

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

DECEMBER 2009

THANK YOU. THANK YOU. NOW LET'S REPENT

BY TIM KELLER

Someone recently sent me some photos of Redeemer services at 111 E. 87th Street during 1989-90, the first years of our church's life in New York. It put me in mind of the hundreds of people who during those first years poured their hearts and resources into the ministry. A surprising number of people in those photos are still here, having faithfully planted, watered, and nurtured Redeemer from a tiny sapling into a great, spreading tree.

I am equally amazed and grateful for the Redeemer-of-the-present. In the past several months the leadership and congregation have enthusiastically embraced a bold new plan for

're-planting' Redeemer as a movement. Also, in the middle of the worst economic environment in half a century, you have joyfully committed millions of dollars to see that vision accomplished. When my family moved here twenty years ago to begin the ministry, we had dreams. Some were more optimistic than others, but the reality has out-stripped our wildest imaginations a hundred-fold. At this Christmas season, I want to thank all those brothers and sisters who made the Redeemer of the past a success, and now those who are carrying out the vision so remarkably in the present.

Having given credit where

it is due, we must not end on a note of self-congratulation. In Amos 3:2, God says to his people: "*You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth—therefore I will punish you for all your sins.*" A startling sentence! God had given Israel unique benefits—he had visited and loved and empowered them as he had no one else. But because of that, he held them more accountable for their behavior. J.A. Motyer explains the verse this way: "Special privileges, special obligations; special grace, special holiness; special revelation, special scrutiny; special love, special responsiveness...the church of

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BRINGING NOTHING IN, TAKING NOTHING OUT

BY HOWARD FREEMAN

I've witnessed the birth of each of my three sons, and not one came into the world holding anything but his breath. Likewise, none of us leaves this world holding anything, certainly not our stock

certificates or property deeds or favorite shoes.

We learned in the sermon on "Hope and Money" in early November that Paul, echoing Job, writes to Timothy in a letter, "*But godliness with con-*

tentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to

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WHAT DOES “BORN AGAIN” LOOK LIKE?

BY JULIET VEDRAL AND DAVID PLANT

The term “born again” is as polarizing today as it was 20 centuries ago when Jesus of Nazareth confided to a friend; “Truly, truly, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” The New Birth Portrait Series was created to explore and further articulate the meaning of his words through the lives of New Yorkers. These videos were shown as modern-day portraits in a gallery on 36th Street from September 24–27. Each video portrait was a window into the new birth experience—an experience typically dismissed, usually misunderstood, and when rightly considered—offensive.

Through the show we hoped to start a dialogue between people who believe and people who don’t. We wanted to provide a means for people to question what they saw presented, but also to question what they thought they knew. It was a daring experiment and no one was sure if it would have the impact we believed it could have, especially on the night that was specifically designed for people outside the Redeemer community. We were pleasantly

surprised by the feedback we received:

“What I appreciated most was the warm and inviting atmosphere. Part of what turns me off with most things associated with ‘born-again’ Christians is an environment that is hostile, preachy, and judgmental.”

“As a Muslim, I’m very moved by the forward thinking vision of this event, especially since my very own religion is under attack from the West. We lack a forum that fuses modernism with spirituality, which a lot of people battle with in my humble opinion, but the Portrait Series successfully merges both in a very personal and engaging way.”

“One of the great things documentary does is open up questions about a subject you may or may not want to explore. To be honest, the night I came I really didn’t feel like opening up those questions. However, the laid back way it was presented helped me ease into the subject matter, rather than be forced.... I think what turns me off most from

Christianity and other religions is the superior way of thinking I have encountered that causes separation instead of unity. I was able to take in the message without the residue of being manipulated. So, I walked away thinking and wondering about Christianity. That is what Art does, it provokes questions that we want to deny.”

This feedback, along with the limited engagement of the show, prompted us to develop www.newbirthportraits.com, which launched November 9. The site features all of the portraits that were shown in the gallery plus a new video that was recently completed. As more stories are captured on video, they will be added.

While we have plans for another gallery installation, the website was designed to replicate the look and feel of the original gallery setting, which you can use to start conversations on faith with your friends. We hope that you’ll agree, after you’ve visited it, that we’ve followed the advice of *60 Minutes* founder Don Hewitt: “Just tell a good story.”

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

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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
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DIACONATE MERCY FUND SPECIAL OFFERING

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2009

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. - 2 Corinthian 8:1-2

On Sunday December 13 the Diaconate will take a special offering to provide an opportunity for members and regular attendees to give to the Diaconate Mercy Fund at all five services. Our Mercy Fund allows our deacons and deaconesses (deeks) to meet the concrete and visible needs of those in our congregation who are experiencing financial, physical, social and spiritual hardships. In addition to prayerfully considering contributing to this vital ministry of mercy, please take a look around and encourage those congregants in need to reach out to the Diaconate for help.

Our Mercy Fund is available to members and regular attendees of Redeemer.

In the verses above, Paul was writing from Macedonia to the Christians in Corinth. Paul wanted to bring to their attention the wonderful example set by the churches of Macedonia. He highlighted that despite Macedonians' own extreme poverty, they gave with joy and liberality because of the grace of God that had been given to them.

It's been a great encouragement to witness Redeemer's congregation living out the example set by the Macedonian Christians. Our congrega-

tion has faithfully given generously over the years to enable the Diaconate to provide financial assistance to those in our church community facing challenging situations, especially in this recession. We on the Diaconate are so grateful to God for the abundance of financial resources we have to carry out this mercy ministry.

If you are a Redeemer member or regular attendee with a financial or other practical need, please call the Diaconate Helpline, (212) 726-1334. For more information, visit: www.redeemer.com/diaconate.

Thank you in advance for your partnership.

LIFE TOGETHER, BY DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

In his book *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers the Christian means with which to cultivate authentic Christian community. Having been imprisoned (and later hung) by the Gestapo for his participation in the political and military resistance against Nazism in Germany, the author writes with the authority of experience of Christian community. He asserts that communal life, the physical presence of other Christians, is a gift of grace, that it is the "extraordinary,

roses and lilies" of the Christian life. He aims to describe the nature of Christian community through five concepts and devotes a chapter to each: Community, The Day with Others, The Day Alone, Ministry, and Confession and Communion.

Of the nature of communal life, or Christian community, Bonhoeffer writes that it is unified through and in Jesus Christ. He maintains that the communal life is not an ideal, but a divine reality. This means that a Christian must regard community as not a "dream

REVIEWED BY GEORGIA NOYAN

world" of great experience and discoverable riches, but as inherently messy; for it is not, as the author writes, "an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate." And in such a reality, the sinful nature of man is ever present. Therefore, we must be disillusioned by that nature itself in order to be "brought to the knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship."

His central theme is that despite his own imperfection (and because of Christ alone!)

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DECEMBER SERVICE SCHEDULE & HOLIDAY MUSIC

Please make note of the special service times and locations for the month of December.

DECEMBER 6

Celebration of the Lord's Supper at all services

9:15AM: Ethical Culture Society, 64th St. & CPW

10:30AM: Hunter College, 69th St. & Park Ave.

5:00 & 7:15PM: First Baptist Church, 79th St. & Broadway

6:00PM: Hunter College, 69th St. & Park Ave.

DECEMBER 13

Special offering for the ministry of the diaconate at all services

9:15AM: West Side Morning Service of Lessons and Carols

*Music by orchestra, choir, and soloists,
with readings of the gospel accounts of Jesus' birth.*

Other services on usual schedule

DECEMBER 20

Note special East Side morning service start times

9:15AM: West Side morning service on regular schedule

9:45AM and 11:30AM: East Side Morning Services of Lessons and Carols

*Selections from **Messiah** performed by the Orchestra of the Redeemer
(Miriam Burns, music director), choir and soloists, with readings of the
gospel accounts of Jesus' birth in multiple languages.*

5:00 & 7:15PM: West Side Evening Service of Lessons and Carols

*Music by East Side band and vocal soloists,
with readings of the gospel accounts of Jesus' birth.*

6:00PM: East Side Evening Service of Lessons and Carols

*Music by West Side band and vocal soloists, with readings of
the gospel accounts of Jesus' birth in multiple languages.*

DECEMBER 27

Note special evening service times

No West Side Evening services (5:00PM and 7:15PM)

All other services on regular schedule (9:15AM, 10:30AM, 6:00PM)

REDEEMER SONGWRITERS TO RELEASE CD

BY SEAN MCCLOWRY

The Redeemer Forum for Singer/Songwriters, a ministry of Redeemer's Worship and Music Department, is now completing work on a new CD featuring six artists from the Redeemer community. The CD, titled *In the City*, is a compilation of 10 songs about living in New York City. All proceeds from CD sales will benefit Hope for New York. The artists will perform selections from the CD at a release party on Monday, December 14, 8:00 p.m. at Crash Mansion, 199 Bowery. All are invited to attend.

RFSS began in 2004 as a way for singer/songwriters to form community through sharing original music. The forum serves as a means for

songwriters to introduce new material and receive feedback. Last summer, RFSS began planning for the CD project and writing new material inspired by HFNY and the vision of Redeemer. The task for each songwriter was to compose a song addressing his or her unique experience living in New York. As a result, the lyrical content covers a wide range of attributes of city living, from the richness of culture and the beauty of architecture to the weight of homelessness and the stress of commuting. Through each songwriter's individual perspective the CD as a whole provides a unique soundtrack that resonates with the experiences of city life.

As part of the Renew Campaign, much of the music on *In the City* has been featured during worship services and at Renew events. The songwriters featured on the CD are Monica Allison, Edmerald Gan, Phoebe Lyng, Sean McClowry, Melanie Penn, and Steph Shaw. The project was a team effort involving many volunteers, including instrumentalists from the Redeemer community and Tommy Matthews, who provided the artwork for the disc.

The CD will be available for purchase at the release party on Monday, December 14 as well as at the CD sales tables following all worship services in December.

CD Sales Tables

Get your Christmas shopping done following all Redeemer worship services in December and support good causes at the same time! Following all services, head to the fellowship hall to purchase CDs produced by Redeemer. This year we are excited to introduce a new CD,

In This City, a collection of ten songs about New York featuring the members of Redeemer's Forum for Singer/Songwriters. [See related article.] All proceeds from this recording will benefit Hope for New York.

You can also purchase other Redeemer CDs, including ***Christmas of Peace*** (a benefit for New Song Community Church in Harlem), ***Christmas of Hope*** (a benefit for Hope for New York), and ***Look to the Sky*** (which benefits the Redeemer diaconal ministry), and Sarah Lentz's ***My Christmas Carols***.

BRINGING NOTHING IN...

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." (1 Timothy 6:6-10)

As true as Paul's words are, Job's original words were in a much different context and provide a dramatic element to their particular truth. In Job 1:13-19 Satan had just obliterated his family, servants, and livestock. Job's response is stunning: "At this, Job got up and

tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said:

"*Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.*" (Job 1:20-21)

Job worshiped.

Jesus, too, was naked when he came from his mother's womb and before he was crucified was stripped naked and nailed to a cross. And yet, unlike my sons and Paul and Job (and me and you) who didn't bring exactly "nothing" into the world but rather did bring our sin (Ps 51:5), Jesus

the babe brought into the world "the true light that gives light to every man." (John 1:9) And the sin we brought into the world was what he took with him when he departed.

So, what shall we do?

As Job said, "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." He worshiped in light of realizing that—all trappings aside—he had nothing, except the Lord, who is more than enough.

This Christmas let us remember to hold our temporary possessions lightly, and remembering Jesus' nakedness

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THANK YOU...

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God cannot ever escape the perils of its uniqueness.” (J. Motyer, *The Day of the Lion: The Message of Amos*, IVP, p.68.)

Has Redeemer been protected from problems, well

supplied with talents and resources, and empowered with God’s spirit, even when we didn’t seek it as passionately as we should have? Have we been unusually blessed as a

church? I think so. Then we should be unusually holy! Are we? The richer God’s blessing, the more we should receive it with fear and trembling and self-examination.

BRINGING NOTHING IN...

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

on our behalf, let our possessions pass through our hands as Job did, ending with worship. Because many of us won’t have these possessions yanked unwillingly from us as happened

to Job, let us give freely, wholeheartedly, and cheerfully, as Paul instructs elsewhere.

Remember to give to your church and to the other organizations that do kingdom work

in New York and other cities where gospel movements are taking place.

- giving.redeemer.com/
- app.etapestry.com/hosted/HopeforNewYork/OnlineGiving.html

LIFE TOGETHER BOOK REVIEW...

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

the Christian is a great help to his brothers as they mutually act as “bringers of the message of salvation”—which, Bonhoeffer argues, is the goal of all Christian community. Indeed, through their attachment to the church, the common worship of song, scripture reading and prayer, personal prayer, and

mutual service the members of the Christian community are being sanctified.

Life Together was a work that stuck with me long after I had put it down. Its lessons are immediately relevant and yet of such enduring consequence. I was constantly sending excerpts from the book to

friends and family, and when it came time to review the book itself, my desire was to simply quote it from beginning to end. I count it among the best of theological works that I have ever read; and I believe it to be an indispensable resource for every Christian.