

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

NOVEMBER 2003

RECEPTIVE GRACE

BY TIM KELLER

Receive one another just as Christ received you. (Rom 15:7)

How can we live and work together harmoniously with those whose beliefs are not just extremely different from our own but even offensive to us? In today's "shrunken" world, people with radically different views live right beside one another. The Bible shows us the way to achieve something different, something even beyond 'tolerance.' It shows us the way to what I'll call 'receptive grace.'

What receptive grace is not.

In 1 Corinthians and Romans Paul addressed two parties that he called the 'Weak' and the 'Strong.' The Weak were those whose consciences were not very oriented to God's grace and love, and therefore they easily felt condemned and defiled (1 Cor 8:7.) Therefore they wanted no gray areas—they wanted to know whether each and any practice was right or wrong. They wanted lots of rules and boundaries in order to bolster their weak consciences, and they tended to be very narrow-minded and judgmental of those who didn't obey all the rules.

The Strong were the broad-minded people. Yet Paul sharply criticizes the Strong because they disdained the Weak (Rom 15:7) and they were refusing to alter their behavior though it was being

misconstrued and harming people (1 Cor 8:9-11.)

The irony is important to recognize. Those who congratulated themselves as being broad-minded and tolerant disdained the narrow-minded. They were being judgmental of judgmental people; they were being self-righteous about self-righteous people. Though the Weak are *overtly* intolerant, the Strong are *covertly* intolerant. In the end, each side was excluding the other.

Why no one can be all-inclusive.

This analysis could not be more relevant for us today. The public rhetoric today goes something like this. "People who believe that they have the truth—that their morals are the only right absolutes—exclude and subjugate others. We will only get along if we all agree that no one has the supreme religion or moral values, that every individual must determine what is true and right or wrong for him or herself." But, as Paul said, this is just a new covert form way to exclude people, but now on different terms.

About 60 years ago, those who publicly promoted sex outside of marriage were denounced as 'obscene' and not allowed a public voice. But today those who speak

publicly about traditional sexual mores may be denounced as intolerant or even as engaging in 'hate speech.' Now *they* are not allowed a public voice. This isn't progress from intolerance to tolerance. Rather, the group that was once excluded now has to power to exclude. The rules have changed but the exclusion and intolerance continues.

Let's take another example. To say, "I think everyone ought to be free to determine what is truth or what is moral or immoral for *them*" sounds quite tolerant, as if it is open to all sorts of philosophies and world-views, but it is not. It is a very western, white, almost tribal way of thinking based on the European movements of the Enlightenment and Romanticism.

That way of thinking certainly has many merits, but it is not at all 'open.' It is pressing a highly individualistic way of thinking (an 'epistemology') that is filled with assumptions about God (namely, that he doesn't exist or doesn't care about truth,) human nature and ultimate reality. It is saying: "my liberal, western, Enlightenment way of knowing should be privileged over yours." This isn't progress from intolerance to tolerance either. There

(continued on page 2)



INSIDE:

- COMPASSION THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST
- THE HFNYCHARITY BIKE RIDE
- MY PROBLEM WITH RELIGION
- CHRISTMAS PROJECTS NEED VOLONTEER
- STEWARDSHIP CORNER
- TITHING BEYOND THE PLATE

must be a better way! There is.

What receptive grace is.

In Romans 14:1, Paul tells the Strong to “receive the one who is weak with respect to faith.” Notice that Paul calls the person “weak”—spiritually and theologically. So Paul gives a negative evaluation of the person’s character and beliefs. Yet Paul calls us to receive—to engage, to enter into relationship with those that we evaluate as wrong. In Romans 15:1 he calls the Strong literally to “bear the weaknesses of the weak and not please ourselves.” What can this mean? It surely cannot mean we are to adopt the errors of the weak. One commentator writes, “They are to sympathetically ‘enter into’ their attitudes, refrain from criticizing and judging them, and do what love would require toward them. Love demands that the ‘strong’ go beyond the distance implied in mere toleration.” (Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p.866.)

Modern tolerance refuses to do any evaluation, but also refuses to let others impinge on their individual freedom. It says: “I accept all people—but I’m not going to let anyone effect the way I want to live.” But Paul is calling us to something far beyond toleration. It is almost the opposite. He says that we *should* evaluate the beliefs and practices of others, but then we should love them, engage them. (And Paul calls us not only to have this attitude with other Christians but with our neighbors—cf. Rom.15:2.)

Obviously, it is enormously hard to be sympathetic, caring, open, and non-judgmental with a person whose beliefs you evaluate as being seriously in error. Why is it so extraordinarily hard? Jonathan

Edwards preached a sermon in the 1740s entitled “Love is Contrary to a Censorious Spirit.” We don’t use the word *censorious* anymore, but it means an intolerant, condemning spirit. In the sermon he points out that it is not ‘censorious’ to make sharp, negative evaluations. Rather, he says, what makes you censorious is if you *enjoy* making negative evaluations even if you only make them deep within your heart. The question is: do you *enjoy* contrasting your own views and practices with those of others? Do you enjoy despising other people, even if you don’t say anything outwardly? Do you enjoy seeing those others ‘trashed’ in books and reviews? That is a sign, says Edwards, that your own heart has not been changed by the grace of God.

The power for receptive grace.

How does the gospel do this? In Romans 15:7 Paul writes: *Receive one another just as Christ received you.* When Jesus died on the cross, he was making the most negative evaluation of our condition he could possibly make! His going to the cross says to us: “you are so lost, so flawed, so sinful that nothing less than the death of the Son of God can save you. I would never give away my life unless there was absolutely no other way. You are *that* lost!” When Jesus died on the cross he was not being tolerant!

Oh, but look at the love. He was naming us as sinners, lost. But he was loving us though at the time we were the ultimate Weak people. We did not believe the right things. We did not live as we ought. Surely our lives and attitudes would have offended

him, but he entered in to our situation, cared for us, made room in his life for us, and died for our sins. If we follow a man like that, how can we ever treat our opponents disdainfully or oppressively even though we negatively evaluate their beliefs and practices?

If your identity and self-worth are mainly based on how hard you work, you *have* to despise those who you perceive as lazy. Or if your identity and sense of significance is mainly based on your morality, then you *must* look down on those who you perceive as immoral. Or if your main source of significance is that you are a tolerant, inclusive person working for the rights of others, you *must* look down upon those who in your view are intolerant or bigoted.

But a Christian says: “I am loved because when I was believing all the wrong things, Jesus came and entered into my reality, took on the weakness of my human nature, radically re-adjusted his life for me, and died for me.” A Christian’s self worth is based on the one who *was* excluded for us—Jesus was socially and spiritually cast out. Now we are free to disagree even sharply with people and yet do so without any ill will, without the need to withdraw or exercise power in the relationships with them. You have the power to disagree with love, respect, deference and humility, with no inner need to win the argument. If we do that on a broad scale, eventually the world will ask us—“what have you got?” The answer will be “*Receive one another just as Christ received you.*”

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Rebecca Lock
Fred Liedtke

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
OFFICE • 271 MADISON AVENUE • SUITE 1600 • NEW YORK, NEW YORK • 10016
(212) 808-4460 (phone) (212) 808-4465 (fax) www.redeemer.com

HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 9:30AM • 11:15AM • 6:00PM

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of West 79TH and Broadway
service at 7:00PM

COMPASSION THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST

BY JENNY CHANG

When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)

As a social worker, one of the greatest challenges for me is to set aside my personal values and remain non-judgmental when working with clients. It is true that personal values do influence the helping process, and one can never be completely value-free. I have learned that the best way to serve others is to see each person through Jesus' eyes.

It is difficult to gauge the extent of needs that exist within the Redeemer community by looking at the congregation. I did not realize there was such a great need for a church-based mercy ministry until God presented an opportunity for me to serve Him through the Diaconate, as the

Associate Diaconate Director. My serving capacity with the Diaconate gives me opportunities to interact with the officers and the clients we assist. These experiences show me both the humility needed to seek assistance and the obedience in answering God's call for all parts of Christ's body to have equal concern for each other.

As a part of the Redeemer community, the Diaconate is composed of deacons and deaconesses possessing diverse backgrounds in their profession, experience and culture. One thing they have in common is their commitment in ministering through relationships to individuals from the congregation who are in crisis, financially and/or emotionally

There are similarities between a Diaconate officer and a social worker. Both function as the

helper and both seek to bring progress and change through a trusting and respectful relationship. While social workers affirm self-determination to enhance client autonomy, however, the Diaconate officers seek to bring transformation to clients through community. The social work profession recognizes the right and need of clients in making their own choices and tends to shun any paternalistic view in a helping relationship. But for us to completely be transformed, I believe it is better to rest on the assurance that the Father does intervene with our choices because He knows better than we do what is best for us.

I encourage those who are approached to consider a nomination for deacon or deaconess to explore serving through the Diaconate and to prayerfully consider making that commitment.

Prayerfully consider making a commitment.

THE HOPE FOR NEW YORK CHARITY BIKE RIDE

BY TRACEA VICTORIA ROUTIE

I had been praying for God's leading in ministry for several months. During the Christmas season of 2002, I began to feel a concern for our church's financial circumstances and the ministries and people they supported.

Tim Pettit suggested that I meet with Mike O'Neill, Executive Director for Hope for New York (HFNY). For those of you who don't know (I certainly didn't know at the time), Hope for New York mobilizes Christian volunteers and resources across the NY community to support 30 faith based organizations that are committed to fighting economic and spiritual poverty. While most organizations offer support through prayer, encouragement and charitable giving, Hope for New York goes one step further and encourages us to be in the trenches and volunteer our



"Doing God's Work Comes in Many Forms"

time as we are commanded to by God in Deuteronomy 15:11: "You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land." After my meeting with Mike, I knew this was the ministry God wanted me to support,

and I agreed to take on the task of developing and organizing fundraising strategies and events to support Hope for New York and its ministries.

I had heard of a charity bike ride that had been organized the prior year for cancer, and I

(continued on page 5)

OPEN FORUM: MY PROBLEM WITH RELIGION

Sunday, November 9 at 6:00 PM, Hunter College Auditorium, 69th and Park

Invite your friends to a concert of rock songs about religion, followed by a talk by Tim Keller and a question-and-answer session. Features the songs of John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Luther Vandross, Tori Amos and others performed by Annie Quick, Keith Fluitt, the Redeemer band, and more.

NOT TOO SOON TO THINK ABOUT CHRISTMAS: CHRISTMAS PROJECTS NEED VOLONTEERS

Hope For New York will be sponsoring three annual Christmas projects this year to take place in December.

***Angel Tree** is a ministry to the children of incarcerated men & women to provide them with Christmas gifts on December 14th.

Contact Christina Stanton at Cray713@aol.com to help plan or learn how to donate gifts.

***His Toy Store** will coordinate “stores” in three poor neighborhoods of NYC for families to purchase donated toys for very low cost on December 6th.

Contact Steve Smith at histoystore@hfny.org to donate or collect toys or to help organize the events.

***St. Paul’s House** will sponsor a party for hundreds of homeless men & women to provide a meal, music, gifts, good cheer and the gospel message on December 16th.

Contact Albin Sadar at albinsadar@netzero.com to help plan this event.

REDEEMER RELEASES FIRST WORSHIP CD

(HAVE YOU STARTED YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING?)

New York Hymns, Redeemer’s first CD of original worship music, is now available through the website, www.redeemer.com. The recording contains fourteen settings of classic hymn texts in a variety of contemporary styles, and features soloists Kimberly JaJuan, Ken Prymus, Michelle Jennings, Keith Fluitt, Holly Krueger, Rozz Morehead, and others. *New York Hymns* was produced by Redeemer member Gary Haase, who has previously produced recordings for Celine Dion, Grover Washington, Jr., Chaka Khan and George Benson.

Also appearing on the CD are numerous Redeemer instrumentalists. All proceeds from the recording, as well as the many other recordings and sheet music available through Redeemer’s online store, benefit the Worship Arts ministries of the church, funding such events as Open Forums and artist fellowship groups. The online store also carries *Christmas of Hope*, which benefits the children’s ministries of Hope for New York, and Steve Sacks’ *Look to the Sky*, which benefits the diaconal ministry of Redeemer.

JONATHAN GILLEY JOINS REDEEMER STAFF

The Worship Arts Department is pleased to announce the hiring of Jonathan Gilley as Associate Director of Worship Arts. Jonathan’s main areas of responsibility will include music planning for the new West Side morning service, overseeing fellowship groups for arts professionals, arts “marketplace” ministry, and consulting with the music directors and pastors of Redeemer network church on worship and arts issues.

He and his wife, Laurann, were involved with Redeemer from the earliest days of the church, playing bass and piano for evening services beginning in 1989. Jonathan is a member of the 6:30 band, and wrote numerous worship songs and arrangements which are frequently part of Redeemer’s services. In 1995, Jonathan served as Music Director at the Village Church. Then in 1996, he became the Director of Worship Arts at City Church of San Francisco. The Gilleys have two sons, Jasper and Jaden, and have settled into an apartment on the West Side. We are happy to have them back in New York.

contacted the three leaders of the past event, James Leonard, Ruta Pakstas, and Suzy Ulrich and asked them if they would be willing to develop a ride to support HFNY. Even though James had moved on to a new role as Assistant Pastor at Trinity Baptist Church, Ruta was a deaconess at Emmanuel Presbyterian Church and Suzy and I were from Redeemer, we all united to work together for this cause. From a thirteen year old student volunteer from the Bronx to a seventy one year old rider from Queens, we were truly blessed to have a team as diverse as the group of people leading it, consisting of people from different churches, ethnicities, age groups, professions and boroughs. One volunteer, Cheryl Robertson, who was very much needed at the last minute, came all the way from North Shore Community Church in Oyster Bay, Long Island!

After months of prayer and preparation, it was September 19th, 2003, the evening before the ride. The team of 11 riders and 4 volunteers prepared and shared a pasta dinner with the men of St. Paul's

House, one of the ministries supported by HFNY. At 6:00 a.m. the next morning we embarked on our 100 mile ride from Grant's Tomb on the Upper West Side to Bear Mountain after a quick word of prayer from James. The team rode tirelessly from sunrise to sunset to safely and successfully complete the ride.

Over 1,000 miles were collectively ridden, dozens of friendships formed, and more than \$13,000 raised, and that day as a result of the team's dedicated motivation and performance we helped make a difference in the lives of the people supported by the ministries of Hope for New York.

We each learned that no matter what our individual gifts and talents are (organizing, fundraising, cooking, or riding), we are called to use them to serve God and his people. Won't you pray about your gifts and talents and how God is calling you to use them? Visit www.hfny.org to find out about opportunities for volunteering.

We would like to thank the riders, volunteers, and sponsors for their contributions in making

the first annual Hope for New York charity bike ride a success and look forward to making it an annual tradition.

Andrew Chaveriat
John Cole
Ellie Ellsworth
Jonathan Freeland
Beatrice Lau Kee
Helen Kim
James Leonard
Andrew Pakstas
Regina Pakstas
Ruta Pakstas*
Stan Park
Joanne Redmond
Tracea Routie*
Brian Sumner
Suzy Ulrich*
Charles Westfall
Cheryl Robertson

*Leaders - You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. - 2 Corinthians 9:11-12

MARK REYNOLDS TO HEAD CHURCH PLANTING

During the past three years Dr Mark Reynolds has been the field director of a large church planting movement in Manila. In July, Mark moved with his family to take on assignment in another church planting movement, as he became the Associate Director of the Redeemer Church Planting Center. Mark says, "Manila, with its large ethnic diversity, made the transition to New York easier and has allowed us to fit into the rich cultural make-up of New York."

One of the Center's goals is to assist many churches from different neighborhoods and ethnic groups

in planting indigenous churches in the greater area of New York. His cross-cultural experience will also be a valuable asset as we continue to plant churches in global centers of the world.

Mark is a graduate of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis and has advanced degrees from Aberdeen in Scotland and also from St. Louis University in St. Louis. In his present position he is able to use his leadership experience together with his theological education to take major responsibility in administration, training and ministry coordination. He is

looking forward to ordination in the Metro New York Presbytery and serving not only with the Center as well as contributing to Redeemer especially in the areas of training and teaching. Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Tuck Bartholomew are collaborating on a new internship program, which will be a "partnership in training" between Redeemer and the Church Planting Center.

Mark and Renee and their two young sons live on the west side and already are being immersed in Redeemer's fellowship communities.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER

BY DAVID BISGROVE

Investment in Redeemer's vision

As the Stewardship Testimony printed in this issue (“Tithing Beyond the Plate”) highlights, there are many ways to support Redeemer’s mission. We are grateful to those who regularly financially support our programs and ministries, and as we look ahead to 2004, we see many opportunities to further expand Redeemer’s impact within our congregation, as well as around the City. These include, but are not limited to:

- The addition of a Family Minister
- Expansion of our “Center of Faith and Work” into new vocational areas
- Expansion of our Sunday Worship into a West Side morning facility
- Increased investment in Church Planting in and around New York City.

Our ability to support these new initiatives as well as meet the needs of a growing congregation (our average Sunday attendance in 2001 was just over 3000 and in 2004 it is projected to grow to

approximately 4000), we rely on the generous year-end giving of our friends and partners. As the graphic below indicates, our giving in August and September was below our projected figures.

How can you help financially? Place your checks/cash into the offering plates on Sundays. Mail your checks (please don’t send cash) to the church office. The address can be found on the inside cover of this newsletter.

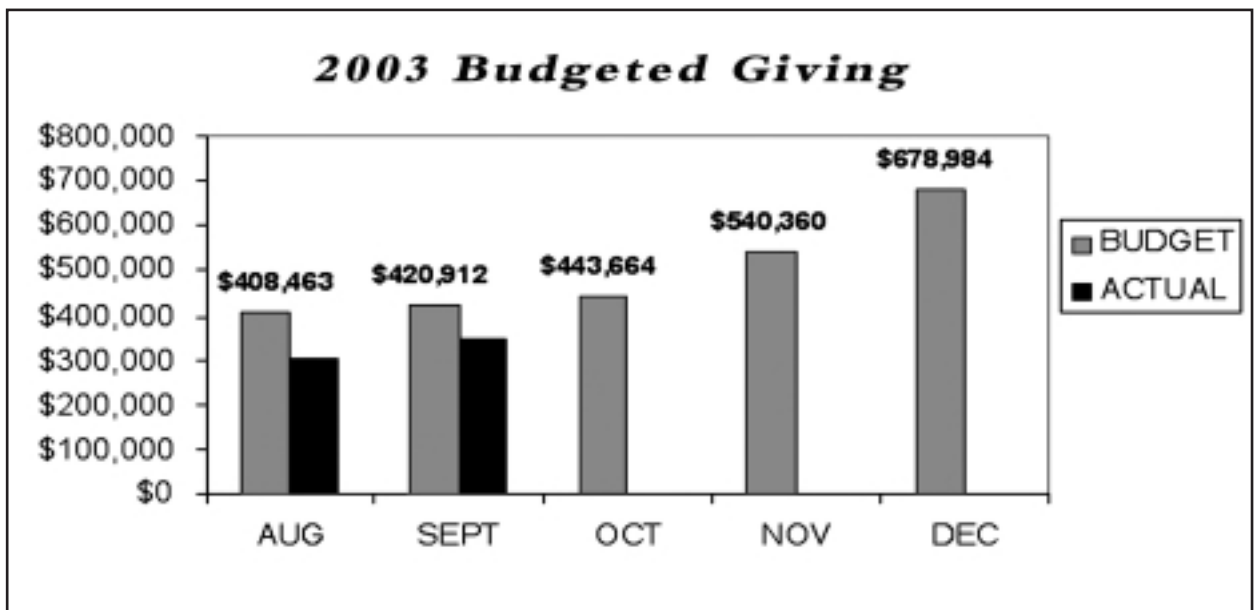
You can donate stocks and mutual funds that often provide you with a double tax benefit (assuming the investment has appreciated **and** that you have held the stock for more than one year). By donating appreciated securities you avoid the capital gains tax faced when selling the stock, and the church pays NO capital gains tax when it sells the donated security. (For more information on this method see the section entitled “Donation of Stocks and Other Assets” on the web site (www.redeemer.com) under the Stewardship section. *You should also check with a tax professional before initiating any*

transfer of securities. If you would like to donate stock you can initiate the transfer through your broker and request that the shares be transferred to:

Charles Schwab
Account Name: Redeemer
Presbyterian Church
Account Number:
7354-3138
DTC #: 0164
Please call or email me
(david@redeemer.com)
if you are considering
this kind of gift so that I
can send you a letter of
receipt.

If your bank has automated bill paying (i.e. JP Morgan/Chase) you can set up Redeemer Presbyterian Church to receive *electronically generated checks*, allowing you an easier way to be systematic in your giving.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership in the Gospel in New York City!



TITHING BEYOND THE PLATE

BY STEPHAN D. STEINER

Each fall at Redeemer, several testimonies relating to giving are highlighted as a means of encouragement in the area of stewardship. The testimony below demonstrates one of the unique ways in which God enables each of us to support ministry through our time, talents and money.

In 1994 Redeemer was my church. Despite my move to Connecticut some years later, the church maintained a special place in my heart.

Fast forward to 2003. The United States had experienced a deep recession, worsened by the terrorist attacks on our country and city. For most members of the church, times could not have been much worse financially. The natural response would be to cut expenses and giving to the church. Redeemer, along with every church or mission based organization I know has experienced a downfall over the past several years in relation to their projected budgets.

Tithing during these difficult

times actually creates a unique opportunity to strengthen and deepen your personal relationship with the Lord (2 Cor. 6:15).

Recently at a men's retreat I attended, we were focusing on "Fear" and how we let it effect our lives. I realized financial fear (Will I continue to be able to pay my mortgage?) can pull my focus and relationship away from the Lord. The most important quote I heard all weekend during that retreat was, "With love comes confidence to trust." What I found was, as I "let go" and "cheerfully" gave not with any anticipation to gain, I experienced a more intimate and trusting relationship with the Lord. He no longer seemed as impersonal but instead seemed more an intimate friend in my life.

Last year, when I myself experienced a decline in my personal income, and desirous of a relationship with God more based on trust, I searched for what or how I could give. The solution I came up with was to provide a needed service to the church. Being the

president of a printing company, I knew that I could buy printing at trade price levels that Redeemer, being a final consumer, could not obtain. Furthermore, any printing my company was capable of doing in our plant would be done at cost. Since I began working with the Redeemer staff on various printing projects, I have been told that the church has saved thousands of dollars in the existing print budget that can now be used in other areas to minister and share Christ's love with the city.

I encourage all the worshipers who have passed through Redeemer's doors to get creative with tithing even if you're experiencing financial challenges. It is empowering to offer what you can to the Lord beyond the Sunday morning offering plate.

•There are many ways to partner with Redeemer and our vision for the city. If you would like more information about supporting Redeemer's ministries call David Bisgrove (212) 808-4460 x111 or email him at: david@redeemer.com

Use the gifts God has given to you.

NOVEMBER IS OFFICER NOMINATION MONTH

How Do I Nominate Someone?

- ★ You must be a member to nominate another member.
- Ask the person that you want to nominate for Elder, Deacon or Deaconess if he or she is a member and willing to be considered for the office.
- Obtain a Nomination form from Redeemer's website at <http://www.redeemer.com> (under the news menu, click on Officer Nominations) or pick up a form at any service at the information center.
- You must FAX the form with the nominee's name(s) and your signature to the church office, attention: **Andrea Clark at 212.808.4465**. You may also send it into the office by mail or place it in the offering basket during any of the Sundays in November.

The deadline for submitting nominations is November 30, 2003.



NEW START DATE FOR WEST SIDE MORNING SERVICE

After a short delay, the new date for the first West Side morning service is now planned for December 7th.

The final renovations on the Ethical Culture Society's building are expected to be completed by the end of November, and the start of the new the west side morning service is now planned for the first Sunday in December.

This new Westside service will take the place of the early service at Hunter College Auditorium on the Eastside, which will cease to exist.

All Redeemer service times and locations are listed on the front page of www.redeemer.com under the link, "worship services". Check the website between now and December 7th for any updates regarding this service.