

Warren Wilson Presbyterian Church

Narthex Redesign Recommendations

The Process

Kristin Williams and Robyn Castellani served as co-leaders for this initiative. They spoke with about 20 members of the congregation to discuss their ideas, concerns, and priorities for the redesign of the narthex and parlor. They also looked up ideas online, to see how other churches have structured their parlors and entry ways. The recommendations below reflect all of the input they received, as well as their own ideas.

Specific Requests

These were the issues that were important to different members of our church family. We made sure to integrate all of these into our overall approach.

- Make sure that the history of the church, and some of our old artwork, is represented in some way.
- Find a better way to do sign-up sheets than the tables that get set up every Sunday; having to put the tables up and take them down every week is cumbersome.
- Better lighting in the narthex, especially in the central area.
- Showcase the artwork of our church family, especially the kids' artwork, possibly in a rotating display.
- Showcase our children's ministries.
- Showcase our community engagement and social outreach ministries.
- Highlight our ministry to and support for students and the campus community at large.
- Include a digital display screen, possibly something interactive.
- Integrate the poles that stand in narthex in some way that adds color to that space.

Thematic Approach: Lively, Active, and Light

Currently, when you walk into the church, it feels somewhat old and dated. The artwork on the walls is older, the space is dark, and there is nothing that reflects the lively, creative work that our church is doing. So our thematic quest was to create a space that feels like our church itself, who we are today and who we might become as we live into our shared future. This means that we want the space to feel light, colorful, engaging, and active. We want people who walk into the space to feel that they have come into a church that is engaging, vibrant, and doing lots of good things in the community. So in our approach, you will see a recurring theme of color, creativity, and a focus on the different work of our ministry teams.

Three Areas to Welcome, Connect, and Serve

Think of the narthex area as integrating three kinds of spaces. There's the central narthex, the entryway. Then there's the parlor to the right, and the wide hallway where the bathrooms are on the left, as you walk in. Each of these areas will have its own purpose.

With the central narthex, we will create a first impression of color, energy and welcome. The purpose of this space will be to encourage people to come in, and to give a sense of who we are and what we are about.

The parlor will be set up like a coffeehouse, to enhance our coffee hour and create a better space for connecting. This will be the place to get to know each other better; it will include the digital screen.

In the space on the left, in the hallway, we will have all our "here to serve" materials, where people can sign up to participate in a wide range of our activities. (This will replace the tables that have to be set up and taken down every week.)

1. Central Narthex: Welcome

We will transform the central narthex into a colorful, vibrant call to community. There will be three central elements to this redesign.

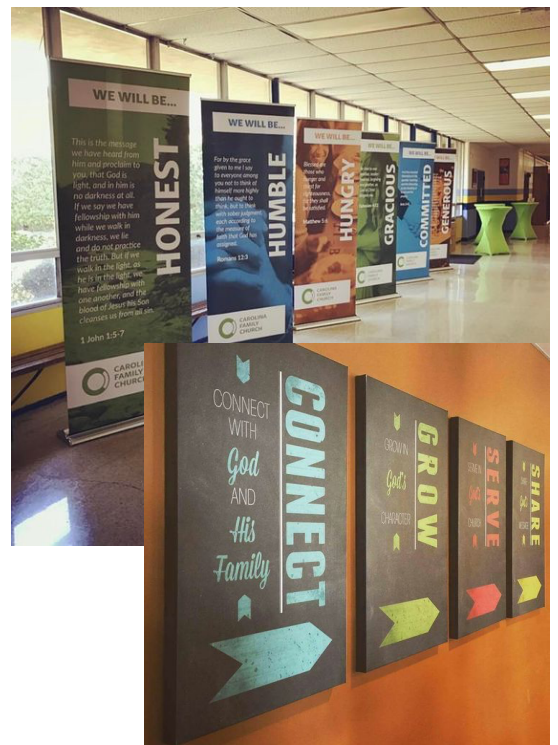
Light

Install better lighting, especially in the front two corners, which tend towards darkness.

Welcoming Banners

On the poles on either side of the narthex, we will put up colorful banners, each one speaking to a core tenet of the church. (A volunteer has already agreed to make the banners and proposed a way to hang them.)

The pictures to the right show some examples of this idea in action. Since we don't have solid wall space, we'll do a similar idea, but instead of walls and signs, we'll use poles and banners.



Side Walls

The front of the narthex, the area closest to the entrance to the sanctuary, is currently quite dark. We are proposing new lights -- possibly floor lamps -- for this area.

We also propose putting up banners on the walls on either side of the narthex, nearest the doors to the sanctuary.

The inspiration for this idea is the Advent banner Kristin made a few years ago, which our members -- children and adults -- helped create. This piece could perhaps feature our inclusivity statement (*We are mothers and fathers, single and married, gay and straight, young and old . . . all one in Christ!*) surrounded by handprints from everyone in the church. We would make this together, under Kristin's direction.

The idea here is for this entire space to tell a story about who we are, through the pole banners and through the larger banners on the walls. When the general design approach is approved, we will develop the idea for the banners. These could also rotate with the liturgical season, so the look and feel is regularly refreshed.

Needs

- Lights
- Pole Banners
- Wall Banner(s)

2. Parlor: Connect

Our hope for the parlor is the same as it is now: that it will be a place that will draw people in to spend more time and connect with one another. To that end, we want to create a basic coffee house design; and to declutter the space and create a more communal, welcoming feel. And also one that helps tell our story.

We will do this in three ways:

1. Back Third: Sofa and Seated Area

The sofa and comfy chairs that are currently located to the left of the room as you enter will remain in that space. These will continue provide an inviting and comfortable area for people to sit during coffee hour, or for ministry teams and other groups that meet there.

II. Remainder of the Space: Coffeehouse

Instead of cluttering the central space with a large, heavy table that has to be moved in and out every week, we propose installing a coffee hutch (similar to the one pictured to the right) on the wall to the right of the windows, just outside the kitchen. This will simplify setting up for coffee hour, and create a more contemporary and friendly feel.

With the space that we save from not putting up the large table in the center of the room, we can have some smaller tables (we are proposing round, high tops), again to facilitate people connecting and talking to each other, and creating a lively and welcoming communal space.

III. Display Monitor

On the wall to the left of the big windows, we propose mounting a high def screen that can display the following:

- Pictures of the church in community--enjoying fellowship and doing service together.
- Pictures of our history, including archived artwork, as well as stories from members and alums.
- Calendar of events
- Rotating content from our social media sites (our website and Facebook page), focused on what we believe, what we do, calls to action.
- The Communications Team will take the lead on developing the content for the rotating display, and it will integrate with our social media content.

Bonus Idea: Art On Order

We have a lot of artists and writers in our community. We may wish to set up an account with an online production firm, and create T-Shirts, mugs, etc. that represent our values and our progressive Christian artist aesthetic. These items could be on display in the Parlor. Then, through the monitor (or our website), people can order anything they'd like and it will be delivered straight to their door. (Marketing progressive Christian artwork is a growing trend, and can serve as a potential revenue source -- and a church growth tool -- for churches like ours.)

Needs

- Coffee hutch (can be as simple as table with built in shelves above)
- Display monitor
- High top tables, chairs



3. Left Hallway: Serve

The hallway on the left (near the restrooms) has large uninterrupted wall space and will be dedicated to our signup sheets. There are a few ways we could do this. One idea was to build in a standing shelf, where people could easily sign up. Another idea is to create a signup board, like the one to the right, taken from another church narthex design idea. But regardless, we will have in this one space all our “serve” content, so people can get in the habit of going here to see what is happening in the community and how they can connect.

We can also create a design element to the signup board, like they’ve done here, which will motivate people to participate and also connect our signup sheets to our mission.

For instance, “Play” would be a permanent section, and we’d have information on our baseball trip, potlucks, etc. “Connect” would draw people to our Care Teams, or dinner clubs. “Serve” would feature our partnerships with Habitat, SVCM and others. “Worship” give people the chance to sign up to usher or serve as a liturgist or sing in our choir. With this approach, we’re not just getting signups, we’re telling a story about who we are and what we do.

A Special Note on Artwork

We have identified nine different areas in the parlor, narthex and hallways that we can use to display artwork and photos.

We propose using these spaces to display kids’ artwork, as well as art created by our adult members. We can also post photos of our congregation in action, and display historical pieces. These are the spaces where we can literally tell our stories.

