

# With local consultant, churches make sound investment

By Sylvia Carignan News-Post Staff Sep 22, 2014



Staff photo by Bill Green

Spring Ridge resident Bryan Chaney, right, helps local churches install, train members to operate and maintain sound and visual systems used in their worship services. He is shown recently working with staff at Hope Christian Fellowship Church in Adamstown, where he recently installed a system. Church members, from left, are Roosevelt Harrison, Champal Jordan and Nathaniel Prayer.

Hope Christian Fellowship Church pastor Keith Harris addresses the congregation as a video projector displays the image on a large screen in the sanctuary and in a secondary overflow location in the building. Photo by Bill Green



When Bryan Chaney does his job right, people don't know he's done anything at all.

Chaney, of Spring Ridge, is a sound engineer by trade. He started volunteering his talents at Damascus Road Community Church nearly a decade ago and helped them design their new audio, visual and lighting systems when they moved into a new home in Mount Airy in 2012.

When people heard the quality of the sound at their new church, Chaney said members of other churches started to ask him what they could do to improve theirs. He's served several Frederick County churches as a part-time consultant.

"In concert with being good stewards of members' money and

God's resources ... let's take what you have, and make it sound the best that we can," he said.

In the past few years, he has worked with Redeemer Lutheran Church in Damascus, Monocacy Valley Church in Ijamsville, Centennial Memorial United Methodist Church in Frederick, Hope Christian Fellowship in Adamstown and others.

"I do think more and more churches are becoming aware of this need," said Cindy Kindl, coordinator of sacred music at St. Joseph-on-Carrollton Manor in Buckeystown.

The Catholic church held its first service in its new \$4.6 million building in May.

"For us, the biggest thing was that the sound could be heard equally well in every corner of the building," she said.

That meant putting subwoofers in the rafters and using different kinds of microphones for the pastor, choir and musicians. Kindl's piano is a digital hybrid that looks much like a baby grand, but is connected to the church's sound system.

At Damascus Road Community Church, Sunday services include a video system for announcements and lyrics, theatrical lighting, and a sound system to accommodate a full band with several singers.

Maintaining all that equipment is a team effort and a challenge, said Brian Maddox, director of technical ministries at Damascus Road Community Church, especially when church volunteers are not familiar with professional audio and visual systems.

"Most of the people on my tech teams walked in without any prior experience operating this kind of equipment," he said. "Training is

an ongoing challenge.”

Almost every piece of audio and visual equipment the church has is used every week, and as churches expand, they acquire different needs.

“Breakdowns are inevitable, and keeping things going is a large part of the job of a technical director at a church,” Maddox said. As a consultant, Chaney said he wants to teach church members how to use their equipment, rather than rely on him to run it. “My goal is to teach them how to fish,” he said.

Churches generally work with smaller spaces and fewer resources than people might see at a concert or similar event, making maintenance and setup more difficult, Maddox said. After spending years in professional audio production, Maddox started working with church systems “because it was harder to do.”

“Moving into the church world adds the additional challenge of trying to pull off the same level of production quality, without access to the same resources,” he said.

Compared with the cost of building a new home for St. Joseph-on-Carrollton Manor, the price of a new sound system was “negligible,” Kindl said, but it can be expensive for an established church to install a new one.

“It’s a significant investment, and it’s not one that you want to cut corners on,” she said.

St. Joseph’s has also invested in a system to assist parishioners who are hard of hearing. Three types of receivers are available for them when they arrive for services: a device that can clip onto

their belt that picks up an FM signal; headphones; or a hearing loop that conducts the signal electromagnetically into a cochlear implant.

“It does make a big difference in the quality of their worship to be able to hear,” Kindl said.

The idea came from her father, formerly a pastor at Leisure World, a senior community in Silver Spring. At St. Joseph’s, the hearing assistance devices are used every weekend.

Even for those who aren’t hard of hearing, sound quality has an effect on the church experience. Chaney said church members in particular are picky about their sound.

“They are there every week,” he said.

Chaney runs rehearsals for the services at Hope Christian Fellowship Church in Adamstown. He works with the church’s worship technology team to make sure everything is set for Sunday morning.

“I always say when ‘worship tech’ does their job perfectly, you don’t even notice us,” he said.

Chaney said he had about two weeks to put together audio, visual and lighting systems for the 200-member church. Despite the hard work, he finds rewards.

“Nothing better than seeing a room full of a couple hundred or a couple thousand, with their hands in the air praising God, connecting with the music, the spirit and God, not knowing I had anything to do with it,” he said.

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