

Village Presbyterian Church

Prairie Village, Kansas, USA

Forward-thinking Church Brings Renowned Professor to the Classroom with LifeSize HD Video

Village Church connects theological seminary professor, 500 miles away, to expand minds, open hearts

Organization

Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, Kansas, USA

Founded in 1949, Village Presbyterian Church is one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the nation, based on membership activity. And with over 5,000 members operating out of an 80,000 square foot facility, Village Church not only utilizes their space, but also technology to reach believers.

Every Sunday, the three morning worship services stream online in a live video feed via the church website. An audio version of Rev. Tom Are Jr.'s morning sermon can also be streamed from a local radio station on your computer.

Education and spiritual growth is an important commitment of Village

Church. In 2007, an educational program called Village University was formed. Village U is a university inspired layout of short-term courses designed for people wanting in-depth, balanced education on a variety of issues. Each semester, classes in subjects like literature, world religions, music, money, language, film, art, parenting and life skills are taught by community leaders, professors and pastors.



Village Church is one of the largest Presbyterian churches in the US



"Our reach is wider than ever before. We are now able to invite guests from India, Africa and Europe - something we would've never been able to do before."

- REV. GORDON MCCLELLAN, ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF MINISTRIES



CHALLENGE

Eliminate travel and corresponding costs to bring renowned professor to teach six-week course.



SOLUTION

LifeSize HD video at 1Mbps between students in Kansas and professor in Texas.



RESULTS

Fully immersive, meaningful experience for all; reduction in time, travel and environmental impact.



Village U also offers an advanced studies program for members wanting a more in-depth biblical and theological study. Rev. Dr. Gordon McClellan, Pastor of Ministries at Village Church, came up with an idea for The Village U School of Theology. These advanced studies courses would be taught by leading seminary professors and give students the opportunity to dig a bit deeper into biblical interpretation and modern theological thought.

Through Village Church's affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Rev. McClellan connected with Dr. David Jensen, Associate Professor of Constructive Theology with the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas and the author of several books on theology. Dr. Jensen's "Theology in the 21st Century," course would be held biweekly for six evening sessions at Village Church in Kansas. But while Rev. McClellan had found the ideal instructor to teach the class, the logistics of the partnership soon became an issue.

Time and money were the initial problems facing Village Church. The cost to fly Dr. Jensen from Austin to Kansas every other week, not to mention the expense for rental car, hotel and meals, was exorbitant. For Dr. Jensen, time spent traveling meant time away from his students and prior commitments at Austin Seminary. Environmental impact was another important consideration for Village Church.

"It was so immersive, everyone completely forgot about the technology and it was as if we were in the same room."

- DR. DAVID JENSEN CIO, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

While Village U is mostly made possible by the church's congregation and endowment trust, spending tens of thousands of dollars on a new technology was out of the question. Village Church needed a solution that could connect Dr. Jensen to the students in Kansas that was simple for non-technical users to operate and cost-effective. Also, the experience had to feel as life-like as possible, as though everyone were sitting in the same classroom.



Rev. McClellan and his IT team at Village Church selected the LifeSize® Express™ as the communications solution that best met their needs.

The LifeSize Express system was ultimately chosen based on its simplicity and ease-of-use, flexibility in set up because the system was almost instantly connected to their existing T1 broadband network and the Express systems's remarkable HD video call quality. And because the Express system is a point-to-point solution, no additional bridging software was needed. The built-in data sharing capability was also an important factor in the decision making process.

Effortless interaction between professor and student was another significant feature for the solution, so a LifeSize Micpod was used as the audio input device in the classroom in Kansas. The MicPod features a single omni-directional high definition active microphone which can capture even the most soft-spoken participant in the back of the room.





The first video course at Village Church proved to be a success and both professor and students felt an immediate, meaningful connection with one another.

"Even though Dr. Jensen was nearly 500 miles away, for us, he was larger than life," Rev. McClellan said of the experience. "Everyone felt like we knew him. It was very natural."

The quality of each call, an important factor for VPC in the selection process, also made a difference in the overall user experience. At 1Mbps, LifeSize reaches 1280 x 720p resolution at 30fps, for clean, crisp images and superior motion handling, allowing for a natural communication experience.

"Quality means everything," McClellan said. "Many of our members go home to watch the evening news on their HDTV's, so if we don't deliver the same kind of experience in a classroom setting, will they come back next week? If it doesn't look and feel real, it's just not meaningful."

As for the future, Village U has big plans for expanding the technology. The next step is to work with Conference Technologies on creating a portable, "loaner" unit, housed in a durable carrying case, which they can ship to any speaker's church, school or home office, anywhere in the world.

"We can now bring our students the very best content because the LifeSize solution makes it possible," McClellan said. "We also realize that by using these systems, we are doing our part to lower our impact on the earth, which is very important to us. If each call can make us a little greener, that's peace of mind."

VPC's ROI

TRAVEL COSTS:

Number of trips per course - 6 Average overnight parking at Austin airport - \$30 Average roundtrip airfare - Austin to Kansas City - \$250 Average hotel, 1 night - \$150 Average car rental, all days total - \$65 Average meals/incidentals - \$50 Total cost for each trip - \$545 Total cost of travel for entire course - \$3,270 Courses per year - 4

TRAVEL DOLLARS SAVED: \$13,080

Total cost per LifeSize Express system - \$5,999 Number of Sites - 2 Total Solution Investment - \$11,998 Time to payback on LifeSize investment (months) - 11.0 < 1 YEAR ROI

ADDITIONAL COSTS:

Total emissions per trip (1, 301 miles) (Austin to Kansas City) - 1,496 lbs CO2 Total CO2 per course - 8,976 lbs of CO2

CO2 EMISSIONS AVOIDED: 35,904 lbs

Days lost due to travel per trip - 2 Days lost due to travel per course - 12 Total days due lost per year - 48 **IN-DAYS RECOVERED: 48**

By holding four, six-week video courses per year through their Village U program, VPC will pay for the LifeSize implementation in less than one year. By using video instead of travel, the organization has significantly expanded their reach because they can effectively bring anyone, anywhere in the world, into their classroom to teach a course. More courses means more presenters, improved content for students, and an even faster ROI. VPC will experience a net zero expense for the next 3-5 years.

All data presented is meant to serve as a quideline for average travel costs. LifeSize products US MSRP. Monitors and installation not included.



EMEA: