

# REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JUNE 2009

## AN UNCOMMON CALL FOR THE COMMON GOOD: VISION CAMPAIGN 2009

BY BRUCE TERRELL, EXEC.DIR. & HOWARD FREEMAN, SR. DIR. OF GENEROSITY

We've all heard the saying "It's not about *you!*" Well, this time, it *is* "about you." Or, more accurately, it's about your involvement.

By now you have probably heard that Redeemer will be conducting another vision campaign this fall. During a serious recession like this one you might ask, "Why is the church doing a campaign *now?*" Looked at one way, this is the *perfect* time to get engaged with vision, giving, and sacrifice.

In the course of the campaign we'll look ahead to Redeemer's next ten years of working with neighbors to build a great city, acknowledging our past twenty years of service, and we'll each have the opportunity to ask ourselves, "Why am I in New York, and why should I stay at a time like this?" It's our hope that now and in the coming months you'll consider how you might play a role in the campaign to advance the gospel

movement here and around the world. Let's take a look at vision, giving, sacrifice, and the gospel.

Every four years or so we need to revisit Redeemer's vision, as we did in the 2005 Vision Campaign. There is about a 25% annual turnover in our congregation. As happens each summer, many new people will move to New York to pursue a career or a dream. Those who are new to the church may not have had time to become familiar with our vision, which is, "to spread the gospel, first through ourselves and then through the city by word, deed, and community; and to bring about personal changes, social healing, and cultural renewal through a movement of churches and ministries that change New York City and through it, the world."

This is the vision that led Tim and Kathy Keller to pack up their three young sons in the mini-van and move to New

York in 1989 to pursue that dream. The first evening service was in April, 1989; the first morning service took place at the end of September of that year. This is also the same vision that has motivated many of us to come to the city. For some of us, we heard the gospel for the first time at Redeemer, repented and believed, and now we are captivated by this vision—devoted to sharing it with others and expressing it through our work in vocational ministry, in business, in the arts, and in serving the poor and marginalized.

For others, who might be brand new to Redeemer and are hearing bits and pieces, this is intriguing, and you want to learn more. This vision is not Redeemer's alone, of course. It is rooted in the historic gospel message, and yet many reading this have never explored the way Redeemer articulates this vision in this unique city.

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### CORRECTION:

The article in last month's newsletter entitled 'A Reason for Hope' should have identified Calvin Chin as the author. Many apologies.

# THE OBTRUSIVE SELF

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BY TIM KELLER

Kathy and I saw the new Star Trek and loved it for what it is—a fun action movie. Among all the appreciative reviews however, several critics noticed a trend. The older Star Treks (TV and movies) were often corny, but they treated ‘big ideas’ like how the races should treat each other, the nature of justice, how people (and species!) should live together. The new Star Trek, however, is more about self-discovery, struggling with rivals, finding your identity, and personal fulfillment.

In the same way, *The Lord of the Rings* movies disappointed deeply loyal fans by filling characters such as Aragorn and Faramir with modern inner emotional conflicts that were absolutely foreign to the characters in the books, as they were in all old sagas. In ancient cultures what mattered most was honor and making your community proud by fulfilling your duty. The world was conceived as a testing ground to see whether you would be faithful to truth, beauty, and causes higher than your own emotions and interests.

Today, however, our cultures are highly individualistic. There is no duty higher than plumbing the depths of your own desires to find out who you want to be. In modern narra-

tives, the protagonist is usually a person who bravely casts off convention, breaks the rules, defies tradition and authority to discover him or her self and carve out a new place in the world. In ancient tales the hero was the person who did just the opposite, who put aside inner dreams, aspirations, doubts, and feelings in order to bravely and loyally fulfill their vows and obligations. The director of *The Lord of the Rings*, Peter Jackson, tried very hard to be true to J.R.R. Tolkien’s story (which is modeled on the old sagas), but at certain points he simply could not understand the inner life of an ancient hero. He had to give us people who were struggling with doubts about ‘who they really were.’

I am not picking on the new Star Trek movie at all (we expect to see it several more times this summer). In many ways, the self-discovery theme comes naturally to a story about younger people just coming into their careers. But the movie serves as an occasion to reflect on what is going on in our culture. Andrew Delbanco’s book *The Real American Dream: A Meditation on Hope* traces out the history of the things American society has offered its citizens as their reason for living. His little book has three chapters, entitled ‘God,’

‘Nation,’ and ‘Self.’ In the beginning, Most Americans understood that their purpose in life was to live in this world in such a way that they were prepared for the next. After nearly a century and a half things changed, and while God was still present, the main thing in life was to build strong families, community, and a nation. We were to live for ideals such as patriotism, honor, and civic duty. Today, however, our main goal is self-fulfillment and individual happiness. Delbanco convincingly traces out this trajectory.

How different our modern world is from Jesus, who spoke of ‘losing yourself (in service to God and others) to find yourself,’ who spoke of discipleship as taking on a ‘yoke’ (Matthew 11:28-30), losing your independence and saying ‘no’ to many of the desires of your heart in order to find rest and true freedom.

When we see a well-done piece of art there are usually great messages in it (bravery, self-sacrifice, love, right and wrong) and also some mistaken ones. It’s always good to be circumspect and, while appreciating the good, being careful not to let unwise messages affect our hearts by “sneaking under the radar” of our minds.

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## REDEEMER REPORT

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Kathy Keller  
Heather Klein

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

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# HOPE FOR NEW YORK: GIVING HOPE...

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As the economy has dipped and turned, we as a community have felt each jolt and wondered how best to react. Over 200 young adults participated in the 3rd Annual Hope for New York Spring Benefit on May 13th where they heard an answer to that lingering question. Simply put: give HOPE.

At a time when our country has been given the charge to get involved in our neighborhoods and create change, we have a unique opportunity to bring a message of hope. But what we bring is more than just our volunteer hours and our resources. In the words of Pastor Abe Cho, we bring a “living hope” to those around us who are struggling and hurting. During the HFNY Spring Benefit program, Abe shared that “we are made in the image of a giving God—a God who gave himself away, utterly, for no

other reason than the fact that we had desperate need.” When we give of ourselves for others, we emulate God’s gift to us.

The hope we bring is not “a vague, shapeless sort of optimism” but rather it is concrete—the kind of hope that has the power to change people’s lives. As Abe said, “This hope is alive because it was born in the terrible concreteness of a man beaten, stripped naked and crucified...a man raised from the dead, still stinking of sweat, blood and tears.” This is the kind of concreteness that gives birth to a living hope. Right now there are an increasing number of people who need this message of hope.

Hope for New York partners with 32 affiliate organizations, many of which reach out to New Yorkers who are struggling with the most basic human needs. Just as we are

feeling the pressure and changes of the economy, HFNY affiliates are experiencing a shift in their reality. Services such as soup kitchens and shelters are seeing a dramatic increase in clients, yet the financial donations they need to serve their clients have dropped sharply. Hope for New York is seeking to fill in this gap by giving away larger grants this year and by providing emergency grants to affiliates who have experienced severe shortfalls. As our affiliates encounter a decrease in funds, we want to respond with an increase in mercy and grace. At the Spring Benefit, attendees were encouraged to get involved. And now we invite you to respond to this urgent need. We ask you to join us in giving HOPE. If you would like to volunteer or give financially, please visit [www.hfny.org](http://www.hfny.org) for more information.

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## VISION CAMPAIGN 2009

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This fall we’ll go deep into the vision for cities in God’s redemptive plan.

Because we believe in the gospel message held by orthodox Christians, we are both humble and bold to move ahead in planning our next ten years, which this campaign will address in part. At the end of Redeemer’s third decade, in 2020, Tim Keller expects to be more of a player-coach, mentoring emerging pastor-leaders at worship sites rather than the single senior pastor of all the sites and the primary preacher. This campaign, one of probably

three over the next decade, will address the first set of objectives to reach the next milestone. As Tim mentioned from the pulpit in late April, the vision includes finishing the west side building, church planting, and new ministry initiatives.

This is an expensive undertaking and one that is done with deliberation in light of what many in our congregation are going through. In our church, both rich and poor are poorer, and many from all across the spectrum are out of work or soon may be. College graduates who moved here in September

to fill job offers in August find themselves looking elsewhere. Yet we are a larger church: on Easter Sunday, more than 8,200 people worshiped at Redeemer, surpassing last year’s record turnout of 7,923. There has never been a shortage of the need for the gospel. Therefore, those of us with the means to give must now step forward and do what we can so that those whom the Spirit draws to hear the gospel will find a healthy and growing Redeemer.

Some have jobs and can give money—sacrificially, over and  
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## VISION CAMPAIGN 2009

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above what they give to the Operating Budget. Some have time and could lead a vision group this fall, serve in some other campaign role over the summer, or get involved in an aspect of Redeemer's work on Sundays (ushering, Information Table, etc.). Some have skills to offer ministry fronts like the Center for Faith and Work.

The common thread here—the uncommon call—is not to flee the city but rather stay and serve the common good. As Christians stayed in New York after 9-11 to minister to a hurting city and as Christians stayed in cities during difficult times throughout history to minister to those who were suffering, now is the perfect time for us to not only revisit our vision and our own calling to the city but also our willingness to continue the commitment to stay, serve, and give. The converse is true: the city will not know Christians truly care until and unless we give and serve when

it is most difficult to do so.

Giving during the coming months and years will be sacrificial for each of us. And yet, as we sacrifice, and to the extent we do so, we enter a holy place that is inhabited by the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This holy place is where extraordinary giving meets extraordinary need. It is the Cross. When Jesus had truly “emptied himself of all but love,” is where we see the riches of heaven—the inestimable blood of Jesus—poured out at the feet of those who crucified him, indeed at our own feet, the feet of those who need him most. We can never give as much as he gave in our behalf.

And that is the point. Since we can never fully match the gift of God's love, our giving can be freed from a performance mindset and from selfish motivation, and can be released to be an expression of our love for Jesus: for what he has done, as a spiritual act of worship.

Then, in that holy place, where his sacrifice was suffering, our sacrifice becomes joy, because we can endure it knowing that the Cross has gone before us.

This campaign is about the next ten years for Redeemer and our coming together as a community to realize that vision. But it is also about each of us revisiting why we have come to New York and why we have stayed. If we desire to be a part of the gospel movement in New York and movement partners with other global cities, now is the perfect time to strengthen our individual and corporate commitment to serve the city through Redeemer.

*If you would like to lead a vision group (a 7-week commitment of weekly small group facilitation starting after September 27), please email Susana Gough at [Susana@redeemer.com](mailto:Susana@redeemer.com). If you would like more information about the campaign or to volunteer in other roles, please email Howard Freeman at [howard@redeemer.com](mailto:howard@redeemer.com).*