

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

DECEMBER 2005

THE REAL VISION CAMPAIGN

BY: TIM KELLER

I was deeply impressed with how much the campaign had done to remind us of God's blessing, unite us, and prepare us for the next chapter of our life together...

Almost everyone leading a fund-raising campaign in a church says, "It's not about the money — it's about the vision." We have said this, too. But it is not just spin. By late October I was deeply impressed with how much the campaign had done to remind us of God's blessing, unite us, and prepare us for the next chapter of our life together in the city. At the end of a Vision Campaign the amount of money raised excites our attention. That's unavoidable. And the money truly is important if we are going to execute our plans. But I want to end our Vision

Campaign looking away from the dollar-figures to what has been accomplished this fall.

First, this fall we revisited our Biblical-theological roots. As the preacher, I suspected that reviewing these key themes and familiar texts would be necessary for newcomers but would be a bit stale for us old-timers. I was wrong. Each week I felt we were *all* getting greater clarity about God's Word to us.

Second, we incorporated 1,000 new people into small groups to discuss the vision,

in addition to the 1200 or so who were already in groups. Often people come to Redeemer for months or years, growing somewhat as individuals, but not becoming a functional part of the Body nor owning our vision for serving the city. This gave us great hope that we can do a better job of drawing people more quickly into community than we have in the past.

Third, we are seeing real progress in our prayer life. Many people are beginning what Jonathan Edwards called 'extraordinary prayer'—praying for the church and

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DIACONATE MERCY FUND SPECIAL OFFERING

Special Offering Sunday, December 11, 2005

Once a year the Diaconate receives a special offering to fund the needs of Redeemer members and regular attendees who are under its care. Please prayerfully consider contributing to this vital ministry, which supports men and women who are experiencing financial, physical, social and spiritual crises. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

"But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving." (2 Corinthians 8:7)



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the city in times and ways beyond the ordinary ones (daily devotions, weekly worship and small group prayer, etc.) Some are praying for a given worship service as it goes on. Some are praying for specific neighborhoods as they walk through them systematically. Redeemer has never been noted for being a praying church, but that could change.

Fourth, the Vision Campaign could never have occurred except through many partnerships between lay leaders and Redeemer staff. The results have been far greater than anything that either unaided lay leadership or staff leadership could have

produced. It is also hard for me to see how we can pull off the ambitious projects of the future Vision without on-going partnerships of this nature. I think this will be the pattern for major new ministry initiatives in the future.

Fifth, the Vision Campaign has facilitated greater unity about Redeemer's future. The long and frequent brainstorming meetings about our next stages and steps has produced not just a great deal of consensus, but a greater sharpness and clarity about the next few years.

Sixth, the Vision Campaign has helped us look back in

gratitude almost as much as it has helped us look ahead with hope and excitement. During the formal meetings this fall we always focused on the future. But after the meetings, talking to individuals, I heard scores and scores of stories about how the ministry of Redeemer has converted people and changed lives. And the old-timers have reminded me constantly of what a miraculous distance we have traveled since starting as a little Bible study of 9 people in a Manhattan apartment 16 years ago. By any human standards of rationality and common sense, we shouldn't be standing where we are, making these plans.

OPEN FORUM: CHRISTMAS OF PEACE

On December 6-8, we will be presenting our first ever Christmas Open Forums, "Christmas of Peace," at Theater 315 (315 West 47th Street).

Clichés abound about peace at Christmas – but what kind of peace is it, and how do we get it? This will be the theme of the programs, which will feature a 40-minute performance of jazz and classical selections from the new Redeemer benefit CD, "Christmas of Peace," a talk by Tim Keller, and a time of singing carols. There will be two performances each evening at 6:30 and 8:30PM. Each performance will last an hour and fifteen minutes.

Theater 315 is an intimate 110-seat theater. This will make for great acoustics and a cozy evening – but it also means that seating is limited and must be reserved through Redeemer's website, www.redeemer.com. There is a \$10 charge. These events will sell out quickly.

Open Forums are designed to introduce the Christian worldview to those who are skeptical or seeking. Please consider bringing a friend who might benefit from this event.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller

Carl de Prado

Fred Liedtke

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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

THE BARTHOLOMEWS ARE PHILLY BOUND

BY: TUCK BARTHOLOMEW

Being part of a church committed to mission means that we are immersed in a community on the move. As our vision campaign has reminded us, we move into our vocations, our relationships and our culture with the gospel, asking God to bring change to all spheres of life – that His kingdom would grow. Just as some of our members have committed to being part of various church plants around the city and in other cities around the world, Stacy and I have recently accepted a call to start a new church in the University City neighborhood of Philadelphia, pending official approval of the Philadelphia Presbytery. The neighborhood is home to The University of Pennsylvania, Drexel University and three other graduate institutions. We plan to start a church similar in style to Redeemer that will engage the broad university community as well as the growing population of professionals in the city.

This has not been an easy decision. When we came to Redeemer we had no idea that five years later we would agree to plant a church, and we certainly never expected to leave the city we have come to love and enjoy. Our ties with Philadelphia, however, are old. Stacy and I lived in Philadelphia our first two

years of marriage while I was a student at Westminster Theological Seminary and working with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia was our first exposure to the beauty, complexity and brokenness of urban life. We had our first “fine dining” experience there and encountered our first homeless person. We will return, however, with a much wider view of living in and loving a city as a result of our time here.

“The University,” philosopher Richard Rorty once said, “has replaced the church as the center of morality.” He meant that today, when someone wants to clarify or understand ethical and moral positions, they typically turn to specialists within the university, not the church. The university has become the principle context for personal, social and cultural formation. Its stories become the stories by which we live.

One way that Christians are able to express love of neighbor throughout the world is through establishing churches that celebrate, articulate and embody the story of the gospel in university neighborhoods everywhere. Stacy and I both experienced tremendous spiritual growth during our university years,

in part due to the church that welcomed us and showed us the beauty of a worshipping community. We are asking God to establish such a community through this church plant.

When will all of this happen? Over the next six months we will be working on fund raising, training for church planting, and gathering a group of people that will help launch the new church. We plan to relocate to Philadelphia after the kids finish school in June.

Can you help plant this new church? The answer is Yes! First, pray for us. Tim Keller often recounts that upon agreeing to plant the church in New York, he felt as if a chasm opened up at his feet. We could not agree more.

While we are overwhelmed with the work that lies ahead, we are so thankful for the season of prayer that has covered this decision. This is a huge venture for our family and we need your continued prayer. Second, if you are an alumni of Penn or Drexel, have insight into the community or are simply interested in hearing more about the project, we would like to hear from you. Also, if you know of anyone in the Philadelphia area that might be interested, please let us know as well. You can reach us at: tuck@redeemer.com.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

Christmas can be a very disappointing time for children, individuals, and families in need.

For this reason, HFNY hosts THREE Christmas projects- Angel Tree, His Toy Store and the St. Paul's Christmas Dinner. Great individual and group opportunities!

To know more or to sign up, please contact Faith at faith@hfn.org or (212) 808-4460 x114.

IMAGING CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

BY: ANDREA MUNGO

A Diaconate Client Interview

Andrea Mungo, the Diaconate Director, recently met with Dennis Morton, a current Diaconate client and interviewed him about his experience with the Diaconate.

Andrea: What led you to approach the Diaconate?

Dennis: A friend recommended that I approach the Diaconate during a time when I was feeling especially alienated and frightened. I felt as if I was looking into an abyss. My unemployment benefits had run out and I hadn't found another job. Rage was a constant reality for me with the pendulum swinging from self-condemnation to blaming others for my life struggles.

Andrea: What practical assistance have you received?

Dennis: I have received financial assistance with my rent and for food and transportation expenses and most recently I began going to counseling.

Andrea: What spiritual support have you received?

Dennis: At first I felt like a beggar and was defensive with my first deacon. But he was so gracious and genuine that he disarmed me. Currently my two deacons are very consistent in prayer for me – which has the ultimate value. They have assured me that they will stick with me through this time. Their own commitment to Christ is deep and their commitment to me is

clearly coming out of this. Their depth of conviction is very real as well. This is healing for me as I have longed for depth and intimacy in relationships within the Body of Christ.

I am realizing more and more that I have to image Christ in the midst of my difficult circumstances. Christ has suffered more than I could ever suffer so he knows my struggles. And I'm learning to laugh more even in the midst of my trials!

Andrea: How has your relationship with God changed since coming to the Diaconate?

Dennis: It has forced me to take my relationship with God seriously. Regardless of my role in my sufferings, the presence of Christ is what abides and keeps me stable. My ongoing battle is to believe that Christ really will help me. For instance, in my 20's I was crippled by fear that I couldn't accomplish anything and my mind started to turn against me. By age 25, I ended up in a mental institution and I found that I didn't even fit in there. I knew God loved me but my reality seemed to contradict this. This time, being at the end of my resources caused me to begin to see this contradiction resolved. I have seen Christ at work in my deacons and my counselor.

Andrea: How has your perspective on your situation changed?

Dennis: It's not about just feeling better but about being in the presence of

God. My perspective on people has changed as well. I used to resent and look down on a friend who has been successful but now I see him with admiration and thanksgiving for the blessings God has given him. I appreciate him, my counselor and deacons so much more. When I was focused solely on myself I couldn't see the gifts others had to offer.

Andrea: What are you learning?

Dennis: That I am still alive. There have been many times I have contemplated suicide but because of God's hand of protection, I have not attempted and succeeded.

Now when I have a self-defeating thought, I can call upon the Abba Father and it brings comfort. I don't have to work at it! The joy and peace of God comes even before anything changes in my life – either internally or externally. My motivation has to be to have God, not what He can give me.

Andrea: What advice could you offer those contemplating asking for help?

Dennis: If you are in dire straights of some kind and you look about the church and everyone seems affluent, prosperous and content, know that everybody is in the same boat ultimately. You are probably not as bad off as you think and others may not be as prosperous as you think. We are body and we all need help from one another to become a more healthy body.

C.S. LEWIS AND *THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA*

REVIEWING THE REVIEWERS

BY: KATHY KELLER

Although the movie version of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* will not debut for a few more days, an odd thing began occurring last month. Just as the Narnia publicity machine began cranking up in anticipation of the movie, the *New York Times Magazine* (Charles McGrath, "The Narnia Skirmishes," November 13) and *The New Yorker* (Adam Gopnik, "Prisoner of Narnia," November 21) published what amounted to pre-emptive strikes on both Lewis and his writings.

I suspect that the mixture of innuendo, misunderstanding and outright mistakes that characterize both articles may have resulted from both blindness and fear. Of the two, the blindness is less culpable, because unless a mind is opened by the Spirit, much of the life of faith is puzzling.

For instance, both McGrath and Gopnik spent time rehashing Lewis's pre-conversion sinful behavior, citing his real or supposed sexual misdemeanors. They take as their source A.N. Wilson, who McGrath refers to as "the best and most persuasive of Lewis's biographers." In reality Wilson's biography is a muddle of outdated Freudian psychologizing, of the sort that Lewis trenchantly exploded in his "Psychoanalysis and Literary Criticism."

Lewis himself, in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, refers quite candidly to his revels in lust, as well as his (successful) efforts to make "myself into a fop, a cad, and a snob." However, he adds "I may as well say here that the feeling of guilt...was a thing which at that time I hardly knew. It took me as long to acquire inhibitions as others (they say) have taken to get ride of

them. That is why I often find myself at such cross-purposes with the modern world: I have been a converted Pagan living among apostate Puritans."

Gopnik professes to be startled at the amount of time and effort Lewis (and other believers) devote to strengthening their belief, asserting that if a belief needs that much work to believe "it isn't really a belief but a very strong desire to believe." What he fails to understand is that the belief is never in question (except for the unbelievers Lewis addresses in his apologetic works.) What takes time and effort is living out the life of a believer with consistency when one has a still sinful, albeit forgiven, heart.

The blindness extends to the books, as well as the man. McGrath seems actually not to have read them. If he had, he might have noticed that Susan fails to enter Aslan's country not because she "reached puberty and has become sexualized," but because she dismisses Aslan as "that funny game we used to play when we were children" (*The Last Battle*) rather than "learning to know [Aslan] in [her] own world." (*Voyage of the Dawn Treader*) Adam Gopnik objects to a lion as an allegorical symbol of Christ, wishing instead for a "despised donkey who rallies the rats and weasels and other unclean animals." One wonders if he has ever heard of the Lion of Judah, or noticed that Aslan does appear to the children as a Lamb (*Dawn Treader*.)

But behind the blindness I sense fear, the fear that, if the movie proves successful, it

might awaken an interest in Lewis's writings that could extend past his fantasy to his apologetic works. If so, this is a legitimate fear.

I first encountered *The Lion, the Witch, et al* as a second grader, cruising the fairytale shelf of the local bookmobile. I snapped up each successive volume as it arrived (with excruciating slowness) in America. In junior high school I found *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, and from there it was only a short step to *Mere Christianity*.

Anything with the Lewis name on it was magical, not only his writings on magic. Here was someone who could express a thought more clearly than any writer I had yet (or since) encountered, with wit and style as well. I "learned to know Aslan in my own country" because of Lewis, though I have to admit it was a stretch, at first, to connect the boring Jesus of my Sunday school lessons with the vibrant Aslan.

Not knowing any better, I wrote Lewis, and he graciously corresponded with me for several years before his death, including an invitation to visit him during a trip to England. Though he died less than two weeks after his last letter to me, I did visit The Kilns the following April. Only as an adult did I discover how thoroughly he loathed letter writing, yet how faithfully he answered every one.

If McGrath and Gopnik are able to sense the attraction of Aslan, they may be right to fear a widespread interest in Lewis. Who knows how many others may learn to know Jesus through Aslan or Lewis's other works?

DECEMBER WORSHIP SERVICE: SCHEDULE AND EVENTS

December 4

Regular service schedule; communion at all services

December 11

Special diaconal offering at all services; also:

West Side AM: 9:15 a.m. — service of Lessons and Carols with string quintet, jazz ensemble and soloists; special diaconal offering.

East Side AM: 10:30 a.m. — special diaconal offering

East Side PM: 5:45 p.m. — service of Lessons and Carols with jazz band and soloists; diaconal offering

West Side PM: 7:00 p.m. — diaconal offering

December 18

West Side AM: 9:00 a.m. — note early start time!

East Side AM

(1st service): 9:45 a.m. — service of Lessons and Carols with orchestra, choir and soloists

East Side AM

(2nd service): 11:30 a.m. — service of Lessons and Carols with orchestra, choir and soloists

East Side PM: 5:45 p.m.

West Side PM: 7:00 p.m. — service of Lessons and Carols with jazz band and soloists

December 25

**Services at 10:30 a.m. (Hunter College)
and 7:00 p.m. (First Baptist Church)**

NO Services at 9:15 a.m. or 5:45 p.m. — Tim Keller preaching both services

January 1

**Services at 10:30 a.m. (Hunter College)
and 7:00 p.m. (First Baptist Church)**

NO Services at 9:15 a.m. or 5:45 p.m. — Jeff White preaching both services