

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

SEPTEMBER 2001

HISTORY, VISION, AND RENEWAL

BY TIM KELLER

Twelve years ago this month, in September 1989, Redeemer Church officially 'opened its doors' to New York City. After six months of preparation we held our first morning worship service. Each year we usually make grateful mention of this milestone, but this year we are going to do much more.

When God dried up the Jordan river so the Israelites could enter the Promised Land, their leader Joshua insisted that they build a monument in order to continually re-remember the event (Joshua 4:4-7, 19-24). As Samuel Johnson once put it, we

have far more need of being reminded than of being instructed. Christians already know most of what they need to know in order to handle life. The problem is that our hearts 'forget' it. For example, we may 'know' that God loves us, but that truth may no longer be 'real' to our heart. It no longer comforts us.

The truths we can recite with our minds will slowly and inevitably lose their controlling power over our hearts unless we deliberately prevent the process. During the winter, farmers once had to twice daily break the ice forming over the water supply, otherwise it would freeze solid

and there would be nothing to drink. In the same way, we have to regularly break the ice that forms over our hearts in this world by remembering our history and God's acts of strength and love in that history.

But it is not enough to only remember our individual histories and how God brought us individually to himself. The people of Israel were directed by God to regularly think back over their corporate history, to commemorate God's "mighty acts" that rescued them and shaped them into a people. The Passover (Exodus 23:15), the feast of Purim

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WHAT IS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

(Fellowship Group Sign-up is Sunday, Sept. 23, so you better figure it out fast!)

BY IRON KIM

Zygmund Bauman in *Intimations of Postmodernity* makes a fascinating observation about the relationship between postmodernity and community. Because postmodernism is a kind of hyper-subjectivity in which identity collapses, Bauman contends that it fuels an "obsessive search for community" and a desire to be connected. In one sense both modernity and postmodernity have left a longing for community.

Community is something everyone longs for even apart from religious conviction. If community exists outside of the church and people long for it, what makes Christian communi-

ty unique?

There is a common misconception that Christian community, on the one hand, is merely composed of our existing community plus Jesus Christ. In other words, we maintain our old lifestyles and just add a bit of religion to it. This is a typical mistake of Christians to approach community in this way. It is not just one more thing we are to participate in as a result of the gospel but community is an expression of the gospel itself. In 1 Peter 2:9 we

are called a 'holy nation' or a distinct and unique spiritual ethnic group. Peter is saying that the gospel changes us into a people who share a common way of doing almost everything from understanding right and wrong to having inside jokes. It is not an aspect of our life we can choose to be a part of when we have time for it but it is something into which we are born spiritually. You cannot be a 'holy nation' some of the time.

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- MOUNTAIN GETAWAY

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HISTORY, VISION, AND RENEWAL

(Esther 9), and the feast of Dedication (John 10:22) were annual festivals celebrating God's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, Persia, and Syria respectively.

But in addition sometimes the people were called to special gatherings of remembering. The "covenant" was the solemn and legal yet loving and intimate relationship that God established with his people at Mount Sinai. He promised to be their God, ruling, guarding, nurturing, and shepherding. They promised to be his people, a counter-culture that embodied the truth, grace, and justice of God in a single human society, so that all the nations of the earth might know God (e.g. Joshua 4:24). Despite the privilege and wonder of this covenant-making event that made them a people, their hearts continually 'forgot' and so there was a need not only for annual festivals but also for occasional special seasons of "covenant renewal." We see examples of such times in Deuteronomy (see 1:1-5 and 29:1ff.), Joshua 24:1-33, 2 Kings 23:1ff., and in Ezra 10:1-17.

In covenant renewals you can see three things happening. (The whole book of Deuteronomy follows this outline.)

- First came the "historical prologue," in which the people are reminded of their whole history, of all the ways God had been guiding them with deeds of power and love. This led to times of thanksgiving and praise.
- Second came the "reading of the law," in which the people reflected on what they had actu-

ally been called to be and do as a people. This always entailed times of self-examination and repentance.

• Third came the "renewing of vows" in which the people, now clear about their direction and calling, made new resolution to move forward toward God's future for them.

In other words, covenant renewal means to see where we've been, where we are, and where we're going in a much deeper way. Through teaching, praise, prayer, and vows the original calling becomes 'real' to our hearts and we move out as a people with a renewed vision for the future.

This fall we are going to have a season of covenant renewal (though we will call it "Vision Renewal" for the many people who find the word 'covenant' still unfamiliar.) We will take time to ponder how, why, and for what we were formed by God into a people. We will have times for remembering our past thankfully, for examining our selves honestly, and for committing our lives fully to the vision

of being a church in the city.

I will be preaching a series of Sunday sermons on the book of Jonah in order to re-visit that vision and calling. But the most focused time of renewal will be a special service at St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue and E. 51st street at 7:00 p.m. on October 17. Please plan to be there, whether you are a Redeemer 'old-timer' or newcomer.

Premarital Seminars

If you are engaged or even just considering marriage, we have two Premarital Seminars for you to choose from — Oct. 13, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the church office, 271 Madison Ave., 15th floor; and another spread over two Sundays, Oct. 28 and Nov. 4, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., at Hunter, Rm 116, West Building.

You MUST register at 808-4460 x110! The fee for both seminars is \$35 per couple. The seminar is required if you want a Redeemer pastor to officiate at your wedding.

!!NEW MCM LOCATION!!

September 10, New Location

Attention all ministry leaders who normally attend MCM:

You're aware that we've been hopping from one MCM site to another over the past year. Thank you for your patience and perseverance in keeping track of us. We're pleased to announce that we have a new permanent site. Beginning September 10, MCM will meet at the Fourth Universalist Society, 160 Central Park West at 76th Street.

Worship and teaching by Tim Keller will be at 7:00 p.m. as usual; huddles will meet 8:00 - 9:00 p.m.

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

Join us for Redeemer's 12th Anniversary

Celebration!

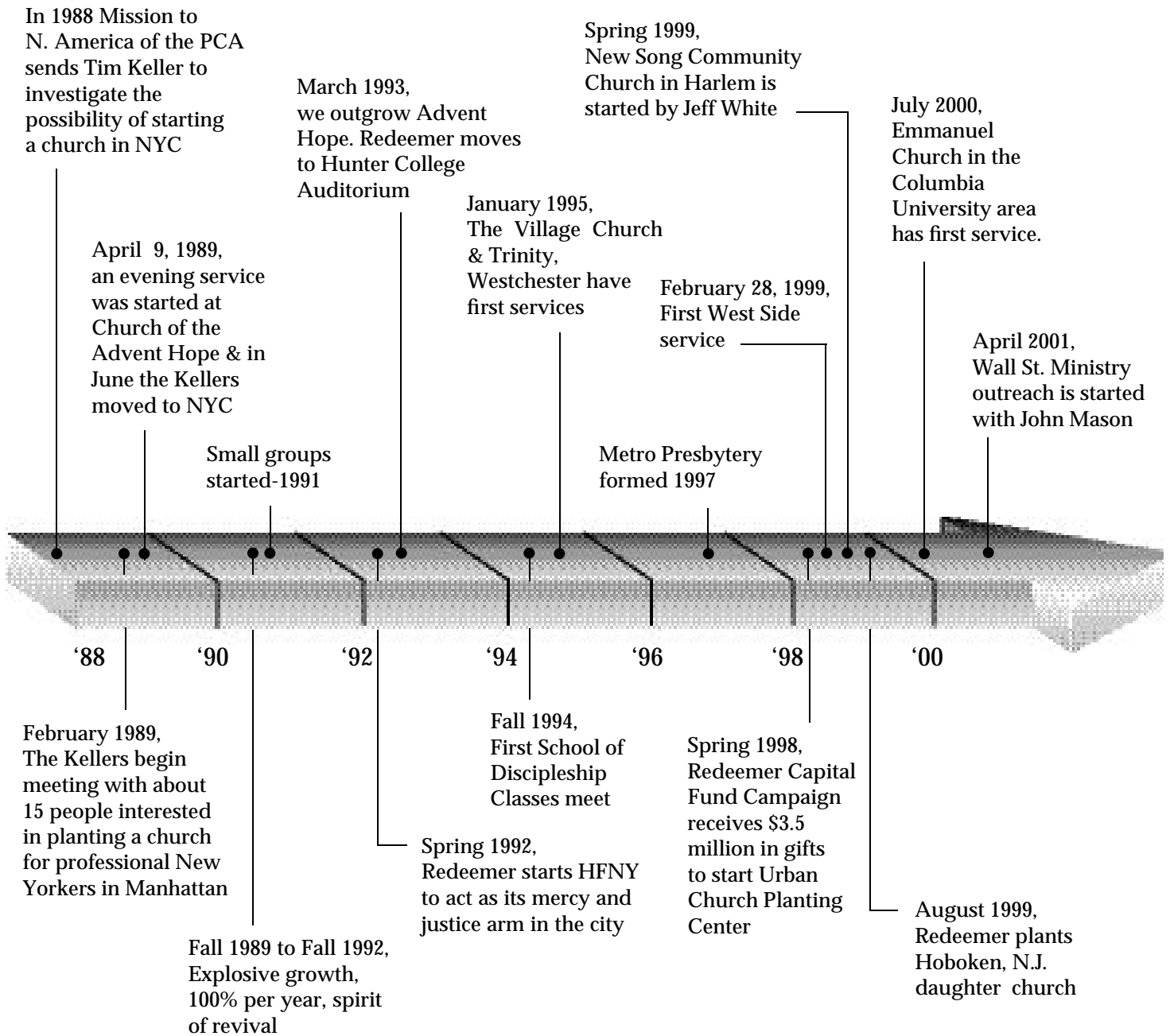
- Covenant Renewal Ceremony
- Sermon from Tim Keller
- Music & Worship
- Stories of Changed Lives
- Vision Video

When: 7:00p.m.
Wednesday
October 17

Where: St. Bartholomew's Church
Park Avenue and 51st

Save the date now in your day-planner or palm-pilot

What Are We Celebrating?



— The Story of God's Work In Our Church and Our City

LOOKING FOR MORE THAN A SMILE AND HANDSHAKE

BY TIM PETTIT DIRECTOR OF CHURCH LIFE

There has to be more than just a smile, a handshake and a cup of coffee after a worship service. That thought prompted David, Bernhard and Jae to join hundreds of others at one of Redeemer's many week-end Getaways.

"After spending a few Sundays sipping coffee alone at the Coffee Hour after the service, I decided I had to do something to meet people," said David Turley. At Redeemer less than a month, David took the plunge and signed up for the February Non-Ski Getaway to Vermont.

"The retreat was great because, unlike other retreats I had been on, it was not clique-ish," David said. "I met a lot of people and had a blast. The activities really promoted interaction"

Trey Huey and Wallace Kim befriended David at the Vermont Getaway, invited him to their fel-

lowship group and then roomed with David at the April Getaway in the Pocono Mountains. With two Getaways under his belt, David said, "75 percent of the people I now hang out with I met on the Redeemer Getaways."

After deciding that "a handshake and a smile after a worship service wasn't enough," Bernhard Burzer saw a Vermont Getaway announcement and thought, "Let's give it a shot and meet people."

"There were no cliques, and it was a nice combination of spiritual and social activities," Bernhard recalled. "It got me into Redeemer because it builds your confidence. Once you get to know one person, it leads to another and then to another."

Because so many participants are new to Redeemer, the Getaways place a heavy emphasis on fun activities that allow people to get to know each other.

In addition to large slots of free time, there are sessions of dynamic worship and spiritual teaching. At least eight Getaways are scheduled over the next 12 months.

"The Getaways are great because you get to meet and talk with a large number of people," said Jae Kang. Jae said he "made a bunch of friends" at two Getaways and, as a result, got involved with a Redeemer citilights picnic (citilights is a ministry to young adults) and now wants to connect with the Redeemer Sports Network.

James Leonard, the manager of volunteers at Hope for New York, has also seen how the Getaways connect people to ministries at Redeemer. After attending three Getaways, James said, "The networking opportunities have helped me to place more than 20 volunteers at Hope for New York."

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WHAT IS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

On the other hand, many understand Christian community to be an exclusive gathering of enthusiastic Christians who escape from the evils of the world by gathering together. This image is the *opposite* of the 'city set on a hill' image Jesus gives us as what Christian community looks like in Matthew 5:14-16. This city is composed of Christians whose visible behavior brilliantly displays to the world the glory of God in their lives. This cannot be done individually nor by hiding from the rest of the world.

Most people find surprising the idea that the purpose of Jesus' salvation is not to just save individuals but to form a new and alternative society

which declares that Jesus is Lord of the world and that he is going to redeem all of creation (Romans 8, Revelation 21). Christian community may share elements which are common to all kinds of communities yet it is radically different and exciting as we see what God has in store.

You have often heard it said at Redeemer "if you are not in a Fellowship Group, you are not in the church." September 23 will be our annual Fellowship Group sign-up day following each worship service. If you are not part of a group, this is one of your opportunities to join one. How else could you be a 'holy nation' or a 'city set on a hill' in New York?

Mountain Getaway

Oct. 26-28, 2001
Tamiment Resort,
Pocono Mtns, PA
Registration, photos and
details at
www.RedeemerChurchLife.com

Married Couples Getaway

Nov. 9-11, 2001
Lodge at Star Lake,
Bloomingdale, NJ
Registration and details at
www.RedeemerChurchLife.com

To Get More Info

Rev. Timothy Pettit
Director of Church Life
Redeemer Presbyterian
212-808-4460 x141
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DOING JUSTICE, LOVING MERCY, WALKING HUMBLY

BY JAMES LEONARD

Redeemer's mercy and justice ministry "Hope for New York" has been sending out volunteers and resources to ministries throughout the metro area since 1992. Today more than 2000 volunteers a year from Redeemer have connected themselves to this vision, a vision developed in response to the Biblical mandate to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God."

As the Volunteer Manager for Hope for New York, hundreds of people have come to me asking the question "How can I get involved?" It seems that many are looking for much more than just another thing to do on a Tuesday evening or a Thursday morning. After all, when you're working sixty to eighty hours a week, who has time for mere philanthropy?

When someone tells me they

would like to volunteer I sense that they are looking to engage in deeper and more meaningful relationships. Perhaps they have been transformed by a severe mercy and would like to see the same for others. Maybe they are tired of the injustice they see around the city, or perhaps God is calling them to wrap themselves around His plan instead of the other way around. Clearly volunteerism can be a catalyst for addressing each of these.

Pastor John Mason has been asking many on Wall Street, "Is there more to life?" Let's face it; life can seem empty at times. Even in a vibrant church bustling with like-minded people and more ministries than you could count on two hands, one can feel disengaged, insignificant and downright lonely.

In our highly technological and savvy world there are prob-

ably countless ways to address these issues, but isn't it interesting how things can change so quickly when we begin to engage in the lives of others? When we begin to empower those around us and help them to see just how significant and important they really are, we experience changes in ourselves and in our immediate surroundings.

When we reflect back on the words "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God," these words are so much more than just "a good idea." They are a revolutionary component of the the Kingdom of God. If Jesus had a heart for mercy and justice, and spoke openly and consistently about it, shouldn't we who are in Christ? There is nothing more life-changing than the transforming power of the Gospel applied to the needs and problems of a person's life.