The rapid rise of technology has led to ways of worship that would have been unthinkable even twenty years ago. Then the Overhead Projector (OHP) with often handwritten transparencies was considered very daring!   Now multi media projectors and sound systems are a regular part of worship in many churches. This enables those leading worship to use a wealth of material from outside the regular hymn-book. Using a PC (personal computer) or equivalent, brings a new form of creativity to a congregation.

Song Words

For many, using a projector for viewing song or hymn words is the easiest way of introducing fresh songs without the need for additional sheets of paper and the ever expanding number of worship songbooks.

There are some other advantages in using the screen including
- encouraging the congregation to look up instead of down
- freeing up people's hands for worship
- saving the uninitiated from figuring out which songbook is being used
- enabling church lighting to remain dimmed and words to be seen (for example, during a candlelit carol service.

But beware - there are difficulties!
Some people are prevented from using the screen because of poor eyesight. Provision in the form of sheets (preferably large print) should always be available for those that require them.

Presenting song words on to a screen can actually change the way we think as we sing which is an important part of worship - only one verse or a few lines at a time will appear on the screen and this makes it difficult to anticipate the words to come or reflect on what has already been sung.

Even an experienced computer operator occasionally gets 'lost' in a song. Many modern songs don't have a simple verse structure. Some hymns have various versions or the verses are in different orders in different books. It's very important that the PC operator prepares carefully, and becomes familiar with what is need in advance of the service.

If the main reason for getting a projector is because it is thought that it will no longer be necessary to print sheets for new hymns – think again! There will still need to be printed copies and in any case you will still need to ensure that you, or your church, have copyright clearance to produce copies of, or display, these words.

There are several commercial packages available and a internet search brings up a good selection. These packages usually include good databases of popular songs and hymns, which can be quickly found and used in a service even when unplanned. Many newer hymnbooks include the words on a CD with the music edition.

Increasingly words can be downloaded from the internet. There are also large song and hymn da-tabases included in software programmes such as **HymnQuest** (Stainer and Bell) or **Visual Liturgy** (Church House Publishing). These packages allow for change of point size etc. **Powerpoint** can also be used but this does requires creating slides for every song individually. However it is popular and versatile.

Whether preparing your own slides, or using a commercial package which can be tailored to your own requirements is your chosen method the following are suggestions which you may find helpful:

Choice of Font: don't be tempted by the large variety on most computers. Choose a clear font like Arial or even Times Roman. Resist the "curly" fonts – these look good on the computer screen but often do not translate to a larger screen successfully. The use of **Bold** or *Italic* can add some enhancement.

Size of Print and Line Spacing : for hymns **36 point** is ideal – anything smaller than **32point** may give some readers difficulties. Using **1.25** spaces between lines aids legibility. Sometimes it is necessary to use to 2 slides per verse, take care make the break sensitively - half way through a verse, or, if there is a chorus putting that on to a separate slide**.** Don't strand the last two lines alone on a separate slide.

Remember that if there is a chorus it needs to be projected after each verse.

Colour: Many visually impared people find that black text on white background is not the most visible combination. Yellow on black, yellow on blue or dark blue on pale blue are easier to read.

The details of the author and copyright holder together with the CCLicence number should be printed at the end of each hymn.

When considering **placing a picture or video clip** as a backdrop to song word remember that this can drastically affect the legibility of the text.

USING THE SCREEN TO PROJECT WORDS FOR PRAYERS, MEDITATIONS, COMMUNION LITURGIES AND OTHER TEXTS has all the advantages of singing from the screen. It enables creative and new forms of words to be used in worship without producing sheets for all. Helpful pictures or graphics can be used as well. Here are some suggestions for using the screen:

Use words on screen to present special or last minute notices at the beginning of the Service.

Make the service more user-friendly to visitors by explaining what's going to happen during worship.

Put scripture readings up on screen.

Project prayers and responses.

AND DO REMEMBER THAT LESS IS MORE Perhaps technology should come with a hazard warning! Don't always feel the need to incorporate every fancy effect that the software will allow. 'Over the top' just distracts and pulls attention away from the real message! Just because you've invested in a video projector for your church doesn't mean it has to feature in every aspect of every service. If the technology becomes intrusive, it will be obscuring the message rather than assisting or enhancing it.

Technology is working best as a tool when it is virtually transparent and unnoticed .

The United Reformed Church Musicians' Guild

USING
A
DIGITAL
PROJECTOR
IN
CHURCH

URC Musicians' Guild

Christ for the world we sing!