



## Project Case Study

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### St. Leonard's Church, Butleigh, Somerset

**| The Challenge...**

To modernise facilities within an historic church building

**| The Solution...**

A PA and induction loop system from Gordon Morris Ltd.

**| The Benefits...**

Clear sound throughout the church, for those with and without hearing impairment

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Many churches face a challenge in bringing their facilities up to date. On one hand, they need to maximise participation and strive to better serve the needs of the local community. Yet also they are guardians of our heritage and must be sure not to compromise the atmosphere and history that make these buildings special.

Gordon Morris Ltd was one of a team of contractors who helped St. Leonard's to manage this balancing act. As part of a project to modernise and conserve the building, it was decided to upgrade the existing PA and install an induction loop system for hearing aid users. The result is a PA system that is both less intrusive and more effective than its predecessor, together with much improved access for the hearing impaired.

Nestled in a picturesque Somerset village, St. Leonard's is a charming rural parish church commanding beautiful views over the surrounding countryside. The site and some parts of the structure are believed to date back to Saxon times. Most of the nave was constructed in the fourteenth century, with substantial extension and remodelling in the nineteenth century. Recent conservation work on the Grade II\* listed building has discovered inscriptions remembering the church's wealthy Victorian benefactors and restored carvings and monuments.

### **Designing the Solution**

The church serves a thriving local community and was very keen to modernise its facilities. The team at St. Leonard's decided on a project to upgrade the plumbing, drainage, heating, lighting and wiring in the building. It seemed like an excellent opportunity to upgrade the sound system in the church and to improve disabled access with an induction loop.

David Wood was closely involved with the project and describes the inconvenience of working with an outdated PA system. *"We'd got into the habit of playing with the amplification levels regularly and we wanted to get away from that. We wanted a system that simply produced the*

*sound where it was needed and nobody noticed... and that is what it does.*" Having worked with Gordon Morris Ltd in the past, our company was the obvious choice. *"To be honest, our thoughts didn't go any further than turning to Gordon Morris."*

Technical staff at Gordon Morris Ltd took the time to ensure the brief was clearly understood by all parties before designing a solution. The proposed system was given a trial at the church, to ensure it met the needs of the building and improvements were made to the initial set-up. Additional speakers were added and the system tested again. *"We had a trial with Gordon Morris' help before we started and that worked, so we were fairly confident we knew what we needed. We spent quite a lot of time talking about what we wanted to give us confidence that we were doing the right thing."*

## **Managing the Project**

As the sound installation was only part of a larger refurbishment that involved other electrical contractors, plumbers, builders and specialist conservators, careful consideration had to be given to the project's management. Gordon Morris Technical Manager Mark Birch liaised with staff at the church on a regular basis to try and find the most appropriate working method and carried out site surveys to see how installation engineers could fit in with the programme of works. David says *"We liaised through him as work progressed so he could see how he needed to fit into the bigger job."* It was this professional service and communication that ensured the installation ran smoothly, even with all the other contractors working on site.

David believes that the key to success for a project like this *"is having an organisation which can establish what the client wants at the beginning and puts a lot of thought into making sure that it's right. And ensures that the client's aware of what he's asking and then regularly monitors their part in it. And that's in fact what we did. That sort of liaison worked."* The result was that our experienced engineers were able

to take the pressure off for the team at the church. *"Mark came regularly to make sure everything was going according to plan...I was able to just relax! It was one of the simplest most clear cut stories of the whole job."*

## **Assessing the Outcome**

The system at St. Leonard's has been a success for several reasons. As David points out, it has given the building a discreet, secure and convenient solution to its sound requirements. *"What we have now is a hidden system. We keep the microphones locked away; get whatever microphones we need out for a particular service and switch on the power to the amplifiers. We keep the amplifier box locked- we don't play with the controls at all. The company set them up- we haven't actually opened the amplifier cabinet since they left. We believe you should be able to do that. Previously we used to have somebody who played with the amplification every service."*

But also the system offers much clearer sound quality, allowing the congregation to enjoy services more fully. *"You can hear wherever you are. With a radio mic -a clip-on- which the priest normally wears, we usually have quite uninterrupted clear speech. It's done exactly what we asked for and that's been a great bonus."*

So would the team at St. Leonard's recommend Gordon Morris Ltd? David Wood is in no doubt: *"I would recommend Gordon Morris; they did a very good job for us. Very clear cut- I knew exactly what we were contracting for and it went exactly as we expected. A very good result."*

Gordon Morris Ltd would like to thank Mr. Wood for his kind cooperation with this article and wishes everyone at St. Leonard's the very best for the future.