



This Clergy Corner is a transcript from the recent Parish mission where the Ruchs, Millers, and Gauthiers shared their thoughts on the transition Resurrection is making to a bishop's church and explained more about what it will mean for everyone.

From Fr. Stewart:

I'm very excited for this meeting because want to give an extended explanation and reflection on the transition to bishop.

1) What the transition means for me and my family

For me, the process of being elected bishop has been a very emotional journey for me and it has been difficult at times. When I was waiting to see if I would be elected, I was anxious because I was worried about both outcomes. I love being the rector at Rez and I worried what either outcome of the election might mean for me, for my family and for Rez. I was anxious about all the responsibility that would come with being elected bishop, but also excited about the possibility because more than five years ago God began to instill in me a vision for a revival of Word and Sacrament infused by the Holy Spirit in the Upper Midwest. I love coaching and I already have a fatherly relationship with other rectors in our newly forming Diocese. I've been at Rez for 25 years, which is rare for clergy, and I'm sure you've heard me talk about an increasing desire to expand our ministry.

When I was elected, I felt a huge acceptance and welcoming from the college of bishops, which was extremely encouraging and confirming in the midst of mixed emotions. During the election at Nashota House, before the announcement was made official, Archbishop Duncan came and told me that I had been elected bishop. He then said that my "brothers", the other bishops who were gathered in a room nearby, were eager to welcome me. When I entered the room where they were gathered, they all individually greeted me with an embrace, and I felt so encouraged. Their warm welcome to me confirmed my election and gave me a sense of peace about it.

To wrap up my personal reflections, I have found this quote by St. Augustine to be an encouragement and a challenge to me. Augustine said that, when you are called into ministry, you "can neither shrink back in cowardice nor lean forward in selfish ambition", you must simply do what the Church asks of you. It would be easy for me to shrink back because of the great responsibility I am called to bear. It would also be easy to lean forward in arrogance. What I need to remember, and what I am committing to do, is to simply obey the call of Christ through his church.

2) What the transition will mean for Church of the Resurrection

I am deeply connected to Rez. We are deeply connected to each other, and so the transition will affect us all. I did not ask for this responsibility and this call. I didn't ask to be made bishop, and you didn't ask to become the bishop's church. But we are in this together and we will learn together. I need you; I need your support and encouragement. I cannot make this transition without you.

With that in mind, I am so excited because, by the grace of God, the Diocese of the Upper Midwest has been formed according to the ancient model of having a mother church birth and plant daughter churches to form a healthy, interconnected community. God has formed Rez into a church planting hub for our new diocese and so it is fitting that Rez should become the bishop's church.

My role as bishop will be deeply shaped by my leadership at Rez. In fact, I chose my bishop's seal to be "Christ Is Risen!" which I'm sure you've heard me yell a few times before, if you've been to Easter Vigil. As bishop, I will actually be more established at Rez than I was as rector. Rez is becoming the bishop's church, which means it houses the seat (cathedra) of the bishop. Because Rez is now where the bishop is, it also means that I can be, and need to be more committed and connected to Rez as we share we expanding ministry.

Over our history, we have been growing in the shade of the giant oak trees of the great established churches in Wheaton, like Wheaton Bible and College Church. Now we have our own daughter churches to nurture and shade. I recently talked with Fr. Gregory in Cambodia, and Fr. Damiani in Uptown. I've already had numerous calls from rectors across the Diocese of the Upper Midwest. They are already asking for guidance, prayer and love. I am already acting out of my role as bishop and Rez is already stepping in as the bishop's church. Our diocese needs a bishop and a bishop's church and God has blessed me and Rez with that responsibility.

In a way, this consecration is like having a wedding and a new baby all at the same time. Like weddings and new babies, there is a lot of excitement energy surrounding the event itself, but nobody tells you what happens afterward. So, we're going to have to learn together what it means to become bishop and the bishop's church. I want to give you grace and I will need your grace as well as we undergo this transition together.

Katherine and I have found that there are 3 H's that are important for learning to handle change in our marriage, and I think the same will be true for us as a church during this change. We need to honor each other, have humor, and enter this transition with humility. I think we already do that pretty well and I'm sure that if we keep it up, we're going to be a great bishop's church!

3) What the transition will look like

It's looking like I will probably be traveling to other churches every six to eight weeks to celebrate the Eucharist with them. Most of my role as bishop will occur midweek and I want to be clear that my main Sunday responsibility is to Rez. I will continue to share the preaching load with Fr. Kevin and other leaders. But, as I'm sure you've noticed, I've already been doing that. I'll probably be preaching about as frequently as I have been over the last few months, but I'll be celebrating the Eucharist more, which is just what the bishop is supposed to do, administer the Sacrament. I will continue to be involved in my regular staff and vestry meetings and I am committed to both. The pastoral staff will stay focused on Rez, but it will also be expanding its responsibility to assist my new responsibilities. So, what will it look like? It will look very similar to what we already do, but more so. God is expanding our capacity and blessing us with the opportunity to lead a revival of Word and Sacrament infused by the Holy Spirit in the Upper Midwest.

Bishop's Wardrobe Terminology

Here's the basics of the new stuff Stewart will be wearing:

Rochet: White Robe for bishop's

Chimere: Red Bishops Vest

Tippet: black preaching scarf with ACNA seal

Chasuble: Outer garment worn when the bishop celebrates Eucharist, same as the priest's chasubel

Crozier: A symbol that he will tend and feed Christ's sheep (John 21:15-17)

Mitre: A symbol of the bishop's sacramental leadership (Exodus 29:6)

Purple Cassock: Basic priestly garment, when Stewart is on clergy business, purple is the color of a bishop

Cross: To be worn over the heart (“pectoral cross”) as a reminder of his promise to take up the cross daily and follow Jesus (Luke 17:23)

Ring: A symbol that he will love and care for the Church as Christ does, who has taken the Church as his own bride (Ephesians 5:25-32)



From Katherine Ruch:

I wanted to share a few brief thoughts on this transition. First of all, I want to say that we all have been given a lot and now God is asking us to share that abundance. This will require tough sacrifices, but we can't keep a record of these sacrifices. Instead God asks us to give joyfully. We now carry concern for our own church and all our daughter churches, which is an amazing blessing and a great responsibility. On a more personal note, I feel honored that this is our time to sacrifice, share and set the example. But, like Stewart, I've been anxious about what it might mean if he were elected bishop and this has been a time of spiritual warfare for our family.

I was ambivalent about the possibility of Stewart becoming bishop, and it is hard to consider sharing Stewart even more. But in the midst of this transition, I have felt God expanding my own soul, giving me

more capacity to meet the needs that God has set before us. I know that Stewart will be traveling more, and I'm hoping to be able to travel with him more often. The children have wondered and worried about the transition, but they pray regularly for the church and Stewart's ministry and they are excited to see what God will do. We are excited as a family, but we already feel God preparing us for the transition, and we ask for your prayers.

From Vestry Member Dan Easley:

I really see this consecration is an official recognition of Fr. Stewart for what he is already doing. He is already shepherding churches of the Diocese of the Upper Midwest. He is already guiding and encouraging their rectors, so this is just a confirmation of what is. It is also the consecration of Rez as the mother church of these daughter churches. God has grown Rez from the very beginning, from a small chapel to an auditorium to our new building. He led us out of a diocese and then later, back into the Anglican Communion. He has birthed churches from us and made us the hub of a church planting movement. God is continuing this work as he consecrates Stewart as bishop and Rez as the bishop's church. It is exciting, it is right, and it is a fulfillment of what already is.

From Fr. Kevin Miller:

I'll break my remarks into 5 frequently asked questions that I get, and my answers to those questions.

1) How will your role (Fr. Kevin's role) change?

Not that much. I will be preaching more and investing in the preaching gift of others, as well as being involved with more financial oversight and overseeing formation ministries as I have been.

2) Will you become the rector?

No. The bishop is still the rector. It may require some adjustment in my role and Stewart's role in the future, but for now and the foreseeable future, Stewart's role as rector is unchanged.

3) How are you feeling?

I am excited. I remember when we made the decision to leave our diocese in the early nineties because of a heretical bishop. I am so thankful and blessed that we now have an orthodox, local bishop whom we know and love to lead our church and our diocese.

4) How will life change for us as a church?

We are now the bishop's church of the diocese. We are already 40% of the attendance and giving for the whole diocese, so we already are doing that role somewhat. Now, as the bishop's church, we will also be growing in hospitality, welcoming more people via conventions, meetings, and regional conferences. We will be sending out more teams to other churches to train encourage and coach. We will be releasing more leaders to plant churches. And we will be investing more, financially and otherwise, in a revival of Word and Sacrament. We get to birth a regional revival and that is exciting!

5) Will all of this take us away from our calling as Rez?

No, this is taking us deeper into our calling as Sanctuary of Transformation for the Lord, the lost and the least. Our call is now the center of a regional revival.

From Deacon Karen Miller:

It became clear to me early on after meeting Stewart that he was going to be a bishop one day, because I knew that he was one of the most godly leaders I'd met. So, I was really excited to see God's confirmation of Stewart's calling in his election as bishop. Very quickly after he was elected though, I freaked out a little bit, because I realized that I work for him! I wasn't sure what this change was going to mean for me, but

already I can feel that God is growing me and growing us as a church and I can feel that this change is right.

It's important to remember though, God will hold us accountable if we do not share Fr. Stewart, Katherine and their family. We need to pray hard for Stewart and his family.

Similar to what Fr. Stewart and Fr. Kevin already mentioned, my role will mostly stay the same, but it will grow in capacity. Stewart will continue to do what he has been doing, leading and visioning, but now he will do it not only for Rez, but also for the Diocese of the Upper Midwest. It reminds me of our baptismal font, full to overflowing and running over down the sides. We are overflowing and are now God is calling us to share our gifts and leadership with the Diocese of the Upper Midwest.