



Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I invite you to join us in a collaborative project to the glory of God and for the blessing of our city. Holy Week 2008 (March 16-22) will be an opportunity for a broad collection of churches and groups to partner and create an experience in Cincinnati. Via Crucis :: Immersion is an experiential Stations of the Cross. Via Crucis is based on the 14 Stations of the Cross ... remixed. Our expression of this ancient Christian practice will be multi-sensory, multi-denominational, multi-layered, and multi-media. Via Crucis :: Immersion is a pilgrimage. A journey into the heart of God. It is an immersion into the suffering of Jesus and a discovery of our own brokenness. It is Christ's passion.

Known by many names throughout history, Via Dolorosa, Stations of the Cross, or the Way of the Cross, this act of devotion and worship represents the journey of Christ to the Cross. This is commonly known as the Passion of Christ. Entering into the Stations of the Cross is a way to enter into and identify with the suffering of Christ. Participation in the Stations likewise has the effect of entering into our own suffering and the pain of those around us.

"The most important reason for reviving the practice of making the Stations of the Cross is that it is a powerful way to contemplate, and enter into, the mystery of Jesus' gift of himself to us. It takes the reflection on the passion out of my head, and makes it an imaginative exercise. It involves my senses, my experience and my emotions. To the extent I come to experience the love of Jesus for me, to that extent the gratitude I feel will be deep. Deep gratitude leads to real generosity and a desire to love as I have been loved" (from [Why do the Stations of the Cross?](#)).

The Via Crucis is a pilgrimage. As much as it is a journey of remembrance for what Christ has done; it is also a journey into the heart of God and what the Spirit is doing today. We enter the Way of the Cross in many ways - some in arrogance and self-assurance, some with deep wounds and pain, some with malaise and distraction - but hopefully in the midst of it we all discover our brokenness and our blessedness. We identify our pain with the suffering of Christ and we also realize our place as the beloved of God.

There are two key elements for the success of this collaborative, dynamic, multi-sensory experience of worship. The first is **collaboration** and the second is **creativity**.

But first, some history... in 2004, Vineyard Central, a community of faith in Norwood, created the first Via Crucis :: Immersion event. This was a joint project by our community of artists, graphic designers, musicians, and regular folk who like to be creative. It took a cadre of 50+ people to pull this off and close to 200 came to experience this onetime event on Good Friday 2004. We had a great time putting this together and the energy it created was contagious and refreshing. We made the decision to host the event every two years and 2006 was another great experience. The 2006 Via Crucis built on the first and we partnered with 7 other churches. The musical group [Aradhna](#) performed a meditation concert of yeshu bhajans in the Hindi language in conjunction with Via Crucis at the beginning of the week. The

group captured the beauty and dignity of India's bhajan devotional melodies with music that blends east and west. All donations went to [Freedom Firm](#) for the set-up of a rehabilitation home. Restore International is an organization committed to rescuing and rehabilitating minor girls forced into prostitution in India.

Vineyard Central is eager to host Via Crucis :: Immersion again in 2008. However, we don't want to do it just the same as we have in the past. We enjoyed doing it so much that we would really like to share the experience with the rest of the Body of Christ in Cincinnati. We want to open it up so more people can come experience this amazing interactive event.

This year Via Crucis :: Immersion will be created by many churches from a wide array of denominational and ecclesiastical leanings. The event will start with a Palm Sunday (March 16th) evening opening (like an art show opening) and be open every day, Monday thru Saturday from 11:00 AM till 11:00 PM. We will all share in and contribute to the resources needed to pull off this scale of an event.

Collaboration

Let's do this together! This type of event lends itself well to a collaborative effort. No one person could pull this off. This is a great opportunity for the Body of Christ throughout Cincinnati to share in a common task for the sake of our common mission. This year we will have 14 different churches/groups create the 14 Stations of the Cross. Each group will have vast freedom to explore, dream, and design their station based on the gifts of their people, the call of God on their community, and the work of the Spirit in their midst. Groups will sign up for a station on a first come, first serve basis. Each group will assemble a team of artists, dreamers, innovators, producers, designers, and really anybody with at least one creative bone in their body. The church team will design the station, set it up in St. Elizabeth's (the former Catholic church building of which Vineyard Central is steward), and tear it down when the event is complete. Others in the church can sign-up to serve for an hour or more as "docent" during Holy Week to serve as host and greeter.

The requirements, specs, details, and whatnot are as follows:

- A genuine passion for trying something new and different
- A team of people – as few as 2, as many as 20
- A desire to see Christ's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven
- A representative to attend the two planning meetings
 - February 16th, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
 - March 8th, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
- Folks to set-up their station on Saturday, March 15th and tear-down on the afternoon of the 23rd or morning of the 24th
- Financial contributions
 - You need to cover the cost of creating your station (whoever you choose to do it – many can be created for free)
 - We need pay for the creation and publication of marketing materials to spread the word
 - We also need help offsetting the cost of heating St. Elizabeth's (\$200-\$300)
- People to sign up for "Docent" time-slots for Monday March 17th to Saturday the 22nd
- And probably the most important (beyond actually making the station) – Word of Mouth! Tell your friends, neighbors, co-workers, family, etc....

The Stations (first come first serve, let me know which one your group would like to do):

First Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 25:36-41)

Second Station: Jesus, Betrayed by Judas, is Arrested (Mark 14: 43-46)

Third Station: Jesus is Condemned by the Sanhedrin (Luke 22: 66-71)

Fourth Station: Jesus is Denied by Peter (Matthew 26: 69-75)

Fifth Station: Jesus is Judged by Pilate (Mark 15: 1-5, 15)

Sixth Station: Jesus is Scourged and Crowned with Thorns (John 19: 1-3)

Seventh Station: Jesus Bears the Cross (John 19: 6, 15-17)

Eighth Station: Jesus is Helped by Simon the Cyrenian to Carry the Cross (Mark 15: 21)

Ninth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem (Luke 23: 27-31)

Tenth Station: Jesus is Crucified (Luke 23: 33-34)

Eleventh Station: Jesus Promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief (Luke 23: 39-43)

Twelfth Station: Jesus Speaks to His Mother and the Disciple (John 19: 25-27)

Thirteenth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross (Luke 23: 44-46)

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Placed in the Tomb (Matthew 27: 57-60)

Creativity

I wanted to give you the details up front so that you know what you are getting into. But if I could make a simple request... don't get stuck on the details. I know that when I'm faced with a new challenge I can at times fixate on the facts and figures, the details and minutia. Via Crucis :: Immersion is an experience. It is both wonderfully simple and deeply meaningful. As each team creates their station they truly have the freedom to explore new ideas, try new things, and respond the Holy Spirit's creative birthing in their midst. Our prayer is that we would be flooded by the Spirit as sacred space and time are created; and that as we leave we would be drenched in an overwhelming sense of both who Christ is and our cross that we are to bear.

As we commonly enter this event, we will find threads, themes, and learnings that emerge. These are already happening.

This kind of worship experience will be de-centered, multi-sensory, and dynamic.

1. De-centered

The Stations experience will not have a stage or unidirectional piece. The design of the event is more like a pilgrimage or journey than an auditorium or theater. As such there is direction and by nature of the stations there is a (unforced) linear flow. It's O.K. to get "stuck" at Station 5 (for example). You may need to stay there a long time before moving on and perhaps will need to stop there and leave if the Spirit is working with you in a specific way. It's kind of like walking through a museum, an interactive one in every sense. We allow the art and the experience to speak for itself - or rather we allow God to speak through it.

2. Multi-sensory

All 6.

3. Dynamic

The event works on multiple levels. It is an intensely personal experience, allowing for deep, long, and meaningful contemplation on the part of an individual. But it is also for the community as well. There will be opportunities for us to post our thoughts, reflections, and prayers. This way, even as it is very personal, we can as a community of faith embrace and support and share with one another.

Furthermore, dynamic means that there will be tension, the stations are not meant to present answers, but questions. Conclusions are not necessary. Jesus is our reality that we will swim in and as such we don't have any more (nor any less) than him. Or, another way of looking at it, we have nothing to offer besides ourselves, our very lives, and in as much as we are transformed into his likeness and he lives within us and shows himself through us. This means that we are in an inherently relational dynamic. Only as we are relation to Christ can we relate with our fellow human being.

Next Steps

If you want to participate in Via Crucis :: Immersion please contact Aaron Klinefelter. Here's how:

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The Peace of Christ be with you all,

Aaron Klinefelter