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Easter brings two churches together

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Array Brad Davis

Marsha Raker directs combined choirs from her church, Oakwood Baptist, and St. Timothy Lutheran during a weekly rehearsal for an upcoming joint praise service called "People of the Risen King." The two churches joined forces for the event, which will include a full band.

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Two Charleston churches are crossing party lines, so to speak, for a special Easter musical event.

"People of the Risen King," is being called a praise gathering and it will join the choirs from St. Timothy Lutheran and Oakwood Baptist churches. The churches are located within a mile of each other off Corridor G in Charleston.

"When we get to heaven, we aren't going to have denominations," said Rachel Driggs, worship leader for St. Timothy Lutheran Church.

"As Christians, we get wrapped up in denominations. This breaks denominational lines with Baptists and Lutherans coming together to celebrate Easter. I hope a lot of people come. They are going to be blessed."

The service will include a combined choir of about 65 voices as well as praise bands from both churches. In some instances the congregation will be invited to sing along.

There will also be a dramatic presentation by Dr. J.K. Lilly, who will portray a man who saw Jesus. The service will also include prayer and communion.

Marsha Raker, choir director at Oakwood Baptist, said it has been inspirational to hear the vocalists and instrumentalists rehearsing together.

"It's a little glimpse of what heaven will be like," she said. "We are two different congregations with the common goal of sharing the news of the gospel. We have one common goal and that is to spread the word of the risen king."

Driggs and Raker first met in 2009 when St. Timothy hosted the Charleston Choir Festival, an annual event that gathers church choirs from various denominations to raise funds for the Davis Child Shelter.

Driggs and Raker became friends and last summer began discussing a joint service that would be a community outreach.

They agreed the Easter season would be the perfect opportunity.

When they met to discuss their respective music choices, they found they had picked many of the same songs.

"That God! He is something else," Raker said.

The music will be a blend of traditional and contemporary.

"Worship is about an attitude," Raker said. "It's not about a style."

Raker and Jenny Morris, interim choir director at St. Timothy, will alternate directing the choir.

"We want to invite the entire community," Driggs said. "It's a good way to start holy week and get in the mood for the reason for the season."

Raker and Driggs hope the upcoming service will be just the beginning of community outreach events the two congregations can do together. Pastors of the two churches are the Rev. David Moutz of Oakwood Baptist and the Rev. Rich Mahan of St. Timothy.

"People of the Risen King" will be held at St. Timothy Lutheran Church, 900 Lawndale Lane in Charleston at 5 p.m. April 17 and 7 p.m. April 18. A reception will follow the Monday program. The event is free.

Visit the websites www.sttimothy.com or www.obcwv.org for more information, or call 304-343-0424.

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