

Commonly asked questions about Redeemer East Side's Leadership Transition

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Questions for Abe

What led you to the decision to step down?

This has been one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make because of the deep love and affection I feel for our church as well as the love and affection I have received from you. Redeemer East Side has been nothing less than family to me—from our Session, to our staff, to dear members and attenders like you who have loved and supported me so well as your pastor and brother in Christ. It has been one of my greatest joys and honor to serve you in this capacity.

I've been thinking and praying about this for many months on several levels.

I have felt a greater call after 20 years of weekly pastoral ministry and preaching to focus on a ministry of teaching, training, and equipping other pastors and leaders in NYC at least for this next season in ministry. There is a famous quote that goes: "Vocation is the place where our

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deep gladness meets the world's deep need.” That intersection of gladness and need leads me to pursue ministry in underserved and marginalized neighborhoods in the city. Many of you will know that this has always been a passion and priority of mine, but in the last few years, this sense of calling and conviction has continued to grow.

I am grateful and honored to have been able to lead Redeemer East Side (RES) to grow as a community of cross-cultural love I am encouraged by the ways the Session¹ has committed our church to be more intentional about working out what reconciliation and justice would look like for the Upper East Side (UES) through our [vision and values](#) which were updated last year.

You may have already gathered this from what I've shared, but I just want to underscore that I am not stepping down because of any conflict or church politics. Our staff and our Session feel like family to me, and I thank God regularly for how healthy our church is. I'm leaving entirely because of a clear sense that God is calling me to a different kind of ministry for this next season.

Is burnout a factor?

This past year has certainly been an incredibly difficult year, as it has been in different ways for all of us. So, I'd be lying if I said that I wasn't feeling the weight and fatigue of that. You may remember several years ago that I experienced severe exhaustion and burnout. This fatigue doesn't at all feel like that. So, while it certainly has been an exhausting year, I wouldn't say that burnout was a major driving factor behind this decision.

Why are you stepping down now at this specific time?

It feels like we are coming out of the pandemic, and we are beginning to enter into a new day and a new chapter in the life of our church. I feel like RES is entering a re-launch moment as it begins to regroup and begin construction of the East Side (ES) ministry center; it will be a season of an exciting vision. As I wrestled with my deep questions of calling, I felt that to step away *after* casting such a vision would be harder for the church than it would be if I left now. The hardship is real, but I'm trusting that as I answer this new calling, it leaves space for RES to enter a new phase with the strong leaders you have among you and the limitless goodness of Jesus as the source of strength.

When will you transition out?

Right now the Session and I are planning for sometime this summer and using July 1 as a placeholder date. We still have yet to work out the exact details.

What will you do?

I'm not exactly sure what that will look like yet, but after communicating the decision to the Session recently, I'm having some encouraging conversations about some interesting

¹ The Session is the governing body of the church and consists of the elders elected by church members, as well as the senior pastor who is a member by virtue of his role.

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possibilities that I am hopeful about. I hope it will involve training, equipping and coaching diverse ministry leaders in NYC.

Will you be moving out of the city?

We hope to stay in NYC where I may use the experience, knowledge and skills that I've gained during my 14 years of ministry in Manhattan. My wife and I still want to be a part of the vision for a gospel movement in New York City.

Will you and your family still attend the East Side?

We love Redeemer, and RES in particular. Redeemer has been our church for 14 years. It's all we have known in the city. I believe it is a best practice for the RES congregation, and for your next senior pastor that we find another church to attend. We are not yet sure where we will attend. But we'd love to stay in touch with you. Many of you already follow me on various social media platforms, like [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). My personal email address is abrahamcho@gmail.com.

Questions about our church

What does this mean for Redeemer East Side's vision for the future?

We remain committed to our [vision, mission, and values](#) that the Session established last year. RES will continue to center the gospel in all it does, grow as a cross-cultural community that's committed to the ministry of reconciliation, and seek to make disciples for a gospel movement in the city. This is our vision. The Session will have these commitments in mind as a new senior pastor is identified. The [Redeemer DNA](#) will continue to define RES for many years to come.

The next chapter is incredibly exciting and bright. Becoming rooted in a new ministry center on 91st and Lexington will be a game changer for our congregation. To do that coming out of the pandemic sends a strong message that RES is here to stay for the good of the UES and the city. There are new ministries and outreaches already getting started in that area at places like the Isaacs Houses.

Who will be preaching?

During much of the summer, as is typical, the preaching is done by several different pastors and this year will be similar. Hector Sanchez and Brandon Bennett will do the bulk of the preaching and we've been planning for others like our former pastors, Aaron Bjerke and Justin Adour, to also preach. We are also in the process of hiring an assistant pastor that we hope would join our staff team possibly sometime this summer and would also preach.

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For the longer term, we are seeking a seasoned pastor to provide the majority of the preaching until our next senior pastor is identified.

Who will lead Redeemer East Side in the meantime?

Over the last few years, the staff executives of the church have been Abe and [Bruce Terrell](#) (Executive Director) who've worked closely with a staff leadership team that currently includes [Hector Sanchez](#) (Assistant Pastor, Director of Justice and Cross-Cultural Community), [Lindsey Schultz](#) (Director of Children's Ministry) and [Lyn Cook](#) (Senior Director of Formation). Bruce will continue leading that team under the oversight of the Session.

What is the plan to find a new senior pastor?

The Session is developing a plan to find a new senior pastor in accordance with the process outlined in our denomination's polity. As that is clarified in the coming weeks, we look forward to sharing it with the congregation, and members of RES will be invited to give their input during the process.

The Session remains committed to working out the RES [vision, mission, and values](#) that were established last year and shared broadly with our congregants by means of an [All-Church Conversation](#) and [sermon series](#) last fall. These include the gospel value of cross-cultural gospel community. The new senior pastor will pick up that vision and continue to shape and develop it.

What does Abe's decision mean for the East Side Ministry Center on 91st Street?

We are moving ahead as planned. The architectural plans for the building are proceeding apace, and we plan to start construction this fall.

Will this change other things as far as staff, worship services or programming?

We plan for staff, worship services, and programs to continue as normal.

Does this change anything about the vision we talked about with the Rise Campaign in 2016?

The [Rise Campaign](#) vision remains clear and we are well along in the path toward that vision with the purchase of the building, the development of new leaders and the launching of new churches.

Where can we find resources to ask more questions or to process this?

We are holding Q&R times after worship services during the month of May, as well as midweek open forums to process together. Please see our website for days and time. Also, all of our ES

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elders, deaconesses, deacons and staff are ready to process and pray with you. Please see the [website](#) for care and assistance help.

Prayer

How can we pray for Redeemer East Side and for Abe?

- Faith for our church as we process this change, realizing that Jesus is the head of the Church and is in control.
- Lament for the sorrow we all feel after such a difficult year and Abe's leaving.
- Wisdom for the Session as we develop and implement a plan to find the next senior pastor
- Discernment for Abe as he finishes well at RES, explores his new calling and for the Cho family as they navigate this change
- RES to be transformed by the gospel and share its peace everywhere we live, work and love
- A movement of the gospel to increase on the ES
- Cross-cultural gospel community to continue to grow in and through our church
- Strength from the Spirit for the staff

What are opportunities to pray with others at this time?

- Every weekday: Join us at noonday prayer, Monday to Friday from 12 to 12:20 p.m. on [Zoom](#).
- Every month: Join our monthly prayer gathering every last Sunday of the month from 12 to 1 p.m. on [Zoom](#).
- Process with church leaders at [Open Table Discussions on Zoom](#), at 7 p.m. Wednesdays May 5, 12 and 19.