

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

FEBRUARY 2006

ABANDONMENT TO GOD

BY: MARK WENZEL

Editor's Remark: Mark Wenzel is a guest writer. He lives in Phoenix, AZ, with his wife Martha, and their four daughters, ages fourteen to twenty two. Since the only way he can communicate is with a computer activated by eye movement, I have left in his own spelling and punctuation.

Three and a half years ago, when I was 48, I was diagnosed with ALS, commonly know as Lou Gerhig's disease. It is a disease that affects the nerves that control muscle movement. The nerves die and consequently the muscles stop working. This is a progressive disease that has no treatment or cure. Most people live 2-4 years after diagnosis. before i got ALS i worked for a local hospital as a nurse practitioner seeing and caring for uninsured children in five elementary schools near the hospital.

While we all know that we won't live forever, most of us spend our daily lives as if we will. Shortly after my diagnosis, my wife Martha and I spent many hours walking and praying the truths we knew about God; His love for us, his all powerful nature, and that we

could trust him even in our confusion. Romans 9:20 and 11:33 ministered to me during these early days as I wrestled with the sudden change of my dreams of what I thought my life would look like.

i had a couple times about two years ago when I was getting pneumonia. i was short of breath and couldn't get relief. i had never felt that way before. it was like swimming under water and not being able to come up for air. since getting als i knew i would likely die soon, but i didn't think i would be so filled with such fear as death drew near. my personal faith walk had been a daily source of strength since high school but it had never been tested like this. i talked to martha about it and she spoke with a close friend of ours who is a spiritual mentor to our family. he asked a key question, "how is mark taking in Jesus?" so we began to pray. God answered this prayer through the tape ministry of redeemer.

Although we live in phoenix Arizona, a friend of a friend recently moved here from new york and had attended redeemer. We listened

to the message on meditation. That was the beginning of a process of what tim Keller calls "finding ways of pounding the absolute love and faithfulness into your heart". Job put it this way, "thy words were found, and I did eat them, and your words were unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart..." I found the cure for fear to be hearing truth and hope. I listened to three or four messages a day. Listening to messages with my friends was a way to minister to my friends when I could no longer speak.

My als has progressed to the point where I can no longer move, Swallow, speak or even breathe without help. I communicate with a computer I operate by eye movement .But, remarkable as it may seem, I still enjoy each day. Henri Nouwen calls it "finding joy in small corners". But there is not only joy, but work as well. One of Tim Keller's messages that has become one of my favorites is called the discipline of guidance. In it dr. Keller talks about eph. 2.10. how god has made us a work of art and has a set of works that we can do, that only we can do, because of our unique

Continued page 3



INSIDE:

- INTIMACY: SOMETHING SWEETER STILL
- PLEDGES GO HIGHER - GIFTS START COMING IN
- PARENTING SEMINAR
- DISASTER RELIEF
- THE BOOK TABLE MINISTRY: BOOK REVIEWS
- HFNY CHRISTMAS 2005 RE-CAP

INTIMACY: SOMETHING SWEETER STILL

BY: SOBEYDA VALLE-ELLIS, LCSW

Redeemer Counseling Services will be offering a practical workshop to help couples experience deeper intimacy in their marriages on February 4, 2006, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Redeemer Church offices at 1359 Broadway, 4th floor, between West 36th and 37th. The cost is \$20/couple. For more information or to register, please contact Jenni Bounds at 212.370.0475 X 131.

Think this seminar isn't for you, your marriage is just fine, thank you? Having faith in Christ does not guarantee you'll have a strong and healthy marriage. Even Christians who have grown up in the Church and have a relationship with God through Christ can have difficult marriages.

In Genesis 2:23, God declared his ideal for marriage when he said, "This is why a man will leave his father and mother and will cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh." God protected the one-flesh relationship by making it a covenant relationship, a permanent and exclusive relationship based on a promise.

In this type of marriage, spouses are open to each other and respond lovingly when the other is in distress. Under this umbrella of safety, spouses can feel secure enough to venture outward into the world and inward toward deeper marital oneness. Now, isn't this the type of marriage we long for? These are popular ideas that even Dr. Phil promotes. So, why are so many of us frustrated and disappointed in our marriages? Why are we not more able to be this type of spouse?

Why can't we be more responsive to our partners?

There are lots of reasons why we fall short of God's ideal for marriage: our sinful nature; our selfish desires; our self-absorption with work, success and appearances; the shortcomings of our parents' marriage and the values of society. But there's another reason.

We forget that we are sinners who have been redeemed and loved by God. We are already living in a covenantal relationship with God as his chosen and beloved. In his covenant love for us, we are recipients of a deep and abiding safety, comfort and protection. Only as we remember and commit to live out of the fullness of God's covenant with us, can we begin to live out our covenant with our spouses.

Scripture describes God's covenant to his people using these words:

"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion." Exodus 34:6, 7 NLT

Here are some guidelines for how to let God's covenant with you shape the way you interact with your spouse.

1. Be slow to anger. This means to be quick to listen and to try to understand your spouse and their situation before jumping to conclusions.
2. Be rich in unfailing love. Consider love as your main motivator, to motivate yourself and your spouse.
3. Be faithful. Be sure to remind your spouse of your commitment to the marriage and your promise to work out your issues together.
4. Be quick to forgive. This means that you avoid putting yourself on the pedestal of self-righteousness and the attitude that screams "I would never do that!" Never forget that you fall short and need forgiveness also.

The sweetness of our marital attachment can serve to remind us of an attachment that is even sweeter still—God's covenant love for us. This is a foretaste of heaven, glory and home.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Carl de Prado
Fred Liedtke

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
OFFICE • 1359 BROADWAY (BETWEEN W. 36/37TH STREETS) • FOURTH FLOOR • NY, NY 10018-7102
(212) 808-4460 (PHONE) (212) 808-4465 (FAX)

www.redeemer.com

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

experiences and difficulties.

Keller teaches that it's often down there, in places that we don't want to go, that our good deeds are waiting for us. That has certainly been true for me, especially the part of "where we don't want to go". but despite the difficulties, I am finding opportunities to declare god's love and faithfulness that I would never have had if I had not developed als. This week I was interviewed for an article in the major newspaper of Phoenix, AZ, where we live, an opportunity I would not have been given if I had not had als. one must "fol-

low the thread" and if you don't know what that means, get the tape.

I would like to close with the prayer of Abandonment by Charles de Foucaud. It is my desire through the grace of Jesus i will be able to make these words more and more my own.

Prayer of Abandonment To God Father, I abandon myself into Your hands.

Do with me what you will, whatever you do, I will thank You, I am ready for all, I accept all. Let only Your will be done in me,

As in all Your creatures, And I'll ask nothing else, my Lord.

Into Your hands I commend my spirit; I give it to You With all the love of my heart, For I love You, Lord, And so need to give myself, To surrender myself into Your hands With boundless confidence, Because You are my father.

[If you would like to get in touch with Mark his email address is: mwenzel4254@msn.com]

PLEDGES GO HIGHER - GIFTS START COMING IN

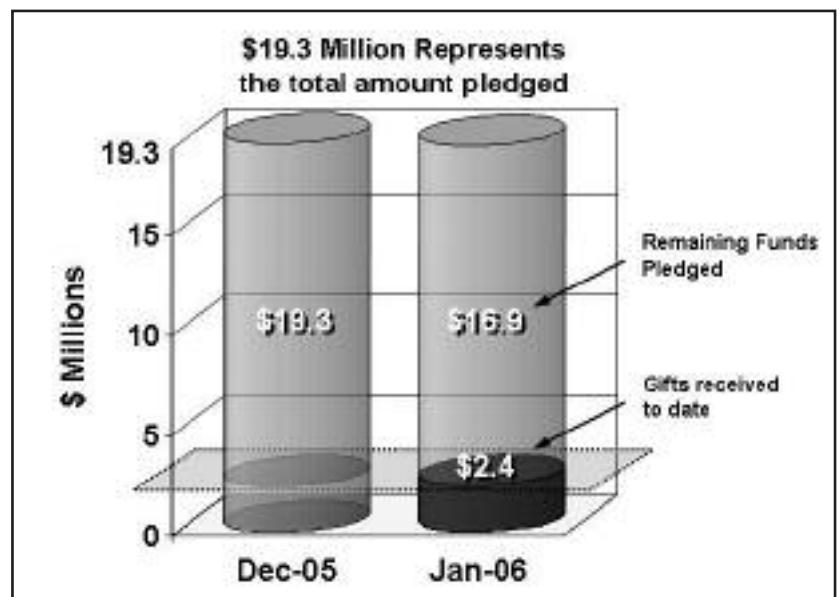
The last week in December was a busy month as our pledges to the Vision Campaign increased from the \$18.4 figure we announced on Celebration Sunday to a grand total of \$19.25 million! All of these funds will be used for the stated purpose of buying a building and implementing the other vision goals. None of it will be spent on general budget items. We are hopeful that even more additional pledges will continue to be made as newcomers attend Redeemer, experience Christ through our community, and learn about our vision for New York City. Perhaps we'll reach \$20M.

The other good news is that we have started to receive actual gifts that were pledged. By December 31, 2005, we had received \$2.385 million in gifts of cash or stock. Many of you have started to contribute

monthly to your pledge, on top of your regular giving to Redeemer, so we will begin to show gifts received against gifts pledged on a monthly basis.

It's exciting to be part of something this big! We want to share the good news with you each month

in this newsletter. It's a lot harder to actually give the gift than to pledge, so we appreciate the sacrifices so many of you are making to enable our church to be good stewards of the growth, opportunity, and community that God has given us.



DISASTER RELIEF

BY: MIKE O'NEILL

The year 2005 will long be remembered for an unusually large number of natural disasters. The tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake that affected India and Pakistan were particularly devastating. Although the media spoke of "compassion fatigue" or "donor fatigue," many from Redeemer reacted with generosity and compassion – donating generously to aid those suffering.

With so many different disasters affecting our world, Redeemer decided it was necessary to create a "Disaster Response Team." This team includes Terry Gyger, Director of the Redeemer Church Planting Center, Andrea Mungo and Mike O'Neill. They represent the core team responsible for Redeemer's response to disasters requiring an immediate and urgent response. The team may be reached at disaster.response@redeemer.com

Through your efforts Redeemer donated funds to

Mission to the World, Mission to North America, The Salvation Army, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services and The Katrina Fund operated by Resurrection Church in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Williamsburg, Brooklyn? Yes, that's right, Brooklyn. Over 6,000 people left homeless by Hurricane Katrina arrived in New York City and were temporarily housed in nine hotels in Queens and Brooklyn. Jeannie Hildebrand, whose husband Chris is on staff at Resurrection Church, was formerly on staff at Desire Street Ministries in New Orleans. They were located in the Ninth Ward, one of the most devastated areas of that city. Because of her connection to New Orleans, and the Lord's call to action, she was the perfect person to spearhead the effort to help those who chose to relocate in New York.

Jeannie wanted to assist those displaced by the hurricane with

rent, security deposits, home supplies, and job searches and finding schools. She approached Andrea Mungo, Deaconate Director from Redeemer, and Mike O'Neill, Hope for New York's Executive Director, to create an Advisory Board.

They worked together to coordinate a united response from the New York Metro Presbytery – Redeemer is one of many local PCA churches in Metro Presbytery. Jeannie was hired on a short-term basis as a caseworker to identify those who needed assistance. To date, sixteen households – some were families with children, some couples and others were single – have been served.

Jeannie has done an amazing job, and we are so pleased to have had the honor of supporting her grass-roots initiative. Let us continue to pray for the millions affected by the disasters in 2005 who are still struggling to recover.

BOOK REVIEWS FROM THE BOOK TABLE MINISTRY

Real Sex: The Naked Truth About Chastity

by Lauren F. Winner

Reviewed by Carol Boissier,
West Side PM Book Table
Ministry

Lauren F. Winner's (author of *Girl Meets God*) latest release *Real Sex: The Naked Truth About Chastity* is an excellent starting point for needed conversations about a big topic that Christian culture often treats as taboo — sex! Winner sheds light on the current attitudes about sex in the church as well as in the secular world. For instance,

conversations about sex among Christians don't happen very often, if at all, while the secular world talks about sex in the form of jokes and winks — neither are addressing the topic with importance, truth, or honesty. In her book, Winner sets out to break the silence among us.

Winner's straightforward writing asks her Christian readers to consider how we can bring hope to a sexualized society unless we have the maturity, wisdom, and understanding of our own flesh and blood bodies. In Winner's own words: "Though we are willing to

talk about sex from the pulpit, we are often less comfortable initiating hard conversations with our brothers and sisters about sex in people's real, day-to-day lives....We have understandably absorbed the story our surrounding culture so forcibly tells us, trading our vision of community for American notions of individuals and free agents."

Fearlessly candid, and refreshingly honest, Winner encourages the Christian community to openly discuss and understand the truth about sex while living in a sexualized world.

HFNY CHRISTMAS 2005 RE-CAP

The Christmas Season at HFNY was a huge success!

We hosted three projects: Angel Tree, His Toy Store, and the St. Paul's Christmas Dinner (co-sponsored by Gifted Hands).

With the help and support of many volunteers and generous donors, we were able to distribute toys and clothing to 450 children from Washington Heights and the Lower East Side through Angel Tree.

We also provided toys to over 400 families in need at five different sites throughout The Bronx, Washington Heights and Brooklyn through His Toy Store, and serve over 200 marginally housed and homeless men and women a warm Christmas meal at our St. Paul's dinner.

Thank you to all of the amazing volunteers and donors for making these events possible, and especially for helping to spread the love of Christ and share in the celebration of our Savior's birth!



Ryan Tompkins (with daughter Charlotte), one of Redeemer's Fellowship Group Directors, and his Fellowship Group volunteering in the Bronx at one of five His Toy Store projects operated in December.



Donny McCaslin, Kimberly Jajuan, Faith Huckel (HFNY Volunteer Coordinator) and Albin Sadar (HFNY Volunteer Team Leader) leading worship at the Hope for New York Christmas Celebration dinner which served over 200 homeless men and women



Emma Bartolazo (3), Caitlin O'Neill (3) and Gemma O'Neill (1 1/2), current and future volunteers enjoying a much deserved break at one of the His Toy Store projects in the Bronx!

«Mailing Name»
«Address 1»
«City», «State», «Postalcode»

1359 BROADWAY
4TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY
10018



NON PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK NY
PERMIT # 349



**Saturday
February 25, 2006
9:00 am - 2:30 pm**
Trinity Baptist Church
250 East 61st Street
in New York

**Presented by
Dr. Scott Turansky and
Mrs. Joanne Miller**



For
parents of
children ages 0-18

Parenting Seminar

Connect with your kids in ways that
will change their hearts.

You will learn...
Hands-on strategies to change the way your
family relates. Dr. Turansky and Mrs. Miller use
humor, drama, and real-life stories to illustrate
their practical approach to family life. You will
go away refreshed, encouraged, and armed
with specific plans that work.

\$20 per family
Call (212) 808-4460
ext 209 to register
or online at www.redeemer.com

This seminar is sponsored by Redeemer
Presbyterian Church and Trinity Baptist Church,
churches with a commitment to strengthening
families. For more information on each church's
ministries, please access their individual websites:
www.redeemer.com and www.trinityny.org.