may be time to redress the balance a little." Protestants have emphasized the creative power of word and deemphasized the creative power of image.

When we deemphasize visual imagery in our theological discourse, we miss that which precedes verbal construction: image. A word-oriented, book-oriented church misses the power of the image and its essential cultural and theological contribution.

To understand imagery and symbolism as media for God's revelation is to legitimately explore the potential that electronic visual arts of film and video have for deepening our experience with God's revelatory power. These arguments suggest the importance of including within the life of the church, and specifically, within its worship life, visual arts, including electronic visual media.

The church's mission is to communicate the Gospel--to make disciples--in every generation. To do that the Gospel must be communicated using the available technologies of each generation. 21st century preachers have additional means for communicating power messages with the advent of electronic and digital communication systems.

Incorporating audio-visual media in worship engages our senses, encourages our attention, and deepens our response to God's work in our lives. Walter Brueggemann suggests this is critical to our work,

"...the task is to fund--to provide the pieces, materials, and resources out of which a new world can be imagined...people in fact change by the offer of new models, images, and pictures of how the pieces of life fit together--models, images, and pictures that characteristically have the particularity of narrative to carry them. Transformation is the slow, steady process of inviting each other into a counter story about God, world, neighbor, and self."

Film and video engage the eye, the ear, the heart, and the mind of the viewer. They transport us to different settings, and encourage us to make choices about how we live our lives in response to God.

## Theology as Theophany

This discussion about reversing our bias towards word in favor of a fresh look at image leads to an examination of our theological language.

The very term we use to talk about our experience with God, "theology," reflects a bias towards "word," theos-logos = "God-words." Other words loaned from the Greek reflect our bias, too: we value logic (logos) over fancy (phanos).

The favored status of our word "theology" can trace its roots to Greek Stoic philosophy and early church tradition, which refer to a threefold way of speaking about gods in natural, civil, and ritual functions. It wasn't until Abelard in the 12th century that theologia was used to refer to "a philosophical treatment of the doctrines of the Christian religion..."

The term "theology" came to express our systematic thinking about God. With the development of the printing press, rational, linear, word-oriented contemplations found a medium for distribution, and the printed word became a means for the spread of the Protestant revolution in the 16th century. The revolution was fueled not only by a suspicion of the abuses of the Church, which visual arts and architecture represented to many, but also by a technology that allowed for mass distribution of words. God's "Word" came to be mediated through words and logical constructions of such words. Theology came to be understood to mean "The study or science which treats of God, His nature and attributes, and His relations with man and the universe."

Tillich concludes his theology of revelation with the striking declaration that all of the "different meanings of the term 'Word' are all united in one meaning, namely 'God manifest'..." While he doesn't use the Greek word, he is talking about Epiphany, which means "manifestation," or literally, "to show upon." Using biblical Greek to translate Tillich's phrase, "God manifest," we arrive at theos-phanos, or, "to show God."

The difference between theology ("the study or science" of God) and theophany ("a manifestation or

appearance" of God) is the difference between transcendence and immanence---a study removes us one step from the experience, while a manifestation is direct experience. The very word "theology" is more transcendent, more removed from us, than the word "theophany," which is more immanent, more immediate.

To propose using visual arts in worship is to reclaim the fully immanent revelatory power implied in the term "theophany," which is defined as "A manifestation or appearance of God or a god to man [sic]." Just as the church uses words to understand God's revelation, so does the church legitimately use pictures and imagery.

Through the use of visual arts, and electronic visual media, the Word of God is mediated in fuller expression. Using visuals in worship is a way to rebalance our need for word, and our need for image, as mediators of God's revelation to humanity.

Theology is theophany, theophany is theology. Word and light are joined to one another in an interactive dynamic. Biblical narrative weaves this theme throughout its stories.

The interplay of light and word begins in Genesis 1:3, "Then God said, 'Let there be light...'" Light is called into being by the creative word of God. Light emerges in relationship with God, with darkness, with heaven and earth. Similarly, the Gospel of John pairs word and light, "And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory...full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

At the burning bush, Moses is engaged both by light (the fiery bush) and God's voice, the word. In the great stories of the exodus from Egypt are many dramatic examples of God acting through light and sound. At Sinai, there is lightning, thunder, the blast of a trumpet, and a voice. (Exod. 19:18-19) At the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus, the voice of God is paired with light playing off of the figures of a dove at the baptism and of the prophets Moses and Elijah during the transfiguration. The interplay of light and word is evident in Paul's conversion. On the way to Damascus, a bright light and a questioning voice encourage Saul's conversion: "Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven

flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice..." (Acts 9:3-4)

Later Paul writes, "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6)

To bring together Word and Light in worship by using electronic visual resources, paired again as they have been since the dawn of creation and throughout important biblical stories, can effect a richer evangelism and teaching ministry.

Theology that includes multi-sensory phenomena opens a deeper and wider experience of God's revelatory Word, a Word that is known in word and images. Worship that engages spoken and written word and still and moving visual imagery assists in our honoring and glorifying God.

[Portions of this article appeared in Church Worship and in a 1997 Doctor of Ministry thesis, "Using Video Resources in the Worship Setting."]

*" Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message and translate it into colours, shapes and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen. It does so without emptying the message itself of its transcendent value and its aura of mystery." John Paul II*

*Theology disclosed and revealed through the senses is prominent in biblical narrative.*

*Protestants have emphasized the creative power of word and deemphasized the creative power of image.*

## WORSHIP: EXPECTING SOMETHING TO HAPPEN

Psalms 131 is a song that people sang on their way to the temple in Jerusalem: as they climbed the hill, some struggling in the hot sun, they sang, and in the singing, they anticipated the holy place and the holy encounter with God:

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,  
my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvelous for me.  
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.  
O Israel, hope in the Lord  
from this time on  
and forever more.

Seeing this scripture again, we see that worshiping takes effort. It's not a form of entertainment where we just sit back, and when we leave, we say, "oh, wasn't that music beautiful?" Or, "oh, wasn't that sermon exquisite?"

When we come to church to worship, what happens there happens best when we come expecting something to happen. You have to bring your self in. You can't leave your self at home and come to worship in body only. We have to come; ready to give it our full attention, ready to participate fully as we can, ready to notice God.

Worship is not something that happens around us, or on the outside of us...it is something that has to happen on the inside. We have to prepare, make an effort; we have to be expectant and observant.

People in ancient Greece traveled to a temple at Delphi to speak with the Oracle. The Oracle lived in the Temple and served as the mouthpiece of the great god Apollo. People went to Delphi to bring their questions about personal problems, questions about their families, and questions about national and international crises. Those who came were looking for guidance, not answers, because the oracle never gave clear instructions. Those who came took a long trip to the temple nestled amid the beautiful Greek hills overlooking the

Aegean Sea. On this journey, it is said that the people coming with their questions would think about the god Apollo and all of his attributes...light, insight, radiance, healing, order, elegance, and beauty...and would begin to anticipate the encounter they were going to have.

Rollo May, in his description of this anticipation, wrote how the worshiper's "...conscious intentions and his deeper intentionality would be already committed to the event about to take place. For the one who participates in them, symbols and myths carry their own healing power."

Their anticipation would help them develop a commitment to the event that was to take place. Anticipation grew an expectation that something would happen. Those who sought guidance brought their hopes along, and their faith. When they asked the question that plagued their hearts, they received a cryptic message from the oracle, something requiring the individual to do their own thinking and interpreting. The oracle never gave a clear answer. Each person who came to the oracle was expected to freely respond and interpret the message received. Each person had to put themselves wholeheartedly into the encounter...these were not passive viewers and listeners, but active participants. The questioner heard the advice, and then was called upon to think fresh about his or her situation, using every creative and imaginative bone in their body.

This process describes what happens in worship. We must come expectantly. We must come ready to be actively involved. We must come ready to uncover the treasures we seek, knowing that God expects us to put an effort into it. Worship can be an hour of special alertness, where we come ready to notice a new detail, something we haven't seen before, or by noticing a feeling in one's self, or the stirring of a new idea that grows out of some word or phrase that is heard.

If we come expecting it to be the same old, and familiar, we will be the same old, familiar self when we leave. Is that the fault of the church, or the preacher? Some might say so, but worship requires the worshiper's active participation. Each worshiper is a weaned child of God (Ps. 131) and that means each is no longer spoon fed but knows how to feed him or herself. God expects maturity in faith and willingness to

grow and change towards what St. Paul called “full manhood” or “full womanhood.”

When we come to worship, everything is in place for an encounter with God:

Sacred space, dedicated to worship  
Architecture and symbol  
A holy time, dedicated to ritual and tradition  
Music and singing  
Opportunities for heart and mind to be engaged with God  
A relationship with a community of faith

But none of this makes a difference without the individual worshiper.

We have to encounter what is presented. We set aside the time. We set aside normal life...to wash and dress and put on special “Sunday clothes” that are set apart for the occasion, to sing, to pray, to read aloud, to listen actively, to pay attention.

We might take a cue from the ancient Greeks, and come to the place of worship with a question. A question about personal matters, or family matters, community life, or national and international issues. Anything and everything that concerns us is fair to lift up to God for guidance.

The guidance that is received will cause us to think. We have to bear responsibility. God doesn’t hand over the answer in a vacuum, but comes only to those who are receptive, who are waiting, who are developing their spiritual awareness, their religious sensibility, and their conscience of faith.

Worship, then, becomes a dynamic interchange between the ones who bring the questions, and the God to whom it is presented.

[Background on the oracle and process are provided by Rollo May in *The Courage To Create* (pp.111ff.).

*I believe that the age of the Screen is at hand. Sight, Sound, and Motion meet Mystery, Sensuality and Intimacy. Get ready to be inspired!” Kevin Roberts*

*When we come to worship, everything is in place for an encounter with God.*

## Worship Work Group Exercise

Throughout this resource, you’re learning about how to integrate various media into the worship experience at your church. You’re beginning to understand what types of media and technology will be effective in your setting. You’re also starting to plan for various ways to involve others, identifying key roles you would like each to play.

A helpful step to take at this stage of the process is to create a “touchstone” to symbolize the core beliefs your church holds true in how you “do” worship.

Think about your worship congregation. Why do they come to worship at your church? What are they looking for? What do they expect to receive? What will they expect to give in time and talent? Try to identify the top 3-4 commonly held values or expectations your congregation has about worship in the life of your church. Write them down. Next, write three or four phrases or sentences that describe how media might advance each of these values.

Next, create a visual picture or symbol to represent your statements as a whole. Combine all of these elements together into a graphical representation of your church’s core understandings about worship. This becomes your touchstone, which will help guide your work in developing media-enhanced worship at your church. You may wish to share this image with church leadership and other key groups to help broaden the support and understanding of this venture.

# Four Books and Three Websites: Seven Essential Resources

What follows are reviews of current books and websites that will be useful to pastors wanting to use digital technologies to promote the mission of the church. The works cited are offered as helpful guides into the practical and theological issues of the use of such technologies.

## Book Resources

Susan J. White, *Christian Worship and Technological Change*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

While this book has been around for more than a decade, it is a starting point for anyone wishing to address the church's use, and resistance to, a wide variety of technological developments. Susan White's work is an important survey of the church's response to many of history's important technological innovations. Avoiding promoting one technology over another, her goal is to show how the church's adoption of various technological innovations shaped worship and liturgy. White concludes that technological progress is inevitable, and it is always a free choice whether to see a new technology as something that will help the church accomplish its mission.

She points out that churches quickly adopted most technological innovations as they were developed, resulting in the widespread use of things not now considered to be "technology," such as duplicating and copy machines, anything working with electricity, mass produced hymnals and bibles, and a wide variety of musical technologies. Those still bound to the expectation of a one hour worship service will find her discussion of the liturgical implications of the invention of the clock to be quite amusing!

White also discusses how 19th century bio-tech research would eventually result in many churches replacing wine with grape juice in communion, quickly changing a 1900 year tradition of using wine with the sacrament.

As we find ourselves awash in a sea of quickly chang-

ing technologies, White reminds us that this is nothing new for the church. In some ways her book provides us the small comfort of knowing we join a long line of church leaders faced with similar dilemmas: to decide when and how to use, or not to use, the products of technical progress.

John P. Jewell, *Wired For Ministry: How the Internet, Visual Media, and Other New Technologies Can Serve Your Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004.

Jewell organizes his material around three main themes helpful to church professionals as they seek to understand and integrate new technologies into education, evangelism, mission, administration, and worship: 1) to be aware "of the pitfalls of the new technologies in the life of the Christian community 2) to "develop a knowledge of the promise of new technologies that can facilitate and enrich ministry" and 3) "to develop a working strategy for the implementation of the best practices for the integration of technology in ministry."

Using terms such as "technolust," "technostress" and "technobabble," Jewell is clear in his critique of the church's use of tools of this digital age, while simultaneously showing how the church can embrace these means for reaching out.

Through a series of short chapters, Jewell provides a thorough survey of the issues that must be mapped out when considering such things as communicating with today's "Net Generation" of children and youth, starting an Internet ministry for visibility and evangelism, building an online learning system for your church, or what authentic screen-based worship might be like. Ever interested in integrating technology and ministry, Jewell offers the balanced perspective pastors will appreciate.

While much of what he suggests is not new to church people aware of recent technological developments, what is new is that today's technological tools are even more affordable than they ever were. Jewell also has a good eye for what he calls "the fit" of technical skill, technological tool, and congregational sensibilities and needs.

Tex Sample, *Powerful Persuasion: Multimedia Witness in Christian Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.

Tex Sample's latest book is a real treat to read. Always autobiographical in his approach, and rooted in a

teaching and writing ministry, he embraces technologies which provide a full use of multi-sensory and multimedia experiences in worship. What I appreciate most is not only this embrace, but also his theological reflections on the urgency of this embrace. Few commentators have given this a more readable treatment. Without straying into dry theological formulas, Sample manages to keep his material lively, informative, and compelling. The stated focus of his book is to answer the question, “how can the church use multisensory and multimedia rhetoric in ways that are intrinsic to, or compatible with, faith?”

What he provides are some really good answers. “The use of multisensory and multimedia rhetoric requires a craft knowing of the uses of image, sound, beat, light, move, and dance in the emergent culture and how they serve in the representation and presentation of God’s story.” He calls for “faithful experimentation” to learn this new “craft” as part of the “prophetic work of the church” to be “an alternative community of faith able to love the world but also able to oppose it and to call it into question.” For Sample, the use of media technologies is to serve the progressive witness of God’s story of justice, peace, and love in a broken world. Those considering using visual arts and products of popular culture in worship, or those already doing so, will benefit from Sample’s foundational theological work.

Tom Mucciolo and Rich Mucciolo, *Purpose, Movement, Color: A Strategy for Effective Presentations* New York: MediaNet, Inc. 1994.

This short, 71-page book offers pastors and lay teams everything they need to consider when presenting computer-enhanced, screen-based messages. Using research on the impact of color and shape on the human mind, speaker placement in relationship to the screen, and the power of purposeful communication, the writers concisely explain the basics for electronic presentations. “By establishing a central theme, by paying close attention to layout and design elements, and by incorporating color into the presentation, your chances for a successful event dramatically increase.”

The book covers the importance of graphic symbols for anchoring the eye to your slides, and the use of geometric shapes (such as arrows) to lead the viewer to a certain expected or unexpected bit of content. In a section about emotions and background color, vari-

ous emotional responses are linked to the colors one chooses as slide backgrounds: red heightens emotion, blue indicates a conservative approach, green stimulates interaction, etc. Citing research studies, the writers back up assertions on how men and women respond to various colors.

Another helpful section of the book gives specific advice for those accompanying their verbal presentations with visuals. For example, the authors recommend that the screen is to the speaker’s left side (or on the right side from the audience or congregation’s perspective). The reason given for this is that we read from left to right, so the viewers’ eyes move easily from the speaker standing to the left of the screen to the material being shown on the screen.

While this book was written many years before most in the church were presenting sermons and liturgy with screens in the sanctuary, the basic principles still apply.

## Internet Resources

<http://www.marcprensky.com/>

This next resource is helpful to those wishing to understand the impact of digital technologies on today’s children and youth, and how teachers (and preachers) need to find new ways to communicate with today’s “digital natives.”

Marc Prensky is an educator who creates videogame-based training tools designed to teach today’s technically fluent children, youth, and young adults. In his ground-breaking article, “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants”, Prensky coins the term “digital natives” to refer to those who are natural users of computers, video games, and the Internet. Those not born into this digital world he calls “digital immigrants” who, while using much of today’s technology, retain an “accent” because they were born before the advent of home computers, cell phones, and the Internet. Prensky maintains that today’s educational challenge is for the digital immigrants teaching in classrooms (and preaching in our churches) to find ways to effectively reach out to the “natives” in our midst.

At his website, Prensky offers downloadable versions of his many articles about today’s youth and how they think differently, and how their brains are changed as a result of their use of digital technologies. When navigating his website, click on “Writings” to go to a

number of his free articles, including those with practical suggestions for developing effective teaching and learning strategies.

Prensky says that while today's teachers (and preachers) do not need to master all the new technologies to be effective presenters, we do need to involve the digital natives by listening to them on how they might teach (or preach) the material, and to enlist them in helping design their learning instruction.

What I like about Prensky is that he has given us a way to understand the shift that has been taking place ever since the development of the radio, the camera, the moving picture, and television: those who use these media are affected by them. Prensky discusses how the "digital" world of technology is changing human brains. If brains are being changed, and if multiple generations of people are now shaped by electronically-delivered content, how does the church harness this force for the sake of the gospel?

<http://www.hollywoodjesus.com/>

David Bruce's web contribution is to affirm the presence of the gospel in today's films. Using the slogan, "Pop culture with a spiritual point of view," the website provides reviews of films currently showing at theaters as well as DVD's available for rental and purchase. Each review offers a synopsis of the film's story line and then adds commentaries from Christian writers sharing their perspectives and uncovering scriptural references, theological themes, and "what to look for."

I find the site very useful when I have a hunch there might be sermon material in a film that I am either looking to rent or going to the theater to see. For example, with the entire media buzz" surrounding a film like "The Da Vinci Code", HJ offered plenty of study resources and interpretive guidance. David Bruce, webmaster and founder of the site, loves film and has made a contribution for those searching for deeper spiritual meanings in films.

That said, his website is more than a film database. Dozens of reviewers discuss current TV shows, music, fiction and nonfiction books, and comic books, all with an eye towards their spiritual contribution. You can stay current by reading Blogs, listening to podcasts, or getting RSS feeds sent to your email address. HJ

is a great starting point for church leaders wishing to understand and reflect upon the many messages communicated through today's popular culture.

<http://www.textweek.com>

This website is well known to many clergy as a starting point for weekly sermon preparation. While organized by lectionary text, the site offers the capacity to search for specific scripture passages, making it helpful to those not particularly bound to using the lectionary. The website is full of resources including sample sermons, illustrations, stories, primary sources and bible translations.

Of particular interest to those using projection technologies are the art and movie concordances. Works of art are searchable by their connection to scripture passages and themes, and are presented in chronological order with the oldest art listed at the top of the page and the newest works at the bottom. This information is helpful for those looking for either more classical or more contemporary art.

The movie concordance also lists films and scene descriptions by their connection to lectionary texts and themes. Unfortunately with most descriptions there is little guidance for where to find the scene in the film. It is left to the reader to watch the film, find the scene, and preview the content for its suitability in one's worship setting. While this isn't the best solution for those hoping for a reference to quickly-found DVD chapters and minute marks, textweek still provides a stimulating starting point for finding film clips appropriate to lectionary scripture passages.

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*"...the revolution in new media, which most persons assume is only about computers and the Internet, is not really about computers as such: it is about a reorganization of all knowledge." Kim Veltman*

# Copyright Law and Church Use of Media Arts Resources

This section is meant to help worship leaders recognize the legal and ethical requirements of U.S. copyright law, and to help you demonstrate an awareness of the intricacies of copyright law, while understanding the unique application to educational and worship settings.

Churches, like everyone else, must comply with U.S. Copyright Law. While not a “roadblock” to the use of multimedia in worship, U.S. Copyright Law is a “speed bump” that forces us to slow down and think about how we will legally and ethically use copyrighted material.

Copyright law in the digital age is a subject of debate as well as legal scrutiny. The Internet has made it possible for people to share texts, images, video clips, whole films, and music---and has opened up many disputes about ownership of this material, and what may be copied, when, to what extent, and at what cost.

It is easy to “Google” for imagery, music, and video, to download the material, and yet to have no idea your legal basis for doing so. When you choose to use material you have not created in a presentation you are creating, it is good to know your ethical and legal boundaries.

## Summary of Copyright Law and Media Arts

1. U.S. Copyright law governs all use of copyrighted material. Churches must comply with the law. Many websites offer the full text of Title 17, the Copyright Act of 1976, along with helpful discussions about various details of the law and how they may be applied. All churches and their leaders should be aware of how their church measures up to the law’s requirements.

2. The law allows “certain performances and displays...in the course of services at a place of worship” but other church settings require proper permissions and/or licenses. Blanket licenses for church music and for showing motion pictures are advised for the

broadest possible coverage under the law. ASCAP and BMI advise that their recordings may be played during worship. On its website, ASCAP advises churches that “Permission is not required for music played or sung as part of a worship service unless that service is transmitted beyond where it takes place (for example, a radio or television broadcast).” BMI has confirmed the same in private correspondence.

3. “Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia” provide voluntary guidance for the amount of such material that may be used, the amount of time material may be stored before specific permissions are required, and for proper crediting of sources of material.

## The Worship Exemption

US Code Section 110 provides specific limitations to the exclusive rights of copyright holders, and exempts certain performances and displays. Section 110 (3) of the code applies directly to the use of worship multimedia. Under this section of the law, churches are granted an “exemption of certain performances and displays...in the course of services at a place of worship...” This includes “...display of a work in the course of services at a place of worship or other religious assembly...” This worship exemption is a “narrow exemption” and must be carefully applied.

While the exemption allows for the use of certain material during worship, the provision does not apply to any other aspect of church life, such as educational (e.g. church school or youth groups), and social occasions. For example, if you wish to show an entire movie to a youth group or other educational or social gathering in the church, you need to have a license (see license information below).

## Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia

In 1996, the Subcommittee on Courts and Intellectual Property, Committee on the Judiciary, U. S. House of Representatives consulted with hundreds of publishers, software companies, professional associations, organizations, libraries, governmental agencies, and educational institutions about the meaning of U.S.



Copyright Code for educators wishing to use protected material in classrooms.

This consortium of interested parties agreed upon certain “Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia” whose purpose was to “provide more specific guidelines that educators could follow and be reasonably sure that they would not be in violation of the copyright law.”

A final report was issued in November of 1998 to offer “guidance on the application of the fair use exemption by educators, scholars and students in creating multimedia projects that include portions of copyrighted works, for their use in noncommercial educational activities, without having to seek the permission of copyright owners.”

While the guidelines are not legally binding, they “represent an agreed upon interpretation of the fair use provisions of the Copyright Act by the overwhelming majority of institutions and organizations affected by educational multimedia.”

As you have begun to realize, while churches are not specifically mentioned under these “Fair Use Guidelines for Educational Multimedia,” these voluntary guidelines can provide churches with guidance for their use of multimedia in worship. These Fair Use Guidelines are the only guidance we’ll have, as I don’t think Congress is soon going to be passing a law to give churches specific guidance on their use of media arts in worship!

The guidelines specify the portion of a work that may be included in a multimedia project. The rule of thumb is about 10% of a given work, whether it is print, movie, video, music video, or photographic images.

For example, they provide for using:

- Up to 10% or 1000 words of text
- Up to 10% or 3 minutes of movies or video
- 10% but not more than 30 seconds of music, lyrics, and music video [however, ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) and BMI say that churches may play entire songs “as part of a worship service”.)
- Not more than 10% or 15 images from a single source.

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT----

### Music:

LicenSing provides a license to use copyright cleared music for worship. Logos Productions, 1-800-328-0200.

CCLI is another music-licensing company <http://www.cvli.org/cvli/index.cfm>

If you are using music from popular recording artists from formats like CD or MP3, the recording artists’ licensing agencies ASCAP and BMI affirm your use of such material “in the course of services at a place of worship.” Check out ASCAP’s website for licensing information and their view of the church worship exemption to copyright law: <http://www.ascap.com/licensing/licensingfaq.html>

### Movies:

Motion picture/video licenses and music licenses are available from CCLI, <http://www.cvli.org/cvli/index.cfm> or the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation, [www.mplc.com](http://www.mplc.com)

The license you buy is based on the size of your church and usually costs around \$100 a year. The license allows you to show feature-length commercial videos produced and distributed by certain companies for use under certain conditions. These licenses apply beyond the worship setting and cover use in other social and educational contexts.

The Fair Use Guidelines provide that up to 10% or 3 minutes of movies or video may be used (without a license), meaning that clips should be 3 minutes or less in length. You can easily comply with this, since our experience is that clips of 90 seconds or less are often much more attention-getting and focused.

### Video:

Sites like YouTube.com and dailymotion.com offer millions of uploaded videos. They are continually doing the work of assuring copyright compliance and clearance of such material, although it is a constant challenge. When using material from these Internet based sites, citing your source is a good idea, while using your own judgment about material that may be copyright protected such as music videos, television

shows, and movies. More and more film studios, television production companies, and recording artists are providing their material freely and without restriction, so be on the alert for these sources of legally-available material. Clarifications, restrictions, and clearances seem to be released on a daily basis, so pay attention to digital media news!

### Imagery:

Exercise caution when downloading material from the Internet. The Fair Use Guidelines tell us that “Access to works on the Internet does not automatically mean that these can be reproduced and reused without permission or royalty payment and, furthermore, some copyrighted works may have been posted to the Internet without authorization of the copyright holder.”

When using imagery from Internet sources, be sure to see if the website offers the imagery for free or if there are restrictions. Avoid restricted material, or be prepared to ask permission and/or pay a fee for use of this imagery. The Fair Use Guidelines provide the free use of 5 photographic/illustration images or not more than 10% or 15 images from a single source.

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS:

### Develop Your Own Library of Visual Material

One way to avoid having to deal with others' material is to develop your own library of visual arts. Accumulate digital photographs and label and organize them around theological theme and scriptural reference. Scan 35 mm slides you already own into digital files and store them along with other photographs. Be on the lookout for original artworks from artists you know, and ask permission to use their material in future presentations. Carry a camera with you at all times, and ask others to do the same, so that you can add to your database of images. Learn how to use photo enhancement features so that you can turn some of your digital photos into colorful and abstract works of art. Be ready to turn some of your color images into grayscale or black and white to experiment with mood and other effects. Adding to your personal and church visual library will provide you with a storehouse of material you legally own and control.

### Include This On a Slide or In Your Worship Bulletin

An announcement declaring your awareness and observance of U.S. Copyright Law needs to be included in your program. A good place to put a PowerPoint slide with this information is in the announcements before the worship, or at the end of your presentation. Printing it in any worship bulletin is also a good idea for those who may have missed the material during the slide presentation.

This language, or something similar, should be sufficient (as long as you've actually done this!):

“Certain materials used in this worship service are provided in accordance with U.S. Copyright Act Section 110 (3) exemption “in the course of services at a place of worship.” They have been prepared using the “Fair Use Guidelines For Educational Multimedia” and are restricted from further use.”

### Learn More About Copyright Law

Go to the Copyright Management Center materials from Indiana University and Purdue at <http://www.copyright.iupui.edu/quickguide.htm>  
Stanford University has an extensive website dedicated to these issues at <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/>  
The full text of the Fair Use Guidelines may also be found posted by the Consortium of College and University Media Centers at <http://www.adec.edu/admin/papers/fair10-17.html>

For a good print resource on churches and copyright law, get Richard Hammar's The Church Guide to Copyright Law . While Hammar does not specifically address the issue of media arts and worship, he does provide specific guidance about the church's legal obligations and rights pertaining to music, print resources, video-taping, broadcasting, and re-broadcasting.

*“The great moments of civilization... come when cultures are open to other cultures, when they recognize that it is only by sharing that they can grow, grow richer in experience, and become something more than they were.” Kim Veltman*

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