

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

DECEMBER 2000

LIVING IN THE VERY LARGE CHURCH

BY TIM KELLER

When we began Redeemer, we never expected or tried to become large. But now that we have grown so substantially we must learn to accept our size and live as a community within it. We cannot expect Redeemer to function like a smaller church, and pretending that it could or should will be a recipe for disappointment and frustration.

Last month we looked at the blessings and difficulties of being large. This month I want to distill some of the essential features of a Very Large Church.

Six Traits of Very Large Churches

1. The VLC accepts change,

complexity, formality. As a church gets larger, it experiences more frequent changes. In addition, as a church gets larger, it also

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becomes more complex. It is not immediately obvious to anyone (even the staff) who to talk to

about an issue or who all needs to be in on something to get it done.

Thirdly, as a church grows, communication can no longer be informal, relying on face to face. Instead, information has to be written down, carefully sent out, and presented redundantly. Although the leadership of the very-large-church is not necessarily happy about these three factors, neither is it judgmental toward them. It accepts them as a necessity. It does not attach moral significance to them, regarding all change as “instability” or all formal communication as “impersonal.”

2. The VLC must rely on small-

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NEW SONG COMMUNITY CHURCH: LIVING OUT THE INCARNATION

BY JEFF WHITE & JOHNNY ACEVEDO

At Christmas we remember that God did not remain aloof from our world and its problems. In Jesus, God entered into our world and has identified with us in our struggles, our pains and our tears. But that is not all. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has also acted to bring about a reversal of all that is broken and wrong with our world. So we sing, “Joy to the World! No more let sins and sorrows grow nor thorns infest the ground. He's come to make his blessings known far as the curse is found!”

Three years ago, when New Song Community Church was in its planning stages, it was this good news that we were intent on living out. As part of God's church in Harlem, it was our vision to become a neighborhood congregation that sought to live out the good news of grace in our immediate community and to be a sign that the New Creation has dawned in Christ. We are now

celebrating God's faithfulness in enabling that vision to become a reality!

New Song is now a thriving church with a growing community base. A multi-ethnic congregation together celebrates God's goodness in Sunday morning worship and in fellowship groups and children's bible clubs throughout the week. Neighbor-

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LIVING IN THE VERY LARGE CHURCH

er decision-making bodies. The smaller the church, the larger the decision-making bodies. But the larger the church, the smaller (proportionately) the decision-making bodies become. In a church of 200, the Board makes decisions that in a church of 40 were made by the whole congregation. In a church of 1,000 the staff make decisions that previously were made by the Board, and so on. Why? If everyone in the congregation, [or even the Board or the staff] had to be a part of the decisions of a larger church, the decision making process would become unwieldy and protracted for even the simplest issues. Coming to a consensus with hundreds of people would take too long, and some decisions would require too much information to be made by the larger group. Just to maintain the same level of progress, decisiveness, and intentionality, decisions have to be made by smaller bodies.

3. The VLC allows multiple power centers. The paragraph above might lead one to think that power becomes concentrated centrally in the larger church. It is more accurate to say that power is dispersed into *multiple* power centers and smaller decision-making bodies. For example, the Senior Pastor has to allow more and more freedom to other staff and lay leaders to make decisions and do ministry without going through him. It becomes impossible to control all the ministries centrally as was possible in a smaller church.

4. The VLC requires more self-starting, competent leaders and staff. When a church is smaller, leaders of ministry can receive a

lot of close direction and mentoring. As a church becomes larger mentoring is still possible in some cases, but in general the call to leaders changes from “do your job as I tell you” to “go out and make it happen.” Resourcefulness and creativity become more and more important as a church grows.

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5. The VLC recognizes that the preacher is not the pastor. As a church grows, the most visible change to the average member is the changing role of the Senior Pastor, who is the main preacher and teacher. In smaller churches the average attender can expect to be pastored (nurtured, counseled, guided) by the one who does most of the preaching. But that can not be true when a church gets very large. Small group leaders, officers, and other staff all serve as pastors and shepherds. The Senior Pastor functions as the preacher, vision-caster, and the shepherd of the shepherds.

6. The VLC operates on a high level of trust. Perhaps the key factor necessary for the very large church to operate is trust. Why? a) The larger the church the more the elders must entrust the staff with power to do things that previously the elders used to decide or do. b) The larger the church, the more the staff must entrust the execu-

tive staff with power to do things that previously the whole staff did together. c) The larger the church, the more the Senior Pastor must trust individual staff and leaders to do things that he used to ‘sign off on.’ d) The larger the church the more the members cede power to all the leaders and must still support and follow the Senior Pastor’s vision, even though they can’t know him personally. It all runs on trust. If any of these groups or individuals fails in their trustworthiness, the whole structure of the church grinds to a halt.

Accepting And Resisting

Years ago I read a book for handicapped people on how to deal with a new physical disability in their lives (such as blindness, paralysis, etc.) The author counseled the reader to find the balance between acceptance and resistance. If you simply deny your limitation and refuse to accept it, you will be miserable. On the other hand, if you simply give up and refuse to resist your limitation, you will never become all that you can be.

This is exactly what we must do as those called by God to live in a very large church community. On the one hand, we must accept the fact that we are a large church. God has done this by bringing people to us, in spite of all that we have done to avoid advertising our existence. (For years we weren’t even in the Yellow Pages, we’ve never advertised anything publicly, we turn down every offer to raise our profile, etc.)

If we insist that the pastor be accessible to all members, or that decisions continue to be made by

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REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller

Buddy Mungo

Dave Jacobs

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
EAST 69TH BETWEEN PARK AND LEXINGTON
services at 10:30 • 6:00

CHURCH OF ST. PAUL AND ST. ANDREW
86TH AND WEST END AVENUE
services at 7:00

CHRISTMAS CD OFFERS HOPE FOR NEW YORK CITY CHILDREN

In an unusual and exciting partnership, Hope for New York, the mercy arm of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, and a team of professional musicians released last year a compact disc entitled *Christmas of Hope*. Performed by several professional artists from the Redeemer music community, the album of Christmas music consists of twelve original arrangements and includes songs such as, *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*, *Sweet Little Jesus Boy* and *Emmanuel*. With a vision for helping

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specific ministries throughout the city, the 130 musicians donated over 800 hours of their time and talents to record and produce this special Christmas CD.

Proceeds from the CD will directly benefit children in min-

istries who partner with Hope for New York. In addition to sponsoring several Christmas parties, sales from *Christmas of Hope* will help after-school programs and summer camps purchase much needed educational supplies. Mentoring programs and neighborhood sports programs will also receive assistance. Last year the project raised \$40,000.

Featured artists on the special CD include Broadway performers George Merritt (Jekyll and Hyde) and Kimberly JaJuan (Ragtime), Metropolitan Opera soloist Mark Oswald, and Dove-Award winning songwriter Lorraine Ferro. Other performances include Keith Fluit, Stickman Jones, The 6:30 Band, and the Redeemer Presbyterian Choir and Orchestra conducted by Miriam Burns.

Several ministries will benefit directly from the sales of *Christmas of Hope*. Angel Tree, Chinese Christian Herald Crusades, Kids With A Promise, Operation Exodus-Inner City and Reading Heroes are just a few of the special partners who will receive helpful contributions for their important Christian work with New York's children.

CDs can be purchased for \$15

each. They will be on sale after each service at the Hope for New York Information Table and on our web site: www.hfnny.org



For additional information please call the Hope for New York staff at 212/808-4460 ext. 161.

Hope for New York is a ministry of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, helping ordinary people make an extraordinary difference. We mobilize and equip individuals and groups to contribute their gifts to the cause of mercy and justice in New York. Since 1992 we have brought together Redeemer, other local churches, affiliate ministries, hundreds of volunteers and thousands of dollars in donations to suffering New Yorkers.

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NEW SONG: LIVING OUT THE INCARNATION

hood-wide pastoral work takes place on the streets, in apartment buildings, and in local institutions where members play supportive roles.

With great excitement, we anticipate holding our first worship service in the New Song Center soon (a Christmas Eve service is a possibility!) A beautiful 4-story building that had stood vacant in the middle of our neighborhood for nearly thirty years, the Center now

serves as a tangible sign of hope. When fully functioning, it will not

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only be home to our church, but will house an after-school program, four affordable apartments, the offices for an urban seminary and our first economic develop-

ment initiative – a café.

New Song also gave birth this year to a separate 501(C)3 community development corporation – Jubilee Community Corporation! Jubilee will be an organization through which our church and community can address housing, economic, health, and educational issues in our neighborhood.

As you can see, wonderful things have taken place. We re-

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DIACONATE MERCY FUND SPECIAL OFFERING DECEMBER 10

What is Christian community suppose to look like? Acts 2 and 4 tell us that the early Christian community was a dynamic place where fellowship, teaching, eating together, sharing resources with one another, sincerity, joy, and grace was experienced. Yet even in the early church it was necessary to choose deacons and deaconesses so that the needs of the community could be cared for in a comprehensive way.

Redeemer's Diaconate is consciously fashioned on the lines of the first deacons and deaconesses—we care for the physical needs of the community (rather than building upkeep or usher-

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ing, for instance!) The deacons and deaconesses who are elect-

ed into office by the Redeemer membership take seriously the biblical mandate to carry each other's burdens and to share with those in need as the early church did.

Once a year the Diaconate takes up a special offering to fund our work among the needy who come under our care. To express one's need for help is hard, especially because of the strong cultural value of self-sufficiency. Being in need is not a stigma; rather, it is a condition we are all familiar with. Giving and receiving go hand in hand.

With thanksgiving, please prayerfully consider your gift to the Diaconate Mercy fund.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS: A REDEEMER FORUM DEC 1

Having trouble finding love in the Big City? It's not a new problem. For hundreds of years the great opera composers have spun tales of love scorned and commitments broken, as well as great acts of sacrifice and mercy. In these arias we find cautionary fables but also the occasional glimpse of a mysterious eternal love for which we all long.

This is the theme of our second Redeemer Forum, *Love Among the Ruins*, to be held on Friday, December 1, 2000, at 7:30 PM at Florence Gould Hall, 55 East 59th Street. Redeemer Forums are cultural events that examine the prevailing worldviews surrounding a topic through artistic expression and/or lectures and discussion. The art form for *Love Among the Ruins* is (obviously) opera, and will feature a number of world class soloists, including Metropolitan Opera artists Mark and Belinda Oswald and Grego-

ry Turay. If you have attended any of the Sunday night Opera Open Forums over the past five

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years, you know that the music performances will be outstanding.

Redeemer's pastor, Dr. Timothy Keller, will be the emcee for the evening. He will connect the arias thematically, highlighting the worldviews suggested by each.

Redeemer Forums are outstanding venues for you to introduce your friends to Redeemer. Consider inviting a neighbor or co-worker. Or bring a date. After all, what could be more romantic than a night of opera arias about love?

Reserved seating tickets for the Redeemer Forum are \$15 and are available by calling Mindy Sax at 212-808-4460 x147. Any unsold tickets will be available at the Florence Gould Box Office beginning two hours prior to the event. However, we highly recommend ordering your tickets in advance as seating is limited. Proceeds cover the cost of the hall and promotion. Any excess will be used to fund future Redeemer Forums.

MOM'S GROUPS AND KIDS CELEBRATE ALL SAINTS AT ALL ANGELS

BY CHRIS WHITFORD

Does the name Perpetua ring a bell? Well, if you had come by All Angels Church on Nov. 5 you would have "met" the young widow martyr from the turn of the Third Century. Children from Redeemer and All Angels Church disguised themselves as biblical figures such as John the Baptist, Joshua, Jonathan, David and Esther in an evening of festivities celebrating All Saints' Day.

Members of the Redeemer/All Angels West Side Moms' Groups organized the party to encourage community among families and to bring to life the communion we share with Christians throughout the ages. "There was such a feeling of unity," Carlana Miller said of the celebration. "We had everything in common."

The children bobbed for apples, decorated candy bags, walked Abraham's walk of faith, played musical chairs and stuffed themselves with hotdogs, cider and brownies. We ended

the evening with worship, prayer and a parade of saints marching to "Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In."

A partnership between the Redeemer moms and All Angels began in the early years of Redeemer's history, when All Angels graciously opened its doors to provide the space for a West Side moms' fellowship group. Today, two moms' groups meet weekly at All Angels for Bible study, worship and fellowship, and a variety of opportunities have evolved to nurture the faith of our children. The Christmas party is an annual favorite, along with a Holy Week celebration and a summer vacation Bible school. We hope that the All Saint's Day party is the first of many more new celebrations initiated and by the West Side moms' group.

All Angel's Church is located on W. 80th Street, just half a block off Broadway behind Zabar's. For more information about times and programs, call Carole Kleinknecht at 212-751-9822.

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PREMARITAL SEMINAR

Planning on getting married? Or even just thinking about marriage? Then our next premarital seminar on Saturday, Jan. 6, is for you. The seminar runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the church office.

The cost is \$35 per couple and you must pre-register by calling the church receptionist at 808-4460 x110. This seminar is required if you want a Redeemer pastor to officiate at your wedding (and highly recommended even if you are being married out-of-town.)

joy in God's goodness. We are also confident that, by God's grace, an exciting future awaits this ministry.

Redeemer Presbyterian Church's generous partnership of prayer and resources has been invaluable in helping New Song to fulfill its calling and mission. We are deeply grateful for the congregation's support as well as the generous support of many individuals and congregations in New York and around the country. An effort such as this requires not only a lot of hard work, but also the generos-

NEW YEAR'S GETAWAY TO VERMONT

You'll rocket down a snowy hillside on a toboggan (4-person sled), build an igloo, snowshoe across a mountain meadow and take a sleigh ride at our annual New Year's Getaway to Vermont. Or you can just curl up with a good book in front of a crackling fireplace in the quaint Hotel Coolidge. We've designed this weekend Getaway so that you'll walk away with many new friends, even if you're new to Redeemer. And the intimate size of this antique railroad hotel ensures that you'll get to know a lot of Redeemer folk quickly.

The weekend runs from Friday night, Dec. 29, through Monday, Jan. 1 and will include three worship and teaching services plus a Coffeehouse and New Year's Party featuring Jon Werking, the pianist from the Broadway show "Fosse."

To register, get more details or see photos from past Getaways, log on to www.RedeemerChurchLife.com or call Tim Pettit, director of church life, at 808-4460 x141. The deadline is Dec. 15, but don't delay: This Getaway always sells out quickly.

NEW SONG: LIVING OUT THE INCARNATION

ity of many and the blessing of God. It will continue to require the same into the future. We earnestly hope for your continued prayer and support.

(If you would like to be on New Song's mailing list, please e-mail your address to New-songjw@aol.com or send it to New Song Community Church, Morningside Station, P.O. Box 1711, New York NY 10026. Tax-deductible gifts may be sent to the same address and made payable to "New Song Community Church".)

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LIVING IN THE VERY LARGE CHURCH

consensus by all—then we are living in denial. One of the hardest lessons for me personally has been to see that “accepting our size” means that we must also accept the fact that not everyone can serve Christ well in this setting. There are many people who by temperament simply cannot live in a large organization. They need more informal ‘face-to-face’ time with those in charge or they feel alienated.

Also, some people have had very bad experiences in churches (or other organizations) where the leaders failed their trust. For what may be good reasons these people are ‘organizationally suspicious’ and are not comfortable in a church in which the leaders do not need to come to the congregation for permission to make major changes. And then there are plenty of people who simply cannot take the constant change and who need the stability of smaller churches.

Over the years I have had many people approach me who felt guilty — they were ready to leave Redeemer because they could not handle its size. I have always done my best to encourage people to stay (and, obviously, most have!)

But I have also told people that is it not a sign of disloyalty or immaturity to find Redeemer’s size uncomfortable. The ideal solution is to take part in the planting of one of our daughter churches.

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On the other hand, we must resist the fact that we are a large church. What do I mean? I mean that it will not do to simply resign ourselves to the trends and traits of a very large organization. Despite the fact that we do need to make decisions in smaller bodies, we need to work extremely hard at better communication so that people know what is going on. We also need to find ways to get input from a broad range of involved people before we make decisions.

We must do everything we can to keep people involved and engaged. Of course the greatest act of ‘resistance’ to the limitations of the very large church is to join a small group.

I end with an exhortation to everyone in Redeemer who is a leader of any sort—whether staff, officer, fellowship group leader, or volunteer. As I said before, a very large church runs above all on mutual trust. And Redeemer is in New York City! What a challenge. If we are going to maintain the trust of the congregation we need to be humbled by all this and take great pains to keep up our walk with God. We cannot let ourselves slide and slip into spiritual coldness or worse. Our joy, our love for people, our ability to listen—our holiness—all of these things are important if we are to maintain trust. If leaders fall into sins or lapses of a minor or major sort it could bring the whole trust-balance crashing down and make it impossible for the church to continue to reach such large numbers of people. “Who is sufficient for these things?...Not that we are sufficient in ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” (2 Cor.2:16; 3:5)