



Let there be Light

Case Study: St. Francis of Assisi – Wednesbury

by Richard Nock, Design Director, Lightmaster-Direct Ltd

PROJECT TEAM

Priest in Charge:
Father Ron Farrell
Lighting Designer:
Jonathan Cardall
(Lightmaster Direct)
Architect:
Bryan Martin

The History:

Consecrated in 1941, the Church of St. Francis of Assisi was built by Italian prisoners of war and features beautiful hand-painted frescos and plaques depicting the 14 stations of the cross.

The Problem:

The original lighting scheme consisted of fluorescent tubes mounted more than 5 metres above the floor, providing lighting levels so low in the pews that many of the congregation were struggling to read their hymn and prayer books. It was cumbersome to control, expensive to maintain and lacked atmosphere.

The Brief:

The comprehensive brief called for:-

- Atmospheric and calming lighting to encourage quiet reflection.
- Accent lighting to feature the hand-painted arches and 14 stations of the cross.
- Improved lighting levels in the pews for reading.
- Warm, soft lighting to welcome people on arrival, for pew lighting during hymns and for font lighting during baptisms.
- Exterior lighting to highlight the restored gold-plated St. Francis on the church-tower.

- The ability to easily alter the lighting effects to complement the different parts of the service.
- Create pathways of light to direct visitors to the area of the church being used for a particular service or meeting.
- Provide a lighting control system which would take into account the different activities taking place in the church, such as parish meals, brownies, youth club, Sunday School.



- Discreet, remote-control not reliant on wall switches.
- Low running-costs and easy access for maintenance.

The Solution:

The new lighting scheme was part of a large scale renovation project, which involved working with the local diocese, the PCC, architect, builders and English Heritage.

English Heritage had originally requested pendant lighting suspended from the ceiling but, after much discussion and the creation of a full-scale model and simulation of the fitting, custom-made wall-lights were designed and manufactured by Lightmaster in collaboration with the architect.

The solution included:-

- Bespoke wall uplighters are positioned on the internal walls to achieve not only bright crisp light, but also a warm candlelit effect when dimmed.
- Miniature spotlights are located on the ceilings with a narrow beam to accent the plaques depicting the 14 stations of the cross.
- In the chancel three discreet uplighters now provide a wash of light into the whole space and highlight the high level windows.
- The altar, lecturns and fonts are lit by low voltage halogen lighting that enables Father Ron to not only read but also to be front lit for the congregation. The seat behind the lecturn is also lit by a narrow beam spotlight.
- Each light has been focussed to ensure that every seat in the congregation is properly illuminated.
- Uplighters and cross lighting spotlights are used to wash the ceiling with light.
- LED strip-lighting was used to light the hand-painted arches.
- Low-energy fluorescent fittings were used in north & south aisles, narthex, vestries, sacristy and porches.
- LED spotlights illuminate the gold-leafed St. Francis, which can now be seen from the motorway.

Lighting Control System

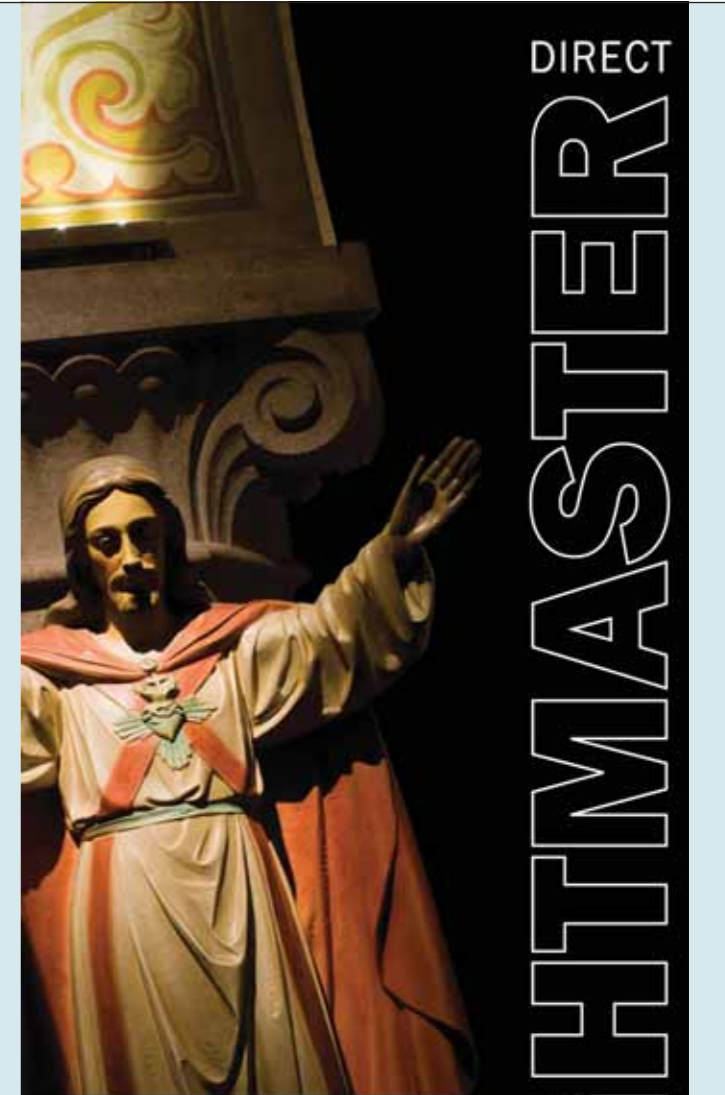
The dimming and control of low-energy light sources is technically quite complex and this is why Lightmaster selected the Dyalite lighting control system, which is very effective at controlling both LEDs and fluorescent lamps.

Lighting control was of the utmost importance as Father Ron wanted to be able to control and alter the lighting effects throughout a service without the need to use wall-switches. This was achieved using a discreet hand-held remote control, which is easy-to-use and with which preset lighting effects can be changed at the press of a button.

The Result:

Father Ron Farrell commented – “The night it was all revealed was Christmas Eve. Subdued lighting emphasising the arches outlining the nave and the apse behind the high altar seemed to hush people as they entered. When the Midnight Mass was due to begin, the lights subtly rose to flood the place with light and there was an almost audible gasp as the beauty of the restored building was revealed and enhanced by the new lighting.” ■

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