

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JANUARY 2001

WHY FELLOWSHIP GROUPS?

BY REV. TONY HINCHLIFF

The Rat Race

America is perhaps the most individualistic society the world has ever known and, at the apex of that society, New York City reigns supreme as the professional pinnacle of individual achievement, success and personal autonomy. While this produces breathtaking creativity and productivity, it also predisposes New Yorkers towards: multiple, superficial relationships; friendships based on professional utility and convenience; and years in the city without a single new friend to match the ones made in high school or college. Unchallenged, and taken to the extreme, a New Yorker's life can begin to resemble the notori-

ous image of a "rat race," frenzied individuals, joylessly shuttling between office cubicles, brief encounters and shoebox apartments, always in motion, endlessly chasing an elusive happiness that remains, tantalizingly, just out of reach!

Christian Community

While Christians can and should celebrate the creativity and productivity of the city, the Christian tradition also has resources to challenge and redeem the darker side of city life. The essential resource is the richness and vitality of Christian community. The life of a solo Christian, like that of any other solitary person, inevitably becomes self-focused, driven by

personal ambitions, ego or individual character traits. It is a life with a small story line.

By contrast, in joining the Christian family, by becoming part of a Christian community, individual story lines are woven into the majestic thrilling plot of God's divine family story. Christians become part of the Bible's story: beginning with the dance of Creation, moving through the cosmic calamity of the Fall, to the story's center, God's awe-ful love and costly redemption of his people, coming himself to die hanging bloodied and shattered on a cross.

Yet though the final chapter of the story is known, Christ's tri-

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STEWARDSHIP FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Now that the new millennium is REALLY here (and for those of you who thought you had just spent a year in it) taking stock of our possessions, reassessing our current world and life view, and counting our blessings are all appropriate things to do. Since all Christians are commanded to be "good stewards" (i.e. good financial managers) of what God has entrusted to them, the beginning of a new year and a new millennium is a very good time to think through how you are using God's assets which are under your control.

In December many of you received a letter and a brochure en-

titled "Investing in our Vision" from Tim Keller. The brochure highlighted the way our \$6,000,000 budget for 2001 will be used to fulfill what we believe to be God's intention for Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Here are two of the most important of those ways:

• **To Deepen Community** - \$3.7 million dollars will be devoted to funding our Sunday worship celebrations, our Open Forums (which interpret Christian

truths through an art form like music or dance), our Fellowship Groups (which are the heart of Redeemer's discipleship and pastoral care), the Counseling Center's services, and much more.

• **To Expand the Movement** - \$2.3 million dollars will be allocated to provide support for Hope for new York, New Song Harlem Community Development, the fourth and final west side worship site (God willing!) and the Urban

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- SKI RETREAT

- NEW COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR
- NEW SOCCOMMUNITY CLASSES!!!!

MORE...



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WHY FELLOWSHIP GROUPS?

umphant return, the story is still being written. When we join a church, when we stand up and publicly take our place among God's people, when we begin to pray and work for the advance of Christ's church and his kingdom, then our lives join the movement, flow and drama of the divine story. Nothing will ever be mundane again, every answered prayer changes history, every encounter becomes pregnant with eternity, every new relationship carries with it intimations of heaven.

The Grammar of Christianity

The first step is to notice that solo Christianity is an oxymoron. I first noticed it when soon after becoming a Christian I started to get hung up on the Lord's Prayer. No longer could I blithely skip over "Our Father" in my prayers. Coming to faith had been all about discovering "My Father" but here was Jesus insistently harking on "Our Father." Eugene Peterson puts it this way: "One of the immediate changes that the gospel makes is grammatical: we instead of I; our instead of my; us instead

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of me. There is simply no such thing as a solo Christian. It is a contradiction in terms. It contradicts the very nature of God; the Trinity." Jurgen Moltman writes in *Humanity in God* "The three divine persons are not simply for themselves. They are there in that they are there for one another. They are persons in social relationship. The Father can be called Father only in relationship with the Son; the Son can be called Son only in relationship with the Father. The Spirit is the breath of the one who speaks—being a person means, being in relationship." Beautiful theology, no doubt, but what does it mean practically to join a Christian community and "be in relationship?"

Born Again!

When I first heard the gospel and fell in love with Jesus Christ eight years ago at Redeemer, I was a blank slate. My ignorance of Christ and his church was profound and comprehensive. I had had little exposure to Christians and no church experience growing up in England. Yet in the midst of that ignorance about

Christianity, I remember my excitement and delight, a sense of adventure in giving myself to Christ. It has become an almost embarrassing cliché to describe becoming a Christian as being born again. But for anyone who has been through the experience "born again" is a rich and apt metaphor that vividly captures the transformation wrought by Christ.

However, although I was now born again, I had been reborn into my old lifestyle. A baby Christian inhabiting the life, habits and relationships of a thirty year old, secular man. A man whose philosophy had been, "Only Pleasure," a man who was less a personality than a collection of old, treasured and much loved vices. I was a stranger in a strange land. What to do?

A Stranger in a Strange Land

The problem, and also for a time the delight, of being a stranger in a strange land is that old habits and attitudes no longer work. Every thing is new. There is a fresh perspective and critical distance that allows familiar things to

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STEWARDSHIP FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Church Planting Center.

As you recover from your holiday shopping and finalize your budget planning for 2001, consider how you can invest in Redeemer's vision. Stewardship always begins with remembering the Gospel—that Jesus gave up everything so that we could be adopted into the household of God and inherit the treasures of heaven. Gospel reflection deepens

our gratitude, which in turn is demonstrated by our willingness to give back to Christ's kingdom.

How can you participate? Here are two suggestions:

- Through the donation of appreciated stock and/or mutual funds. This is a potentially tax-saving method of donation. Redeemer is set up to receive these kinds of gifts electronically. Check with your accountant before initiating a transfer.

- Automated checks sent from your bank to Redeemer. Many in our congregation have signed up with their local banks to take advantage of this method of donation. This is a great way to systematically give weekly or monthly.

If you have any questions about these suggested methods, or want more information, please contact David Bisgrove at 212-808-4460, ext. 111.

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

REDEEMER HIRES FULL TIME DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

At the last congregational meeting, Redeemer staff apologized for their uninspired and sporadic communication with the congregation and within the staff itself. A search was under way for a full-time Director of Communication and Media, who would be given broad responsibilities for analyzing Redeemer's present methods of communication and also for creating new ones. Included in this job description was responsibility for our website, Redeemer.com, and for future publishing projects.

In God's providence, just as we began looking for candidates for this position, the perfect one appeared, so we are able to announce the addition of Cregan Cooke as Director of Communication and Media several months earlier than what we had hoped. Cregan began attending Redeemer in its earliest years. He has served as a deacon, led short term missions trips to Sandtown in Baltimore and Japan, and is presently leading the senior high youth group, along with his wife, Mindi, whom he met at Redeemer.

Those of you who remember the beautiful capital fund campaign brochures that were produced by

Videographic Enterprises, Inc., have already had an introduction to Cregan's work. He supervised the development, design and production of that project and has also donated many hours of design work for other Redeemer publishing projects.

Asked about his willingness to accept this position, Cregan answered, "After 12 years in Manhattan helping to build and manage a multimedia company, it became evident to me that it might be time for a career change. Last year at a business conference I attended, I heard Richard Leider speak on the topic: "Is your job your calling?" and it made me think much more extensively about changing the direction of my career. In September of this year my former company and I parted ways and I began my search for a new position. Since I am the son of a pastor, and one of my two brothers is also a pastor, for some time I've considered going into some kind of full-time ministry, but the right situation had not presented itself until now. I am truly excited to be here and have the opportunity to serve the church in this capacity."

Cregan continues: "As Director of Communication, my first piece of

news is a long anticipated announcement. Redeemer has recently completed the first phase of the new web site. This upgrade to Redeemer.com is being launched this month. Please go and explore the site. As it is a work in progress, we will continually be upgrading and improving the functions and information of the site on a regular basis. Work is currently underway to construct an e-commerce aspect of the site for purchasing sermons on line. In the future we will expand this to enable other purchases and registrations to be done on line as well. We will continue to bring you news on the development of the site as new additions are made."

One of Cregan's responsibilities is the creation of a Communication Leadership Team. Lay volunteers who have expertise and interest in publishing, graphic design, web programming, communication systems, layout, writing and editing should contact Cregan at the church office (212-808-4460 ext. 165) You can also e-mail him at cregan@redeemer.com, but since our DSL provider went out of business the first week in December, accessing staff e-mail will be difficult for several weeks until our new provider installs our new DSL connection.

SKI RETREAT FEB 16-19

Sign-ups are getting under way for Redeemer's first retreat of the new millennium, scheduled for Presidents' Day Weekend, February 16-19. This is always our most popular retreat (last year over 200 people attended), and for good reason. It's a wonderful mid-winter getaway for recreation, relaxation, teaching and worship, and building new friendships and old ones.

Redeemer pastor-alumnus the Rev. Jeff White, now of New Song Church in Harlem, will be leading our retreat again, speaking on "Kingdom Living in a Fallen World." Jeff is always humorous and engaging, and always applying Scripture to our lives in surprising ways.

We'll enjoy first-class accommodations in the beautiful village of Lake George, New York, a year-round vacation destination, which is featuring a Winter Carnival that weekend. There is outlet shopping just down the road, and, yes, plenty of skiing and snowboarding! We'll be going to Gore Mountain, one of the state's largest and finest areas. Gore features separate, gentle slopes for beginners, miles of wide groomed "cruisers" for intermediates, and some of the steepest trails in the east to challenge experts. Equipment rentals and learn-to-ski/ride packages will be available.

Sign up now! For more information and to sign up, go to www.RedeemerChurchLife.com, e-mail rpscki@hotmail.com, or call 212-639-1279.

ALSO SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES RETREAT ^ FEB 16-19

We'll combine tobogganing, snowshoeing, igloo-building and sleigh rides with a study of the Spiritual Disciplines in the mountains of Vermont over Presidents' Day Weekend, February 16-19, 2001. Our group of 70 Redeemerites will virtually take over the quaint Hotel Coolidge in White River Junction, and you're assured of making a lot of new friends, even if you're new to Redeemer.

Chris Gilbert, one of our directors of fellowship groups at Redeemer, will teach on the disciplines of Community, Solitude and Service. Chris hails from Australia, where he was a jour-

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nalist and a leader in a large missions organization.

There will be plenty of free time for snow activities: on Saturday we'll have a tobogganing (four-person sled) party, followed by lunch in a one-room schoolhouse heated with a potbellied stove. Later, you can take a horse-drawn sleigh ride and help build a real igloo. On Sunday we'll snowshoe across a mountain meadow. Or you can relax in front of two fireplaces with a cup of hot chocolate and your favorite book.

To register, see photos of past Getaways and get more details, log on to www.RedeemerChurchLife.com. Or call Tim Pettit, Director of Church Life, at 212-808-4460 x141.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE - SOCC NEW CLASSES

Redeemer's School of Christian Community provides teachers and participants with the opportunity to examine subject matter and issues through the Gospel, applying it to their hearts, minds, and lives, and through this application to build Christian Community. Teachers are asked to view and develop their classes within the perspective of both SOCC and of Redeemer as a whole.

School of Christian Community adult classes are offered weekly from September through June after the morning service (at this time none are offered after the evening services). New in January: they will be on a five-week cycle starting the first Sundays of January, March, and May. Also beginning in January, we will introduce a series of classes on Core Christian Studies: a survey of the Christian Bible will be offered each cycle. During the second cycle we will initiate the first of two Church His-

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tory courses; the cycle beginning May 6 will include a newly designed Introduction to Doctrines of the Christian Faith. Also new for the coming cycle is a series

taught by Tim Oakes on Sanctifying Marriage.

These classes are designed not to fill an intellectual vacuum but to point us to the gospel that unites the entire church of God: the community of believers lives out that unity in very practical ways. Our classes explore the implications of faith and belief for the world we live in and remind us that we are part of a rich and remarkable heritage. They also introduce Redeemer: What the church stands for (our core values), how it is structured, how individuals can get plugged in.

Classes are 45 minutes long and are held after the morning service beginning January 7 for five weeks. **Introduction to Redeemer**, the class required for church membership, *will continue to be offered for seven weeks each cycle*, as will the continuing **Skills for Growing Christian Community**.

Details will be in the bulletin January 7, 2001.

"LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!"

BY MYLENE PIONILLA
SENIOR, BARUCH HIGH SCHOOL

For a few hours 50 senior high teens had their moment in the theater spotlight. With festive decorations on the walls and music playing in the background, kids from all boroughs of New York City enjoyed Redeemer's CLAY Improv Night last November.

CLAY stands for Christ Loves All Youth, the fresh new name for Redeemer's ministry to senior and junior high school students. With the help of professional actors Tony Hale, Ben Hoffman, Jenni Frost and Kim Betzto, the kids were able to experience true New York City theatre, kick back, have fun and get to know new faces.

The event was held at the Priority Associates office's conference space in Midtown, which normally houses meetings for individuals in the professional and creative fields. However, on the

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evening of November 10, it was filled with enthusiastic, teen-age actor wannabes. The teens gave 100% participation as the actors led them through improvisational games and humorous skits. Later in the evening, kids had the opportunity to ask the panel of actors some questions about

what life is like in the city for a performing artist.

The CLAY Improv Night was just the first of many activities planned for senior and junior high schoolers. Some others include:

- High Retreat at Lake Champion, January 26-28, 2001.
- Senior High Ski Trip, February 16-19, 2001.
- Junior High Retreat at Lake Champion, March 2-4, 2001.

CLAY meets after Redeemer's Sunday morning worship service at Hunter College. If you're interested in helping CLAY work with teens at Redeemer, or to get more information about CLAY, call Cregan & Mindi Cooke at 201-792-6313 or e-mail them at mcooke@tommy-usa.com or cregancooke@hotmail.com.

CHURCH FAMILY UPDATE

Membership Vows:

Norma L. Ailes
Aimua Eghobamien
John A. Frato
Elena Greeves
Rafael Anthony Hernandez
Jerome Hill
Aileen Hsueh
Raymond Yi-Kun Huang
Esther Jung Huh
Dino (Yee Sing) Li
Peter Ligh
Ava Liu
Mark Andrew Semsel
Helen Mathews Smith
Patricia Goodlett Wells
Alice Caroline Yu

Adult Baptisms:

Peter Ligh
Ava Liu
Elena Greeves
Raymond Yi-Kun Huang
Dino (Yee Sing) Li
Alice Caroline Yu

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be questioned and gives everything the glamour of novelty. However, there is also the detachment and alienation of strangeness. Being a stranger can be lonely unless an effort is made to come to terms with the strange land. In Christian terms—how to be in the world, but not of the world?.

Life Together

It would be lovely to recount how, still all a-tremble with the awesome transformation of Christian faith, I staggered into the loving arms of a Redeemer Fellowship Group and was gently eased out of the squalid habits of my old life and into the wholesome disciplines of the new. And it is true that this is what happens to many who become Christians at Redeemer. However, I must confess it was not a Redeemer Fellowship Group but rather a Christian House at my college back in England that began the process.

How do Christians deal with stress? By praying together every morning during final exams. How do Christians deal with conflict? With great seriousness, scripture, prayer and repentance. How do Christians relate to the world? To-

gether, by talking through problems and celebrating each other's successes. I learnt all these things and many more while living with a group of Christians for a year in England. It is infinitely easier and

“... (where) *Primary Christian Community* ...
exists Christ is present and anything is possible.”

much more fun to work out how to live in a strange land if you are around joyful people who have been thinking about the issue for a long time. In technical terms what I was experiencing was Primary Christian Community.

Primary Christian Community

Before divisions into Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox, before denominations, before church buildings, the book of Acts describes the beginning of the Chris-

tian Church. Small groups of believers gathered in each others homes in Jerusalem. Their time together consisted of five elements: Worship, Prayer, Scripture, Fellowship and Mission. They praised God and prayed to him, learned the family story through the teaching of the Apostles, shared the burdens of each other's lives and reached out to the community around them to spread the good news about what God had done in the world through Christ.

This is what Primary Christian Community looks like, and where it exists Christ is present and anything is possible. With those small groups in Jerusalem living out the details of the five elements, God built his church and began to redeem and transform the world. At Redeemer Presbyterian Church we seek to honor God's call by creating and nurturing similar Primary Christian Communities in every neighborhood and borough of New York City. Redeemer IS Fellowship Groups— they are our story and when the big Story reaches completion they will be our contribution and our offering. May their fragrance be sweet.