

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

JANUARY 2013

A CHURCH NOT FOR OURSELVES

BY MAI HAIRU-POWELL

Happy New Year! We will continue this month and until June to meditate on Generosity, our ministry year's theme. We began last September with a seven-week sermon series on Generosity and then have continued with a study on Acts. We learned that the first community of believers was radically generous with their possessions because of their newly found boldness in the Spirit and the fearlessness that came out of an assurance in Christ's love. It was the quality of their community that demonstrated and proved the reality that the gospel changes lives.

You may be wondering why Generosity was chosen for this ministry year's theme. At Re-

deemer, our collegiate model is in full swing with three dynamic congregations. This is a model that hundreds prayed and fasted for and sacrificially gave to for years, beginning with the first Vision Campaign taking us to multiple sites, the RENEW Campaign to purchase our W83 building and the Downtown Challenge to start a new congregation. We all stand on the shoulders of those who stepped out in faith as early as 1997 to get our church to where we are today.

In 2012 alone, we opened our own ministry center, went from 5 to 8 worship services, broke our 6,000-attendance threshold for worship services and launched a brand new congre-

gation that is already thriving with 1,000 to 1,200 worshipping together on Sundays. What an amazing God we serve!

Although the growth we experienced in 2012 is amazing to say the least, more importantly, with it comes a level of responsibility that calls us to be more sacrificial in serving our church and our city. Because of the fruit we are experiencing from the collegiate model, this is a challenge more than ever to be a church not for ourselves. This is a challenge more than ever to step out of our comfort zones and serve on Sundays, serve with Hope For New York, serve as a Community Group leader or host.

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BEYOND ABUSE SEMINAR

Saturday, February 23, 2013 from 10:00AM to 5:00PM at the Redeemer Offices

Beyond Abuse is a seminar on dealing with the weight of sexual abuse for survivors, loved ones of survivors and those who minister to survivors. The seminar is sponsored by the Redeemer Diaconate and Counseling Center. All are welcome.

Sallie Culbreth, the Founder and Executive Director of Committed to Freedom Ministries (www.committedtofreedom.org), will be the speaker. Cost: \$30 (lunch included), limited scholarships available. For more information email amungo@redeemer.com or call (917) 605-4040.



THE W83RD STREET MINISTRY CENTER IN ACTION

BY BRENT BOUNDS

On a Saturday in November I experienced a day in the life of our W83 Ministry Center that exemplified the kind of community for which we have hoped and prayed. I began the day at 8:30AM by leading 35 couples through the Preparing for Marriage seminar where we looked at God's plan and purpose for marriage as well as the transformational effect of the Gospel on our relationships.

During a break in the seminar, I was able to go upstairs and witness dozens of families assembling Thanksgiving dinners for Here's Life Inner City's "Boxes of Love." Chil-

dren of all ages and their parents were decorating cardboard boxes, placing food items inside and writing cards to the families who would be receiving these gifts.

Later in the afternoon I attended the first funeral in our building, where I joined the West Side community in the sanctuary as we grieved the loss of an infant in our congregation. At the end of the day, my family and I celebrated a pre-Thanksgiving dinner with the Redeemer Young Couples Network in a large classroom at W83.

What struck me about that day was the diversity of life

experience and the variety of ministry that was taking place in our building within the span of 12 hours. Some were contemplating or planning for a new stage of life, some were celebrating a season of gratitude with friends, some were clinging to each other and asking God for strength in the midst of unimaginable loss, and some were serving the poor in our city.

This was the church as it should be—a community of believers and seekers serving, growing, grieving and celebrating together.

GENEROSITY TO THE MERCY FUND

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

- James 1:17

Since 1991, we on the Diaconate have witnessed many lives being stabilized and transformed by the gospel. We want to thank you for rallying in support of the Diaconate, especially in this year's challenging climate. This could not have

happened without your partnership through your generous and sacrificial giving.

Your gifts, combined with your prayers, help and strengthen the Diaconate to provide holistic care and financial assistance to those going through a hard time in our church family. We are so moved at the generosity of our congregation and the love of God that is being poured out among us. The verse from James tells us that

every good and perfect gift proceeds from God, not just pertaining to this life but the one that is to come. We praise and thank God for his grace as we reflect on the goodness and perfection of the gifts we continue to receive.

If you are a Redeemer member or regular attendee with a financial or other practical need, please call the Diaconate Helpline (917) 719-0259. Thank you.

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

Hunter College Auditorium
East 69th St.
(between Park & Lexington)
Services at
10:30AM & 6PM

W83rd Ministry Center
150 W. 83rd St.
(between Columbus & Amsterdam)
Services at
9:15AM, 11:15AM, 5PM, 7PM

Metropolitan Pavilion
125 W. 18th St.
(between 6th & 7th Aves.)
Services at
9:30AM & 5PM

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MISSIONS SUNDAY AT REDEEMER

On January 27, Redeemer's 2013 overseas mission trips will be highlighted at all services. This year we have great expectations that more people than ever before will go on these life-changing trips. Ten trips are scheduled, with the goal of sending up to 200 people to South Africa, Chile, India, Argentina and more.

Here are answers to some common questions:

Q: What exactly is a missions trip?

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

Q: How do Redeemer missions trips differ from just a tourism opportunity?

A: We 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, Tokyo, and Mumbai, among other locations. Projects the teams developed and implemented included:

- Teaching Business and Finance classes to help adults start their own businesses
- Hosting/Conducting various workshops and seminars related to professional development and "Faith & Work"

- Medical professionals gave specialized care to rural populations.
- English classes were taught to university and middle school students

Q: How can I find out more about past missions trips?

A: Funds raised by our teams were used to initiate outreach events such as a jazz concert, a children's festival, and a café worship concert. Funds also underwrote initiatives such as property enhancement and infrastructure projects. Teams brought over much needed materials such as dental and medical supplies, new clothes, and sports equipment (donated by various companies) that benefited the local residents. For a comprehensive recap of 2012 trips, please visit the website at www.redeemer.com/missions.

Q: Who should go on a missions trip?

A: 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 includes 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.

In 2012 many Community Groups went on the trip as a group. Says Group Leader Yvette Thompson: "Going on a mission trip with my community group helped us to truly get to know and grow with each other. We had the opportunity to realize

each other's strengths and encourage each other in new and different situations." Adds Christi Jingoian, "As a member of my small group I have felt the unity and deep level we have gotten from going togeth-



Previous mission trip to Argentina

er. Our relationships, which were strong, have gotten much stronger. Because they have been strengthened, the body of Christ and His church in NYC shines!" We're excited about the prospect of more CGs getting involved in foreign missions! But whether you take a trip with your group or as an individual, it's a blessing



Previous mission trip to Mozambique

to bond with your teammates as you form "One Body in Christ" while serving together.

On Sunday, January 27, look for the Missions Table at Coffee Hour. Literature on our upcoming mission trips will be available, and former team

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GROWING TOGETHER IN THE WORD

BY AARON BJERKE, ES COMMUNITY GROUP DIRECTOR

What does your pursuit of God look like? Do you keep your quiet times with God to yourself? Do you struggle with having a consistent devotional life? If we are honest, each and every one of us knows what it is like to *not* make God a priority, even when we know how important it is.

When I talk with people at Redeemer, many say that their devotional life is always done alone. In other words, we don't share with one another about what God is doing in our lives, or what he is revealing to us in his word. The reality is that very few people are wired to have a robust, but private relationship with God. It is difficult to pursue God in isolation, and it should come as no surprise to us to find our spiritual growth ebbing more often than flowing when our private walks with God are completely isolated from our communities.

Something that you might try this year is tracking along with the devotional lives of some of your friends. Introducing a corporate element to your private devotions may sound like an oxymoron, but

in actuality, not sharing what God is doing in your private walk with Him goes against the grain of making God's love known (Psalm 89:1). We see this in Paul's letters. He shares with others what he is praying about (Philippians 1:3-8), as well as his intimate moments with God (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Have you shared with someone lately what God has done in your private devotions?

I was recently encouraged to hear that five East Side Community Group Leader-Coaches came together in the fall to read the Bible in 90 days. Yes, the entire Bible in 90 days! This was a personal goal they shared, as none of them had ever read the Bible from cover to cover, and they were excited to see anew the overarching biblical narrative of Christ's redemptive plan.

There is also a women's CG that is using the M'Cheyne Read-Through-the-Bible plan together. The women read three chapters a day, then log into a Google share doc to record just one observation they want to share from their read-

ing. A dad I know with grown sons is doing the same thing—M'Cheyne reading plan plus Google doc—with his adult sons who live around the world.

Now, I am in no way saying that one must read the Bible in 90 days or use the M'Cheyne/Google.doc plan in order to have a robust devotional life. What I am advocating is growing together by celebrating with each other how God has moved in one another's personal time with God. Whether you study the same passages throughout the year, or share about your prayer lives on a weekly or monthly basis, add a community element to your private devotions. In this way, you will be encouraged and motivated by the testimonies of your friends, and you in turn will be a blessing to them.

What you will find is that there is much joy in sharing with others how God has been moving in your life through your prayer and Bible study. God uses us to spur one another to grow in Him. Have you taken advantage of the community he's provided for you?

MISSIONS SUNDAY AT REDEEMER... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

members will 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 during the services.

There is much need in the

world, and it's a blessing to be able to assist our international church plants in loving and serving their communities "with actions and in truth." We hope you'll prayerfully consider joining us this year.

"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth." – 1 John 3:17-18

ALONE I WOULD NOT HAVE DONE IT

In a recent high school youth group meeting I was teaching on Psalm 51. To illustrate a point about the nature of sin, I shared a passage from St. Augustine's *Confessions*, in which he remembers stealing pears one night with a group of friends. This thievery, as he recounts, was not because of hunger, or even a particular delight in pears. Rather, it was because of a desire to do what was not permitted: *"I stole something which I had in plenty and of much better quality. My desire was to enjoy not what I sought by stealing but merely the excitement of thieving and the doing of what was wrong."* I found this to be very insightful as I reflected on the nature of sin with our high school students.

And yet, perhaps the most helpful part of this anecdote comes a few pages later. St. Augustine continues to reflect

on this incident and discerns another, perhaps deeper, root for his thievery: *"Had I been alone I would not have done it—I remember my state of mind to be thus at the time—alone I would never have done it. Therefore my love in that act was to be associated with the gang in whose company I did it."* Here we are reminded that at the very root of so many of our choices to pursue evil is a desire for acceptance among our peers (as well as an ignorance of our acceptance in Christ). St. Augustine concludes, *"Friendship can be a dangerous enemy."*

The lesson here is that friendship is *powerful*, able to produce great goods as well as great evils. Certainly many of us have done evil things that we never would have done if we were alone. But the converse is also true. Many Christians have been inspired to

pursue goodness, mercy, and justice precisely because of their company of friends. If this story teaches us anything it is that because of our associations we may do things we never would have done alone—whether for good or ill.

As I reflected on these things with my students, I also thought more broadly of the Redeemer community. Christian community is essential for so many reasons, and here we are reminded of one of those reasons: because of friends we may be inspired to do things—for good—that we would never have done alone.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

— Hebrews 10:24-25

A CHURCH NOT FOR OURSELVES... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

This is a challenge more than ever to serve the city by joining ongoing hurricane relief efforts to serve the thousands who are still without power, heat, running water or homes. This is a challenge more than ever to reach out to a neighbor and invite them over or cultivate a relationship with someone in your building who may be alone. This is a challenge more than ever to serve in our vocations as a dedication to the renewal of all things and not out of selfish gain. We as a body of

believers at Redeemer need this theme more than ever to work against our naturally selfish tendencies of being consumers.

If you are a believer, it's not a question of whether God will call you to live sacrificially or not. He *is* calling you. And more than that, a sacrificial life is part of our sanctification. Ultimately, it's not 'if' or 'when,' but rather 'how.' How sacrificial living will look in each person's life will be discovered only by prayer, a community of like-minded believers meditating on

the scripture together, and spiritual sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Last month we meditated on his incarnation and his promised second coming during Advent. If we truly believe in his promised second coming, which is the full manifestation of his redemption, we must consider how we can live in such a way that demonstrates and offers a foretaste of that full glory and joy to come. What comforts are we holding onto that are meaningless in light

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FILM REVIEW: *LES MISERABLES*

BY TIM AND KATHY KELLER

I could make this review, very, very short: It's been a long time since Kathy and I left a theater with tears running down our cheeks.

To expand a bit. When *Les Miz* played on Broadway in the 80's and 90's, it was our go-to play for visiting friends, family, and pastors. We wanted to show off what was the best Broadway could do. I remember one pastor turning to

me during the performance and saying "I know what this show is about, but what do all these other people who come think this show is about?" He was stunned that a show that revolved so obviously around the conflict between grace and legalism, love and hate had become so popular.

The movie faithfully follows every nuance of the Broadway production. While film critics

and moviegoers may debate the wisdom of transferring a stage production wholesale onto film, I for one am glad that millions of viewers will be exposed to the themes of redemption, self-righteousness, and self-sacrifice. Critics uncomfortable with the unabashed sincerity with which those themes are treated have mocked the film as "risible." The rest of us can weep tears of joy.

A CHURCH NOT FOR OURSELVES... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

of the new Jerusalem? If the Holy Spirit gives us boldness and assurance of our adoption, then what can we put to death to better live out our lives as children of God? (Romans 8:15-16)

Without a community of believers living sacrificially in service with joy and gladness, our numerical growth will just be numbers of consumers and

not lives that have been transformed by the gospel. In the early church of the book of Acts, through their generous community, God added new believers. "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46-47) What a blessing that Redeemer grew so much in 2012 and will continue to grow. As we seek ways to live sacrificially, this only makes us expectant and excited for what 2013 will hold and the new believers God will bring into our community.