

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

NOVEMBER 1997

THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT

BY TIM KELLER

ment of their certain declension and decay. (*Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul*) Our experience of God is like a fire (it is often characterized as such in the Bible). But fires begin to burn down as soon as they are left untended, and then go out as soon as you fail to feed them fuel.

In Acts, we see that the disciples prepared for Pentecost much like the people of God in the Old Testament sought revival (*Acts 1:12-26*). Then there followed numbers of "mini-Pentecosts" in which renewed prayer, renewed separation from idols, and renewed grasp of the work of Christ for us led to a radical new experience of God's

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Last month I discussed the "re-invention" of Redeemer, and you responded with widespread excitement over the new expansion in general and over the formation of a West Side site in particular. This plan is essentially an organizational renewal of our church's form and structure. But Jesus warned against renewing only one part of something without renewing it wholly and comprehensively. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins." (*Matt. 9:16-17a*) In other words, if we only renew Re-

deemer's structure and not our hearts, the new form will be too much for our status quo levels of service to God to bear.

Because we live in a universe which physically and spiritually decays (*Rom. 8:20-22*), we are continually in need of spiritual renewal and revival. In the 1840's, Octavius Winslow wrote: "We tend to deify the graces of the Spirit, thinking of the faith and love in us as though they were essentially omnipotent. [But] though they are divine in their origin, they have no self-supporting power, but need constant communications of life and nourishment from Jesus...The moment of their being left to their inherent strength is the very mo-

... we are continually in need of spiritual renewal...

RENEWED HEART, CHURCH, AND CITY

BY ANDREW FIELD

This month Redeemer is launching a special campaign called, "A Renewed Heart, A Renewed Church, A Renewed City." The goal of the campaign is to lay a foundation of prayer, commitment, and generosity so that as a church we can prepare for God's transforming movement in this city. This special emphasis will continue through next April.

The events of this month are:

- Sunday, November 2, there will be a Vision Presentation, "A Renewed Church for the City," immediately following both worship services. A luncheon will follow at 1:00 p.m. and the con-

gregational meeting to approve the budget will be at 2:00 p.m.



- Starting that week many Fellowship Groups will spend three sessions studying Biblical stew-

ardship using Bible studies written by the pastors.

- A four week personal devotional study "A Renewed Heart in God's Service," also written by the pastors, will be available.

- Sunday, November 23, has been designated Renewed Heart Sunday. We will have a time of committing our resources at that service, and everyone is encouraged to bring an Estimate of Giving for the next year.

In past years, the stewardship

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THE NEWNESS OF THE SPIRIT

presence, and thus to assurance and effectiveness in witness (see *Acts 4:31; 13:1-12; cf. Acts 7:54-60; Luke 1:62-67; 3:21-22, 4:1*). Renewed lives led to renewed congregations which led to renewed cities and society.

A widescale time of renewal in Korea in 1904-5 was described this way: "The Christians returned to their homes...taking the Pentecostal fire with them. It spread to practically every church. Schools canceled classes for days while students wept out their wrongdoings together....All through the city people were going from house to house, confessing wrongs, returning stolen property, not only to Christians but to [non-believers]. A Chinese merchant was astounded to have a Christian walk in and pay him a large sum of money he had obtained unjustly years before....The

cry went out over the city..." (Ralph Blair, *The Korean Pentecost*).

Why should we at Redeemer seek renewal? We should notice that the NT times of revival were not usually preceded by what we would be called "backsliding." The disciples had not fallen into sin. Rather, renewal was sought in the face of some new opportunity or challenge for the spread of the gospel. Currently, Redeemer is healthy--we have not been damaged by scandal or party-spirit or spiritual lethargy. But now we face a new opportunity for the spread of the gospel--multiplying our ministry all over the city. The only way to respond is not simply to make plans or to give money, but to seek comprehensive spiritual renewal the way it has always been sought.

How should we seek renewal?

You will hear more from me this year on this subject! But in November we have our annual stewardship season. How does money and giving fit into the seeking of renewal? In *Acts 4:31-32* we see that radical generosity is one of the effects of spiritual renewal. An assurance of God's reality and love ("boldness" v.31) makes us unafraid to give our wealth away. In *Exodus 33:4-6* we see that radical generosity (they "stripped off their ornaments") was one of the causes of spiritual renewal. They gave their money as a way to make God their treasure and prepare for his presence in their midst (*35:22; 40:34*). A season of stewardship is a great opportunity for all of us to "strip off our ornaments" and find renewal of life. But it takes more than just making a pledge of money. Giving our money is a way to give our lives and find God.

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RENEWED HEART, CHURCH, AND CITY

campaigns have focused on Redeemer's budget needs. Not this year! (Sure, we'll have to talk a little about our budget for our members, but not much.) Our focus will rather be on a Biblically appropriate response that each of us needs to make in response to Christ's rich grace. We aren't directly trying to raise money for our budget, because we believe that if Christians gave according to God's call there would be such an outpouring of resources that our church budget would be raised many times over.

As we dedicate ourselves to this season of commitment together, we should recall how Jesus gave up everything for our

sakes. He also purchased for us our eternal glorious inheritance, using his own blood as the currency. We can therefore respond to his grace with joyful abandon out of both gratitude and hope. In other words, the Christian view of stewardship has a dual motive: (1) obedience to his commands and (2) bold trust in his care. The Lord that we serve is also the Lord that loves us. His past grace and his future promises join together to compel us to us give beyond mere rationality. (See Tim's related article in this month's newsletter).

I just spoke with someone this week who is not only committing for the first time to give in Bibli-

cal proportions, but she is also letting go of a financial safety net that has kept her from trusting God wholeheartedly. Scary? Yes, but also thrilling. She is excited to see how her hope in God's care will far exceed her former trust in mere money. Her enslavement to money has ended and she is noticeably more free. I know that this woman's relationship with Christ has deepened to a new level.

How much do you need to grow in this area of commitment and trust? Please use this month to pray through that question.

(See article on page 5 for some practical suggestions.)

REDEEMER REPORT

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CHRISTIANS: PERSECUTED/PERSECUTORS

BY DANITA GELTNER

November 16, 1997, is the National Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. People of all faiths are joining together to pray for Christians around the world who are being persecuted.

I am a Christian and I have been persecuted. Yet, I was first persecuted not as a Christian, but by Christians. As an artist and a member of the homosexual community I experienced the Christian message as one of prejudice against homosexual people. Moreover, Christians seemed to me to point toward homosexual sin in a manner which gave license to the world to persecute homosexual people.

Persecution is wrong. All people are made in the image of God. Yet, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said, the dividing line between good and evil runs right down the center of every human heart. It is the life and death of Jesus, that confronts this major human dilemma: Humankind is noble, (created in the image of God) and

Humankind is cruel, (fallen from the glory of God).

Jesus was persecuted. Intellectually, He was ridiculed and totally misunderstood. Emotionally, He was betrayed and abandoned. Physically, He was beaten and killed. Even so, before His death He cried out, Forgive them Father, because they do not know what they are doing.

The worst thing to come out of persecution is more persecution. Jesus says, "Do not repay evil with evil, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

For over twenty years of adult life I thought Jesus was a myth and Christians were my enemy. I saw one side of persecution. Now, by the grace of God, I see another. Christians are imperfect people who have come to know a perfect God. No one is able to fully understand or live up to this awesome reality but being a Christian is not about human accomplishment. It is about faith in a real God who walked among us, who died for

us, and who rose from death for us.

Man alone can not save fellow man but we can help one another by obeying the words of Jesus, hating evil and clinging to what is good. To be silent about persecution is not the answer but neither is revenge.

Jesus implores us, "Do not repay evil with evil." But His rules are impossible to follow without Himself. Thousands of years ago, Moses spoke directly to the same God, "Lord," he cried out, "if Your Presence does not go with us, we're dead!"

And so it has always been. We need to have a relationship with God in order for His Love to support us under the pain of persecution while His Truth restrains us from looking at any fellow human being as if they were worse sinners than ourselves. The Gospel tells us that we are all more sinful than we ever dared imagine, yet we are all more loved than we ever dared hope. The Author of The Gospel Message alone offers hope to the persecuted and hope to the persecutors.

...His Truth restrains us from looking at any fellow human being as if they were worse sinners than ourselves

A "PROBLEM" THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY

BY ANTHONY VARTULI

The train ride from Connecticut to Manhattan is predictably quiet. On most days, the silence doesn't bother me. I use the quietness to prepare for my own day, catching up on some reading, praying for my friends, my family, and myself.

Other times, the silence sends a shiver through me. Just like a cold, wet day somehow finds its way through several layers of clothing, this silence has the ability to soak through the many layers of my busy thoughts, seeping its way into my heart. It's then that I begin to sense how alone everyone feels, how alone I feel. Something inside me begins to quietly groan.

But I shouldn't feel this way, should I? After all, I am a "new creation" in Christ. His presence in

my life should be sufficient to fill every longing in my soul. Shouldn't it? If so, then why this groan?

Perhaps I am not living the Christian life as I should? Maybe this groan points to a spiritual deficiency within me? Maybe I need someone more godly than me to correct a spiritual problem I am too weak to correct myself?

Maybe it's an emotional problem? Maybe this groan that I feel comes out of some unresolved pain from my past that is triggered by present events? Maybe I need someone, endowed with psychological insight, to help relinquish a pain that I have not been trained to handle on my own? Perhaps I need a Christian counselor?

Whoops. I am a Christian coun-

selor. And I wouldn't be much of one if I never grappled with questions such as these. On the contrary, asking the questions has allowed me to connect with people in richer, more meaningful ways than if I had not done so. It is, at least, partly why I enjoy my ministry as much as I do.

Indeed, there are spiritual and emotional problems that cause us to hurt inside (yes, even counselors). There are also solutions we can and should pursue in order to find legitimate relief from such pains. Yet, what if the groan within me is not the result of a problem at all? What if the ache inside my soul reflects something right about me instead of some-

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CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Births

Julia Kyungae Song was born to Anna and Ken Song on September 19, 1997.

Infant Baptisms:

Elana Danielle Leopold, daughter of Richard & Nikki Leopold

Rachel Anna Leopold, daughter of Richard & Nikki Leopold

Emily Rose Leopold, daughter of Richard & Nikki Leopold

Lucas Joesph Giusto, son of Joseph & Sandra Giusto

Victoria Marie Giusto, daughter of Joseph & Sandra Giusto

Adult Baptisms:

Daijin Kim

Henry Wei-Han Fang

William Ramsay Kurtz

NEW MEMBERS:

Joseph Giusto

Sandra Giusto

Michelle Bruxvoort

Bob Bader

Craig Krasinski

Daijin Kim

Tom C. Kim

Henry Fang

Stanton Young

Kathy Gilliam

Elizabeth Lukes

David Lukes

Judith Shieh

Anne Wolf

F Y I

Children's Ministry is hosting an Open House.

Do you know where Redeemer's smallest people worship? On November 2, from 12:00-12:30 p.m., you are invited to come down to the C-Level (one floor down on the elevators in the auditorium lobby, or a 1/2 flight of stairs past the East Lounge) and visit our 11 classrooms where the action takes place. Redeemer's little people will be learning about our mighty God and making a joyful noise unto the LORD! Be prepared to see lots of busy activity.

Beyond the Culture Wars: Art, Faith & the Rise of the New Religious Humanism

This is a conference exploring the ways faith and imagination can bring healing to a divided world. Artists and writers such as Dave Brubeck, Chaim Potok, Kathleen Norris, Luci Shaw and Theodore Prescott will be joined by sociologist James Davison Hunter, editor Hilton Kramer and Robert Royal of the Ethics and Public Policy Center November 14-16 in New York City. For more information contact Richard Wilkinson at (610) 444-8065 or e-mail at gwolfe@compuserve.com.

HOPE FOR NEW YORK EVENTS

Angel Tree:

Sponsor a child with a parent in prison this Christmas season. Stop by the Angel Tree table downstairs in the East Lounge from November 16 until November 30. Better yet, join the Team who coordinate this whole project (from contacting families through the BIG Christmas Party, which will be held on Saturday, December 6.) Contact team leader Myla Yee at (718) 383-1965 or by e-mail at GeckoY@aol.com.

Nursing Home Holiday Crafts Project:

Saturday, November 1, volunteers will make crafts to give to elderly residents of the DeWitt Home. Call Lisa Maynard to get involved (212) 307-6149.

Midtown Pregnancy Support Center Benefit Auction:

Thursday, November 6, at the Williams Club at 7:00 PM. This will be one of the premier charity fundraising events in the church and all proceeds will benefit the Center. Entrance tickets are \$25. There are many interesting events and items for you to bid on such as opera tickets, sporting events, TV Show tapings, country weekend, fine dining. For information call Cary Hemphill at (212) 986-9785.

Bake Thanksgiving pies:

Saturday, November 22, we will bake pies, pack food baskets and deliver them to families in Harlem associated with Partnership/Harlem. Contact Clarence Jacobs at (212) 864-5117. We're also collecting canned food and donations for turkeys for the holiday baskets.

Bailey House Thanksgiving

Sunday, November 23, is our Thanksgiving dinner for the residents of Bailey House, an AIDS Hospice in the Village. Contact Catherine Traiforou at (212) 879-1507.

His Toy Store

His Toy Store will again collect toys for the children of the South Bronx. Drop by the table in the East Lounge beginning Sunday, November 23. For more information, call the Toy Store message line: (212) 780-3327.

A "PROBLEM" THAT JUST WON'T GO AWAY

thing wrong? Consider the following passages:

- We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. *Romans 8:22-23*

- Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. *2 Corinthians 5:2-3*

Is there a God-given pang within me that longs to be expressed instead of cured? Is there a cry inside of me that profoundly reflects the Spirit's work rather than the work of the flesh? This is what the above passages suggest to us. We Christians have a tendency to mislabel this groan as an insecurity, as a problem reflecting a lack

of trust in Christ. This is not difficult to do, here in our western culture, where having a "secure identity" in Christ has its appeal. There are many good things we can gain from pursuing a richer identity in Christ. Yet, a big misconception arises when we wrongly assume that being "secure in Christ" means we shouldn't long, ache, or groan for anything.

The passages above suggest that there is an ache inside of us that actually reflects the presence of Christ in our lives rather than his absence. It is amazing (and a bit radical in our day) to think that we Christians, who have the "firstfruits of the Spirit" (i.e. the very best that God can give, the Spirit) groan inwardly.

What do we groan for? Just as a pregnant woman groans during delivery, we also groan for the birth of our ultimate redemption. We longingly await the place where sin, and all of its awful consequences, will no longer be present. The groan reflects our keen awareness of what it feels like to be Christians in a fallen world, caught between the "now" and the "not yet."

But the Bible doesn't stop there in its discussion about groaning:

- In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. *Romans 8:26*

Could this really be true? The Holy Spirit Himself joins us in our groaning? When our groaning isn't enough, when our groaning takes us to the limits of our own soulful expression, the Spirit steps in and says "I know your groan. I know the ache within you. I groan as well. I groan even more than you do. Let me help you with what you most deeply want to say." The groan that I am so quick to label as "a problem to be fixed" is seen by the Spirit of God, as an opportunity to join with the one who groans. (Perhaps the Spirit, in these passages, reflects for us what true community is all about?)

Short of our ultimate redemption, there is no cure for this groan within us. However, we can express it to others. We can also join with others who groan. Maybe that's the point after all?

Short of our ultimate redemption, there is no cure for this groan within us.

WAYS TO GIVE

Several options exist for your giving at Redeemer.

1. Regular (undesignated) offerings.

This is the most flexible. Your donations written simply to Redeemer not only cover the staff and general ministry expenses, but they allow the church to move out into new opportunities as they arise. Regular giving through the Sunday offering accounts for the vast majority of our church's income. Checks are better than cash, because they allow us to give a year-end receipt to the donors.

2. Designated offerings.

Sometimes a particular ministry or event sparks your interest. A donation earmarked for that area will be used strictly for whatever you've designated. The three special offerings during the year—Missions in the Spring, Hope for New York mercy ministries at Easter, and the Diaconate caring fund in December—are some of the ways to make your wishes known. Specified offerings can be given all year long.

3. Stock transfers.

Gifts of securities have a double tax benefit: they can be deducted at the full market value even though

they don't have a capital gain. Simply ask your broker to transfer them to our account. You'll need the following information: Redeemer Presbyterian Church Account # 7354-3138, DTC # 0164.

4. Electronic Funds Transfer Automatic Donations.

We are setting up a program so that a predetermined amount (\$100 or more) can be deducted from your checking account each month. If this new method interests you, please indicate your interest on the 1998 Estimate of Giving. We will probably begin this program in January 1998 depending on the level of interest.

THANKFUL FOR WHAT?!

BY KATHY KELLER

In this season, with the Thanksgiving holidays approaching, it is customary to be told that we ought to “count our blessings.” Fair enough. The nice things that we are thankful God has allowed in our lives—health, a job, love, family, friends, and so on—are often badly taken for granted.

However, did you ever consider some of the peculiar things for which the Bible suggests we ought to be thankful?

- Consider it pure joy [says James] whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. *James 1: 2-4*

- [The Lord] said to me [Paul], “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” ...That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. *2 Corinthians 12: 9,10*

As you count your blessings this Thanksgiving season, perhaps you should make your list a little longer than it usually is, and add some of the painful and difficult circumstances of your life which God has been using for good.