

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JULY 2012

CELEBRATING THE DOWNTOWN CHALLENGE

BY JOHN LIN

When I became the Lead Pastor for the Downtown congregation two years ago, it was hard to imagine being where we are at this point in time. The momentum and interest in a Downtown congregation and the outpouring of generosity from so many people throughout Redeemer over the past 12 months has been amazing. I've seen people step into leadership roles and embrace the idea of a Downtown congregation before even a single public gathering was held. I've seen hundreds of people come to Catalyst and help begin the formation of our community. And now with

the completion of the Downtown Challenge we have the financial support needed to forge ahead with our launch this fall, which will be a challenge of its own!

The Challenge has been an incredible demonstration of faithfulness and love by people from the East Side and West Side congregations as well as all those in our Downtown congregation. I am now able to see the real meaning and value of the collegiate model as the East and West Side congregations have gotten behind our launch and have made sacrifices to propel us forward. It's my hope that the

Downtown will continue this spirit of generosity for many, many years to come.

Thank you to all 1226 supporters of the Downtown Challenge who gave over \$1.40M guaranteeing the full match of the \$1M matching gift. This will provide us with the funds necessary to reach self-sustainability. In addition to the money raised I want to thank the 300+ Downtown congregants who have affiliated with us, which tops the number we had hoped to reach (for a core group) before launching in October. Thank you to all those who have

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THE BLESSING OF ACCOUNTABILITY

BY DEWANDA MILLER, EAST SIDE MEMBER

When I was a kid, I attended school in a very different district than the neighborhood I lived in. In fact, I was a city-kid who went to school in one of the first planned communities in the country. Folks couldn't change the colors of their shutters without neighborhood approval. To add extremity, my

church was over one hundred years old, and the surrounding area was rural. Needless to say, it was as though I lived in multiple worlds. This fragmentation produced an unintended residual in that I grew to be pretty secretive. I went through college separating my family, peer groups, and activities. I'm sure most of my class-

mates had no idea I was Christian. I considered myself "introverted" instead of "secretive," and figured I wasn't really hurting anyone by it. Then came graduation.

The years following college were pretty dismal. I found myself suffering from extreme loneliness, and so I ate to feel

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WHY HOPE FOR NEW YORK AFFILIATES LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS

Hope for New York hosted its annual Awesome Volunteer Appreciation dinner last month at the W83 Ministry Center. More than 200 committed volunteers, volunteer team leaders, and Hope for New York affiliate staff gathered to celebrate the work our volunteers are doing to serve the poor and marginalized across New York City.

As part of the evening, staff from Hope for New York affiliate organizations shared “one-sentence thank yous” (well, some were a little longer than a sentence!) We’ve included a few below:

“I love my volunteers because they realize that the kids teach them as much as they teach the kids.”

– *Matt Mahoney, Executive Director, Operation Exodus Inner City—a mentoring program for underserved children in Washington Heights*

“I am thankful for the HFNY volunteers that provide access to justice for Open Hands’ clients—New York City’s most underserved and low-income populations.”

– *C. J. Masimore, Executive Director, Open Hands Legal Services—serving homeless and low-income New Yorkers by providing free legal services*

“I want to thank our volunteers for going above and beyond in giving of themselves so that those with unexpected pregnancies and those who have had abortion can experience hope for their futures.”

– *Meredith Stone, Client Services Director, Midtown Pregnancy Support Center—offering support to men and women dealing with unexpected pregnancies*

“I would like to thank our Hope for New York volunteers for feeding the hungry and encouraging the hopeless, especially through our monthly Food Pantry outreach to poor Chinatown moms.”

– *Joe Little, New York City Rescue Mission—a homeless shelter and soup kitchen that provides emergency services, counseling, and recovery programs*

**“Hope for New York volunteers have assisted Gifted Hands with birthing and maintaining 55 compassionate ministry outreaches in NYC. I like to use an old American Express phrase that describes my relationship with and appreciation for HFNY volunteers—
HFNY volunteers: I do not leave home without them!”**

– *Dustee Hullinger, Executive Director, Gifted Hands—an art therapy program for populations including at-risk youth, the homeless, and people living with HIV/AIDS*

Interested in volunteering with Hope for New York this summer? Check out hfn.org/volunteer and search for volunteer opportunities by organization, date, population served, and region.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

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

W83RD MINISTRY CENTER
150 W. 83rd Street (between Columbus & Amsterdam)
services at 9:15AM, 11:15AM, and 5:00PM & 7:00PM

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OVERWORKED AND LOOKING FOR LOVE

BY DAVID H. KIM

On Friday, June 1, 2012 Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work (CFW) hosted two distinguished gentlemen in a sold-out discussion entitled "Overworked and Looking for Love." Neil Clark Warren, chairman and co-founder of eHarmony and Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, tackled some of the hard realities of living in a city where people often prioritize their work over relationships.

What does the co-founder of the largest, most successful online dating service have to do with the president of one of the most influential seminaries in America? It came as a surprise that before launching eHarmony at the age of 65, Warren had served as the Dean of the School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary. As a matter of fact, it was his work in marriage counseling that fueled his concern over the state of marriage and unmarried today.

Over many years, Warren and Mouw developed a deep respect and admiration for the other's academic contributions and Christian commitment. Their close friendship and jovial camaraderie was evident in their buoyant interactions and thoughtful engagement of the other's work.

The CFW has brought in Christian practitioners over the past few years to speak on a variety of topics relating to faith and work in the areas of

politics, business, arts, etc. It was a particular honor to hear two recognized experts—one a clinical psychologist and the other a leading theologian—discuss the realities of trying to find love in the midst of over-worked and over-booked schedules. Through the research and data he's accumulated over the many years,

"Too many people are looking for that perfect someone without first knowing themselves."

Warren has identified 29 dimensions of compatibility that are important factors in understanding compatibility in marriage. From a theological perspective, Mouw validated the importance of such sociological data when it comes to understanding how common grace is at work to strengthen relationships and marriages—Christian and non-Christian alike.

In the midst of fascinating statistics and trends, both Warren and Mouw stressed that the key in finding lasting love was to first know yourself. Too many people are looking for that perfect someone without first knowing themselves. This can and has led to disaster. Warren followed up by saying it is only the Christian gospel that ultimately can help people get right with themselves, by first getting right with God.

His response echoed what Tim and Kathy Keller taught at

the Sex, Singleness and Marriage conference a few months prior to this event concerning how we need the gospel to expose our tendency to idolize relationships. It is the security and love revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ that uniquely enables people to look at themselves and others with a humility and sobriety that brings a loving and wise discernment to all our relationships.

For New Yorkers, there seem to be innumerable and daunting challenges to dating and marriage. People study longer to prepare for their vocations and relocate frequently to advance their careers. The drive to remain competitive and successful escalates the number of hours we find ourselves at work. Singles have a hard time meeting other singles and marrieds have a hard time building deep and lasting bonds. Despite even the remarkable claim that eHarmony is currently responsible for 5% of the new marriages in the country, much more needs to be done to help heal many broken relationships. But, as a concerned and committed academic, entrepreneur, and Christian, Warren has been a significant agent of cultural renewal, whose contributions have made a considerable impact in the church and our culture at large.

BOOK REVIEW—*THE DEMISE OF GUYS: WHY BOYS ARE STRUGGLING AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT*

BY MICHAEL KELLER

There is a new book called *The Demise of Guys: Why Boys are Struggling and What We Can Do About It*. It sheds light on the problems facing young adult males. The book cites research that young men have become hooked on two mediums: video games and online porn. The link is that they both focus on various forms of arousal. Similar to gambling and drug addictions, researchers are saying it is possible to become emotionally addicted to video games and porn due to the arousal effect of each. Brain imaging technology shows that both video games and porn lead to a constant state of stimulation that becomes problematic when the individual does not know how to operate without this input, or is continuously seeking it.

While the book details the psychological and physical effects of these vices, it doesn't offer much in the way of solutions other than getting individuals to stop using them. That is poor advice considering that most people cannot change their character by mere determination. If Scottish pastor Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) is to be believed, then the only way one changes is by the "expulsive power of a new affection." Something else has

to become more lovely and important than the destructive things that currently inhabit the heart.

In this instance, porn tends to give a sense of intimacy while actually not being intimate with anyone at all. In fact, if anything, it tends to objectify the individual viewed, leading those who

**"Real Life IS RISKY,
Pixels ARE NOT."**

watch porn to see someone as primarily physical and therefore an object to be used and not a person to be communicated with.

If porn gives a false sense of intimacy, then video games give a false sense of accomplishment. What better way to feel a sense of reward than to beat all the levels, and unlock all the secret passages and boards of the latest game that others of your generation are playing as well? Games like "Call of Duty" release new versions yearly so that individuals can spend hundreds of hours to master the game, only to start over again 365 days later.

Interestingly, while stimulation and addiction appear to be a physical problem as much

as a spiritual and psychological one, porn and video games ultimately lead men to become less willing to take risks. It is easy to feel a sense of accomplishment and intimacy from the comfort of your own couch. When given the option between getting a job, working at school, or starting a family—why would men take that risk when there is more to gain and less to lose by sticking with the comfort electronic images? **Real life is risky, pixels are not.**

So how do we change this? Can we merely tell men and women to stop? Will that really work? Probably not. These individuals need to have people close enough to them and who care enough to reveal the emptiness of these life-substitutes. That can only happen if there is a larger framework of purpose and truth that is available for them to experience. Here we enter into the world of faith. What is good? What is right? What should we do with our lives? What is the purpose of everything? At the end of the day males aren't failing because of porn and video games—they are failing because they don't have a significance outside of themselves. And only Jesus can offer that.

A GUIDING LIGHT: THOUGHTS FROM AN ARTS MINISTRY COORDINATOR

BY MARIA FEE

Kenyon Adams and I are privileged to gather annually with arts ministry leaders and pastors to artists at beautiful Laity Lodge in the hill country of Texas. These encounters are remarkable in that we're able to reflect on what God is doing in our ministry and observe how he is working in other artists around the country. In the short time span of four years we have seen numerous arts ministries develop throughout the country—a thrilling validation of the arts. Furthermore, through various Laity conversations we recognize how Redeemer has been a beacon to other churches and artists in this movement. As an arts ministry existing in a prominent church we have helped pilot similar ministries all over the world. By our mere existence here in NYC, we are able to lead artists and the arts in other cities and communities.

As I transition out of my staff position at Redeemer, I would like to offer Redeemer my multifaceted gratitude. The arts ministry has afforded opportunities to hundreds in our city and thousands beyond.

I can attest to the praises I often receive on Redeemer's behalf and include myself among the multitude. Tim and Kathy Keller laid the foundation for the Center for Faith & Work (CFW) with their unique vision of a church for the city. This vision has shed a strong guiding light. As I look back to my initial involvement as a volunteer leader in the nascent years of CFW I remember feeling that I had finally found home.

Every home needs a housekeeper. I could, therefore, relate my duties to the vision and shape of the existing arts ministry, but the profound truth lies in how Redeemer has shaped me. Both the extraordinary experiences and the wonderful people with whom I have dialogued have contributed to the next stage of my faith and art journey—formal studies at Fuller Theological Seminary's PhD program for Theology and Culture.

More thanks should go to all involved, especially to the dynamic and loyal colleagues and leaders I work with. Our

collective mission has led many artists to find their place in the church and in the world. And I hope that our artists have blessed the rest of the congregation with our exhibits, performances and culture club events over the years. As Redeemer grows and stretches out into the city with three worshipping communities it will provide more strength to the beacon; this movement of the gospel. The arts can provide a special quality to this light. As three *and* one, Redeemer will continue to illuminate glimpses of God in order to lead many home.

I've been honored to work in the Center for Faith & Work and am even more privileged to exhibit my art, offer thanks and say farewell at the next InterArts Fellowship. Please join the arts ministry in thinking about Eternal Life at the next InterArts Fellowship on July 16 at the W83 Ministry Center. We hope to celebrate Eternal Life on this summer evening as we hear about and glimpse how Eternity affects our present lives as artists.

DOWNTOWN CHALLENGE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

stepped into volunteer roles or who have signed up to serve in our congregation. And thank you to so many of you who have prayed for us

and the Challenge. God has shown us again of his provision and plan for Redeemer in the city and I am truly humbled by how he has done

far beyond what we thought was possible. I can't wait to see what he does in the months and years ahead!



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ACCOUNTABILITY... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

whole. I ate...a lot. Unfortunately, nobody really considers overeating a problem, because we're so acculturated to consumption. My hunger, however, was beyond any semblance of acceptability. I would buy one of those cookies as big as a human head, eat it, and then go purchase a carton of ice cream as a chaser. I'd then go punish myself at the gym for a while.

This cycle lasted for years. It's still painful to read my old diary entries from this period in my life. Thankfully, I finally sought some assistance through a Christian-based online program. Day fifteen of the program, you have to choose an accountability partner, and that's when I realized what my secrecy and separation-of-functions lifestyle had been lacking all along: Accountability.

Up until that time, I had

attended Redeemer for years, but had never applied for membership or attended a small group meeting. The person I chose to be my accountability partner was not only my best friend, but a member of Redeemer as well. That same year she began hosting a community group, and it was the first time I had truly been immersed in a community that cared about my character. They also cared about my trials, and triumphs. It has been unlike any experience I've ever had, and the community I found encouraged me to finally complete the Redeemer Membership process.

We all need to be held accountable. I've always had trustworthy friends, but it's only been in the last three years that I've allowed them to hold me accountable for my actions. No one really likes to be told what to do. It's an act

of humility to allow others to speak into your life. Still, Proverbs 15:32 teaches us that "he who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding." True friends hold each other accountable. They do so in a loving way that pleases God.

Today, not only does my small group hold me accountable, but they are my best friends in the world. I've been a believer since I learned to read, but had never been a part of a community group. If not for the friends God has blessed me with, I never would have known my idols. I never would have seen those things that I tried to replace with God to satisfy my deepest longings. God places people in our lives to draw us closer to Him.