

Data Projection Guidelines for Its Use in Public Worship

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Background

1. Following the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, western churches became increasingly dependent on printed liturgical texts to cultivate common memory and to provide order and uniformity in the worship life of the church. The Lutheran Hymnal and Supplement, as well as other printed liturgical texts, have been central in serving this function in the LCA. Moreover, they have sustained generations of believers through their use in pastoral catechesis, personal prayer, and family devotions.
2. On the other hand, these texts, located in a number of books and pamphlets, have sometimes been thought to complicate easy participation in worship. Ideally, worshippers should be able to engage in the prayers, readings, and ritual exchanges of the service with an attentive, yet 'care-free' receptivity. There is concern for those who seem to be 'lost', apparently needing to handle an increasing number of books, inserts, and bulletins simply to keep up with the progression of the service.
3. In this light, any move that allows both regular worshippers and the visitor to engage more actively with intellect, heart and body in the service may be viewed as a welcome step.

Data projection

1. Many congregations are looking to electronic data projection as a way of making participation in the service easier. In most cases the church welcomes useful arts and technologies that are seen to support the worship life of its people. The employment of various forms of data projection to this end may present a limited, but positive tool.
2. Like other electronic media, however, data projection is not without its potential drawbacks. There is first of all the possible impoverishment of ritual dynamics: liturgical responses and exchanges can end up being directed to a screen or wall rather than the pastor or worship leader. Use of data projection can engender a certain passivity on the part of congregational participants, similar to what studies have shown happens with watching television.
3. Another problem lies in the danger of 'technopoly': the unhealthy hegemony of electronic technology and our slavish dependence upon it. Computer driven data projection can be costly to set up, yet remains liable to malfunction.
4. Finally, unlike the words in printed books, projected data is instantaneous and disincarnate: one cannot dwell upon the words it projects. It cannot be meditated

on, taken home, or gradually assimilated through daily devotions. A further consideration is that it can be time consuming to prepare and complicated to use. As with any liturgical innovation, one must ask: Is it necessary? Is it beneficial? What alternatives exist?

Guidelines

The following guidelines have been prepared for congregations that have weighed up the questions about data projection, evaluated their findings with respect to their local situation, and have decided to implement it, perhaps first on a trial basis. They aim to guide planning and use of data projection in a way that minimises its potential negative effects and enhances people's focus on the objects of the service.

- Use of data projection in public worship should be viewed as a supplement to, not a replacement of, existing literary and common oral liturgical resources.
- Regular (annual) evaluation of its impact upon ritual exchange and liturgical formation is essential to its continued use and regulation.
- Placement and operation of the system should be as unobtrusive as possible.
- The projector is best suspended from the ceiling or mounted on a wall bracket, not situated on the floor or on a stand in the nave.
- Projection may be onto a wall or screen located to the side and back of the eastern (front) wall. The altar, sanctuary and its furnishings should remain the dominant focal points of the sacred space.
- PC set-up and operation should take place in an inconspicuous location behind the view of worshippers.
- Slide content should be limited to text and (where necessary) musical score. All should be of standardised font, style, and size.
- Consideration should be given as to what colour, size, and type of font work best for people with visual impairment or colour blindness. Bright text on a uniform black background generally works best.
- Pictures or non-text images, still or animated, are probably best avoided except as teaching aids.
- Use of projected data should be kept to a minimum, and limited to hymn/song texts, congregational prayers, and creeds. Simple and common ritual exchanges, well-known prayers or liturgical responses, minister's sung or spoken parts need not be projected. Avoid undue use of headings or rubrics.
- Blank slides between 'active slides', that is, when words are not immediately being spoken, help ensure that the screen does not receive undue attention.
- Use of projection technology should be well rehearsed and operated by trained personnel.
- Copyright law should be observed at all times.

Further References

Darren Kupke, 'Designing a PowerPoint Presentation' (2005)

Darren Kupke, 'Operating a PowerPoint Slide Show' (2005)

Andrew Ruddell, 'The Use of Visual Media Technology in Liturgical Worship' (2004)

Quentin Schultze, 'Worship Projections: Be Wise when Using Worship Technology', *The Lutheran* (June, 2004, ELCA); or online at
(<http://www.thelutheran.org/0406/page32.html>)

Quentin Schultze, *High-Tech Worship: Using Presentational Technologies Wisely*
(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2004)

Paul Smith, 'Data Projection at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Toowoomba' (2005)