

Technical upgrade at Acts Christian Church

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Sunday morning worship at Acts Christian Church

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The Acts Christian Church, Midrand Campus, is a modern auditorium where technology plays an important role. The past seven months have seen the church invest in four Strand 300 S LED Softlights and two Strand 150 S Softlights for their live streaming studio and video material, a platform which has caught the attention of thousands of viewers. The church has also purchased 16 Showtec Pixel Strip 40 for their main stage, fixtures that create an eye-catching background for both the live congregation and those watching from home, accompanied by a new Arkaos MasterPro 5 license. On the audio side, a Waves Soundgrid System consisting of Waves SuperRack and a Waves SoundGrid Server One-C will complement their Midas console.

Pastor Peter de Fin was a guitarist and sound engineer who travelled across the globe for six years with Vinesong, a team of international missionaries who share the gospel through worship, before meeting his wife Tammy, an evangelist whose ministry was to go into nightclubs and preach the gospel. The pair were married started Acts Church in 1999, taking over what was previously a small mission church.

“We really wanted to focus on the local church and to build this city,” said Peter. “Both my parents and grandparents were missionaries and started churches in places like Lesotho, Mozambique and Swaziland. But we had the heart to train the local people and over the last twenty years have built four campuses. We also realized that the modern church has become very technical. It’s not about producing a show, but it is about using equipment to create atmosphere and to welcome the next generation to the service.”

The church’s approach has been to upgrade technology little by little each year. “DWR Distribution has played a vital part of our upgrade plans,” said Peter. “Robert Izzett and the guys just get things done and are willing to do the hard work.”

Pastor Sam Wuytack, a worship leader and part of the technical team agrees. “DWR has gone

Technical upgrade at Acts Christian Church

beyond just giving us service and that's what I really appreciate about the company. In the past seven months, they have come out to our homes to see how they can help us set up our virtual studios. They have even come up with design work and solutions from the manufacturing department. From my side, it has been a great service and I really appreciate the team."

Peter points to the walls on either side of the stage, a multi-colour light curtain made possible with LED strips. "That was one of the big things we did a number of years ago, and we just love it," Peter mentions. "It adds something to the entire wall and feel of the church. Most of what you see in our church, especially when it comes to colour and lighting, is from DWR."



Pastors Peter de Fin and Sam Wuytack of Acts Church

The most recent purchase has been 16 Showtec Pixel Strip 40 for their main stage. "We have always had, what we call, a black hole in the centre of the stage," he says. "Our stage was too

Technical upgrade at Acts Christian Church

short to add an LED screen as it would feel as if the screen were on top of us. Over the years we've tried different things, hoping to add something that would take away the black space. The Showtec Pixel Strip was a fantastic new product that we were able to connect to a media server and project a multitude of different content onto. We had great fun with the product, and it has added depth to the stage."

The Showtec Pixelstrip 40 is a 100cm Pixelstrip with 40 individually controllable RGB pixels. It comes with a dark coloured acrylic flat cover or, as chosen by the church, a frost dome cover gives the fixtures a rounded appearance. Thanks to the flexible rigging-system, the units can be rigged easily to any structure. At the church, they have been attached to a metal frame manufactured by DWR Distribution and can be easily be taken off and repositioned when need be. "We were almost able to create the SA flag! This is the first phase and we hope to double it up."

Acts Church also purchased a new Arkaos MediaMaster Pro 5 to pixel map the Showtec products using Kling-Net. The software will also provide access to a range of high-quality digital media as well as a turnkey solution for running seamless video shows on their existing LED screens.

"With people watching movies and videos, they see where concerts are going. Young people want to engage with churches that are progressive," said Peter. "At Acts Church we don't want the lighting to be over the top, but we do want to keep growing and modernizing with tasteful lighting that creates the right mood to worship and pray. I know the die-hards will tell us that you should be able to praise God on a cactus, but it does help to have some atmosphere!"

During the Covid-19 lockdown, Acts Church created a virtual studio and did a vast amount of green screen work. "We purchased the Strand Softlights for backlight at our studio and for some of the smaller satellite studios created at a few homes. The Strand fixtures give you an incredible flat light so that the camera doesn't fight with your green screen. We previously used LED lighting fixtures but the colour temperature was wrong. You think white is white, but the Strand Softlight

Technical upgrade at Acts Christian Church

units were able to give us the colour tone we needed and just worked.”

The studio facility has helped change the way The Acts Church communicate with the world and has also exposed the great talent amongst the church team. “For the children’s ministry, as an example, we have puppet shows (the puppets are made by people in the church, with virtual bees flying around them. We have incredible people, including the media teams, who have done a fantastic job. We have also managed to rent out the green studio space to an artist who made his music video here, and we have a few other people interested in using the facility.”

How times have changed since Peter’s grandfather, Harold Berry, left England in 1938 to work as a missionary in Belgium Congo, taking along with him his wife Alice Wigglesworth, the granddaughter of evangelist Smith Wigglesworth. During the Congo Crisis in the early 60s, a time where thousands were killed, the couple and their daughter Lillian fled to Zambia and finally settled in South Africa, continuing their work and also establishing one of the first Bible Schools in Soweto. “My dad was also a pastor and had a very strong mission’s heart,” Peter explains. “He married my mom, Lillian, and today we have over one hundred churches in the North of Mozambique, located in the bush, just village churches really, non-technical at all. The only thing that moves is the wind through the buildings. There are no lights, it’s really simple.”

The church has two campuses in Midrand (North and South Campus), a branch in Westdene Johannesburg, and also a group who meet in Blandford, England, the hometown of Smith Wigglesworth. The church is involved with various Acts of Love projects. Every Saturday they offer educational tuition on various core subjects like Maths and English, they run a soup kitchen and provide various meals and groceries to people in need, donate sanitary pads to girls from impoverish backgrounds (many girls don’t attend school during menstruation and miss a week of school each week which affects their education), and collect and distribute new and pre-loved shoes to children in need.

Funny enough, when Peter and Tammy started the church twenty-one years ago, they’ll smile

Technical upgrade at Acts Christian Church

and tell you it started growing... in the wrong direction! “We went from 500 to 200 people and the first two years were of the toughest in our lives,” Peter recalls. “I remember one night praying a very short prayer. I took Tammy’s hand and said, ‘God, I know that you called us. I’m asking you to help us.’ From that month on, we came out of financial overdraft. It was like God was saying, get your eyes off man and put your eyes on me. Since then we have continually looked to God and put our trust in Him as our Father.”