

New Space, AVL Upgrades Add Up to Growth for South Carolina Church

Andres Caamano | Sep 13, 2016



In the two weeks after the church's AVL install was completed, the contemporary service congregation doubled.

LEXINGTON, S.C. As one of the oldest Methodist churches in the state, [Mt. Horeb United Methodist Church](#) completed a massive overhaul of its audio, video and lighting systems in mid-July, all part of a new building project.

Dating back to 1894, the church has experienced steady growth in its congregation over the 23 years that Senior Pastor Jeff Kersey has served there, standing at around 80 during the mid-90s, to having grown to about 2,200 today.

Even with that notable growth, a good chunk of it occurred in the short span of two weeks of services following the completed AVL install work done by [AE Global Media](#), based in Charlotte, N.C. Much of that change at Mt. Horeb was tied to the growth in their contemporary service, from 700 to 1,400, making it almost singlehandedly responsible for the overall increase from 1,600, since the new space opened on Saturday, July 16.

As noted by AE Global Media President & CEO Donnie Haulk, "(Senior) Pastor (Kersey) wanted to reach the next generations, and to build a new space that was versatile. (The previous space) naturally did not lend itself to anything but traditional type of worship."

The resulting boost in the congregation size was a surprise for Kersey, who said, "After two weeks, we doubled our attendance in contemporary worship, which blew us away. We were not expecting that."

Mt. Horeb and AE Global Media began working on the space's audio, video and lighting needs in early 2014, to where the technology design integration firm worked in the space for about 12 months on the AVL install. Despite the extensive project, Kersey indicated that the church had no service cancellations or delays, with the most significant curveball he could recall being a requirement "to put in smoke vents by the fire marshal, but otherwise they got the work done on schedule."

The scope of AE Global Media's install included [d&b audiotechnik](#) line arrays, three projection screens (a pair that are each 16-feet by 9-feet, positioned left and right, and a 10-foot by 28-foot center screen), [Digital Projection](#) projectors, [Panasonic AJ-PX380 P2 HD](#) cameras, a [DiGiCo](#) console, wireless DMX controlled LightSource LED lights, [ETC LED lighting fixtures](#), a [Jands Vista L5](#) lighting console, a presentation switcher, and [SSRC distribution bars and theatrical lighting](#).

AE Global worked on the technology design, system design, and consulted with the church to create a pair of standalone systems in Mt. Horeb's multipurpose space, to where, "the coaches don't have to operate the big system (for worship) during their games or tournaments, with access to a simplified system," noted Haulk. "With the push of a button, I can go to a sports venue and to a worship mode."

Kersey also found the two systems to be ideal for their varied purposes in the new space.

"The auditorium space is also a multipurpose room; it's a contemporary worship center, but we can also do basketball in there," said Kersey. "There was a concern whether the room, which was going to have three basketball courts and hold 1,800 people, would be good acoustically, but we nailed it. We can have it look like the Staples Center or a contemporary worship room. To have both types of venues is great. (In addition, Contemporary Christian musician) Jeremy Camp is coming in for a concert, a large contemporary concert, and now we have doubled our capacity."

Beyond the space's flexibility, both Haulk and Kersey highlighted the positive response to the new worship space, particularly the new lighting.

"The things that they are most happy with would be that the worship is so powerful and the second thing is the lighting, bringing the color over the congregation," explained Haulk, while Kersey added, "(AE Global was helpful) in guiding us to create the best atmosphere with the lighting, sound and projection. We are very pleased with all that."

For Mt. Horeb, the church's administration trusted AE Global to guide them on the project, explained Kersey, "because we felt that they had the experience for what we needed. They had been very involved in the Elevation Church in the Charlotte area, so we figured let's bring in someone with that level of expertise."

Among the items making up the AVL install, Haulk noted that the d&b audiotechnik line arrays were a known commodity for the church's staff entering the process.

"The church had attended WFX and went to the shootouts, and they liked the d&b sound, and it was one that our team likes as well it was a preferred sound," he said.

Kersey noted that the budgetary goal was to aim at around 10 percent of the overall project's budget to be dedicated for the space's technological improvements. While recognizing that getting church administrators on board for the overall AVL cost was a bit of a challenge, Kersey added, "it was recognizing what we needed, and how much do we need. We got everything we needed, and the worship people say we got a great product."

While the church, which Gov. Nikki Haley attends, was able to budget for its expansive AVL install project, Haulk noted that since planning for the project began about two years ago, Mt. Horeb nonetheless did have to make a few adjustments accounting for budget to the initial designs.

"We pared down the camera system, the visual presentation system, the lighting a little bit, and the motor system that they initially wanted," explained Haulk. The final result was that "we designed the project with phases in mind. The first phase is what we did, and the congregation and pastor is very happy. We also are doing a phase two application, whenever they are ready to make that happen."

Since the new building has opened, the Mt. Horeb congregation has also been overly enthusiastic with the new space and the technological improvements that were incorporated into it.

"(The reaction) has been very favorable (since opening), to getting the lights and the sound to a place where our people are good with it," said Kersey. "We had several (among the congregation) who were surprised how it turned out, particularly in introducing warm elements to the room, to where it did not feel like a large room. It has been very well received." Among the stories that stood out for Haulk regarding the congregation, was hearing about a "60-plus year old lady, who had been there for generations. She thought it would be just loud and that she would not be enjoying worship (in the new space). Instead she said that it isn't loud, but powerful...it really brings her into worship."

In the nearly two months since the AVL install work was completed in the worship space, Mt. Horeb has only needed AE Global to square away a few minor issues, said Kersey.

"We have had to tune some gear, and we had a lightning strike in our first week," he said. "They've been good at coming back and getting what needs to be done."



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