Martin Audio Wavefront Precision WPM for Grace Community Church

Picture: Jordan Moore



Founded in 2001 in the Cranberry Township of Pennsylvania, Grace Community Church has today grown into a community of 2,400 people. As the ministry planned its next chapter of growth, there was a realisation that outdated audio, video and lighting systems were limiting its ability to create a seamless worship experience, and so a major technical upgrade became an imperative. They were referred to HoW specialists, Milwaukee-based Avenue Systems, by a mutual contact, who recommended the integrators based on trust and reputation.

Avenue Systems' Director of Client Relations, Terry Rhodes, specified a Wavefront Precision WPM small format, optimised line array from Martin Audio as his sound reinforcement solution based on previous experience, and recognising that it offered improved coverage consistency and control compared to a standard line array. The implementation of a line array, he decided, was best placed to address the needs of a contemporary worship church, modelling the system in Martin Audio's proprietary DISPLAY prediction software to ensure it was optimised.

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The WPM rig - eight boxes a side - is paired with five SX218 subwoofers, powered via a Martin Audio process-controlled, Dante-enabled iKON iK81 amp, run in 2-box resolution. The subs and six discreet CDD5 front fills are all driven by a pair of 44M20 four-channel amplifiers, from Martin Audio sister company, Linea Research. The subs themselves are set in a bunker and splayed across the front of the stage in an arc.

Terry Rhodes had no misgivings in arriving at this decision. “We had done a couple of facilities in the last couple of years where we had deployed WPM satisfactorily. And there was enough similarity in this space - it was just a case of modelling it to verify that it confirmed our expectations.” The company’s background in deploying Martin Audio solutions stretches back nearly a decade. “Martin Audio was one of the first lines that we picked up as an organisation. I’ve been with the company seven and half years and we’ve had it as long as I’ve been here; in fact, one of the installations that we did immediately prior to me arriving was our first WPM install.”

So what demands are placed on the new sound system? “When you think of a contemporary, modern worship style it implies loud or concert level. Although they do push volume somewhat, it’s still within the constraints of the system … so that when they do want to do a special event they can push up towards a higher SPL.” Yet the installation was far from straightforward as the church set out to enlarge the sanctuary. “One of the challenges we faced was that the wall needed to be blown out and the room ‘turned’ to create a new auditorium out of the existing space. Whereas previously the stage platform was in a corner, when they blew out the wall, they increased the length and installed raked seating in the back third.”

During this renovation process, the church needed a temporary worship solution, and thus Avenue Systems implemented a setup in the lobby, transforming it into a smaller secondary venue while the main auditorium was under construction - ensuring the ministry could continue uninterrupted. Church pastor Matt Helmstadter expressed his delight with the new infrastructure. “I well remember the first time I heard about possibly installing Martin Audio equipment in our building project. We had chosen a different PA system in the initial design, but Terry went through all the benefits of Martin Audio and felt it was better suited for our project and a better value. He had a great relationship with Martin Audio - I totally trusted his judgement and was happy to make the switch.

“As usual, the project did not go as planned with the building contractors and steel beams for the arrays were installed 8ft-10ft away from the original design - which could potentially cause issues with the way Avenue designed the PA system to work. But they were able to work with what they had in front of them and the room sounded amazing. “The first soundcheck was an uncompressed version of Hotel California and every contractor in earshot of the auditorium had to come in and listen to this clear and crisp sound coming from the system. From that moment on, we were convinced we made the right decision and have been totally happy with the performance and experience Martin Audio has given our congregation and people who join us every weekend!"

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Grace Community Church has continued to thrive in its updated facility. The new systems have empowered their volunteers, enhanced their worship experience and set them up for future growth. For Avenue Systems, the real success wasn’t just delivering the technology, it was building a relationship rooted in trust and shared purpose.

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