

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

FEBRUARY 2002

## FUTURE CHALLENGES AND REDEEMER'S VISION

BY TIM KELLER

*'let's not build a church just for ourselves.'*

**W**henver a new church is planted its original leaders have a great temptation put before them. There is a strong impulse to build the church they've always personally wanted instead of the church that the people of the city actually need. On the basis of Romans 15:1-3, the early members of Redeemer said, 'let's not build a church just for ourselves.' On Wednesday evening January 17th we held a 'Vision Renewal Service at St Bart's Church. There we remembered Redeemer's origins and discerned three broad aspects of its

vision that has characterized it from the beginning.

### **Three Parts to our Vision**

First, we wanted to be a church not just for ourselves but **for our friends who do not believe**. The critical event in Redeemer's ministry occurs when a Christian attends Redeemer for the first time and begins to think, "this church can really help my friends understand the importance and beauty of Jesus." During the early days of the church I heard believers tell me "I personally would prefer a different kind of service, but Redeemer is the

best place for me to bring my friends who are skeptical about the Christian faith." Within this part of our vision are our core values about the power of the gospel to change lives and the importance of being a 'missional church' which engages rather than retreats from our secular society.

Second, we wanted to be a church not just for ourselves but **for the peace and benefit of the whole city**. Two days before our first public service I was at a conference where I heard Ray Bakke say: "If the main aim of your church is for a great

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## THREE QUESTIONS FOR CROSSING THE BORDER

BY JAMES LEONARD  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
OF CHURCH LIFE

*"Who are you?"  
"Where are you going?"  
and  
"What do you have to declare?"*

**H**aving grown up in Washington State I have had the opportunity to cross over the border into Canada on several occasions. Each time I would work my way through the traffic and pull my car to the booth with the proper documentation in hand. With a friendly smile, a few niceties and a few simple questions from the boarder patrolman, my hope was always that I would be granted the freedom to move on without delay.

Over the holidays I made this trek across the border once again. The long line of cars, the

preparation of documentation, the friendly smile and the niceties all remained the same but something was very different this time. I was awestruck by the three questions presented to me by the boarder patrolman.

While the questions were simple enough on the surface level, they are also same three questions that every person has pondered since the begin-

ning of humanity. "Who are you?" "Where are you going?" and "What do you have to declare?"

Maybe it was the fact that I had been listening to one of Tim Keller's tapes just prior to reaching the border but my mind was racing. How as Christians should we respond to such questions?

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- COVENANT RENEWAL NIGHT
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- 3 QUESTIONS - CONT.

*MORE...*



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# FUTURE CHALLENGES AND REDEEMER'S VISION

church—you will only feather your own nest. But if the main aim of your church is to build a better city—then you will in the end also have a vibrant church.” Though we are a Manhattan based church made up largely of professionals, we aim to serve the needs of the whole city, especially those of the poor. Within this part of our vision are our core values of the importance of the city, of Christian community, and of deed ministry as well as word ministry.

Third, we wanted to be a church that exists not just for itself, but **a movement of the gospel that plants many churches and serves the whole Body.** At the beginning, Redeemer anticipated being a “church planting church.” Five years ago we had a Capital Campaign to raise money not in order to become a mega church but to plant a movement of churches. Not only have we begun a center for the training of church planters, but we also anticipate that Redeemer itself will eventually become a network of center city sister churches. Within this part of our vision are our core values of the church planting, movement mindset, and of cultural renewal as well as church growth.

## ***New Challenges and Opportunities***

Redeemer’s commitment to this vision is as strong as ever was. But we must grow in our application of it, and especially by returning to the principle that we did not start Redeemer “to please ourselves” (Rom 15:2-

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3.) Here are three areas where we need to extend and apply our vision over the next few years.

First, we must apply this principle to the area of **church planting.** Redeemer’s record in church planting over the last eight years is quite good by ordinary standards. We have given significant help to start 10 churches in the New York region as well as some in other cities. But if our vision is really to “fill the city with churches” it will take some pretty radical commitments. One requirement is fairly obvious. We must be willing to put very high percentages of our church budget into starting new congregations.

Equally important will be for us to find more systematic ways to raise up and mentor new preachers and church leaders for the city. But perhaps the biggest challenge will be to have increasing numbers of

Redeemer’s members and attenders willing to leave the security and comfort of a large, established church to venture out with a smaller groups in order to serve Christ in a particular neighborhood. This is not at all easy, and it runs against the grain of our ‘consumer culture’. Big Redeemer has more choices and services than a new neighborhood parish. But we follow the one who did not please himself.

Second, we must apply this principle to the area of **training for cultural renewal.** One of the things that has made Redeemer different than other churches is that it has been very supportive of Christians serving Christ in vocations other than church ministry. We have not said, “if you are truly committed you will leave your ‘secular’ jobs and take up the ‘sacred’ min-

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## **REDEEMER REPORT**

Kathy Keller  
Buddy Mungo  
Dave Jacobs

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# YOUNG LIFE VOLUNTEER WORK WEEKEND

BY SARAH OSEWALT

F. H. LAGUARDIA HIGH SCHOOL FOR MUSIC AND ART

Some of us from the Redeemer Youth Group go once a year to do volunteer work for the weekend in the kitchen of the Young Life Camp at Lake Champion New York to help keep the cost of camp affordable.

To work in the pits is to understand the experience that lunch ladies around the world undergo; therefore it is probably the least attractive of jobs at Lake Champion. One must wear unflattering plastic aprons, ruin three pairs of clothing, and not receive the daily appreciation that waiters receive. That experience was one that I found surprisingly enjoyable, because it suited my tastes so perfectly. This is because I am a workaholic. I stay after school when I don't need to, I study extra hard for a test when I know the material, and I finish the book when the teacher only wants us to read the first chapter. I enjoyed working hard in the kitchen, the constant activity that was involved in washing three hundred or so plates, and the challenge of the mess that more than one hundred junior high school kids presented for us every morning. To leave last was a sign of a job well done, and when I left the year before I was determined to have the same job again the next year, to make myself "a servant of God" again.

When the time came, I cheerfully headed for the pits, almost rubbing my hands with glee. The rest of the crew was doing the same. I was the only girl in the crew, and probably the most uptight. I was the last to join in their hearty renditions of "Lean on Me" and Newsboys songs, and had to be coaxed into doing the "spe-

cial pit dance" that one of the guys had invented. I had been fully prepared to scoff at their flippant conversations and silly exchanges, until I noticed something. The guys never got tired the way I did. They dug in with a half-serious complaint and a completely cheerful attitude, singing and dancing their way through pitchers filled with orange juice and Fruit Loops. Despite the fact that they were tired, they attended chapel at the end of the day whilst I found myself clinging to my plastic apron and dishrag.

What had happened to my desire to serve like Christ had? Why did I feel the need to compensate for my lack of spirit with extra work? What people like me assume about being a servant of the Lord is that the only requirement is to work very hard. But to work without joy is to miss the point, to not delight in those that you serve is leave out an important part of the story. To remain silent with those that rejoice is to no longer be a servant, but to be a slave to your

task.

King David threw caution to the wind and sung of his love for God, praising him for his goodness. Had he simply concentrated on his political position he would have been nothing more than a self-serving politician, a slave to the power he possessed. While mopping up milk on the floor, I realized that I was no longer working for God or for the kids, but for my own desire to feel useful. Christ served us because he delighted in us, because he loved us- I had ignored this fact and forgotten about the very kids I had wanted to love. The guys prayed for the kids outside, and constantly praised God. I found myself amazed and humbled. This was what it was like to be a servant—to work, and yet to be utterly free.

It was not merely a matter of loosening up (although that would have been hard enough for me to do); it was a matter of retrieving my joy from the depths of myself. It was a matter of learning to enjoy singing along to Christian rock off key

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# THREE QUESTIONS FOR CROSSING THE BORDER

**1. We are human beings created in the image of God** designed to worship Him and nothing else (Gen. 1:27). In our humanness it may be easy seek other objects of worship leaving us bankrupt of God's presence but Jesus taught that the Father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:26, 28). Not a sparrow can fall to the earth without the Father's will (Matt. 10:29). The principle that God is benevolent in his provision and protection is extended to the latter of the two passages to his human children as well (Matt. 6:25, 30-33; 10:30-31).

**2. As Christians we are on a journey toward God,** a journey that is at the heart of discipleship and fellowship. We are "being formed" into the likeness of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a journey that we cannot

walk alone. Jesus taught his disciples about prayer, worship, and service through the development of a vital fellowship. As we come together and are accountable to others, we find ourselves growing, learning, and serving in the context of community.

**3. Every human being is in search of significance.** We want to proclaim what we believe to be truth. As Christians, service and evangelism are tools to proclaim what God is doing through Christ. As Dr. Tuck Bartholomew said, "We must become sermons with tennis shoes on." In the popular quote from St. Francis, we are to "Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary use words."

While I didn't take that very moment at the border to become "a sermon with tennis shoes on" (for fear that I would

*Every human being is in search of significance. We want to proclaim what we believe to be truth.*

be labeled a fanatic and have my car taken apart.) I left with the reaffirmed realization that 1) I am blessed to find my identity rooted in a God who loves me unconditionally. 2) I have the opportunity to connect with a supportive and loving church body that is helping me to fulfill my calling. 3) I have found significance in knowing that God chooses broken and fallen people like myself to proclaim the glorious gospel—the most important amazing message to ever reach humanity.

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## YOUNG LIFE VOLUNTEER WORK WEEKEND

with my brothers in Christ. It was a matter of making up stupid cheers to help keep us all going. It was a matter of being unafraid to praise the Lord before, during, and after my work, whatever that work was. I won't lie and say that I overcame it all in one weekend, or even say that I have completely conquered my self-serving workaholic tendencies.

But to work with these guys together, in a community, taught me just how much Christians can help each other keep one's joy alive, and how wonderful it is to rejoice together.

## CHURCH FAMILY UPDATE

Vows & Baptisms

### **Vows:**

Marcus Antonio Alvarez  
Elizabeth Ann -  
Hayes Alvarez  
Livia Amber Beasley  
Jill Boekell  
Faith A. Cinquegrana  
James Dunbar Cross  
Kara McMahan Cross  
Mark W. Grannon  
Gai Crawford Grannon  
Marc S. Laing  
Khee Jhung Lee

Josh A. McCormack  
Valerie I Synn McCormack  
Andrew Francis Pelander  
Heather Pollard  
Nina N. Wong  
Jackie Jun He  
Thyrza Roxanne -  
Angelique Meulens  
Jeannie Deluise  
Christina Rogers  
Grace Yi-Wen Chang  
Stanley S. Park

### **Baptisms –**

James Rocco Alvarez, son of Marcus & Elizabeth Alvarez  
Charles (Charlie) Jeffrey Olson, son of Jeff & Amy Olson  
Kevin Sungjin Paek, son of Joe & Cathy Paek  
Taylor Adam Kramer, son of Dan & Margaret Kramer  
Elijah (Eli) Vernon Kramer, son of Dan & Margaret Kramer  
Alejandro Victor Clemente, son of Victor & Karen

# COVENANT RENEWAL NIGHT

BY DOROTHY GYGER

**A**s I saw the sanctuary of St. Bart's filling to capacity, I could feel a sense of expectancy in the crowd. My thoughts were "these people are serious about renewing their covenant. These people, my congregation, can really make a difference in the city and they are excited about it!"

Interestingly, that was exactly what the evening was about — being a church in the city and for the city. We were reminded that at the beginning Redeemer's purpose was to be a church that reaches out and welcomes people who don't yet believe and believers alike, and to be a church that would multiply itself and start other congregations all over the metro area. Redeemer's Vision was recounted like this: 1) We want to be a church for our friends who do not yet believe 2) We want to be a church that loves the city 3) We want to be a movement of churches that plants more churches.

We heard testimonies from individuals whose lives had been changed by the gospel through Redeemer. What a thrill to hear from people who previously had little interest in spiritual things who have now become leaders in ministry! As

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we watched a video recounting the development of Redeemer, it became clear that we cannot just be a church for ourselves, but we must constantly challenge ourselves to move out of our comfort zone. As the video portrayed the stories of so many people who had done just that, I was challenged to make a deeper commitment myself.

As we sang "Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him" I felt the beauty of

the evening and my heart was touched as the meaningful lines of "Jesus, What a friend for sinners" was sung - a fitting reminder that this is what the church is all about - introducing people to that One friend who can make a difference in their lives.

I left the service with thankfulness in my heart that God has allowed me to have a tiny part in Redeemer's ministry of serving and renewing this incredible city.

*If you missed this service, you  
can still see and hear what happened.*

*VHS tapes of the evening will be  
available at the tape table and  
at [www.redeemer.com](http://www.redeemer.com) as*

*"Share the Vision."*

**Vision  
Share**

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## FUTURE CHALLENGES AND REDEEMER'S VISION

istry.” Instead we have encouraged people to be the very best journalists, artists, actors, and business leaders possible, serving Kingdom priorities in those jobs. It is inspiring to talk about ‘working in a distinctively Christian manner’ but how does one do that? What difference does Christianity really make to people working in the theater and film? In the academy? In politics? In other arts? In the media? We have always said that the ‘gospel changes everything’—but exactly how does it do so in every arena of work?

Many of the Christians who are the most effective in their work and who are the most likely to ‘move up’ into places of cultural power are not getting enough Biblical-theological training and input to make them ‘distinct’ when they arrive in their positions of influence. Why not? I think the main reason is that the church is not being creative or committed to delivering such training and instruction to busy people.

While Redeemer is excellent in providing training for some of the fundamental ministry functions (such as small group leading), we have a long way to go in this area. Over the next few years we need to create a culture of training, learning, and discipleship.

Third, we must apply this principle to **staying put and rooted in a city which may experience troubles small or great in the future**. My guess is that New York City will be a harder place to live in over the next few years. At the very least, it is facing a recession, and this will mean fewer jobs and less income. Those with jobs and income will need to be more deliberate and generous than ever in order to keep ministries going. (By the way, Redeemer members and friends responded in 2001 year end giving in just this way. Despite the severe eco-

*I hope that believers will show the world that they follow the Savior who moved from invulnerability to vulnerability in order to serve others.*

nomie downturn, the offerings covered the budget. Amazing.)

But I hope I’m not being prophetic when I say that New York City is still the most likely target for future terrorism. Recently we’ve slowly begun to feel ‘safe’ again, but that could change any time. And what will Christians do if and when that happens? I hope that believers will show the world that they follow the Savior who moved from invulnerability to vulnerability in order to serve others. If Redeemer people by and large stay put in a place that has become much less ‘safe,’ then we would really know that we have become ‘a church not for ourselves’ but for the city.