

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

SEPTEMBER 2005

WHAT IS THE VISION CAMPAIGN?

BY: TIM KELLER

This fall at Redeemer we enter a season that in the Bible is called 'Covenant Renewal.' Although God had entered into a legal yet intimate covenant relationship with Israel at Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19-20), nevertheless there were times when it seemed appropriate for his people to remember what he had called them to do in the world, and how they should live before him. This was called covenant renewal, and, like married people renewing their vows on significant occasions, it often occurred at times of special importance.

Before they were about to enter Canaan, Joshua led the people in a service of covenant renewal (Joshua 24:1-27.) As Israel was about to be led for the first time by a king, Samuel also led the people in a season of covenant renewal (1 Samuel 12:1-25.) When the people returned from exile in Babylon, they again did covenant renewal, this time under the leadership of Ezra (Nehemiah 8-9.) All this looked forward to the day when God renewed his covenant with all those who believe, even non-Israelites, through Jesus Christ (Jer 31:30-33; Ezekiel 36-37.)

Why is covenant renewal necessary? First, we are spiritually weak. Our love cools and we lose sight of God's priorities. Second, things change. We may be living for God in certain circumstances but then a new situation presents itself and we must address it. Because we are always losing some of our love and vision, such new challenges can only be met through deep rededication to

God's calling. On each occasion mentioned above, Israel was facing a new situation in its journey as a people. What did they do? Under the leadership of Joshua, Samuel, and Ezra they set aside time for sustained reflection as a community. They recalled their purpose and calling through reading, revisiting, and relearning Biblical texts. They prayed with intensity—praise, repentance, and petition. Finally they prepared for their next stage by rededicating their gifts, resources, and selves to the work and to the Lord.

That is exactly what we are going to do as a church this fall. A Vision Campaign is a season of covenant renewal, and we will be following the Biblical pattern exactly. During the fall I will be preaching through the Biblical texts in which Redeemer's vision and purpose are grounded. For the first time, we will be discussing these sermons communally—not just listening to them as individuals in the services. In over 200 small groups (some begun expressly for this purpose), we will be reflecting on the substance of the texts and sermons and asking what it means to our life together in the city.

Second, we will be praying for our church and our vision in a much more deliberate way. We have begun a lay-led prayer team of 30 people who are praying daily for all elements of the Redeemer vision, including the staff. This team will also be organizing congregation-wide prayer events. We hope to create an ongoing movement of prayer throughout the congregation.

We also will be considering some initiatives that will move us forward for the next stage of our journey. We need to plant churches a rate five times greater than we are currently. We need to secure much more space for new ministries in the city and for our Redeemer worship sites and congregations.

Finally, we will have a time to deepen our dedication to the vision by commitments of time, gifts, and financial resources. I am excited about what this fall will mean for us as a church. Of course we want to raise money, but the benefits of covenant renewal for both our individual and communal lives will be vast and deep regardless of how much we are able to give financially. If you are brand new to Redeemer this will be a great 'crash course' in learning what we are all about. It will also be a great way for newcomers to very quickly become involved in the life of the church. If you are a long-time member of Redeemer, it will be a rich time as we consider what God has already done in our midst over the years. All such seasons look back to the day God renewed his covenant through the death of Jesus, but they also look forward to the very end of time. Never again will there be a need to strengthen and renew our relationship with God—for God will be all in all and we will finally be completely his. I invite you to pray, love, and work together this fall in the sure and certain hope of that day to come.

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TO STRENGTHEN REDEEMER

The first goal of the Vision Campaign is to use 50% of the funds we raise to strengthen Redeemer by acquiring and developing a community center with worship space. The longer term vision is for three centers and buildings, one building east of Central Park, one on the west side, and one in midtown. The first one will be wherever we find an appropriate site first.

1. What do you mean by a 'community center with worship space'?

Traditionally, churches have had buildings in neighborhoods that are designed to look 'sacred.' Their approach to their neighborhood is: "Come and meet us by attending our services and Christian functions." There is another approach that fits better with the ministry and incarnation of Jesus. It is to secure a building and then ask our neighbors: "How can we make this city and neighborhood a better place for everyone to live, whether they believe as we do or not? What things do you need to happen in this space? Our buildings belong to the neighborhood, not just to us."

Our buildings will give Redeemer a place for worship and ministry, but it will also be a 7-day a week space in which we can live and meet with our neighbors in the city.

2. Why do we need these centers to strengthen Redeemer?

a. For future stability. Having searched assiduously for years, we know the location of virtually every meeting space in Manhattan from midtown to north of the park. Besides the ones we are already renting, there are no other spaces large enough for our worshipping congregations in our ministry area available on a weekly

basis. We hope for long lasting relationships with all the hosts from which we currently rent, but if we would lose any of these spaces Redeemer could not continue to operate at anything close to its current level. To secure a long-term future for Redeemer we must have some alternative to our current spaces, and the only alternative is ownership.

b. For immediate flexibility. It may seem counterintuitive that Redeemer would become more flexible by investing in a permanent location, but think about it. In our current situation we cannot change or add worship service times. We cannot begin new mid-week ministries, because the largest meeting space we have 7 days a week seats 80-100 (though we are a church with over 4,000 in attendance.) There are a large number of important ministries necessary for training, discipleship, and getting people into cell groups that cannot occur because we do not have round the clock, all-week space available to us.

c. For city connectivity. Many of the new ministries we need to build community cannot begin without significant size 7-day a week space. Think of family ministries (after school, daycare,) arts and cultural ministries (performance space.) Other ministries will arise once we are located in a

neighborhood and learn its particular needs.

3. How is it possible to buy a building in such a high-priced real estate market?

First, we have to raise the money for a down payment, not for the purchase of a building outright. Redeemer already pays quite a lot in rent out of our operating budget that could go toward paying off a mortgage. Second, we have the option of co-development, in which we partner with a developer who uses much of the space for commercial uses.

Third, we intend to raise additional money across the country, going to friends of Redeemer outside of our congregation and our city.

4. What is so important about having a strong Redeemer?

Redeemer's vision is to catalyze a movement of gospel-centered churches. Redeemer does not want to compete with its daughter and sister churches but rather find ways to creatively resource and enhance their ministries. One current example of this is that 40% of our counseling center's clients come from churches other than Redeemer. Our buildings will nurture "large church ministries" that can be used by the entire network of smaller churches, such as youth activities, diaconal ministries, arts and music creation, etc.

REDEEMER INTERARTS FELLOWSHIP HAS MOVED TO THE SECOND FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 9

Also the, October 14 meeting will be a special ARTS MINISTRY KICKOFF dinner and celebration in a NEW, larger location that will allow us to invite artists from other churches to our gatherings! Visit www.faihandwork.org/riaf for more information, or watch the Bulletin Board in your worship program or www.redeemer.com.

REDEEMER REPORT

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 10:30AM • 5:45PM

ETHICAL CULTURE
West 64TH and CPW
service at 9:15AM

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

READING TOGETHER -- CHANGING TOGETHER

BY: TUCK BARTHOLOMEW

For most of my life I read Paul's famous exhortation in Romans 12:1-2 as about something "I" should do as a follower of Jesus. Remember the passage - Paul writes, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

I read the exhortation as about "my" worship, "my" sacrifice, "my" conformity, "my" transformation, "my" renewal. Of course our individual lives are in view, but Paul has something much greater in mind. Paul writes about bodies (plural) - that are offered to God as a singular "living sacrifice." Richard Hays, professor at Duke Divinity notes that this metaphor of living sacrifice is not simply the vocation of particular persons -- individuals within the church - but is the vocation of the Christian community through its life together. The change that God desires for us comes as individuals offer themselves as part of a common sacrifice of worship.

What does that mean? Paul connects the sacrifice with transformation that flows from a renewed mind. We are called to

be vigilant together about the way we think about life - and so the way we live life. Do we think about life in light of the things that God has said? At the beginning of the chapter Paul reminds us of the mercies of God as the foundation of our common sacrifice. Our minds must be renewed around the gospel story.

Paul tells the church in Colossae to let Jesus' words dwell among them richly. Paul wants us to enter an on-going and ever expanding conversation with the gospel story - and in this common conversation around the gospel he says we will discover God's will in the various circumstances of our real lives. As we press the story across the spectrum of life - psychologically, socially, culturally, within our relationships (both close and casual), within our marriages, our parenting and our work, we discover what it means to live within these roles and responsibilities as God's people. The church is a community - mind renewed - by the mercies of God in Jesus. The gospel story is meant to shape the way we think about all of life's circumstances, responsibilities, pressures, disappointments, joys and pleasures. Unless this most basic conversation is taking place deeply and truthfully among us we will remain conformed - not transformed.

This fall we want to take our common conversation deeper and wider into our congregation by asking ALL existing Fellowship Groups to join our 100 new Vision Groups in discussing the weekly sermons. Each week nearly 4500 people come together in our four worship services. We celebrate the gospel together as we sing, pray, and reflect upon God's word, but we don't want the conversation that starts there to end when we walk out the door. Instead, we want to keep thinking and talking about the things that God is saying to us through his Word. In Paul's words to the Romans, we want to "offer our bodies as a living sacrifice," and we believe extending this common conversation that begins in worship into the particulars of our everyday lives through smaller community gatherings is a rather obvious pathway toward experiencing the beauty and hope of what it means to live as God's people in our great city.

If you are not currently in a fellowship group, sign up for one of the 100 Vision Groups that will begin September 25th. You can sign up in any of the following ways: 1) online at www.redeemer.com, 2) at one of the sign-up kiosks following Redeemer services, or 3) fill out the card that will be in the bulletin the first three weeks of September. We want everyone to join the conversation this fall.

MUSICIANS KICKOFF DINNER SEPTEMBER 20

Did you know that more than 250 professional musicians and conservatory students attend Redeemer? If you are one of them, join us at the Redeemer office on Tuesday, September 20 from 6-8PM for our annual kickoff dinner. The meal is free. Reconnect with friends who have been performing around the country over the summer, meet the arts staff, learn about musician fellowship groups, upcoming Open Forums and events, and be the first to hear excerpts from Redeemer's new CD, *Christmas of Peace*.

No RSVP required. Questions? Call Christie Allen at 212-808-4460 x147.

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MINISTRY COMMUNITY MEETING -- MCM

For ALL leaders within the Redeemer community

If you are a leader or volunteer in any of the ministries within Redeemer (i.e. if you do anything more than merely take up a seat on Sunday) you are invited to attend our monthly MCM gathering. Our first meeting this fall is Monday, September 12th at First Baptist Church, W. 79th and Broadway from 7:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. Tim Keller will be speaking to us during the fall on the topic of Prayer. If you have questions please contact your staff director or ministry leader. All other MCM meetings fall on the 1st Monday of each month, October through June.

FIVE REASONS FOR CHECKING OUT THE 'MORE TO LIFE: WALL STREET MINISTRY':

- Expand your social network with people in the financial and professional areas of the City;
- Enjoy some clarity in the midst of your busy week;
- Find some answers to those big questions;
- Grow in your knowledge of the world's #1 best seller; and
- Be involved in motivating, interactive Bible talks about everyday life.

FALL PROGRAM COMMENCES:

Downtown on Tuesdays from September 6 @ 12:30PM
at The Wall Street Inn, 9 South William Street @ Beaver Street

Midtown on Wednesdays from September 7 @ 1:10PM
at St Peter's Chapel, 619 Lexington Avenue @ 54th Street
(Enter from 54th Street, south side)

For more information - Check out the web-site: www.christchurchnyc.com

Contact: (The Rev.) John Mason: Minister of Christ Church NYC and
the 'More to Life: Wall Street Ministry' at info@christchurchnyc.com

'The More to Life: Wall Street Ministry' is a Redeemer Church initiative