

FEBRUARY 2013

PRAISING GOD FOR ALLOWING US TO GIVE GENEROUSLY

BY TIM KELLER

First, I want to thank you for your commitment, generosity and faithfulness as a church in 2012. We moved into our first church building at W83 and added a sixth service in the first half of last year. We launched our Downtown congregation in the second half of the year. With the addition of three services, our weekly attendance increased between 700 and 1000 people. And more of our congregation became actively involved as volunteers and leaders. This was a landmark year!

To support all of this we made an ardent appeal for year-

end giving and your response was tremendous. You gave a total of \$12.4M! This is 16% more than 2011 giving, and \$1M over the budgeted goal for the year.

In 1 Chronicles 29:14 David rejoices before God because of the generosity of the people of Israel using these words: *“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.”*

I am moved to claim the same words. It would be hard to overstate how encourag-

ing this is to me as the leader of Redeemer’s move to a collegiate model. In the past year we have taken the church from one centralized congregation with five services to three collegiate congregations with eight services. We did this for three primary reasons:

To grow so that more of NYC can be exposed to the gospel. For instance, almost 1/3 of our congregation lives downtown. Our new DT congregation will help those of us living downtown to invite our friends to neighborhood-based activities and services.

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THE DANGERS OF “FAKING IT” IN MINISTRY

BY KATHY KELLER

When Tim and I first went into the ministry, a wise person said something shocking to us about the dangers we would be facing: “Being in ministry will either make you a much better Christian, or a much worse Christian.” I could easily understand how being in a ministry position could make you a better Christian—think of all the Bible study and prayer

we would be doing, and all the Christian books we would be reading. Surely talking about and using the means of grace every day would only help us to become wise, mature and godly!

Since this was a person we respected, I felt compelled to consider the possibility that he might know something I didn’t about how ministering to oth-

ers could make you a worse Christian. In the nearly 40 years since encountering those words, I have come to believe very strongly that the pull to becoming a worse Christian—cold, distant from God, hypocritical, and even involved in burn-down-your-life scandals—is far stronger when you are ministering to others than

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BEYOND ABUSE SEMINAR

Beyond Abuse is a seminar on dealing with the weight of sexual abuse. It is for survivors, loved ones of survivors and those who minister to survivors. All are welcome.

Saturday, February 23 from 10:00AM to 5:00PM
Redeemer Presbyterian Church Offices, 1359 Broadway (at 36th St.)
Cost: \$30 (lunch included), limited scholarships available

Email amungo@redeemer.com or call (917) 605-4040 for more information.

Sallie Culbreth, the Founder and Executive Director of Committed to Freedom Ministries (www.committedtofreedom.org), will be the speaker.

Sponsored by the Redeemer Diaconate and Counseling Center.

PRAISING GOD FOR... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

To better engage the energies of our congregation. It's harder to get involved and make a difference in a large church; this decentralization allowed many more of you to serve our church and the city.

To prepare us for the next generation of Redeemer. We will continue to start new worship sites, identify and train new pastors and leaders, and engage and serve the city in new ways. While I plan to be at Redeemer in some capacity the rest of my life, I know the best stewardship of the church God

has built here is to empower the next generation of pastoral and lay leaders.

To see the collegiate model continue to flourish, we need to grow. We must grow in the number of congregants involved in serving, the number of givers and the amount of giving to our operating budget. Continued growth will allow us to support the costs of the W83 building, the DT congregation, new services and the 1000 new attendees. The Renew Campaign and the Downtown Challenge fund

will cover these start-up costs for the next three years, but as these funds are spent our annual giving to the operating budget will need to increase. Our RENEW Campaign and the Downtown Challenge were investments in growth; I'm thrilled to see the growth happening and the giving increase to sustain it!

On behalf of all our leaders, I want to say thank you! You've encouraged all of us profoundly, and your response points to God's work among us.

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

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
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CFW 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

The Center for Faith & Work (CFW) is a church-based ministry. It grew out of Redeemer's vision to see the gospel change everything – our hearts, how we relate to other people, and how the world works. Given the importance of career and achievement in the lives of most of us at Redeemer, our lives wouldn't be gospel-changed without a focus on why we work, how we work, and what we do. At the tenth anniversary of launching this ministry and as I turn the leadership of CFW over to the new Executive Director, David Kim, I'd like to share some of the core values that I believe helped shape the leaders, programs and impact of CFW in our church and beyond.

At the core of Redeemer is the promise that the gospel changes everything. In CFW change is the goal – changed people who can then bring change in the form of hope, truth, justice, love, and renewal into their jobs. In the beginning we avoided programs that would draw large crowds of Christians, like speaker events with famous people, but wouldn't really change anyone or anything. Similarly, we don't want to create the checklist or playbook for Christians in the work place, which might help a person conform to a certain ideal behavior on the outside but not change their heart. We

don't answer questions like, "Should I take this part in a play?" or "Should I advertise this product?" but instead point people to a deeper understanding of the God they believe in and what Christ did on the cross for them.

Redeemer is committed to a definition of church as the



Katherine Leary Alsdorf with the Rev. David Kim at the microphone.

people who both gather on Sunday and are scattered the other six days of the week in neighborhoods and institutions throughout the city. The work of the church is both what we do as a community and what we do as individuals in the world. We are a "priesthood of all believers" and God's spirit is poured out on us to serve him and point others to him wherever he has called us to work. The structure and mission of Redeemer has reflected this focus on supporting the people of the church as we bring our experience of the gospel with us out into the world. The gospel is meant to transform and renew our culture, and we can be part of that renewal as we work in the companies, institutions, and professions that comprise

BY KATHERINE LEARY ALSDORF
the society in which we live.

From the beginning, CFW sought to be lay-leader-driven. Application of the gospel to the various motivations, conditions, and experiences of vocation requires people from all professions who understand the idols and worldviews of those fields, have repented of their own false gods and self-righteousness, and can begin ripple effects of gospel renewal with others. After 10 years, we've worked with more than 250 leaders who have in turn led programs for more than 2000 people.

The final core value I want to recognize is our emphasis on theology – specifically, what we can learn from Genesis through Revelation about who God created us to be and what he made us to do, why it's so hard and the world is so broken, and what difference the gospel makes in our work lives. We sought to challenge the highly educated Redeemer congregation to study theology in a way that deeply connects to their real lives in work and home. Five years ago we began the Gotham Fellowship, which offers a 9-month intensive in theological study and application, and this theological foundation undergirds all of CFW's programs.

I look forward to seeing how God works in Redeemer, CFW and all of our work lives in the next 10 years.

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GENEROUS HEARTS, GENEROUS HANDS

BY AMY ALEXANDER, WS PROGRAM & VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Over the last several months, the Redeemer community has been learning a broader definition of “generosity” when it comes to our ministry, hospitality, power, wealth and relationships. This yearlong theme has been trickling down to the youngest Redeemer attendees through several service projects the Children’s Ministry and Hope for New York have hosted.

One event was called *Boxes of Love*. The children packed donated food that was delivered to homes throughout New York. After this event Redeemer families were invited to bring toys to church to sponsor *His Toy Store*. There are *His Toy Stores* around the city where parents in need were able to

select Christmas gifts for their children. Some Redeemer families not only donated toys but also helped host the events. At one of *His Toy Stores*, some of our families brought their children to the South Bronx for a Birthday Party for Jesus where Redeemer children and the neighborhood children were able to celebrate together as some of the parents selected Christmas gifts.

At Redeemer’s Birthday Party for Jesus, the children had the opportunity to wrap gifts for children who are part of *A House on Beekman* in the South Bronx. In January the west side congregation packed hygiene care kits for those in our neighborhood without homes. These kits are being hand delivered

throughout February during Hope for New York’s *Don’t Walk By* campaign.

During Sunday School the children have been talking about gratefulness. As we thank God for all he has done, our prayer is that as our hearts become grateful, our hands would become generous. The children have decorated “hands” and they are hung on the third floor of West 83rd as a visual of all God is doing to build generous hearts and generous hands at Redeemer this year.

We invite you to be part of what God is doing in the children of Redeemer. You are welcome to visit a class and to consider joining a children’s ministry volunteer team. You are needed!

THE DANGERS OF... (CONT’D FROM PAGE 1)

are the benefits that may accrue by daily association with spiritual things.

One explanation that is almost always suggested is that the devil takes a greater interest in attacking those who speak for Christ (and I am including both lay men and women as well as those in the “professional ministry”) so as to derail their influence for the Gospel. There is that, of course. However, what is done to us by the forces of darkness is nothing compared to what we do to ourselves.

The day will come when you have to deliver a sermon,

or counsel someone in need, or listen to a heartsick soul, and you will be in no fit condition to do it. Your prayer life may have been missing, or you have an unreconciled relationship that needs attention, or any number of things may have interrupted your communion with God and your rejoicing in the Gospel. (I knew a woman who claimed she had taken “maternity leave” from her relationship with God...) When that day arrives, you will have two choices: sit down, at whatever expense of time and ruination to your schedule, and get right with God. Then, and

only then, attempt to minister in his name.

What you will be tempted to do, and what most of us do actually do, is to say “I don’t have the time to get back into fellowship with God before this sermon/lesson/counseling session/pastoral appointment. But I know what needs to be said or done, so I’ll just do it (even though my heart is cold) and I’ll get straightened out with God AFTERWARDS.” And, if you’re unlucky, you’ll get away with it. The talk gets delivered and is even praised. The person you

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THE LOSS OF LENT

BY CHRIS MCNERNEY, EAST SIDE ELEMENTARY COORDINATOR

Holiday seasons, while often marked with joyful anticipation and excitement, are also often accompanied by feelings of sorrow and longing. The death of a loved one, the loss of employment, or the coinciding of a holiday with a natural disaster can take a season set aside for celebration and imbue it with heaviness. With the season of Lent, however, we are invited to enter into a time of contemplation where loss and longing are front and center. Lent begins with the sober reminder that we “are dust” and it is “to dust” we shall return.

At the very beginning, when man and woman enjoyed perfect fellowship with our Creator, a decision was made that had everlasting consequences. Rather than trusting God and His perfect will, Adam and Eve wanted to be the masters of their universe and chose to disobey God. As sin entered the world, so did a loss of harmony in nature, and most gravely, a gulf that eternally separated God and his creatures from one another. In the weeks leading to

Easter, the consequences of sin are cause for reflection on what life was supposed to be like. As we face the struggles of our work, the conflicts that arise in our relationships, and the unsteadiness that often marks our

*By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.*

– Genesis 3:19 ESV

day to day relationship with God, we see a world bent by the weight of sin. We are reminded of our “groaning as in the pains of childbirth” and the eager anticipation we have for “our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.”

We then turn our eyes to gaze upon the God-man, who entered into our suffering by sharing in all of the moments we experience as people. Homelessness, hunger, temptation, rejection from friends, and

the loss of loved ones were all a part of the Messiah’s journey. Then, in the culmination of his mission, Jesus is sentenced to death, tortured, and nailed to a cross. We see in the cross that this is the kind of sacrifice and loss that is necessary to make restitution for what was first lost in the garden. The loss of innocence in the garden, required the loss of the One who was truly innocent on the cross.

On the cross, however, is an offering that points to life. In Jesus’s death, we see that the loss is not final and the longing will not go unanswered. After three days, Jesus rose from the grave and pronounced victory over death and sin. In Jesus’ victory, we have been given access to our Heavenly Father, something that was impossible just three days prior. We see that our losses, from those that we love, to the reality of indwelling sin, will not remain forever. We know this because the grave came the empty tomb. Out of death, there came true life. In the end, in Lent we learn to yearn for the promise of Easter.

THE DANGERS OF... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

meet with professes gratitude and seems to be helped. The meeting runs smoothly.

So you do it again.

And again.

And again.

And after a while you hardly even admit to yourself that you are faking your interest

in the other person, you are faking your enthusiasm for Christ and his Gospel, you are faking your entire Christian life, because you don’t even remember what it was like to have a close relationship to God. You have become hollow. You may still look and sound good on

the outside, but inside the reality of God’s presence is gone.

Sometimes this hollowness is uncovered when an apparently strong and vibrant Christian is found to be living a double life, addicted to porn or drugs or alcohol, or having
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THE DANGERS OF... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

an affair, or some other splashy scandal. If you are spared this public humiliation (which is by no means the worst thing that can happen—at least it wakes you up to your spiritual condition), the emptiness of your heart may increase to the level that it can no longer be ignored. Perhaps your faith wavers, or you become cynical about the possibility of genuine connection to God, assuming that those who claim it are deluded.

Or perhaps depression sets in, and with it, a desire to leave ministry altogether. Worst of all, perhaps you merely continue on, mouthing the words, smiling the smile, praying with needy people and going

through all the motions, all the while internally wishing you or they were far, far away. You may be clever enough to hide the hollowness in your heart from those who look to you for spiritual nurture, but those who know you better are aware of the disconnect between your outward persona and your loveless heart. Many adult children raised in the church have bitter memories standing between them and a faith of their own, due to parents who were one thing on the outside and another on the inside.

What is the answer? To run to Christ in repentance, no matter at what level or for how long the disconnect has been operating, and throw your-

self on his mercy. He forgives freely. The only ones who find no forgiveness are those who refuse to ask for it.

Further, find a safe spiritual friend or group to whom you can confess what has happened and be accountable for making whatever changes in your life are necessary to return to your first love. The danger is real, and really, really dangerous. Your life may blow up, or it may slowly implode. But “faking it” in order to get through your ministry is like sailing onto the rocks. You make shipwreck of your faith, and take a lot of other people down with you.

CFW 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

Katherine will continue to work with CFW as a strategic advisor and help with leadership development at Redeemer and other organizations.