

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

MAY 2001

WHY LIVE IN THE BIG CITY?

BY TIM KELLER

This time of year I often talk to Christians who are either thinking of moving out of New York City or considering moving in. I find myself rehearsing a number of principles and issues each time. Why should Christians live in major cities?

Because it is so important

Four of this year's Oscars were won by artists who were all students together in New York University's art department in the mid-80's — Marcia Gay Harden, Ang Lee, Kenneth Lonergan, and Joel Coen. The people who will be in control of our culture twenty years from now are here now also, though we (and they!) don't know who

they are. The city is the future of any society. The cultural trends are forged here. Aspiring writers, artists, thinkers, entrepreneurs, scholars, professionals, and anti-professional activists all come here to make it. Immigrants flow into cities before moving out into the rest of the country.

The early church succeeded in 'capturing' the Roman empire because Christians lived predominantly in urban areas. Today's Christians have fled the cities but then wonder why the church has so little influence on the culture. The late James Boice wrote that the single most effective way for Christians today to be 'salt and light' and 'a city on a hill' (Matt 5:13-16) would be for a large per-

centage of the nation's believers to move in to the largest U.S. cities and simply live out their lives there. (James Montgomery Boice, *Two Cities, Two Loves*)

Because it is so great

Our three children grew up in the city. They regularly thank us for raising them here, and they give some of the following reasons. First, it made them resourceful. After New York City, nothing intimidates them. They feel they can get along and get around anywhere. Second, it brought them into close contact with an enormous range of people of different races, classes, world-views, religions, and tem-

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NEW MINISTRY TO WALL STREET WITH JOHN MASON

As part of Redeemer's development of new ministries the Rev. John Mason has joined Redeemer's staff in order to set up midweek ministries for people who are working in the financial world.

John and his wife Judith have moved to Manhattan from Sydney, Australia. John's background is with the Anglican Church in Sydney where he has been the senior minister of one of Sydney's largest churches for the past sixteen years. Prior to that John was in Canberra (Australia's capital) where he established a new church, founded a new school and taught New Testament theology. John is a well respected and effective Bible

teacher, evangelist and theologian.

Judith, for her part has a background in music. For a brief period she was involved in some music programming with the Australian Broadcasting Commission. In the course of a busy life raising four children, she has been involved in ministry to women both as a speaker and Bible study leader.

The Masons have four adult children. Three continue to live in Sydney (Katie, Angus and

Joanna), while one son, Andrew and his wife Megan, live in London.

Since arriving in New York two months ago, John has been meeting with an increasing number of people who work in the financial world. Out of these conversations two groups have formed to plan and to pray - one midtown and the other downtown. The aim of the new ministry is to encourage professing Christian people to live out their

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- LIVING IN THE CITY (CONT.)

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WHY LIVE IN THE BIG CITY?

peraments. Nothing throws them now! They have both acquaintances and friends among a great diversity of humanity. Third, the big city has exposed them to a stunning range of cultural opportunities. The concerts, the museums, the galleries, the theaters all have enriched and challenged them and made them considerably less parochial.

Lastly, my kids insist that Christianity is more vital in the city. There is almost no nominal Christianity in the city. People do not go to church here because it is expected. People cannot be Christians here without getting strongly challenged and questioned all the time by their friends. This forces believers to be much more thoughtful and to be able to understand and articulate their faith. As a result my children were exposed to scores of very strong, young urban Christians who were extremely

attractive models to them.

These are the same reasons that so many Christians find (to their surprise) that their faith thrives in a city like nowhere else. Daily life here is a dazzling education, a never-boring engagement with the sources of cultural production, a unique opportunity to practice cross-cultural Christian community, and a challenge to constantly go deeper in understanding and articulating what they believe.

Because it is so hard

The city is also a very hard place to live. It is terribly expensive, even in the inner city. It is also a complex place to live--legally, socially, politically. It is highly mobile, and long-time residents suffer with the continual loss of relationships. The city also is filled with idols (cf. Acts 17) of sex, money, and power, and many give in to temptation. But

though Christians should not deliberately seek difficulty, in what more practical way could we possibly follow the incarnate Christ, who did not live where he was comfortable but where he was useful (Rom 15:3)?

The Christian church is mainly middle class and non-urban. We value privacy, safety, homogeneity, sentimentality, space, order and control. The city is filled with ironic, edgy, diverse people who do not value these things at all. The city is an easier place to live (than the rest of the country) if you are poor or rich, if you are non-white, if you are single, if you are rather unconventional in your tastes. But it is a harder place to live if you are a white, middle-class family. The plain fact is that the great majority of Protestant Christians in this country simply find the city an uncomfortable place to live.

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COME HELP US CARE

Congregational care is important, right? And in a big church like Redeemer, we all wish there was more of it, especially when it is we who suddenly find ourselves in need. Are you waiting for others with 'special gifts' to do the work? The fact is, all of us will have the reality of our faith judged by our offering of mercy (Matthew 25: 35,36; James 2:12,13.) Therefore, the work of benevolence is not primarily a work discharged by special officers on behalf of the church. It is primarily the loving action of the members of a church toward those in and around the church community.

However, some gifts require

formal public recognition for their proper functioning. Such gifts constitute an office in God's calling and in the church's recognition. Elders, deacons, and deaconesses are such offices. Since the beginning Redeemer has had a commitment to raising up leaders to serve in these special offices.

What are the historical roots of these offices?

In the writings of the early church, we can see that each congregation had multiple elders/bishops and deacons, all elected by the people. Elders were the official pastors/teachers of the early church. They oversaw the ministry of the word to

the early Christians and discerned true teaching from heresy. Deacons were ministers of mercy to the poor and widows. They were patterned after "the seven" mentioned in Acts 6. They visited community and church members to identify needs and then meet them. Deacons also assisted the elders and bishops.

What do Officers do?

The elders serve on the Session and provide spiritual leadership to the congregation through oversight of Redeemer ministries, leaders, members and regular attenders. Deacons and deaconesses minister directly to the

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REDEEMER REPORT

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services at 10:30 • 6:00

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

YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT REDEEMER GETAWAYS

BY TIM PETTIT
DIRECTOR OF CHURCH LIFE

Almost 1,000 people take part in the relaxation, activities, worship and teaching at Redeemer's 14 week-end Getaways each year. In case you have never been one of them, here are the questions most frequently asked by people before they register.

I've just started worshipping at Redeemer. Why should I go away with a group of complete strangers?

Because we guarantee that they won't be strangers at the end of the weekend! Our Getaways help even the shyest person make new friendships. But don't take our word for it:

"Hardcore New Yorker that I am, I was a bit surprised that everyone was so friendly and open," Emma Arbizu said after a Vermont Getaway.

"The October Getaway helped me to start some solid friendships and also feel like I was a part of the church," said Reyn Cabinte.

"I appreciated the lack of cliques at one fall Getaway," said newcomer Devon Quinn. "People were eager to get to know us and hang out."

I'm not a Boy Scout. Will I be sleeping in some "rustic" dorm room, with 20 people competing for the bathroom?

Absolutely not! We stay in comfortable hotels with modern rooms and private baths. Everyone gets their own bed...and it won't be a creaky steel bunkbed with a wafer-thin mattress!

What kind of people go on these Getaways?

Roughly the same demographic as Redeemer's worship services: about 85 percent of the people are single professionals and students. Ages on the Getaways generally range from

the early 20s through the early 40s.

I don't want to sound unspiritual, but can a church weekend be fun?

You be the judge: Our four Vermont weekends include canoeing...innertubing...hiking...snowshoeing...climbing a waterfall...igloo-building...mountain cookouts and bonfire...and tobogganing. In Tamiment in the Poconos, there is late-night volleyball and tennis in a huge gym...an indoor pool and hot tub...Ultimate Frisbee...miniature golf...and horseback riding...and more!

Or, you can just read a good book by the fireplace or snooze under a tree.

I don't want to sound overly spiritual, but does God have any part in these Getaways?

There are three dynamic worship services and three Bible-based lectures on topics pertinent to your life. In addition to large chunks of free time for activities, there is always space for quiet reflection.

These weekends sound pretty busy. I don't need more intensity in my life!

Neither do I. The beauty of these Getaways is that you have many activities to choose from, but you don't HAVE to choose any of them. After returning from a Fourth of July Getaway to Vermont, Matt Caughey commented, "It was a good combination of organized events and free time when we could just kick back."

Hmmm. Nice hotels. Lots of activities. Can I even afford to go?

We think our Getaways are very affordable, especially when compared to New York City prices. For example, the Mountain Getaway in May includes two-

nights' lodging at a modern lakeside resort, five meals, activities and full use of the large indoor and outdoor sports and swimming facilities. Short of going to a "rustic" camp with dorm-style rooms and shared bathrooms, it doesn't come any less expensive than that!

How do I get more info?

Our Getaway website has a calendar of future Getaways, plus photos and details for the most current weekend trip. Log on to www.RedeemerChurchLife.com or go to www.Redeemer.com, click on "Community Life" and then click on "Getaways." Or you can call Tim Pettit, director of church life, 212-808-4460 x141.

ALMOST-4TH OF JULY GETAWAY

**Go to
WWW.REDEEMERCHURCHLIFE.COM
FOR DETAILS**

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MINISTRY TO WALL STREET

faith, and to challenge others in the wider community to explore the larger issues of life.

Two parallel midweek programs are now set to commence with a five-week series on the theme, More to Life. They will be:

- **Midtown** at the McGraw Hill Publishing building (1221 Avenue of the Americas between 48th and 49th Streets) on Wednesday, May 30, from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m.; and
- **Downtown** at the Millennium Hilton (55 Church Street, cnr of Fulton Street, opposite the World Trade Centre) on Thursday, May 31 (for breakfast - 7:15 to 7:45 a.m.)

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BIG CITY

What can we do? The early church increased in influence and relevance because it was urban. The modern church is fast losing cultural and economic force because it is avoiding the city. The only solution is that a lot of Christians who are not naturally comfortable and indigenous to the city will have to follow Abraham and live by faith, using the comfort and joy of the gospel to face the difficulties of being here and breaking through to the greatness of it. Abraham was called to leave the familiar culture and become a pilgrim, seeking the city of God (Gen.12:1-4; Heb.11:8-10).

Coming and Leaving

It is difficult to strike a balance here. God does not call everyone to live in a city, nor does he call everyone to live their entire lives in a city. People who find great opportunity to use their gifts productively elsewhere need to be able to go out from the city without guilt. People who will not even think of living in the city for selfish or cowardly reasons need to be confronted. Consider it done.

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HELP US CARE

needs of people in times of crisis or in the midst of difficult situations. They are up front after each service to answer questions and pray with those who come forward. They assist the elders in church membership interviews and meet monthly for training, supervision, and encouragement.

Who is qualified to serve?

We are looking for mature Christians with a calling to serve the church with their gifts and talents. For elders the qualities of leadership, spiritual and emotional maturity, humility, patience, discernment, empathy and creativity are sought after. For deacons and deaconesses we are looking for discerning listeners, those who care for the suffering, relate well to people, and are spiritually and emotionally mature. All candidates must be official members.

How can I nominate someone?

We are receiving nominations for the entire month of May. If you are a member you should have received a nomination packet at the end of April. Please prayerfully consider and submit

your nominations to Andrea Clark at the church office – by fax (212-808-4465) or mail (the form must be signed.) Nomination forms can be obtained over the web at www.redeemer.com or by emailing Andrea at andrea@redeemer.com. Questions? Call Andrea at 212-808-4460 ext. 146.

When are the next training classes?

Theological training will begin on Sunday, June 10 from 12:00 – 1:15 p.m. and continue at the same time on June 17, 24, July 1 and July 8, 2001. Skills training will begin on Sunday, September 9 from 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. and continue at the same time on September 16, 23, 30 and October 7, 2001 (box lunch provided.)

Can a nomination be deferred?

Yes, if you are nominated in May but cannot accept at this time, you may defer your nomination until a later date. Training will be offered again on the following dates. Theological training will be January 6, 13, 20, 27 and February 3, 2002, and the skills training will take place on March 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, 2002.