



Sunday, November 23, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Resurrection,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I continue to thank God for you and for this year we are spending in Sabbath and preparation. As we have intentionally made space to hear from the Lord, our Resurrection leaders have sensed a new direction in our celebration of the great Vigil of Easter. I'm excited about that direction and want to tell you more about it.

At Resurrection, we've been given the great gift of Easter Vigil—indeed, the Resurrection is our name feast. We've also been given the gift of this building. We now want to bring these two gifts together.

Over the years, the Easter Vigil has been a central part of our practice as a church. We have seen it function as a prophetic weathervane for us—telling us who we are and where we are going. As our church has changed throughout the years, so has our Easter Vigil service—from its beginnings in the old building on Route 59, to West Chicago High School, to many years in Glenbard West High School, and to the last 4 years at Edman Chapel. In all these different places and approaches to Vigil, I have seen the Holy Spirit work.

With this in mind and after long conversations with the pastoral staff, clergy, and vestry we have decided to host the Easter Vigil in our own sanctuary this year instead of renting Edman chapel. Our plan, which is still developing, is to incorporate a more ancient approach to the service that includes an all-night prayer vigil—while still retaining the dramatic readings and musical celebration that we love. Here's what it will likely look like:

ROUGH DRAFT PLAN

Holy Saturday, April 4

Afternoon “salvation readings” services—These services would focus on the artistic presentations of the Salvation History readings. Each service would be identical and around 2 hours in length. They would not include other components of the Easter Vigil such as the Holy Noise, Eucharist, etc. They would conclude with an evangelistic message.

All-night ancient vigil—This would be an opportunity for our people to step into the ancient tradition of celebrating the Resurrection. It will begin in darkness with candles lit throughout the building, with the traditional opening collects and the Exsultet. From there, we would enter an entire night of Bible reading, prayer, worship, teaching, and waiting. The all-night vigil would culminate in a joy-filled sunrise service on Easter Sunday.

Easter Sunday, April 5

6:00am-ish sunrise service—This would be the conclusion to the all-night ancient vigil. At sunrise, we would make the acclamation announcing the Resurrection and we would celebrate with the Holy Noise, dancing, and the first Eucharist of Easter.

9:00am & 11:00am services—As they have been, a joyful celebration and wonderful opportunity to invite guests.

WHY WE ARE EXCITED ABOUT THIS DIRECTION

As our Worship Pastor, Steve Williamson, has presented this idea and we have collaborated on it as leaders, we feel a freshness and an excitement about this direction that feels right in the Lord. Here's why:

It's More Formational—Worshipping in the same space throughout Holy Week creates continuity. An all-night Vigil provides even more opportunity for prayer, something that Resurrection has been growing in the past several years through experiences like Prayer100. Baptisms in our own space are more intimate, and those baptized can return each Sunday to the place of their baptisms.

It's More Missional—Some visitors who come to our Vigil service in Edman Chapel never return to Resurrection because our other services are in a different building. This new schedule offers 5 incredible invitational opportunities—2 “salvation readings” services on Saturday and 3 Eucharist services on Sunday—all in our home. And all with an evangelistic message.

It's More Worshipful—An all-night Vigil and sunrise acclamation better incorporate the practices of the ancient church. And in our church home, it's harder to mistake a worship service like Vigil for a performance.

It's More Sustainable—Over the last 4-5 years, the challenge of transitioning to a new space and back in the middle of Holy Week has been draining our most gifted artists, leaders, and team members. It is more sustainable to hold all Holy Week services in our own building. And doing so saves us about \$30,000 per year.

We know there are more questions than can be addressed in a single letter. Nor have we figured out every logistic. Please pray for continued wisdom and guidance as we prepare for worship and welcoming this year. And if you do have questions, please reach out to Steve at steve@churchrez.org.

What a joy it will be to celebrate the glory of the Resurrection in our own church home.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stewart Ruch III", with a small cross symbol to the left.

Bishop Stewart Ruch III

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Won't doing the readings all night be more work? The Scripture readings at the all-night Vigil will be spoken readings, not artistically rendered readings like the ones at the afternoon services. The all-night Vigil will be more akin to the around-the-clock Scripture reading week we held to consecrate our new building.

When will the kids get to dance? Following the great acclamation at sunrise on Easter morning. Think of it like Christmas morning—only better!

When would baptisms be? We are still discussing, but likely at some point on Saturday evening.

Won't there be too many people and not enough seats and parking? We are aware of parking and seating challenges and are working on possible solutions. We will continue to do free tickets for the “salvation reading” services on Saturday.