



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

## Worship Resources: Frequently Asked Questions

### How can video projection be used in worship?

*The worship staff receives a number of similar inquiries on worship-related topics from across the church.*

*These responses should not be considered the final word on the topic, but useful guides that are to be considered in respect to local context with pastoral sensitivity.*

*The response herein may be reproduced for congregational use as long as the web address is cited on each copy.*

In churches today, video projection equipment is increasingly becoming as common as audio reinforcement (60% of churches according to a [2005 Calvin Institute of Christian Worship survey](#)). The prevalence of video projection in the church is due to several factors: its crossover from the business world, decreasing costs of technology, and the mega church movement. Its role in worship is to serve the liturgy (as opposed to the liturgy being warped to serve the video projection).

#### **Principles for Worship, Application S-15A**

“The use of audiovisual elements in worship requires careful consideration. Such media are desirable when they enhance rather than replace essential congregational action. Their function of assisting the assembly’s participation in worship through the visual arts may include providing the color and form of seasonal artwork. Because of the many ramifications of the use of this technology in worship, careful integration must be assured. Technological equipment (sound boards, light systems, microphones, speakers, cameras, projectors, video screens) is most effective when it does not impair liturgical movement, obscure primary symbols (meal, preaching, baptism), or adversely affect the design of the space and its worship. Sound reinforcement, when necessary, is held in careful balance with natural acoustics. The effective use of media and technology often calls for particular skills and training.”

#### **The new stained glass**

The video screen has become the new stained glass in 21st Century churches. One of the functions of stained glass in centuries past was to provide instruction and impart the biblical narrative to those who were illiterate. Video projection offers the same functional opportunities: to beautifully communicate God’s story in a visual medium.

We live in a visual culture. The common currency for communication has shifted from text to images. One only needs to observe the rows of icons on the screen of any smart phone to exemplify this. However, our worshipping assemblies are centered on text and Word. “Music, the visual arts, and the environment of our worship spaces embody the

proclamation of the Word in Lutheran churches” ([The Use of the Means of Grace](#), Principle 11). “It’s not either image, or text. It’s both/and, image and text. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus was a man (image) living among us. He was also text (the Word become flesh)” (Leonard Sweet, *The Gospel According to Starbucks*, p. 107). Churches can think in limited terms about the possibilities of video projection.

### **Possible functions of video projection in worship**

There are many different functional uses of video projection in worship. As a core function, video projection should be used for enhancing the environment for worship. In serving the liturgy, it should not be distracting but aide the space for worship as the body of Christ gathers. “In the worship space, beauty is a portal to the mystery of God” (Principles for Worship, Principle S-20). Video projection offers an opportunity to bring beauty into the space for worship. Through images of scenic landscapes, ancient stones, and flowing waters for example, video projection can complement a sense of worship and mystery. Works of art can also be displayed to draw the assembly into reverence and contemplation. A repertoire including the most ancient works of art is suddenly available for our services. Photographs taken by a parishioner and drawings from younger members of the congregation can express the unique context of the assembly. Images from our global partners and the church across the world can increase our awareness of the communion of saints in all places.

Environmental projection is the concept of using video projection on surfaces that surpass the screen. The scale is often much larger. Images can be projected onto entire walls or even a building’s exterior side. Plain surfaces can be transformed into something entirely different through environmental projection. Video projection can also enhance the church’s marking of time through various seasonal representations. The projection of symbols and colors tied to the church’s calendar can highlight our ritual feasts, fasts, and celebrations.

Image magnification is another use of video projection suited for larger worship spaces. With additional camera equipment, live video of worship can be displayed on a screen for people in the back of a large space or in areas with obstructed views. This technology is especially useful for showing choirs and musicians in a loft or during baptisms.

Along with photography, video content can be projected in worship. There are many creative video elements available online that present prayer, scripture, and other content in fresh, engaging ways. A video team from the congregation or synod could be created to find where God is at work and capture the story on video for sharing with others. Testimonies and other special messages could be video recorded for display at multiple services.

Displaying the textual content of worship is another function of video projection. The text of hymns, prayers, scripture readings, and all other liturgical elements can be projected for ease of viewing. Projecting the text is beneficial for many people in worship. Projection benefits parents with children who cannot juggle hymnals and other printed materials. Projection benefits the elderly who cannot read smaller print. Projection benefits the disabled who cannot lift hymnals and other printed materials for a sustained time. Projection also lifts the assembly’s posture during singing and allows the body freedom for the gestures of worship.

Particular skills and training are needed to do video projection well. There are also associated costs upfront as well as long term. If done poorly and without excellence, video projection has the potential to be detrimental to the assembly and worship. There is need for professionalism in how the video presentations are prepared as well as how they are executed. Just as with music, licensing is also required for the projection of some video content. Christian Video Licensing (CVLI) is one organization that provides licensing for the use of some video. Photography projected in worship should also be used responsibly by giving credit to the photographer and following any terms of use.

## RESOURCES

### [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

- ↪ How can technology help lead congregational singing?
- ↪ How do we use the body in worship?
- ↪ How does worship involve all our senses?
- ↪ What are some considerations on art and environment for worship?

### [Resources Available for Download on the ELCA Website](#)

- 📄 Principles for Worship. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002. (Available in English and Spanish)
- 📄 *The Use of the Means of Grace: A Statement on the Practice of Word and Sacrament*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997. (Available in English and Spanish)

### [Resources Available from Augsburg Fortress](#)

- 📖 Crowley, Eileen D. *A Moving Word: Media Art in Worship*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006.
- 📖 *Leading Worship Matters: A Sourcebook for Preparing Worship Leaders*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2013.





### [Other Resources](#)

- 📖 Herring, Brad. *Sound, Lighting and Video: A Resource for Worship*. Burlington: Focal Press, 2009.
- 📖 Hipps, Shane. *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- 📖 McElroy, Luke. *Environmental Projection: The Collision of Modern Technology and Sacred Spaces*. Nashville: SALT Conferences, 2016.
- 📖 Proctor, Stephen. *Leading Visual Worship*. Ebook available at <http://illuminate.us/>
- 📖 Schultze, Quentin J. *High-Tech Worship?: Using Presentational Technologies Wisely*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004.
- 📖 Wilson, Len and Jason Moore. *The Wired Church 2.0*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008.

### Photography and Graphic Internet Resources

-  Unsplash.com (<http://www.unsplash.com>)
-  Sundays and Seasons.com (<http://www.SundaysAndSeasons.com>) (this site requires a subscription)
-  Ignite Media.com (<http://www.ignitermedia.com>)
-  Church Media Drop.com (<http://www.churchmediadrop.com>)
-  Text Week.com/art (<http://www.textweek.com/art/art.htm>)
-  Canva.com (<http://www.canva.com>)

### Video Internet Resources

-  The Work of the People (<http://www.twotp.com>)
-  Motion Loops.com (<http://www.motionloops.com>)
-  Sermon Spice.com (<http://www.sermonspice.com>)
-  Shift Worship.com (<http://www.shiftworship.com>)