



Bespoke Altar Frontal Guide



Thank you for your interest in commissioning a bespoke altar frontal for your church. With all bespoke commissions, there are quite a lot of design details to consider; this document intends to guide you through the different aspects of your new frontal.

We have detailed the design process in four main steps:

- 1 - Style
- 2 - Fabrics
- 3 - Trims
- 4 - Embroidery
- 5 - Your Altar

Step One - Style

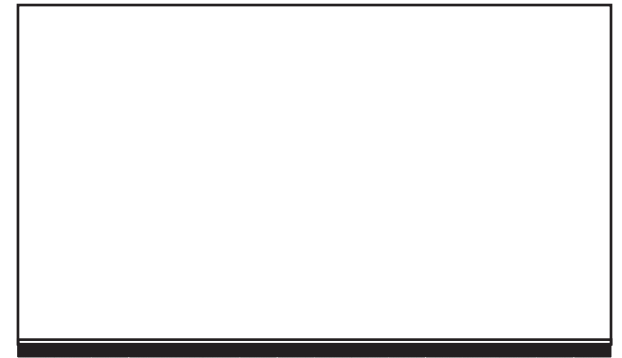
The first step in designing your new altar frontal is to choose the style. Our Super Frontals have a standard height of 7" (incl. fringe), unless otherwise indicated.



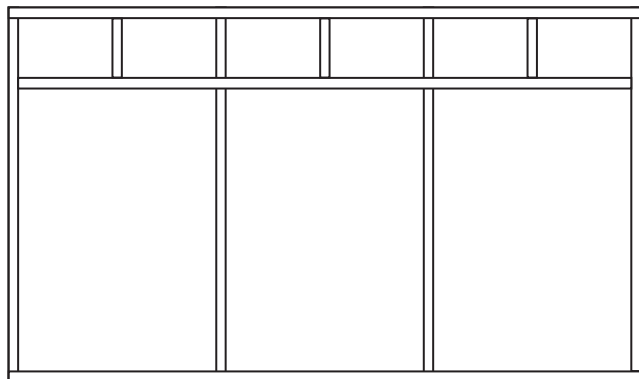
Combined Altar Frontal & Super Frontal



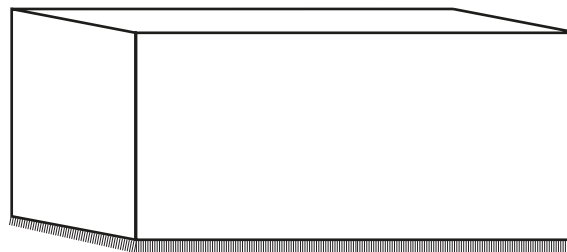
Separate Super Frontal



Separate Altar Frontal



Latin Frontal - with traditional arrangement of outline orphreys in metallic braid.



Altar Pall, or Laudian Frontal

Altar Palls drape over an altar, and are trimmed with 3" silk bullion fringe. These are made to cover the top of your altar, along with either 3 or 4 sides.

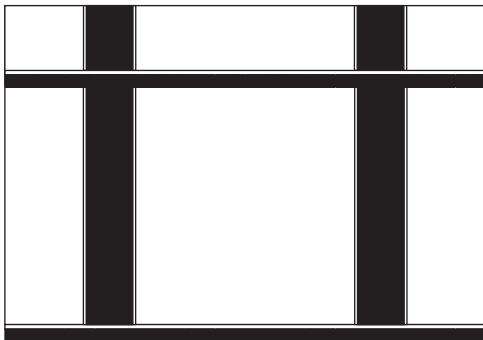
You can choose either rounded or square corners, with the option for open or closed seams.

Step One - Style (continued)

Unless you are opting for a Latin-style frontal, you also need to determine the amount of orphreys you would like. These can be made in a contrasting fabric or in an outline style. Combined altar & super frontals also have an option for counterchanged orphreys on the super frontal. See the examples below for some possible variations.

The number of orphreys will likely depend on the size of your altar, and we are always happy to make recommendations. We offer the following as a rough guide:

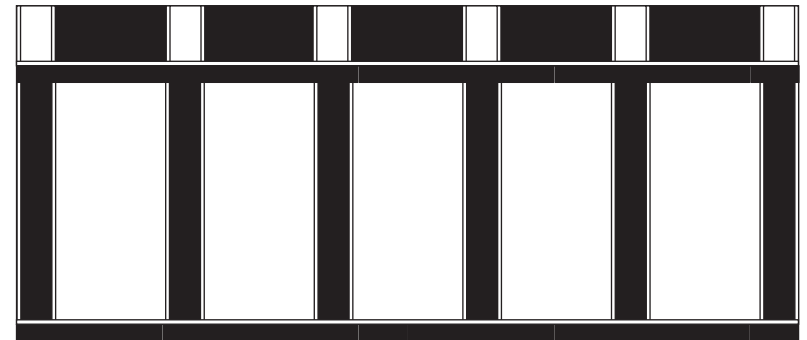
- Altars up to 6' - 2 orphreys (4 max)
- Altars between 6' and 7'10" - 4 orphreys (6 max)
- For larger altars - 6 orphreys



Small Altar - with two orphreys on the frontal, and two on the super frontal



Medium Altar - with four orphreys on the frontal, and a counterchanged super frontal with no orphreys



Large Altar - with six orphreys on the frontal, and a counterchanged super frontal with six orphreys

Please note that the exact placement of your orphreys may vary depending on the fabric pattern.

Step Two - Fabrics

The next step is to choose your main fabric and any contrasting orphreys. We are pleased to offer over 200 exclusive fabrics, including a range of luxurious pure silks and silk blends.

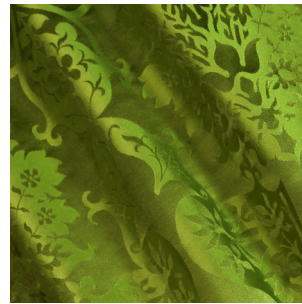
Our experienced design team is on hand to guide you through the possible combinations, and to help with decision making if needed. Below is a selection of some of our favourite fabrics.



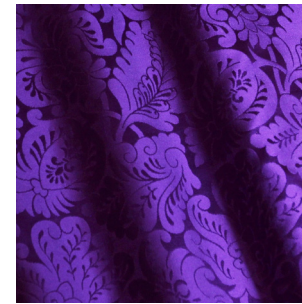
Comper Cathedral - Cream



Bellini - Comper Purple



Gothic - Green



Holbein - Royal Purple



Hilliard - Sarum Red



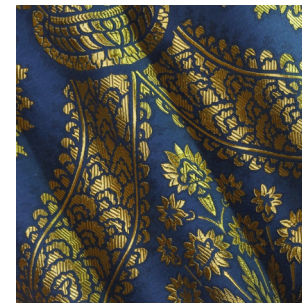
Comper Strawberry - Gold,
Blue, Purple



Crevelli - Brocatelle Garnet



Stag - Cloth of Gold



Memlinc - Blue & Gold



Talbot - Black

Please get in contact if you would like samples of any the fabrics you are interested in.

Step Three - Trims

The next step is to decide the style and colour of trims for your altar frontal. Select from our wide range of braids and fringes - including our exclusive 'Diamond & Lay' which are colour-matched to our silks. Please view our [trimmings guide](#) for the full range of styles and colours available.

You may also be interested in the addition of fringe up the sides of your frontal for an additional cost.

If you have opted for an altar pall, we will trim the hem with a custom-dyed 3" silk bullion fringe in a colour of your choice.



Frontal & Super Frontal in Green 'Gothic' with Red 'Talbot' orphreys. Orphreys trimmed with 1/2" 'Augustus' braid, and hems finished with 2" red rayon fringe.



3" silk bullion fringe in an Old Gold colourway.

Step Four - Embroidery

An additional step is to consider any embroidery that you may like. Our talented team of hand-embroiderers can cater to any design you desire, and our design team can offer suggestions on what might be most suitable for your church. We specialise in traditional hand embroidery techniques, such as goldwork, silk shading, appliqué, as well as the highest forms of artist-led machine embroidery.

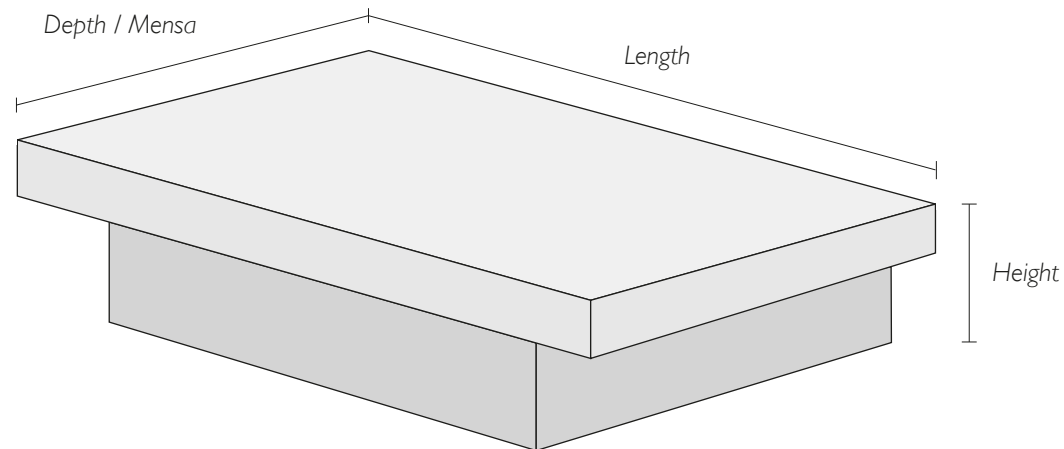
Let us know where you would like embroidery on your altar frontal - perhaps in a central panel, along the orphreys, or even across the whole superfrontal.



Step Five - Your Altar

The final step in commissioning a new altar frontal is measuring your altar. We need accurate measurements of the height, depth (or 'mensa'), and width of the altar. We usually use inches as our main unit of measurement, but cm is also fine to use.

Please refer to the diagram as a guideline.



When measuring your altar, ensure that the tape measure is taut, and flat against the surface of your altar (where possible). We recommend that you have someone to assist you so that measurements can be accurate.

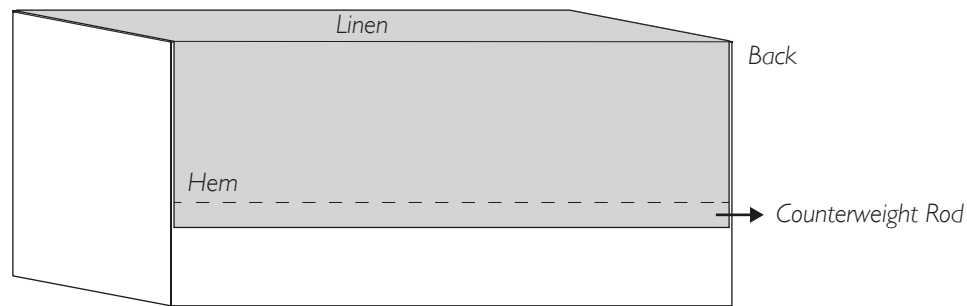
Step Five - Your Altar (continued)

We also need to know how you plan to attach your frontal, so that this can be considered in the design. This will depend on the type of altar in your church - and we find that every altar is different. If you are unsure how to attach a frontal to your altar we can make recommendations. Just contact us with images of your altar, so that our technical team can assess the best way to attach your new altar frontal.

Counterweight Rods

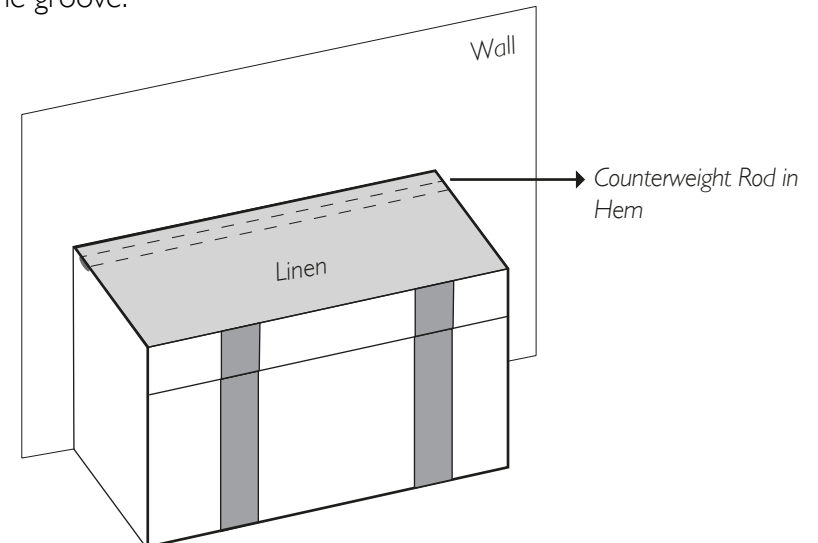
Freestanding altars

Our standard altar frontals are held in place with a counterweight rod. The frontal is attached to linen, which is then draped over the top and back of the altar. A hem is sewn into the linen to fit a rod, which balances the weight of the frontal.



Altars against a wall

Here, the frontal is attached to linen, which drapes over the top of the altar. A hem is sewn to accommodate a counterweight rod, which can then sit in a groove (or divot) on the mensa. For this method, please provide additional measurements of the width of the groove on your altar, and the distance between the wall and top of the groove.

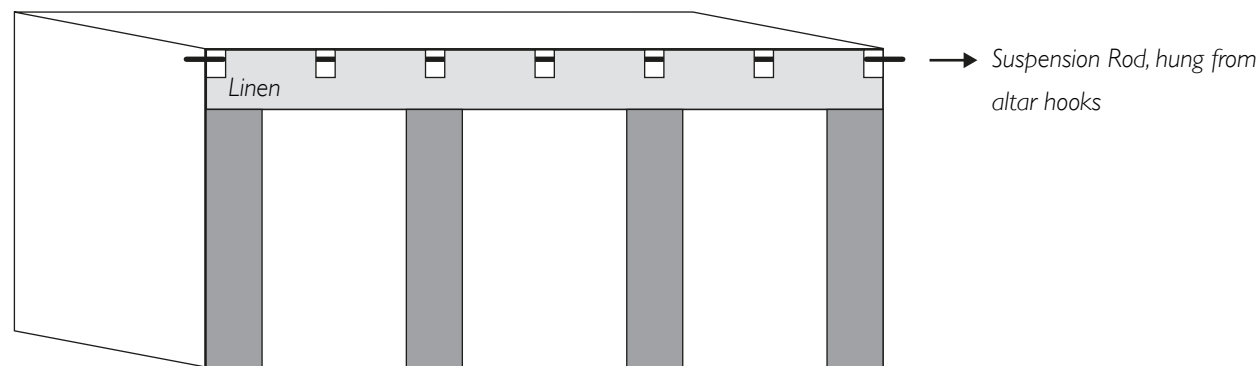


Step Five - Your Altar (continued)

Altars with Hooks

An altar frontal may be attached using hooks - either at the front of the altar, or at the back of the mensa. Here, we would include a hem for a suspension rod, with cut outs in the linen to hang the frontal from the hooks.

If you attach your frontal with hooks, we need to know how these hooks are spaced across your altar – noting the distance between each hook, and how many hooks are used.



If your type of altar is not listed here, do not worry as we will always do our best to accommodate any attachment method.

Please note that we are unable to make any changes to your altar directly; if work needs to be done (such as the attachment of hooks or screws), then you would need to plan for this yourself.

Watts's Design Service

For more complex commissions we recommend opting for our design service, where our experienced graphic designers create a 'mock-up' of your potential set. This is available for a deposit against the full order, and you can ask for 3 re-designs if needed. These digital renderings of your design are a great way to visualise new vestments. If you would like any embroidery on your pieces, then our design team can virtually create different options for you to consider, enabling you to be confident in your new set before the fabric is even cut.

In this example, we used our Sarum Red 'Gothic' as the main frontal fabric, paired with a Cream 'Gothic' super frontal. The frontal features outline orphreys of our Old Gold 'Diamond & Lay' braid, and trimmed with matching 2" fringe. The super frontal is fully hand embroidered with silk shading, appliqué, and Japanese Gold Thread.



First design



Finished product after re-designs

If you have any questions, please contact us,
we'll be happy to help.

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