

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

APRIL 2000

## WEST SIDE SITE APPROVED, THEN DENIED

REDEEMER STILL SEARCHING FOR MORNING WEST SIDE SITE

**I**n a tremendously disappointing reversal, a previously granted permit for Redeemer to use Martin Luther King High School, located in Manhattan's Upper West Side just behind Lincoln Center, on Sunday mornings was withdrawn. We had received written notice that our application had been granted, and we

*“...the  
Superintendent's  
office  
had decided  
to withdraw  
our usage permit.”*

even had our canceled check pre-paying several months of usage in hand before we began announcing plans to begin meeting at Martin Luther King High School on Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m.

However, several weeks after the permit had been granted (and well into our rather extensive preparations for the handling of child care, hospitality, etc.), we heard that rumors were circulat-

ing that the Superintendent's office had decided to withdraw our usage permit. Because of the very involved and costly preparations for getting ready to use a new site, we decided that we should try to track down these rumors as soon as possible to see if they were true, and if true, what legal or other basis was being claimed.

It took over ten days to track down these rumors, during which no one returned our phone calls or contacted us in writing; in the end, however, these devastating rumors proved to be true. Although the letter indicating that permission had been granted had originated in the office of the Superintendent of Manhattan High Schools, it was that office which later withdrew that permit on the ground that a seven-year old provision of an operating procedures manual prohibited the usage we were seeking. Because the issue has widespread application to other churches as well as to Redeemer, Redeemer intends to pursue this matter in the hope that the cited operating procedure can be amended or eliminated to bring

New York City into line with the laws, court decisions and policies of other school districts.

*“It is therefore  
urgent that we  
have a situation  
in hand  
very soon.”*

In the meantime, we are continuing to seek a morning West Side site. As those of you who attend the morning worship service at Hunter College are all too well aware, that service is filled nearly to capacity. It is therefore urgent that we have a situation in hand very soon so that we can begin this year's fall season with a second morning worship site. Please pray for wisdom in this search, and also wisdom in our continuing relationship to Martin Luther King High School and the Superintendent's office.

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- HOPE FOR NEW YORK OFFERING
- OBSTACLES TO MARRIAGE
- CHURCH FAMILY UPDATE

*MORE...*



# IDOLS OBSTACLES TO MARRIAGE

BY CHARLIE DREW

**W**hy is the Big Apple (and Redeemer) so full of gifted and attractive people who want to be married but aren't? What is it about our culture that works against strong and lasting friendships, especially between men and women?

Three obsessions and three circumstances seem to contribute to the problem. We tend to be obsessed, or at least unduly influenced, by appearance, success, and enjoyment (what John Bettler calls the "look good," the "make good," and the "feel good" idols). The first of these shows itself in our fear of getting too close, since a close examination always reveals damaged goods. In a town so saturated by air-brushed beauty who wants wrinkles?

Then there is success. The almost desperate need to "make good" puts a premium on performance, which has both direct and indirect negative impact on long-term relationships. Doing well usually calls for long work hours and too much time on the job means too little time for friendship. If any friendships at all begin to form under these circumstances, they tend to be with people who are "convenient" to us (usually fellow workers); short-term convenience is often a significantly higher priority than long-term compatibility.

Even if we manage to carve out sufficient time for friendship, the "make good idol" still asserts itself. We become efficiency experts in the management of the relationship, developing techniques for getting everything done equitably and with minimal time loss. We feel guilty "wasting" time together. We expect

each other to perform in certain ways—financially, sexually, verbally—rather than allowing each other simply to "be." We have difficulty admitting failure and weakness, a grace that is suicidal in the performance arena but crucial to healthy friendship.

We struggle, thirdly, with an inordinate need to be entertained (the "feel good" idol), a need that culturally rich New York feeds well. We find it easier and often more enjoyable to go to a concert or a show or a lecture than to talk seriously. And yet no long-term friendship is possible without the time commitment serious conversation takes.

The drives to "look good," to "make good," and to "feel good" have always been around. But certain sociological and philosophical circumstances in the contemporary cultural scene tend to overfeed those drives, making long-term friendship especially difficult. One of them is the widespread experience of family dysfunction. When I was an elementary school student in the 1950's, only one classmate was from a broken home. My own children, by contrast, grew up in the 1980's surrounded friends whose families had fragmented. What present day "twenty something" wants to risk experiencing (or causing) afresh all the pain he or she endured as a kid? She'd rather stay single and work on appearance, performance, and pleasure—all of them much easier to manage than serious friendship.

Overchoice is another circumstance which especially plagues the New York relationship scene. This wonderful city draws vast numbers

of talented, beautiful and interesting people. If I discover a flaw or an incompatibility in a potential friend (which I most certainly will), I will always be able to find someone who looks better and who is more compatible (at least in some areas) than that friend. Overchoice feeds our obsessions. The "Look Good Idol" reasons: "I'll wait for just the right catch, the one my family and friends will approve of," or, "I'll get rid of this one now that it is beginning to wrinkle." Feel Good: "I'll just keep looking until I find the relationship that makes me most happy," or, "I guess this one is over, since we just don't have that exhilarating fire we once enjoyed." Make Good: "I'll hold out for a relationship that doesn't interfere with my career," or "I'll get out of this relationship because it is making too many demands on my career."

"Functional Secularism", a close cousin to overchoice, plagues us as well. We may say that this is not the only life, but we act as if it were. We are desperately afraid to commit to anyone long-term for fear that we will miss out on someone else. "If I marry Jane then I cannot marry Sue. And what happens if marvelous Mary (whom I do not yet know) should appear the day after I propose? No, it's better to keep my options open for the perfect match. And besides—I'm so busy at work and I'm having so much fun in this razzle-dazzle town that I don't really have time to figure these women out." The first part of this line of thought is true, and the second is attractive to those who are too busy or too scared to take the relationship

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## REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller

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The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

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services at 5:00

# REDEEMER MAKES UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO NYC THROUGH EASTER SACRIFICIAL OFFERING

BY KATE LEMMER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HOPE FOR NEW YORK

Once a year at Easter the Redeemer congregation, as a community, is asked to make a sacrificial contribution to the work of meeting people's practical needs in the city. Taking an offering for the relief of the poor and needy at Easter has ancient historical roots. The early church saw it as an appropriate and visible way to commemorate the sacrificial life and death of Jesus Christ on behalf of his needy people.

So the unique aspect of the Easter Sacrificial Offering is not that money is being given to help the less fortunate—that happens with some regularity. The contribution of people and money is unique because the motivation behind the action is the gospel.

Because of this motivation, the contributions given have a powerful impact on the lives of all involved. Because of the reciprocal nature of the gospel, those who give also receive and those who receive also give. As Jonathan Edwards said, you cannot help to bear another person's burden without feeling some of that burden fall on yourself. So giving to the point of real, actual sacrifice—there is something you would have like to have spent your money on but now you can't, because you've given it away—moves the giver just a tiny bit into the shoes of the recipient. When we deliberately choose to limit our choices so that our neighbor can have something he or she needs, we become more like our neighbor.

By being involved personally we also make friends and form relationships that probably would never have happened if we had stayed strictly within our own comfort zone. These relationships are often life changing. Both parties can grow in intimacy with God. Aspects of God's

character that might have been hidden from one person are revealed in the life of someone who is quite different from me.

The combination has a multiplier effect. Investing money in people and their circumstances who we now consider friends is quite different than investing in an abstract organization which we know does good work in the city. Gregory of Nyssa, in the 4th century, said: We go beyond "helping the poor" at this point and we become actively engaged in the sorrow which joins us to the suffering of others. We don't just help the poor—we know them as well.

Exposure to poverty and injustice has two effects- we want to become more involved and we feel challenged and humbled by the overwhelming circumstances our friends face. It is exactly in these situations where we are able to see that it is His work which we are doing and He is responsible for the outcome. This allows us the freedom to spend ourselves on behalf of our friends. God calls us to move into the lives of the poor, believing that His power can transform.

On Easter you will be asked to make a special sacrificial gift to benefit the poor and oppressed in the city. You can make your gift complete by becoming actively involved in God's work in the city as well as contributing your funds. God asks us to act. We are to reclaim the territory that so many have given up on or so many have applied only a process or a program or a system or money and have not also applied the human factor of love, relationship, and the gospel.

I am asking you to give both your money and your time. It is what God has asked us to do and what Jesus did for us. If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry, and satisfy the needs of the op-

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## IDOLS OBSTACLES...

"plunge." Sadly it is producing a whole culture of people who are waking up sometime in their thirties and forties with a foreboding sense that something fundamental about living has passed them by.

Marriage isn't Mecca; nor is everyone called to it (Consider Jesus). But it points to something essential about what it means to be human. Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca wrote, "When I am on my death bed, I am not going to say, 'How I wish I had spent more time at the office!'" Whatever our season of life we need to recall and act upon the principle that relationships are what matter most in life. Jesus summarized the whole of the Law in terms of them: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

It is never too late to rearrange one's priorities. Jesus died to reconcile us to God and to each other. He lives to make all things new, not just now, but in a future glory, where the very best friendships we can presently produce will appear by contrast to have been as socially satisfying as a Junior High School mixer.

*Charlie Drew is an associate pastor at Redeemer. He will be planting a church out of Redeemer in the next year or so.*

*Marriage isn't Mecca; nor is everyone called to it (Consider Jesus). But it points to something essential ...*

## CHURCH FAMILY UPDATE

### Vows:

Carolyn Jane Berg  
Ira Alan Berg  
Christine Elizabeth Emmer  
Brenda Mercedes Castellanos  
Lois A. Kehlenbrink  
Alice Smothers Bisgrove  
Jeanette S. Fung  
Stephen G. Fung  
Calvin Chin  
Julie Silvester  
Amy Y. Wong

### Adult Baptisms:

Brenda Mercedes Castellanos  
Amy Y. Wong

## EASTER SEASON AT REDEEMER

**D**uring the weeks leading up to Easter our worship services will be focused on the meaning of the death of Christ. Tim Keller will be preaching a 5-week sermon series on "St. Matthew's Passion" culminating on Easter Sunday morning. East Side morning and West Side evening services will feature musical selections from J. S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion, with mezzo-soprano Angela Horn, violinist Patricia Davis, the Redeemer String Quartet and Brass Quintet. The East Side evening jazz service will also involve special music on the meaning of the cross by Mark Giacobbe, Holly Krueger and Stickman Jones.

Our annual Maundy Thursday service will be held on April 20 at 7:00 p.m. at All Souls Church, at 80th and Lexington. The service will involve a ceremony of foot-washing, Mindy Sax singing *You Called Me Friend*, and communion.

On Easter Sunday, April 23, Redeemer will hold four services: 9:30 a.m., 11:15 a.m., and 6:00 p.m. at the Hunter College Auditorium (69th and Park), and 5:00 p.m. at the First Church of Christ, Scientist (96th and CPW). Testimonies of changed lives will be

given at all services as well as music by the Orchestra of the Redeemer, soprano Heidi Grant-Murphy and choral ensemble (East Side AM), the Redeemer String Quartet and soloists (West Side) and evening band with soloists (East Side PM).

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## HOPE FOR NY EASTER OFFERING

pressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become like noonday. The Lord will guide you always... You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Isaiah 58:10-11

Last year over 4400 people received your help in the form of many different types of service through Hope for New York. Poverty, Injustice, Despair. The words are familiar; the pain they represent are all too real for many neighbors throughout the city. As people of faith, we see in suffering an invitation to reach out and help. We work to rebuild lives through on going care, spiritual support, and simple friendship. We partner with affiliate organizations committed to comprehensive solutions, working to heal body mind and soul through our people and money. This is the gospel in action.

## MEMBERS REMINDED TO RSVP FOR APRIL 17 MEETING

**B**y now all formal members of Redeemer (meaning those who have been examined by the elders and taken vows) should have received their invitations to a special evening of Questions and Answers with Tim Keller and the staff of the church. This informational and fellowship evening is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 17, at the Church of the Advent Hope, 111 East 87th Street. Since seating is limited, reservations will be on a first come first serve basis.

Don't miss your chance to ask questions of Dr. Keller and the entire staff about how ministries operate in Redeemer. If you have ever wondered about how the budget is prepared, who handles staff hiring, how musicians are chosen, or anything else to do with the church, this is your night to find out. Call Ramona Garnes at the church office (212-808-4460 ext 128) to reserve your seat. Child care is also available by reservation only.

If by some chance you are a member but didn't receive an invitation, please let Ramona know immediately.