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COMMUTING FOR CHRIST

COVENANT FAMILY CHURCH CALLS IN THE PROS TO HELP EXPAND ITS REACH TO A SECOND CAMPUS

» By JACK KONTNEY

Located in College Station, Texas, Covenant Family Church found itself growing steadily, but lacked the space to expand further in its existing facility.

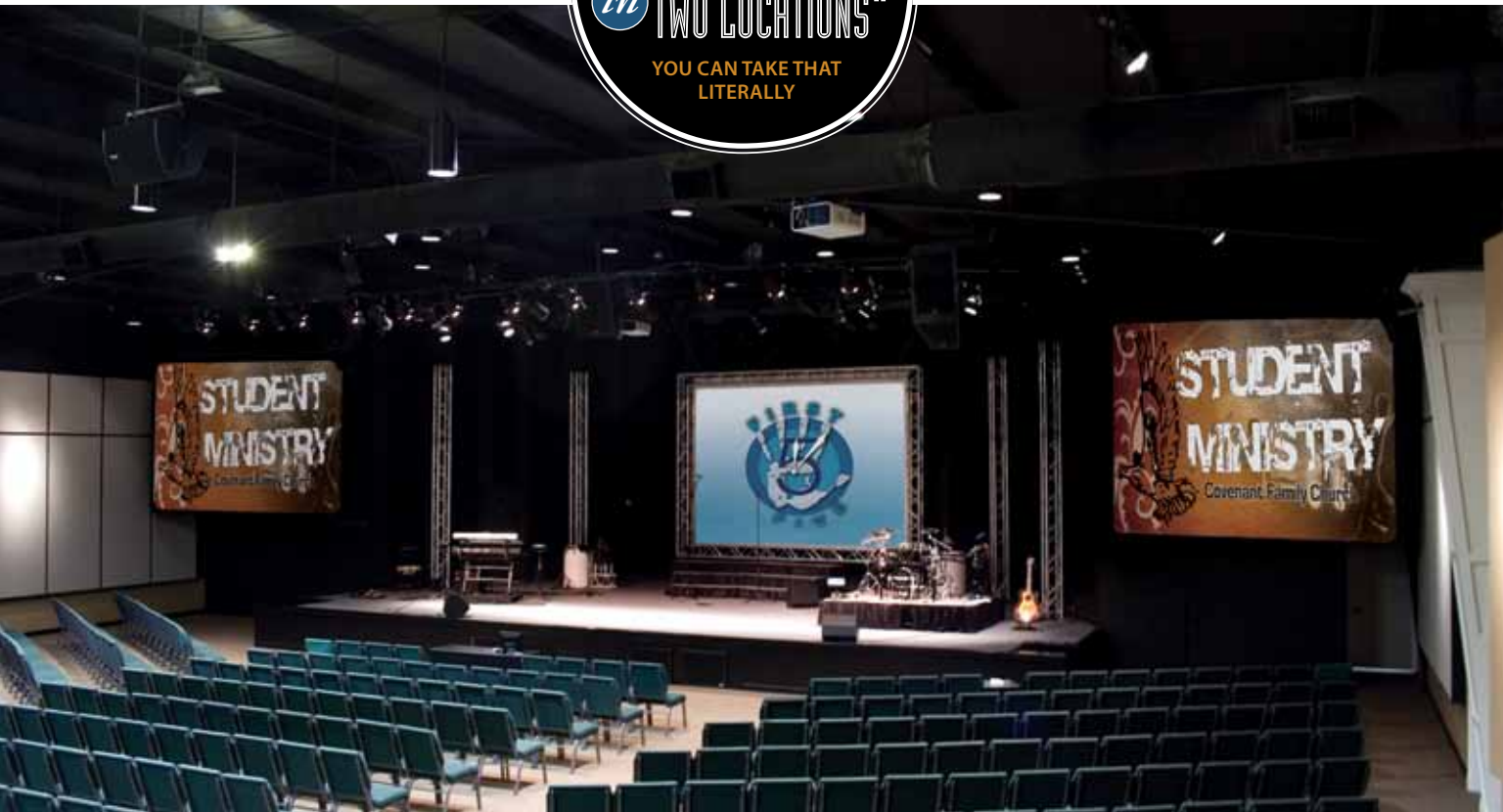
To accommodate its new parishioners, the church decided to open a second facility in nearby Bryan. “The two towns border each other; you wouldn’t know the difference if not for the population signs,” says Communications Pastor Steve Livingston.

Covenant Family describes itself as “one great church in two locations.” But what is interesting is

that the senior pastors, Danny and Janet Green, and key members of the praise team actually commute between locations each Sunday, leading both congregations. Once the praise band finishes their opening music at the 9 a.m. service in College Station, they hop in a car and shuttle to Bryan, where they help open the 10 a.m. service while the pastor delivers the message. And once that’s complete, the pastor travels to Bryan. This game of worshipful musical chairs goes back and forth until all three services—

two in College Station and one in Bryan—have been completed. To coordinate it all, Livingston stays in constant communication with the technical crews by text and phone at both churches to ensure there are no gaps in the service despite the 20-minute commute between facilities.

To enable this unique approach to multi-campus ministry, Covenant Family had to address the need to upgrade its own infrastructure. “Before we added the Bryan campus, we



had always done our own A/V as much as possible," notes Livingston. "This meant buying and installing the best equipment we could afford from places like Sam's Club and Best Buy," notes Livingston. "But adding another whole sanctuary, we knew we were out of our depth, so we did the smart thing and hired some professionals to help us get things right."

Those professionals were the team from AGI Professional, a design-build firm based in

Eugene, Ore., that specializes in the worship market. "We first met the Covenant Family team at a church event in Tacoma around 2005," recalls Steve Diamond, an AGI partner and acoustic designer. "And when they needed our help, three years later, they gave us a call. I flew down to meet with them and we decided to work together. That's how we get a lot of our business—by word of mouth and networking."

BUILDING MODIFICATIONS

The original Covenant Family

Church is a rectangular metal building. The sanctuary within was built up over the years as needed, expanding from seating 150 to its present capacity of 760, including mezzanine and balcony seating. The new facility in Bryan was an empty furniture store, and the plan was to migrate significant parts of the College Station audio-video equipment there while extensively upgrading the main sanctuary.

"There were a lot of issues to address," recalls Kyle Anderson, AGI president and CEO.

PROFESSIONAL UPGRADE

Photo above: The original sanctuary at the College Station, Texas, location had a seating capacity of about 150. Expanded over the years to the current capacity of 760, the technology was added on in a piece-meal, do-it-yourself basis—which often meant installing equipment from Sam's Club or Best Buy. When the church added the Bryan, Texas, campus, the church knew it had to get serious, which meant hiring professionals to install professional A/V equipment.

TAMING THE SPACE

The piece-meal expansion over the years left substantial acoustical issues to be addressed before installing the new sound system. Once the acoustics of the room were tamed (see side panels in photo below), the system designer specified Tannoy VQ100 three-way loudspeakers, two of which include the innovative down-fill attachment for coverage of the seats closest to the stage (photo to right). Tannoy V12HP high-powered loudspeakers are used for side fills.



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“The main sanctuary needed a lot of acoustic work, and they wanted a full audio system, an upgrade to HD video, and the creation of the second campus in Bryan, all within a very tight budget. But that’s what we specialize in.”

The first order of business was to address the room’s acoustical issues. AGI’s lead acoustic designer, Steve Diamond, traveled to College Station to take stock of the situation. “Over the course of their expansion, they had created three completely separate acoustic environments within one room,” he comments. “A big part of the goal was to marry the pieces into one sonic signature. The other thing was to make sure the room wasn’t so controlled that worship died in the space. Our philosophy is to have a very

high-energy environment so the congregation feels very much a part of the worship.”

To accomplish this, Diamond designed the side walls to eliminate the flutter echo they were causing. Installing open railings to replace the sheetrock separating the main floor from the balcony was another important step. The drop ceiling above the balcony was also replaced.

A/V NUTS & BOLTS

With those physical changes in place, AGI set about addressing Covenant Family’s audio and video systems. “We use everything at our disposal to give people a worship experience they can relate to personally,” says Livingston. “But our entire technical crew is volunteer, so we needed a turnkey solution. We also wanted the

same control systems at both locations so that our people could do sound or lights at either College Station or Bryan once they were trained.”

Another key factor was the church’s desire for high technology at a reasonable price. At the main sanctuary in College Station, AGI designed a sound system based on the Tannoy VQ Series speakers. “It was a new speaker that I heard at InfoComm,” says Diamond, “and I was very intrigued. It’s a very efficient design, with high SPL and great sonic transparency and smoothness on the top end. It fit perfectly into the system design for Covenant Family, and was at a great price point for this project.”

The system is based on three bi-amplified VQ 100 three-way speakers spaced above

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the front of the stage to cover the main floor. To maintain even coverage, a set of four Tannoy V12HP speakers are hung just in front of the rise to the mezzanine seats, with a pair of Tannoy V8 speakers supplying energy to the very back of the balcony. A BSS London BLU DSP system provides time alignment from front to back, ensuring the entire congregation receives clear, cohesive sound. The BSS processors also provide some basic room-correction EQ and matrix routing of audio throughout the facility.

To complete the sonic picture, a Tannoy V12HP speaker is hung from both the main left and right VQ100s above the stage to cover the extreme sides at the front of the room. Finally, bass for the entire room is provided by four EAW SB1000 subwoofers, which are housed in concrete vaults beneath the stage. All speakers are powered by QSC Audio PLX Series amplifiers.

On stage, the high-energy contemporary band received some upgrades as well. The preacher and praise band leader use Sennheiser 3000 Series wireless systems with Neumann KMS 104 capsules, while the team of vocalists employs seven Sennheiser G2 evolution wireless handheld systems. Wireless frequencies are coordinated between the two locations so that the pastor can jump from the car to the stage without the need to change bodypacks.

Control for both the house and stage sound

FASTFACTS: BRYAN/COLLEGE STATION, TX



Bryan: Established in 1859 in honor of William Joel Bryan, nephew of Texas pioneer Stephen F. Austin. Incorporated in 1871, Bryan prospered with its robust agricultural resources and a railway system completed in 1876. That same year, the State of Texas established the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas just south of Bryan.

College Station: Planned as a model community by college professors when the college could no longer accommodate their living needs on campus. College Station, named as a railway stop by the Postal Service in 1877, burgeoned in the 1960s when the college opened its doors to women and became Texas A&M University.

Houses of Worship in Area: 142 +

Population of Bryan: 69,396

Population of College Station: 86,480

Population of Brazos County: 285,876

Average Annual Rainfall: 39 inches

Average Elevation: 367 feet above sea level

Average Temperature: 68 degrees

Location: 95 miles north of Houston, 169 miles south of Dallas, 166 miles northeast of San Antonio and 104 miles east of Austin; 75% of the Texas and Louisiana populations, a total of 13.1 million people, reside within 3 1/2 driving hours of B-CS.

City Governments: Council/Manager

Sales Tax: 8.25%

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www.bscs-chamber.org

www.visitaggieland.com



Covenant Family Church recognized the need to standardize equipment between the two locations so staff members could easily operate in both places. For example, both locations have Yamaha M7CL audio mixing consoles, Aviom Pro16 monitor mixing systems and Sennheiser 3000 Series wireless systems. The frequencies are coordinated between the two venues such that the pastor and musicians can use the same mic transmitters and body packs when travelling from one location to the other.

comes from a Yamaha M7CL digital mixing console in both locations. Stage monitoring is a hybrid affair, with six new Aviom Pro16 systems enabled by an Aviom card in the Yamaha console serving the main band, while the vocalists are served by Tannoy V12 and V8 floor wedges.

Another major upgrade for the church was the video system. AGI was charged with finding a cost-effective way to make the move to high-definition production. Two existing Da-Lite cinema screens were augmented by a third unit at the back of the stage, with video provided by three Sanyo PLC-XP100L projectors, chosen for both their image quality and their self-servicing Active Maintenance Filter System, which virtually eliminates the need for regular visits to the church's 30-foot ceiling.

Lighting in College Station is accomplished through conventional PAR fixtures, but AGI upgraded the system by relocating fixtures and cleaning up the wiring. AGI also supplied


a full new system for the new Bryan campus. Lighting control at both locations is provided by an ETC Ion lighting console for Sunday services. In addition, a PRE10-A control system by Doug Fleenor Design provides 10 preset lighting scenes in the room's DMX lighting system so that weddings, funerals and other events can benefit from a professional look without an operator on duty.

Live video is provided by three Sony PMW-EX3 cameras strategically located around the sanctuary, all on tripods with vari-zoom lens controllers. The director sits in a dedicated room, calling camera shots and recording the live switched feed of the service via a Panasonic AV-HS400A video switcher. Another operator within the sanctuary combines the camera feeds with video playback and lower-third song lyrics using an Edirol V440HD video switcher. AGI designed the system with two rack-mount V44SW slave switchers, providing the ability to span a single image across all three screens. The

backbone of the HD video system is an Extron MTPX Plus 1616, a twisted-pair matrix switcher that allows the church to send any video source to any destination on the fly, without physical re-patching.

SUCCESS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

By working with AGI, Covenant Family Church created a new facility while upgrading their main sanctuary significantly. "We had always done our own A/V," notes Livingston, "but everybody has their capacity and we realized that we had reached our threshold. We couldn't afford a mistake on such a big investment, and that's why we called AGI. And I'm glad we did. They upgraded us in every area, including all the infrastructure. Our whole FOCus in opening a second campus was to reach people in Bryan who would never come to College Station. This kind of ministry between two campuses has never been done before, at least in our town, and this project was [key] in helping us reach that goal."

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Quick-links to resources

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