

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JUNE 1998

REDEEMER: "YOU ARE HERE"

BY TIM KELLER

"Where are we—right now, as a community, as a church, as the Body of Christ?"

When I am exploring a new area, the maps I'm most grateful to stumble across are the wall-sized ones with a large, red "X" in the middle and the legend "You are here." It always helps to know where you are starting from if you're trying to get to somewhere else. So in order to talk about the future of Redeemer, we have to ask "Where are we—right now, as a community, as a church, as the Body of Christ?"

New Maturity in Faith.

Redeemer has always grown (rapidly!), but this year there are signs that it is also growing up. The Capital Fund Drive certainly showed remarkable depth of sacrificial commitment to both the gospel and the work of the church. An eight year old congregation, consisting mainly of young people

with little accumulated wealth, pledged (as of today) over \$4.2 million dollars. Meanwhile, the giving to the regular operational budget has increased rather than declined,



and remarkably, enough to purchase a building (though not enough to rehab it, yet) for the Harlem church project was given during the same period.

All the literature about philanthropy indicates that younger

adults are very cynical and turned off by "money talk" and financial appeals. In addition, New Yorkers themselves face enormous living expenses and exist in a highly turbulent economic environment, where a job can vanish overnight. The Redeemer community showed a corporate ability to rise above its natural culture to put up with one year of greatly heightened appeals (without complaint) in order to prepare for a great new work.

Since Jesus frequently used how people related to money as an indication of the state of their hearts (the widow giving her mite, the Samaritan paying for medical care for his Jewish enemy, the rich man who glories in his full barns, etc.), I don't think it is inappropriate for us to view this remarkable level of giving

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WESTSIDE UPDATE

BY ANDREW FIELD

Significant strides have recently been taken to move Redeemer toward our goal of starting multiple worship sites by this coming fall. We are still depending on God for many things—most urgently a worship site—but many others have progressed significantly. Here is the update as of mid-May:

Facilities:

In the past several month we have contacted 42 different institutions on the westside. After a lengthy search for potential facilities, God has not yet led us to

a place that both meets our requirements and is available on Sunday morning. We are still looking at sites and creative alternatives, such as one building for worship and a neighboring building for classes. Please continue to pray for suitable facilities to be located soon.

Schedule: The westside worship service will most likely be earlier than the eastside wor-

ship service. For example, worship may begin at 9:30 a.m., with classes starting as early as 10:45 or 11:00. Everything would be completed by noon, allowing plenty of time for after-church brunch or fellowship with friends. This schedule would also allow Tim Keller time to cross Central Park in time for the sermon on the eastside. We will not be sure of this

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as evidence that God has answered our prayer to renew our hearts and our church.

New Maturity in Hope.

However, it was not really the amount, but rather the object of the sacrificial giving that shows such tremendous growth and maturity. Usually, a congregation only musters major capital resources in order to get a new church building. A church building is attractive because: **1)** it is concrete (requiring little wisdom to envision), **2)** it is conservative (since it enshrines and stabilizes the congregation), and **3)** it is yours (the givers get to have it and use it).

The ministry vision to which our people gave so remarkably was very different. First, the vision is for a whole movement of gospel-based churches all through NYC and the cities of the world. That takes a great deal of wisdom and enormous hope to envision. Second, the plan is for not stabilizing but radically changing Redeemer’s form into the multi-site model of closely connected sister congregations. That takes courage and a strong future-orientation. Third, much of the money given will end up going to build up other churches, leaders, ministers, and institutions rather than Redeemer. Frankly, our financial advisors were amazed that we were able to raise such a large amount for such “intangible” goals. I think the response showed an ability to “walk by faith, rather than by sight” which is the hallmark of Christian maturity.

A New Stage of Challenge

Faith and hope are great, but the greatest challenge now is for a new maturity in love. It took faith and

hope to draw out the plans, but now to execute it all will take a deep and powerful gospel love. Why?

The first big challenge Redeemer is facing is the challenge of loving nurture. The number 1 negative we hear from people about Redeemer is that the church is “too big” to make friends quickly. Related to that, there is legitimate concern that close, loving spiritual care and nurture for everyone who comes is impossible in a church our size. In smaller churches, most people are long-time Christians and newcomers or people with problems automatically “stick out” and can get instant attention. Redeemer is more like a big MASH unit, with far more wounded about than doctors. Few of us would want to abandon such a field of usefulness for a more tidy and safe place. But then what can be done?

To address this challenge we need to have, as a body, both a general attitude and a specific goal. First, the attitude: To be content at Redeemer, and to make it the kind of place where others are befriended and cared for, Christians must come to meetings and services ready to deliberately imitate our welcoming and vulnerable God (Rom.15:7; Phil.2:3-10). This means deliberately loving strangers (Lev.19:34) and outsiders (Luke 5:29-32), and caring about meeting the needs of others than having your own needs met.

As a specific goal, Redeemer needs to find and train at least 100 new small group leaders by next fall. Our church fellowship and pastoral care is based on small groups, making them far more critical than in smaller churches where the professional pastors are more accessible and take over much of the work

of the laity (Eph.4:11-16). (This, by the way, can make a church body feel more loving than it really is.)

At a church like Redeemer, nurture and accountability takes place in homes (Acts 2:46) through carefully trained and pastorally supervised small group leaders and lay leaders. During the last two years, our small group system has matured and the quality of learning, worship, community and oversight is tremendous. But rapid turnover in leadership and the need for new groups to accommodate increased growth has meant that right now groups are larger than what they should be and there is no room for newcomers. The need for new small group leaders is the single greatest challenge facing Redeemer. Almost 100 new people need to become Home Fellowship group leaders or apprentice leaders next year. This is a key way that we must grow corporately in love.

A second great challenge will be the challenge of loving neighbors. When Redeemer was smaller and located at 111 E. 87th Street, it was, to a surprising degree, a “neighborhood” church. When we were 6 months old, two-thirds of the attendees lived between E. 59th and E. 96th streets, most within a ten minute walk of the building where we met. There was a great deal of friendship and neighborhood evangelism going on, which is the most organic and natural kind, since it springs from pre-existent relationships.

When New Yorkers think negatively about evangelism, they are usually thinking about a type of “cold turkey” evangelism practiced on strangers. Real evangelism is both sensitive and loving, because it

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REDEEMER REPORT

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The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM • EAST 69TH BETWEEN PARK AND LEXINGTON
services at 10:30 • 6:00

WESTSIDE UPDATE

All-Day Membership Seminar Saturday, June 13

Having a hard time getting all seven required segments of the membership seminar finished? Like to make up the ones you missed, or do them all in one fell swoop? June 13 is your day. From 9:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., you will be able to either pick up your missing segments or complete all seven. You must call the Redeemer receptionist to register your intention to come: 808-4460 x10.

Redeemer Children's Choir Concert June 14

The Redeemer Children's Choir will present its year-end concert, "Instruments of Your Peace," on Sunday afternoon, June 14, at 12:30 p.m. in the Hunter College Auditorium. Directed by Kate Johnson and accompanied by Renee Allsbrook, the choir has grown to 26 members this spring. The program will feature a variety of musical styles and will last 30 minutes. Come and support our children as they lead us in worship.

Quarterly Pre-Marital Seminar Set for June 20

On Saturday, June 20, Jeff White will teach the popular (and required, if you want to be married by a Redeemer pastor) pre-marital seminar. While this seminar is primarily for those considering marriage, it is also very helpful for those considering engagement or even whether to continue a relationship. The seminary will be held from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. in the Redeemer office, 271 Madison Ave, 16th floor. The cost is \$25 per couple to cover the cost of materials, and you must pre-register with the Redeemer receptionist at 212-808-4460 x10.

DIACONATE NEWS

Before you can be interested in our news, you may be asking: "What is 'the diaconate' anyway?" The term "diaconate" comes from the Greek word, diakonos, which means "servant." The offices of deacon and deaconess extends mercy in the form of practical service to meet the physical, financial, emotional, and spiritual needs of those in the Redeemer community. Exercising the gift of mercy is not just for those appointed to this office, since every Christian is a priest (1 Peter 2:9) who is to offer up deeds of mercy and service as a pleasing sacrifice (Heb. 13:15-16). However, there is still a biblical command to have an organized mercy ministry.

For privacy and confidentiality reasons, the ministry of the diaconate at Redeemer is somewhat of an invisible ministry. Deacons and deaconesses serve in a variety of ways. After every service, we are up front to answer questions and pray with people. One deacon or deaconess is "on call" every two weeks

to respond to emergency needs or prayer requests. We also conduct membership interviews with the elders and meet monthly for training, encouragement and prayer. Officers are assigned to care for individuals or families who request aid from the diaconate. We work in pairs to assess the need(s) and come alongside the person or family as together we seek God's guidance and mercy in addressing the short-term and long-term needs of the whole person or family.

In the beginning of this year, a new staff position was added to address the ongoing and increased needs for case coordination, training, supervision and administrative support. Andrea Clark now fills the position of Diaconate Coordinator. We anticipate that with the plans to go multi-site, additional needs will arise requiring more officers. In light of this, nominations for elder, deacon and deaconess will open up again at the congregational meeting held in May and will stay open

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schedule until we locate a facility.

Staffing: All leadership teams have begun planning for the staffing and resource needs that a second site will require. The multiple site strategy requires several new staff positions related to the additional facility. The new staff positions will be the equivalents of certain staff on the eastside, such as Children's coordinator, Sunday Operations coordinator and set-up staff, and Worship Arts assistant. We may also hire a Sunday Volunteer Ministry Coordinator to oversee the hundreds of volunteers who make worship at both sites a friendly, warm event. Teachers for School of Discipleship classes are currently being organized so that both sites offer the core series of classes. Once the contracts on the site are signed, we will need to bring on some staff to prepare for opening day. We hope to start worship on Sunday, September 13th, (the first Sunday after Labor Day), if everything goes according to plan. I've been appointed as the westside Startup Pastor, which means I will lead worship and 'Q&A' every week, coordinate the westside staff team, and provide pastoral leadership to Redeemerites who live in the neighborhood.

Finances: The funds from the Renewed Heart, Church, City Capital Campaign are making this possible. To date, over \$4.2 million has been pledged and resources are flowing into the fund. A portion of the \$2 million earmarked for Multiple Sites will launch the westside. Thank you for your generous giving which will make Redeemer Church better able to reach all of the neighborhoods of the city with the gospel.

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is nothing but ordinary candor and transparency that are essential relationships. How could you fail to talk about your friend and lover Jesus to your other friends?

A major problem of mega-churches is that Christians travel a long distance from their neighborhoods to go to church, which makes it difficult to bring non-believing friends and neighbors to services. One of the main reasons for the multi-site plan is to enable Christians to reach out more to their real neighbors with whom they already have relationships. Though evangelism also takes wisdom and courage, it mainly takes love.

The third great challenge will be the challenge of loving new groups not just new individuals. I recently read a book that said a growing church had two choices. Either 1) it can draw people from farther and farther away—and stay homogeneous, or 2) it can draw a greater and greater percentage of people from its near neighborhood—and become more heterogeneous. (L.Schaller, 44 Questions for Congregational Self-Appraisal, p.144.)

Redeemer is admittedly weak at reaching some groups: families can find Redeemer intimidating in a way that singles do not; except for people in their 20's and 30's, other age groups are thinly represented;

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and we draw fewer African-Americans and Hispanics than Anglos and Asians. The genius of the multi-site model is that worshipping communities can reach neighbors whoever they are, while all groups will be united across the Redeemer network in numbers of shared ministries.

Interestingly enough, this is the original vision of Presbyterianism, which took its inspiration not from the idea of huge worship center/cathedrals, but from the Ephesus city-church made of house-churches (Acts 20:17-20). This will be a challenge even for New Yorkers pride who themselves on their tolerance. Tolerance is a good start, but it is not the same thing as love. The Redeemer “network” stands a good chance of being far more culturally diverse than most other congregations, even our congregation at present. Will we have enough love to welcome all kinds of people (think of Lydia, the slave girl, and the jailer, all in the Phillipian church—Acts 16)? Will we have not only enough love to welcome each other initially, but to put up with the inevitable conflicts that differing perspectives bring?

There are other challenges, of course. We will need many peo-

ple willing to take the new volunteer jobs at the westside site, from nursery to teaching. We will need patience as we start many new programs—there are always plenty of “kinks” at first. We will need plenty of prayer. (I have been walking the West Side and praying for it. Try it yourself.) But the main challenge will be to summons enough love. Fortunately, the main effect of the gospel of grace is just that. Some people think that the key verse of the book of Galatians is 5:6 - For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith operating through love. Gospel-faith produces an energy of love. Start your engines!

“Tolerance is a good start, but it is not the same thing as love. “

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DIACONATE

through June. Please consider nominating someone you think fits the office — merciful, compassionate, mature in the faith, good listener, wise and discerning. Before nominating someone, please speak to the person and get their consent. Both the nominator and the nominee must be a members of Redeemer. Contact Helen Chen Baez at the office (ext. 16) to nominate someone.