

Installation Profile



SOLOMON AWARD-WINNING CHURCH RELIES ON ASHLY DSP

WAYNESBORO, PENNSYLVANIA – Hollowell Brethren in Christ Church is nestled among the farm fields and southern slopes of the Appalachian Mountains near Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. When the skyrocketing cost of construction materials ruined the church’s plan to build a new facility to accommodate its burgeoning membership, Hollowell fell back on plan B – convert the gymnasium into a dual-purpose room. Steve Christiano of **G.A.D.G.e.T. Media** (Maryland) came on board, even though he was dubious about the prospect of building the lowly ‘gymnatorium.’ But careful planning, abundant acoustical treatment, and first-rate gear, including Ashly Digital Processing, turned the project into an award-winning renovation that has attracted a lot of favorable attention. Indeed, Hollowell earned the *Church Production Magazine* and *Worship Facilities Magazine*’s, Solomon Award for Best Church Design Renovation Project for fewer than eight hundred seats.

“To me, the word ‘gymnatorium’ screams compromise, as in, ‘does neither one well,’” said Christiano, who ended up designing and installing all of the project’s sound, lighting, and projection, as well as much of the acoustics. “It makes me nervous.” To make matters worse, the senior sound reinforcement “tech” at Hollowell is Paul Beard, maker of the world’s finest resonator guitars. “People like Jerry Douglas use Paul’s guitars,” said Christiano. “He is a great guy with an absolutely amazing ear. The system had to deliver superlative midrange clarity and a transparent, balanced response from top to bottom. Paul would be sure to hear any shortcomings, however minor.”

To provide the system with loudspeaker conditioning and, perhaps more importantly, flexibility, Christiano installed a modular Ashly ne24.24M DSP with four inputs and eight outputs. Together with a Crestron touch-panel interface, the Ashly ne24.24M affords Hollowell tremendous flexibility to deploy the technology to match the scale of a particular event. Christiano has an engineering background and can easily program DSPs from a multitude of manufacturers. “The Ashly programming interface is remarkably easy,” he said. “It makes my job easier. Together with rock-solid reliability and transparent audio quality, the Ashly ne24.24M is an excellent DSP for Hollowell.” Because the Ashly ne24.24M is network ready, Christiano was able to attach the sound system to the church’s local wireless network and adjust settings from a netbook.

“The whole point of doing this was certainly not to have the technology be an end unto itself,” said Christiano. “Rather, the church wanted to be able to communicate in the most effective way, and they wanted to be a resource for the community. Perhaps the coolest testament to their content-centered vision is the fact that by going with a ‘gymnasium,’ they ensured that money would be left over to fund the programming in that space! I think that other churches can learn from Hollowell’s example. Often, church leaders are afraid that the older members will be turned off by technology. At Hollowell, the exact opposite is true. The older members enjoy seeing and hearing clearly, and, perhaps more importantly, they enjoy seeing the younger members of the church fully engaged.”

