

Worship the Lord



This collection of photos complements the following article.

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Worship and Outreach In a Southwestern Suburb

By Adam Mueller

The article included these comments:

What began as an innocuous project to address a punch-list of irritations turned out to be a stunning makeover that powerfully influences both worship and outreach. Our previous chapel was utilitarian, but “meh.” The remodel has a wow factor. It is difficult to describe just how impactful good lighting is on people’s demeanor, their mood, and their willingness to engage in worship. A bright space makes for happy people who want to

engage. Replacing the carpet with tile has significantly enhanced our singing. It’s a live room; sound jumps. A retired LCMS pastor who worships with us occasionally commented, “I always knew your people could sing. But now they raise the roof! The new acoustics are a real game changer.” Prior to the remodel, nobody commented about our chapel. Now it’s often one of the first things people notice: “Your chapel is just beautiful.” Happy people, vigorous singing, and a friendly culture connect worship to outreach.



“The biggest improvement, though, was in the chancel. The screens were removed, so now the eye is centered on the powerful visual of a free-floating cross.”



Before: digital displays too dominant in the chancel.



After: digital displays positioned outside the chancel, a pair on each side.

Adam Mueller offers additional comments about the remodeling project.

“The journey for the project was unique and has God’s fingerprints all over it. We were supposed to pay cash for a tasteful cosmetic update: mostly lighting, paint, and flooring. Work began in 2016 for completion by our 2019 75th anniversary. For various reasons we missed the 75th anniversary. COVID came next spring, and we reworked our priorities. Rather than reconfigure the seating with chairs, we opted to keep the pews, reupholster them, and put the rest of the cash toward the chancel. In the meantime, a sprinkler head broke and flooded the sanctuary. Insurance money expanded our budget and allowed us to do more than originally planned.

“Our space is unique. It has unusual angles, lines of sight, and acoustics. Some places felt sectioned off from the main congregation. People seated in those areas couldn’t see the chancel or hear well. The architect and designer wanted to unite the space and make it feel like it was one room. Their goal was that no matter where you sat, you had a common worship experience. Previously, the chancel wall was very plain, painted eggshell white with a

mounted cross that did not provide much of a focal point. The cross has been redesigned, coated in copper for a visual appeal, pulled forward, and suspended over the altar. Now the chancel wall provides a very attractive focal point, envisioning heaven with the Triune God pictured in the wood. A dove descends on the Son

Rethinking digital displays.

The images above show an improvement that focuses the eye on symbols of the means of grace in the chancel: cross, altar, ambo, font. But some churches are rethinking the “necessity” of screens in worship or at least using them only for sermon illustrations, announcements, WELS Connection, and Bible class (if held in the worship space)—but not for projecting liturgy and hymns. Find resources to explore this trend under the “Projection in Worship” tab on the Hymnal Introduction Presentations page of the Congregational Services website.

of Man. Baptism is also in play. The simple symbolism is that those of us in the nave approach God in heaven through the cross and the shed blood of Christ (altar). Jesus' outstretched arms extend

around the whole chapel via the wood slats, indicating his gospel call and his gentle shepherding of those who gather around the Word."



Wide angle panoramic view before addition of the cross and wood slats.



Dark flooring and green pews before the renovation—and after a broken sprinkler flooded the chapel.



Purple carpeting, green pews, grey walls, lavender pillars, a waterfall of purples above the altar, and dim lighting. The walls were updated to a bright white.



Demolition precedes new beauty.

Flags in the chancel

Both before and after the remodel, the American and Christian flags flank the chancel. An optimal design might find some other place to display these flags—fellowship hall or gathering space. A “Luther Rose” flag might replace the Christian flag. Or if there is

an outdoor flagpole, flags inside the church—whether gathering space or worship space—may be omitted entirely.

For further discussion: wels.net/faq/flags-in-churches/ and “Flags in Church” at worship.welsrc.net/download-worship/valuable-worship-reading/.