

Setting the Stage at Bellevue Baptist Church

by Mark Blair

Photos by Jim Barnwell

If you've ever driven down Interstate 40 near Memphis, Tennessee, chances are you've seen Bellevue Baptist Church, or at least the three large white crosses—dedicated on the eve of the 21st century—that stand over the 370-acre campus.



Bellevue's two-hundred seat choir loft was constructed with minimal cross-bracing on multiple levels of modular choir risers, and provides 5,000 square feet of storage space with over six feet of height underneath.

With just 32 founding members, Bellevue Baptist Church was founded in 1903 on what was then the outskirts of Memphis. Bellevue grew and built a 3,000-seat Worship Center in 1952, and became the first church to own and operate its own television equipment in 1958. Having outgrown its 24-acre Midtown campus, Bellevue relocated to the Memphis suburb of Cordova in 1989.

Consistently ranked as one of the largest churches in the Southern Baptist Convention with average worship attendance of 6,700, Bellevue's vision is to be a catalyst for spiritual awakening in Memphis and beyond. Our mission is simple: Love God. Love People. Share Jesus. Make Disciples.



Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, TN

Main Facility: 200 Appling Rd.

Other Campuses:

Bellevue Arlington
Bellevue Frayser
Bellevue Bella Vista
www.bellevue.org

Founded: 1903

Lead Pastor: Dr. Steve Gaines

Mission Statement: Love God, Love People, Share Jesus

and Make Disciples

Project Type: Stage Renovation

Project Budget: \$2 million

Integrator: Paragon 360

Architect: Fleming Architects



Gaines

Memphis, TN

Population: 655,155

20th largest city in the US

Founded: May 22, 1819

Named after the ancient capital of Egypt on the Nile River
If you live in Memphis, you're a "Memphian"



As we approached our 25-year mark on the current campus, the building and grounds were still attractive but in need of some updating. After nearly 4,000 worship services, 200 Singing Christmas Tree performances, and countless special events, the worship center stage was certainly showing its age.

Heritage of Innovation

As we began to look at renovating our Worship Center, Bellevue's heritage of employing innovative ideas and methods was ever-present in my mind. I knew we would need some special help to create a new worship environment that would be state-of-the-art without compromising or distracting from the ability to deliver the life-changing gospel.

The scope of our new design focused on video, lighting, staging and scenic elements, and was driven by Paragon 360, Fleming Architects, and in-house designer Mark Alexander. The

Bellevue Gear List

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MAIN LIGHTING SYSTEM

- ETC S4 – 5 w/ Clamp & Frame
- 68 ETC S4 – 10 w/ Clamp and Frame
- 4 ETC S4 – 19 w/ Clamp and Frame
- 10 Chauvet Q-Wash 436Z
- 10 Chauvet Legend 230SR Beam
- 20 Chauvet Q-Wash 560Z
- 1 High End Systems Full Boar Hog 4
- 2 Martin JEM K1 Hazer

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LED SET LIGHTING

- Chauvet COLORdash Batten-Quad 6
- 66 Chauvet Batten 72
- 6 Chauvet Colordash Par-Quad 7
- 12 Chauvet COLORdash Accent

The quality is evident and has been well received by our members

design was created over a six-month period in 2013 with the renovation process lasting fifteen weeks. The project totaled two million dollars and was completed for Easter Sunday, 2014.

Paragon 360 recognized the importance and impact of the worship environment at Bellevue. They worked closely with the church leadership to design a stage space that increased flexibility and encouraged a more intimate worship experience for those in attendance at either the blended or contemporary services.

Onstage Solutions

We sought solutions for onstage storage, wing space, entrances from behind the stage, and camera-ready backgrounds for the pastor's messages. In addition was the complication of finding modular solutions to allow the whole stage to be struck for productions. Adding to the challenge was the need for creating a unique look for the different services with ease and speed of transition being critical. We also wanted more powerful, engaging, and flexible media imagery and enhanced stage lighting.

A large mezzanine superstructure system with minimal cross-bracing was constructed to support our two-hundred seat choir loft on multiple levels of modular choir risers. This gives us 5,000 square feet of storage space with over six feet of height under the choir loft. The LED-illuminated, background scenic-wall is camera-ready and brand-able, and is built into the front side of the mezzanine. The scenic-wall opens allowing for stage pieces to be moved quickly and easily under the choir loft. The mezzanine is wrapped in wood, faux rock and stone elements, and glass railings. The

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CUSTOM STAGING & SCENIC from PA 360

- "Jesus" Halo Light Feature
- 6 33' x 12" Illuminated Screen Surrounds
- 8 Faux Stone Screen Columns/Walls
- 5 Mezzanine Super Structure Sections
- 94 40"x40" Paragon Modular Stage Cubes
- 4 Stair Sections
- 26 Faux Stone Sections
- 12 Stone/Illuminated Box Scenic Elements
- 40 Frost Acrylic Rails
- 1 33' Splitting Illuminated Wall
- 4 Paragon 360 Modular Band Risers
- 8 Curved, Faux Stone/Wood Illuminated Modesty Walls
- 1 DE-360 Squared Drum Enclosure

2

VIDEO PRESENTATION SYSTEM

- Digital Projection
- 30,000 ANSI Lumen 1080p 192x1080 3 DLP Projector
- 3 Stewart Filmscreen Lace & Grommet DA-Mat Black Back 216" x 384"

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RIGGING & SOFTGOODS

- Solutions SS: 20"x20"x10' Pro Series – Black
- 6 CM Loadstar ½ Ton Chain Motors
- 1 6-Way Distro w/ Pendant
- 1 Custom Motorized Line Shaft System

Bellevue's Integrator Profile



Springfield, MO
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What was unique about the Bellevue Baptist renovation?

This project pushed our team to really think outside the box as many do. I honestly believe that what we created was the only real solution to deliver exactly what they were looking for from environment to storage, flexibility, increased technology and budget parameters. We had to create and fabricate this, top to bottom. All the pieces we needed to make this happen did not exist in the market place.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your projects?

Working with the church to solve challenges far deeper than AVL. Our unique process of design-build renovations for a fraction of the cost of new construction has been a real game changer for many churches. The "word" is not changing but culture and people are. Construction is getting cost prohibitive and baby boomers are retiring which means less discretionary income for the church. It's rewarding to help solve their issues on time and on budget while actually making a difference for the kingdom at the same time.

What is one of your biggest challenges you face on projects?

Getting everyone on board. Casting vision is critical. People don't give to a need they give to vision. We encourage involvement from a small group that can market the project to the congregation. Involvement creates ownership which results in giving and vision buy in. At the end of the day however, someone needs to be able to make a decision for the good of the church.

How do the challenges change between large and small churches?

With large spaces, it's expensive to do just about anything because of the sure real estate. Complicated technical issues can get in the way of easy fixes. It's challenging to create intimacy and make things disappear when required. With small spaces, the challenge becomes structure. Many of the 300 – 1,000 seat spaces of the 70's and 80's were not built to accommodate what we're doing today.

What is the most critical element churches should be focused on as they consider the design or renovation of their space?

I think you have to create an environment that gives you a chance to win. We should be more interested in who we're reaching than who we're keeping. The days of calling out to people and expecting them to run towards us because it's Sunday are gone. Today the church has such a smaller window with the younger generation and unchurched to state their case. We have to create an environment that keeps them engaged. We have to meet this next generation on their field, at their level, plug into them personally and then work to point them in the right direction. Right, wrong or indifferent, it's the culture we live in today.

entire system can be struck for full-stage productions or can be re-configured for special events.

The new stage treatments, designed and built by Paragon 360, not only



provide continuity with the recent lobby renovations, but also allowed for dramatically different worship environments between services. In as little as twenty minutes the modular staging and lighting elements can be completely transformed, which gives us tremendous flexibility.

Stage – Set – Worship

Aesthetically beautiful and functionally designed, the new stage is just over 10,000 square feet and will accommodate intimate band-driven worship, choir-led worship or full-scale theatrical productions. The stage features wood, faux rock and stone treatments, powder coated aluminum framed scenic structures, custom motorized, LED-illuminated screen surrounds, glass railings, two-sided illuminated scenic elements, a custom "Jesus" halo



illuminated feature over the stage, and Paragon 360's custom DE-3602 Drum Enclosure.

The project features state-of-the-art video displays over the newly designed stage set. We have three new, seamless Stewart video screens that total one hundred feet of image space over 18' high using new 30k Digital Projection projectors. This provides versatile service programming and better visibility throughout the Worship Center, allowing for powerful three-screen imagery.

The lighting system was updated with over 100 new ETC conventional fixtures and 40 Chauvet moving light fixtures. The illuminated scenic elements required another 130 Chauvet LED units. The system also includes motorized lighting positions with truss, motors, and motor control systems. The lighting control systems were updated and also feature a new High End Systems Full Boar Hog 4 console. The lighting system upgrades enhance the look of the entire worship environment and allow noticeable differences between blended and contemporary services. The system improvements also reduce the church's yearly production equipment rental.

Easter Sunday was a day of celebration, with the Worship Center full for both worship services. That was only the beginning. In the first three weeks after completion, the stage was used for worship services, a choir-orchestra concert, a children's musical-drama, a Bellevue School of Performing Arts graduation concert, and the first of 12 Memphis-area school graduation events.

Flexible and Functional

Paragon 360 was a vital part of the successful design and renovation of our Worship Center stage. They didn't bring a "cookie-cutter" approach to our project, but truly wanted to partner with us in order to get the best result for our unique needs. The fact that they love the Lord and have a heart for ministry gives them an insight to the various facility uses and programs that can occur in churches on a weekly, as well as seasonal, basis.

The quality is evident and has been well received by our members. The new design is functional for the 21st century, but also helps us embrace

and maintain our strong heritage. People of all ages, styles, and opinions love the look of the new stage. Those who use the space on a weekly basis love the flexibility and quality of the products. It is a win-win for us as the design provides an opportunity to meet the needs of an established, yet growing and changing congregation, while being good stewards of money and time. ♦

Mark Blair has been in full-time music ministry for 30 years and has been the Minister of Music at Bellevue Baptist Church for almost seven years. Before coming to Bellevue, he was the Worship Pastor at First Baptist Concord, Knoxville, TN for nine years and has served churches in Alabama and Georgia as well.

Less is more.

Dawn's T-series column line array loudspeakers have a *smaller footprint* and are *lighter weight* than traditional speaker cabinets. Combined with the premium look and sound the T-series provides, **sometimes less really is more.**





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