

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

DECEMBER 2008

FINANCIAL SCARCITY + GOSPEL JOY = RICHES

BY TIM KELLER

In the most severe trial their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. (2 Corinthians 8:2-3)

Stewardship and generous giving is one of the most important ways we know that the grace of God has taken hold of us. Paul says this repeatedly in 2 Corinthians 8-9. In 9:13 he writes, *“Through this service, which proves who you are, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others; while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God in you.”* This is a theologically rich and dense statement! Paul speaks of ‘acknowledging’ the gospel of Christ, a word that means to constantly seek to bring your actual life practices into accord with it. It

means to ask, “If Jesus sacrificed everything for me, if I am now loved and secure in him, if I am saved by grace—how should that affect the way I live?”

Here Paul claims that a grasp of the gospel naturally produces financial generosity in us. This is so much the case that Paul can say that financial ‘service’ (the Greek word *diakonia*, that means humble, costly service to the practical needs of others) actually ‘proves’ that we are Christians. It also attracts people in the world to us and ultimately to our God.

That’s well and good, some might say, but what about times of scarcity? What about times like we are facing now, in what might be

a protracted economic downturn? Let me speak personally. My greatest asset, my Presbyterian ministers’ retirement fund, took an enormous, breath-taking hit this year. And I’m not 35 years old. So, just like everyone else, I don’t feel nearly as financially secure about the future as I used to. Money ultimately is a form of power, and diminished funds make you feel much less in control of your environment and much more vulnerable to circumstances. So, just like everyone else, I come to the end of the year with all its opportunities and needs for generous giving with butterflies in my stomach.

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DIACONATE MERCY FUND: SPECIAL OFFERING

Sunday, December 14, 2008

The Diaconate Special Offering provides an opportunity for members and regular attendees to sacrificially give to the Diaconate Mercy Fund at all five services. Our Mercy Fund enables our deacons and deaconesses to meet the concrete and visible needs of those in our congregation who are experiencing financial, physical, social and spiritual hardships. Please prayerfully consider contributing to this vital ministry of mercy, which supports men, women and children who are in need of care.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Grace has to do with man’s merits, but mercy has to do with man’s misery. God’s mercy is that aspect of his nature which moves him to relieve suffering and misery. “Mercy” is the impulse that makes us sensitive to hurts and lacks in others and makes us desire to alleviate them. These “hurts or lacks” we call needs. — Tim Keller, Ministries of Mercy



A FAREWELL TO MIKE O'NEILL

Mike O'Neill, Hope for New York's Executive Director since September 2001, will be leaving HFNY and Redeemer in December. Events such as these are always bittersweet. On the one hand, we are so sorry Mike and his family will be leaving, but we are encouraged to know the Lord is calling them to new things.

Mike, his wife, Donna and their three children, Caitlin; 6, Gemma; 4 and Declan; 2, will be moving to England at the end of December. Mike will be working with Stewardship, a Christian organization based in London. Stewardship's mission is to support churches, missionaries and Christian organizations throughout the world. Mike will be their Director of Philanthropy and Human Resources and will be overseeing the distribution of almost \$100 million a year.

HFNY recruited Mike while he was the Executive Director of Kids With a Promise, an affiliate of HFNY. Mike started at HFNY days after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, and spent much of his first six months

mobilizing HFNY resources in the area of disaster relief.

In the last five years, HFNY's donations have grown by approximately 300% and the grants they distribute have grown by approximately 425%! In 2008 alone, in the face of a significant economic downturn, HFNY increased its overall grant distribution by 30%. Mike commented, "The support of HFNY donors has made it possible to not just maintain our giving levels, but increase our giving to help offset the declining donations and increased demand for services among our affiliates. And, of course, the faithful service of thousands of HFNY volunteers maximizes the impact every dollar. Our volunteers are the face of HFNY."

HFNY recently launched a program called, Professionals in Action (PIA). PIA seeks to mobilize volunteers with specialized skill sets to work on short-term consulting projects designed to add value to our affiliates. Volunteers have participated in marketing, IT, strategic development and other areas. This new

initiative is an exciting development.

In addition to PIA, HFNY also branched out to support mercy and justice work at three other local churches. Redeemer has been encouraged to see the vision for mercy and justice flourish throughout the city—our goal has always been not to build a great church, but a great city.

Mike also served as a member of Redeemer's Executive Leadership Team and his participation at that level will also be missed. When asked about HFNY after his departure, Mike responded, "There are thousands of volunteers and donors with a passion for serving their neighbors, and the staff of HFNY is an extremely talented and dedicated group who will continue our amazing work. The support of Redeemer and HFNY's board has never been stronger. As the economic situation in NYC seems headed for difficulty, I am confident that all these groups will come together with an even greater focus on caring for our city and for the city's poor and marginalized."

FINANCIAL SCARCITY + GOSPEL JOY

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That is why I am finding 2 Corinthians 8:2-3 so challenging. Here Paul describes the response of the Macedonian Christians to the news that there had been a famine in Judea and many were in

need. Now the Macedonians themselves were facing 'extreme poverty,' sharp scarcity through some sort of 'severe trial.' We don't know what it was. They may have faced famine themselves, or

flooding or war—the ancient forms of 'recession'. But despite the shortages in Macedonia, they gave radically and generously to the needy. Why? Paul says that it

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REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington)
services at 10:30AM • 6:00PM

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

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Corner of West 79TH and Broadway
service at 5:00PM & 7:15PM

DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

December 7: Regular schedule; communion at all services.

December 14: Lessons and Carols at West Side morning service.
Diaconate special offering at all services.

December 21: Lessons and Carols at East Side morning services
Note special East Side morning schedule: 9:45AM & 11:30AM.
All other services on regular schedule.

December 28: No West Side evening services.
All other services on regular schedule.

CENTER FOR FAITH AND WORK DECEMBER EVENTS

DATE & TIME	EVENT & LOCATION
Mon., Dec. 1, at 7:00PM	CFW Leaders Meeting, Redeemer Offices
Thurs., Dec. 4, at 7:00PM	Law Evening Fellowship, Redeemer Offices
Sat., Dec. 6, at 11:00AM	Filmmakers Brunch, Redeemer Offices
Sat., Dec. 6, at 8:00PM	Culture Club at Metropolitan Opera, "Queen of Spades"
Tues., Dec. 9, at 7:00PM	Dancer's Group Christmas Party, RSVP to kenyon@redeemer.com
Thurs., Dec. 11, at 7:00PM	Ph.D. Students, Redeemer Offices
Fri., Dec. 12, at 7:00PM	InterArts Fellowship, Redeemer Offices
Sun., Dec. 14, at 6:30PM	Healthcare Dinner after West Side 5:00PM service
Mon., Dec. 15, at 7:00PM	Entrepreneurship Fellowship, Email ei@redeemer.com for location
Tues., Dec. 16, at 7:00PM	The A.D. Agency Christmas Party, Cooley Studio
Tues., Dec. 16, at 6:45PM	Entrepreneurship Initiative Workshop: The 4 M's, RSVP ei@redeemer.com
Tues., Dec. 16, at 7:00PM	Actors Group Christmas Party, location TBA
Wed., Dec. 17, at 7:00PM	Writers Group, SALT Gallery
Thurs., Dec. 18, at 8:00AM	Legal Fellowship Breakfast, Redeemer Offices
Thurs., Dec. 18, at 6:30PM	Artists Professional Development Workshop: Financial Management, IAM
Sun., Dec. 21, at 12:30PM	Healthcare Lunch after East Side AM service
Mon., Dec. 22, at 7:00PM	Financial Services Ministry Fellowship, Redeemer Offices

Please go to www.faithandwork.org for information on all CFW events.

GET TO KNOW YOUR DEEKS

The Diaconate, Redeemer's mercy ministry, provides assistance to those in our community with practical, visible needs, while supporting them spiritually. We would like to introduce you to two of our "deeks" (deacons/deaconesses): Suneel Gill & Stella Yee!

Name of deacon: **Suneel Gill**

Length of time I've attended Redeemer: 7 years

Length of time I've served on the Diaconate: 2 years

The service I attend: 6:00PM East Side Evening

Hobbies: reading newspapers & books, running, wine tasting, trying new foods

The last book I read was: *Panzer Leader* by Heinz Guderian

Besides New York, I've lived in: Murree, Pakistan; Laurinburg, North Carolina; Orlando, Florida; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Dubai, UAE

My New York neighborhood is: Harlem

How the Lord has been preparing me to serve as a deek: Through experiencing trials, confronting my own brokenness and experiencing God's grace, which is constant, abundant and lavished on me every day.

Memorable experiences from my time as a deek: Praying upfront after service with fellow brothers and sisters has been a privilege and blessing. It never ceases to amaze me how God works in the lives of those who are going through trials and uses these troubled times to raise awareness of sin, grace and the need for his help, reassurance and love.

Name of deaconess: **Stella Yee**

Length of time I've attended Redeemer: 11 years and counting

Length of time I've served on the Diaconate: 5 years

The service I attend: 10:30AM East Side Morning

Hobbies: swimming, eating oysters on the half shell, eating sushi, oh! Did I mention eating?

The last book I read was: *The Drama of Scripture* by Michael Goheen

I grew up in: New York City and was almost born in a NY yellow cab – my head popped out!

Besides New York, I've lived in: Wheaton, IL. I also lived overseas in Beijing, Suzhou, Qingdao, Changchun and Nanjing—all in China.

My New York neighborhood is: Lower East Side

How the Lord has been preparing me to serve as a deek: By reminding me that His grace is sufficient in my weakness.

Memorable experiences from my time as a deek: Offering practical assistance/biblical principles and seeing clients grow and apply it in life.

If you have a financial or other practical need, please call the Diaconate Helpline, (212) 726-1334. To learn more about the Redeemer Diaconate, visit www.redeemer.com/diaconate

WHY WE GIVE

BY HOWARD FREEMAN

Fast forward a couple weeks to Christmas, and your friend or spouse or parent or child is opening the present you spent hours picking out. It is perfect for them and expresses both who they are and also shows how well you know them. Chances are you are more likely anticipating their reaction with eagerness than you are recalling the cost or the hours spent in line at Macy's gift-wrapping counter.

Why? It's because you delight in your loved one. You want their happiness more than you worry about the cost.

This is one of the reasons that we give, Miroslav Volf says in his book *Free of Charge*. We delight in another.

Volf suggests two other reasons: We give to help someone in need. Consider the Good Samaritan (Lk

10:30ff), who is the classic example of the person who gave (his time, money, once-clean donkey, and oil and wine). Lastly, we give to a charity, like the Diaconate or Hope For New York, through which our gifts help our neighbors get their physical needs met.

Each of these three ways is a legitimate way to give and, Volf argues, each way imitates the way God gives to us. In addition to delighting in us, God gives because we are desperately needy, and God gives to us so that we in turn might give to others—we are like “mini-charities” to give liberally to others in need. We are pass-throughs; in fact, we'd be in danger of malpractice if we did *not* give!

The parable of the Good Samaritan was Jesus' explanation of what it meant to “love your

neighbor as yourself” (Lk 10:27) and who our neighbor was. This Samaritan “took pity” (v. 33) on a man of a different race and religion—his enemy.

The gospel is that Jesus took pity on us—his enemies—and yet gave his payment on the Cross. God knows we are desperately needy and also delights in us, so he gives, anticipating our response to him as if on Christmas day.

When we give like it's Christmas Day, whether it's to Hope For New York, the Diaconate or General Funds, or some other area of the church or outside the church budget in our community, we can take joy in being partners in the gospel. For as we give liberally, sacrificially, without expecting something in return, we are embodying the gospel of Christ to those we give to.

FINANCIAL SCARCITY + GOSPEL JOY

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was a chemical reaction. When their gospel-born, super-abounding joy came into direct contact with extreme poverty, an explosion of sacrificial giving ‘welled’ up into rich generosity. Poverty plus gospel joy produced riches.

Paul isn't using these words lightly. This isn't hype. When we feel secure and prosperous, when we have money to spare, giving arises either out of mild guilt, of having more than others, or out of a desire for self-esteem. (I once heard Jerry Lewis in a fund-raising telethon say, “If you send us \$100 you can look yourself in the mirror and know you are a good person.”) When we feel vulnerable and financially insecure, however, both of those motives vanish. We Christians who habit-

ually give out of guilt and pride are then forced to look deeper. And Paul tells us where to look, in his most famous words on the subject: “*See that you also excel in this grace of giving...For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*” (2 Cor 8:7,9.)

There it is. Jesus did not give out of what he could spare. Jesus did not give out of his riches, he gave away his riches. Jesus didn't give because he had power to spare, he gladly lost all his power and became completely vulnerable, for us. What a challenge! Gospel-shaped, Gospel-proportioned giving doesn't even *begin* until it entails sacrifice and scarci-

ty. That makes you nervous and presses you to look at Jesus' cosmic philanthropy for you. That humbles us, making us ask how we can accept this kind of generosity and not pass it on to others? But it also comforts us, showing us our inheritance in heaven that can never fade or be lost. All other inheritances (and retirement funds) pale before that.

We usually give out of what we can spare. When we do that we are not tapping into the resources we have to give sacrificially out of the joy of the gospel. Fortunately, this year, our economy is giving us a push in the right direction! Even our money says, “In God we trust.”



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HELP REDEEMER BE GREENER

As Redeemer seeks to find new ways to be greener and to be good stewards of its budget in the process, we are asking you to help us in a very practical and simple way. When you receive your letter or email inviting you to “Go Green” please take 5 minutes to update your contact information and preferred method of communication.

You can do this two ways: First, by making your status in our

database “email ONLY” for communication you previously received via posted mail. Although we will continue to do a postal mailing of all communications to those who request it, those who are comfortable receiving information from Redeemer electronically will help us save thousands of sheets of paper and thousands of dollars in postage and handling costs annually.

Second, by updating our database with your correct information you will prevent us from mailing stuff to places you no longer live. That alone would be a huge savings!

So look for the letter in the coming weeks and help Redeemer go greener by responding in a timely manner. Thank you for helping us do more with the gifts God has entrusted to us.