

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JANUARY 2012

GOD WITH US: THE POST-CHRISTMAS EMMANUEL

BY KATHY KELLER

One Sunday, in advent, in a preparation for worship, Matt Buccheri pointed out something I had never noticed. The book of Matthew, one of the four Gospels, is both begun and ended with the promise of “Emmanuel, God with us.” In Matthew 1:23 we are told that the prophecy of the coming of Christ will be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, ... “and they will call him Emmanuel—which means, ‘God with us.’”

Then at the end of Matthew, when Jesus is returning to reign in heaven, he promises his disciples in chapter 28, verse 20, the very last words of the book, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of

the age.”

While we are just past the season of singing and celebrating the incarnation of God in the coming of Jesus—“Emmanuel, God with us”—we should take time to remember that there is no seasonal time limit on both the joy and the weight of Jesus always being with us, to the end of the age. Joy, because we are not left on our own, to muddle through (or not) with only a vague awareness of God’s presence. Weight, as in a sense of responsibility, because God’s presence is not only a comfort, but also a challenge to live in the new age that has begun.

Here’s an old technique to

help you squeeze the meaning out of a verse of scripture. Take the phrase “God with us” and give yourself 10 minutes to write down everything that follows from each of the words in that phrase.

For instance: GOD. It is the maker of the universe, the transcendent, glorious, holy, perfect, wise, omnipotent, Yahweh, our covenantal savior, who is with us. And this superlative, loving, holy being is WITH us: not far off, not uninterested, not attending to the machinery of running the cosmos, but WITH us, every day, every moment, every heartache and every need intimately known

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WITH HEARTS FULL OF GRATITUDE

BY JENNY CHANG

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 Corinthians 8:1-2

The Apostle Paul’s account of the Macedonian Christians has to be one of our favorite passages because we on the Diaconate get to witness Redeemer’s congregation living out the remarkable example set by these churches.

The Diaconate would like

to thank all who gave abundantly to the Mercy Fund on December 11, 2011, during our annual Special Offering. Despite the current challenging economic climate, we are touched and grateful that many of you gave with joy and generosity because of the

grace of God that had been given to you.

Our Mercy Fund disbursements have doubled over the past three years, allowing our deacons and deaconesses to disburse over \$416K in 2011 to meet the practical and financial

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DON'T WALK BY – HOPE FOR NEW YORK

Have you noticed the homeless man or the homeless woman sleeping on the street or subway? This February join Hope for New York and the Rescue Alliance in the *Don't Walk By* Campaign. For the fourth year HFNY has been a co-sponsor

for this collaborative faith-based outreach in Manhattan.

Don't Walk By is an annual outreach to NYC in which volunteers cover every block and subway platform in Manhattan on a search for the homeless—offering every single person food, warm cloth-

ing, blankets and the opportunity to get the support they desire. This year's campaign will take place over the course of four Saturdays in February. For more information and to join this outreach visit <http://hfnny.org/dont-walk-by-2012>.

RENEWAL GROUPS 2012

Starting in January, Redeemer Counseling Services will launch five new Renewal Groups—a powerful counseling approach that combines the gospel with some of the best tools from counseling psychology. Each Renewal Group is made up of 5-8 people and a professional counselor focusing on a particular area of healing.

Participating in a group can provide people with:

- *A greater understanding of one's thinking, emotional and behavioral patterns*
- *Key skills and concepts related to areas of healing like Sexual Integrity and Grief Recovery*
- *Accountability in a safe and confidential environment*

• *The opportunity to support and encourage others in their journeys*

Renewal Groups will be offered in areas of: Sexual Integrity, Emotion Regulation, Sexual Abuse, Grief Recovery and Strengthening Relationships. Please visit www.redeemer.com/renewalgroups for more information.

HOPE FOR NEW YORK TOY CAMPAIGN 2011

This past Christmas was a wonderfully successful season at Hope for New York! Thanks to the generosity of congregants from Redeemer and our other church partners we were able to collect over 1,500 toys and raise nearly \$25,000 for our Christmas Toy Campaign—both a record high!

HFNY served over 750 families through His Toy Store. His Toy Store is a Christmas outreach created by HFNY to enable local churches in low-income neighborhoods in The Bronx, Brooklyn, Harlem and

Washington Heights to reach out to their community during this Christmas season. Families are invited to shop for free toys for their children and connect with the local church.

Each of our eight His Toy Store sites are run by HFNY volunteers, who are critical to their success. Through the generosity of those who gave, we distributed over 3,500 toys to low-income children and mobilized over 200 volunteers.

In addition, we served over 250 children through Angel Tree, a Christmas program of Prison Fellowship that helps

incarcerated parents connect with their families. Angel Tree sponsors from Redeemer purchased gifts of toys and clothing for the children on behalf of the incarcerated parent. These families were then invited to attend an Angel Tree party hosted by a local church and sponsored by HFNY.

Thank you all for your generous contributions during this season of great need! Please continue to pray with us for all the families who came to an Angel Tree party or a His Toy Store program.

INTERARTS FELLOWSHIP JANUARY: BODY LIFE

BY KENYON ADAMS

In our 2011-12 ministry year InterArts Fellowship (IAF) will explore four perspectives on LIFE: the reality of Christ's Abundant life; the imminence and import of life in the Body; the mystery of life in the Spirit; and the hope of Eternal life. We are processing these themes through the lens of the arts by inviting artists and thinkers to contribute through thoughtful lectures and inspiring performances.

At the next quarterly gathering on January 16th we will discuss BODY LIFE and consider how the gospel reconciles us to God and how this reconciliation culminates in life together within Christian community.

We are pleased to include in our conversation New York City Ballet principal dancer, Jenifer Ringer, acclaimed conductor Ken-David Masur, Gregory Hines-trained tap dancer Andrew Nemr and Reach Records hip hop artist Andy Mineo. The Rev. Abraham Cho will close the evening with a keynote address illuminating the reconciling power of the gospel for our lives as newly created people called to a new community.

• **Reconciled Within Our Individual Bodies**

One of the most respected principal dancers of New York City Ballet, Jenifer Ringer Fayette has been a part of the Redeemer Community for five years and has been part of discus-

sions at the Redeemer's Dance Vocational Group.

In 2011, Jenifer responded with extraordinary courage and grace when a notable dance critic attacked her body image in a *NYTimes'* review. The incident, concurrent with the release of the film *Black Swan*, captured the interest of many who are concerned



Andrew Nemr

with body image including Oprah Winfrey and The Today Show. Jenifer will discuss how she has learned to live in reconciliation with the body's brokenness with the hope of the gospel.

• **Creating a Body Through Leadership**

Ken-David Masur has become a leader in the realm of classical music as conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic, Israeli Philharmonic and the symphonies of Munich, San Antonio, San Diego and others. Ken and his wife,

Melinda Lee Masur, also serve as the artistic directors of the Chelsea Music Festival. Ken will discuss the concept of "conductor as shepherd: building a body of people to create a lasting thing" in the world.

• **Embodied Expression**

Andrew Nemr is a gifted tap artist in New York City. A protégé of the late, great Gregory Hines, he has shared the stage with Savion Glover and is the founder of his own acclaimed tap dance company *Cats Payin' Dues*. At IAF, Andrew will collaborate with Actors' Group leader Warren Jackson to perform a special tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

• **Exhorting the Body**

A regular attendee of Redeemer, Andy Mineo is a protégé of *Reach Records* and the *Grammy*-nominated rap artist *Lecrae*, making his record debut with *Formerly Known* in 2011. Andy's music, which will close the evening, challenges listeners to infuse the details of bodily and material life with God's truth.

• **Reconciled One to Another**

The Rev. Abe Cho has been a key leader of *Grace and Race*, a Redeemer ministry that encourages racial reconciliation. We are honored to welcome Abe as our keynote speaker addressing reconciliation through the

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to him. Amazingly, this God who is with us, is with US: sinful, easily distracted, self-absorbed, selfish US.

Obviously the above is not an exhaustive list. If you really do take that 10-minute challenge, your list will be much, much longer. But the point will be the same. Jesus is not merely some historical figure who lived a long time ago and far, far away. He is more present to us, in his Spirit, than he was with the 12 disciples who walked around the dusty roads of Palestine with him. Even with only 12 disciples to talk to, they had to take turns conversing with Jesus, struggle to express themselves, contend with others who wanted their turn to talk or be healed or whatever. Now, however, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Third in the Great I Am, is equally and powerfully present with all those who call on him. As someone said to me recently, "Prayer is the ultimate high-speed connection!"

But back to the double sided nature of Emmanuel, God with us. With a little thought, everyone can understand the benefits of having a living, bright, personal, immediate relationship with God. But what of the responsibility of such a relationship? If you have an important visitor (boss, parent, significant other) coming to your apartment, most people take a few

moments to clean up the mess, take out the trash, maybe even shower and change clothes. Are we guilty of doing less when our God has come, not for a short visit, but to BE with us? Are we casual? Have we mistaken his condescension for a blanket approval of all that comprises our lives? Is there trash we should be taking out? Do we need a spiritual shower? If we think about it, does it make us uncomfortable to know that God is present WITH us at work, on our vacations, during our leisure pursuits, when we're online, when we're with that significant other?

Everyone with a memory of their teen years remembers the wonderful freedom when the parents went out and left you alone for a few precious hours in the house. The television to myself! No one to order me around, or suggest I do something productive, like homework or chores! Food and snacks a, when, and as much as I like! We often feel cramped and judged in the presence of another person, however much we may know they love us. How much more does the knowledge of the presence of God make us uncomfortable in some of our pursuits and pleasures?

So the presence of God, having him WITH US, is a two edged sword. How convenient,

we may secretly think, if he would just be nearby, on-call, as it were, ready to come when we need him, but not bothering us with his presence if we'd rather be left alone. But it's impossible that the burning, shining love that holds every particle of the universe together and which has loved you to death on the cross and beyond could have an off/on switch. The truth of the matter is that many of us have settled for a compromise—God, I sort of want you to be with me when I need you, but I don't want you to be so close that I feel the need to change my life. So we settle for a vague and unsatisfying not-very-personal relationship to Emmanuel.

As New Year's resolutions go, how about this one? This year, I want ALL of your Presence, Lord. I want to see your face, know your heart, feel your comfort and be part of the endless cycle of giving and receiving love that the Father, Son and Spirit had for all eternity. And I further want you in ALL parts of my life, correcting me where I've gone wrong, leading me to become the person you mean me to be, setting before me those tasks that you have prepared for me to do to glorify you. If there are things in my life that have to change for all that to be true, then I choose to change. Because I want to be WITH YOU.



JANUARY IS MISSIONS MONTH

BY CHRISTINA STANTON

This month is Missions Month at Redeemer! For three Sundays, beginning January 8th and ending the 22nd, Redeemer's upcoming overseas mission trips will be highlighted. This year more mission trips are on our schedule than ever before—up to 11 trips, sending 200+ people to countries such as Japan, South Africa, Argentina and more.

Mission trips are special volunteer endeavors where a team of 10 to 20 people serves in an overseas cross-cultural context. Each trip prepares social justice and mercy projects while spreading the Love of Christ.

Those of us at Redeemer have a unique opportunity with short-term missions. Through the connections of City to City, the church planting arm of Redeemer, we partner with our international church planters as a way of supporting their work. Last year we served church planters in East Asia, Buenos Aires, and various cities in South Africa. Projects the teams developed and implemented included:

- *Teaching Business and Finance classes to help adults start their own businesses*
- *Conducting a Kids Club and VBS*
- *Medical professionals, including optometrists and a dentist, gave specialized care to rural populations.*

- *English classes were taught to university and middle school students*

Funds raised by our teams were used to outfit a new computer center and upgrade a dental office, conduct church outreaches in the form of a jazz concert and a Christmas event, and underwrite various projects like landscaping the yard of an orphanage and refurbishing a church nursery.

The projects that were undertaken and funds that were raised are blessings to the host churches, but these trips are often life changing for members of the mission team as well. Trip Leader Christine Kim has this to say about the experience:

“Serving at South Africa’s Lily of the Valley orphanage was such a humbling experience for me. I went with the expectation of fully giving myself, but I ended up receiving so much in return. It was so obvious that God was present everywhere at Lily, in the kids’ joyfulness at a new day, and in their simple and unshakable faith of His love for them. It made me examine myself, my faith and my idols under a microscopic lens.”

There is no certain “personality type” best suited for a mission trip. Every personality and skill set is of value and needed for a well-rounded team. Preparation for the trips

include general meetings, fundraisers, and socials where trip projects are developed and team members get to know one another. The prep time in itself is a challenging and growing experience.

On the first three Sundays in January look for the



One of the boys from the Lily of the Valley orphanage getting ready to enjoy a soccer game

Missions Table at Coffee Hour, where you can find literature on our upcoming mission trips. Former team members will also be on hand to answer any questions you might have. Some of our past team members will also be sharing testimonies of their personal experiences on our final missions Sunday, January 22.

Many of us discussed how to live out the gospel “first in our hearts, then in community, and ultimately out into the world” in our Catalyst groups last Fall. As we begin 2012, how might “living a life poured out in deeds” be reflected in you, personally? Like 73 Redeemerites in 2011, it could be in the form of a mission trip! We hope you’ll prayerfully consider joining us this year.



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WITH HEARTS FULL OF GRATITUDE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

needs of those in our midst who are struggling with various hardships and difficulties. Please know that we consider you to be ministry partners as we care for those God brings our way. It is your faithful partnership with us over the years, which enables us to meet the needs.

If you missed the Diaconate Special Offering and would still like to contribute toward the Mercy Fund, we accept donations throughout the year. If you are giving cash, please earmark your gift for the Diaconate using the special envelope provided at the information table at all service sites

or write "Mercy fund" on the memo line of your check made out to Redeemer. You may also donate at www.redeemer.com.

And if you are a Redeemer member or regular attendee with a financial or other practical need, please call the Diaconate Helpline (212) 726-1334. Thank you again.

IAF: BODY LIFE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

power of the gospel.

• *Join Us in January*

InterArts Fellowship (IAF) is a ministry of Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work that gathers artists of all dis-

ciplines, as well as arts appreciators, on a quarterly basis to share our work and think through topics of theological and spiritual import. IAF is partnering once again with Calvary/St.

George's to gather artists in a sacred space. Join us as we begin the New Year in fellowship. To register visit www.faihandwork.org/iaf or contact kenyon@redeemer.com with questions.

REDEEMER REPORT

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Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM
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ETHICAL CULTURE
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service at 9:15AM

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service at 5:00PM & 7:15PM