

REDEEMER Report



FEBRUARY 2014

DOUBTERS WELCOME

BY TIM KELLER

As a college student I attended a campus Christian fellowship that always had a book table of Christian literature. There was a little pamphlet there called *Doubters Welcome*, and I always wanted to be part of a church that had that spirit. The third of Redeemer's "core values" is that we be a place where those who are not believers (or who are not sure what they believe) find that their questions are invited, their doubts and difficulties are respected, and their struggles have been anticipated. We are relentlessly aware of and glad for the presence of doubters in our midst. We are very relentless yet extremely non-combative as we present the reasonable

beauty of the Christian faith in every aspect of our ministry.

Why do we do this?

First the joyful effects of the gospel in our own lives give us an enormous energy for witness. How can we keep our mouths closed about such a wonder? But second, the humbling nature of the gospel leads us to approach non-believers without superiority and with respect. Since we are saved only by God's grace and not our goodness, we expect to often find wisdom and compassion in non-Christians that at many points may exceed our own. Third, the love experience of the gospel removes from us the fear of others' disapproval.

All this drains us of influences that can lead us to treat non-Christians as "evangelism cases"—people that we relate to, talk to, and care for only in order to win them over to our side. That is to objectify and dehumanize them, and, not surprisingly, it is unwinsome. We don't love people in order to evangelize them. Rather, we evangelize them in order to love them. The more these dynamics are present in our lives the more Redeemer will powerfully draw in new people like a magnet (Acts 2:47).

How do we do this?

In evangelism, we take we take an intelligent, not an
(Continued on page 2)

BEYOND ABUSE SEMINAR

The Diaconate is sponsoring a one-day seminar for women and men affected directly or indirectly by childhood and adolescent sexual abuse (survivors, loved ones/friends of survivors, leaders ministering to survivors.)

Saturday, February 8 from 10:00AM to 5:00PM

Redeemer Presbyterian Church Offices, 1359 Broadway (at 36th St.)

\$35 registration fee. Scholarships are available.

Registration Information at www.redeemer.com/care/diaconate/seminars.html

LEARN HOW TO ENGAGE THE HOMELESS AT *DON'T WALK BY*

The people living on the street whom we encounter daily here in New York—the man wrapped up in a blanket on the sidewalk, the woman weaving in and out of packed subway cars with a cup—can stir up conflicting feelings inside of us.

We feel annoyed, or guilty, or sad, or frustrated. The problem of homelessness is so huge, so broad-reaching...how are we supposed to approach it?

New Yorkers are in desperate need of a practical way to serve our homeless brothers and sisters, and that's why we at Hope for New York are so excited about this month's *Don't Walk By* outreach.

Don't Walk By is an annual collaboration of faith-based organizations that are committed to serving the homeless (including Hope for New York

affiliates like The Bowery Mission, NYC Relief, and NYC Rescue Mission). Hope for New York has supported this movement for the past six years by recruiting volunteers and providing financial support.

Three Saturdays in February (8, 15, 22) and the first Saturday in March, hundreds of *Don't Walk By* volunteers will canvass Manhattan on a search for the homeless, offering the people they encounter care kits and an invitation to return to a nearby church for food and medical assistance.

But, beyond looking to meet immediate and practical needs, *Don't Walk By* volunteers will engage people living on the street as friends—learning their names, listening to their stories, and praying for them.

“As a total extrovert, I wasn't nervous about approaching

someone on the street—especially since we had excellent help and services to offer as provided by the hospitality team back at the base church,” said Elizabeth Elliott, a volunteer from last year's downtown outreach. “But committing to walk and engage with the homeless made me think about the future: how would stopping this time, instead of walking by, change the way I commute everyday? Could I go back to putting on blinders to the need in my own neighborhood?”

Each Redeemer congregation has a designated *Don't Walk By* outreach: Downtown on February 8, East Side on February 15, and West Side on February 22 and March 1. You can sign up as an individual, with a group of friends, or with your community group at hfnny.org/DWB.

DOUBTERS WELCOME... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

authoritarian approach. We remember what it is like to not believe, and we do not expect people to believe simply by being told what is true. People want to know *why*. Second, we take a process, not a “crisis” approach. We provide for multiple

exposures to the gospel. We afford people the opportunity to ask questions, so that they receive information about Christianity in an order and shape that addresses their situation. Third, we take a “presuppositional” approach to persuading

people about Christianity. That means that we believe every person, even the skeptic, already *does* believe in God (Romans 1:18-25). We therefore we find “clues of God”—insights into truth—that they have, and use
(Continued on page 6)

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
9:30AM, 11:30AM, 5PM, 7PM

Salvation Army Auditorium
120 W. 14th St.
(between 6th & 7th Aves.)
Services at
9:30AM & 5PM

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
Office: 1359 Broadway, 4th Fl., New York, NY 10018-7102
(212) 808-4460 (T) (212) 808-4465 (F) www.redeemer.com

INTERVIEW WITH REBECCA LOCKE, CFW'S ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

In October CFW introduced the inaugural Artist-in-Residence, Rebecca Locke, and commissioned Rebecca to create a new piece of work exploring the theme of celebration. The resulting body of work *and we all came in together*, an immersive installation, utilized new digital media, analogue technologies, video, objects, found images and discovered stories to reflect New Yorkers' ongoing relationship with the city, exploring celebration as memory and its meaning defined through the interaction of people. At its core, Locke's *and we all came in together* is a city-centric practice in seeing the unseen.

Recently, CFW interviewed Rebecca about the making of the work and this is what she said.

Where did the idea for the commissioned work '*and we all came in together*' come from?

Following Hurricane Sandy, Dimas Salaberrios, a pastor from the Bronx, would take an old school van every day from the South Bronx to Far Rockaway bringing young men who'd pump the basements of anyone who needed help. I went along with Dimas and Christina Stanton (Redeemer Missions) and someone asked me to check on their neighbor. We came across a dear 96-year-old lady whose home had flooded, but she didn't want to leave for fear of being looted. In this time of distress she wanted to tell her stories and show photographs from her album. I was struck by how many of her memories, her most meaningful memories, revolved around celebration, and of course that meant the people she had made those memories with.

When CFW commissioned the work on the theme of celebration I thought of her and of what she'd shared with me. In thinking of celebration as memory, I invited New Yorkers,

particularly New Yorkers who had known the city for a long time, to tell their stories of celebration, relating to their lives and to the city. It was these stories—these discovered stories—that would form the basis of the piece. It is a very 'New York City' piece of work.

A very 'New York City' piece...

It is inspired by memories collected from New Yorkers who have known the city for five decades or more, memories that I then distilled into twelve New York City stories. These are very small, very short stories, no more than a stanza long, the longest is a hundred and sixty words.

These stories include traveling from New York for the March on Washington, the spontaneous Times Square celebration on VE day as news travelled across Manhattan that war in Europe was over, of going AWOL to visit loved ones in Brooklyn, the accolade of an 'untouchable,' and the story of an old lady forever mistaken for 'Katherine Hepburn on a bike.' Through these memories the commissioned work explores themes of migration, celebrity, tradition, the communal element of this city, and especially the city as a place of sanctuary.

So is the idea of discovery significant?

Art, I believe, should be reflective which is more than saying not all its meaning should be spelled out, or that space should be left for interpretation. As a reflective piece the installation, the stories (and even the process of finding them) will mean different things to different people, and that is my hope. I am sure that this work will mean things to people that I couldn't have imagined, and as the artist, hearing these things, these interpretations, means a great deal.

QUESTIONING CHRISTIANITY

BY KATHY KELLER

Publically identifying as a Christian usually results in a torrent of questions. Some are hostile, some incredulous, some curious, often a mixture of all three.

Redeemer is comfortable with people asking questions. Even more broadly, Christianity thrives on questions. Alone of all the world religions, Christianity stands or falls on the proclaimed facts of the life, death and resurrection of its founder being historically factual. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:14: *And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.*

The Christian church finds itself in the peculiar position, at the dawn of the 21st century, of being the institution most invested in the existence

of objective truth. Spiritually minded people feel free to invent religious beliefs *ex nihilo*. T.M. Luhrmann's op-ed account in the *New York Times* October 14, 2013, describes a young man, Jack, who created a *tulpa*, or a creature to worship, in the form of a fox who spoke to him. Scientists debate as a serious question whether there are an infinite number of parallel universes, although some admit that it is "mere conjecture without evidence" (<http://phys.org/news/2013-01-dont-infinite-scientists.html>) Social scientists differ about every aspect of human nature and flourishing based on often unexamined faith assumptions about the nature of the world.

In an unexpected twist, Christians are in the odd po-

sition of welcoming questions and encouraging close, skeptical examination of all its claims and tenets. We are confident, having asked our own hard questions on our way to faith, that it can withstand the most searching inquiry.

With that in mind, Redeemer is offering a seven-week series for skeptics, questioners, doubters, and the merely curious on Thursday nights beginning January 30. **If you are full of questions about Christianity, just show up at the W83 Ministry Center, 150 W. 83rd St. at 7:00PM any Thursday in February, as well as March 6 and 13.** If you are a believer yourself, bring someone you know who is questioning.

WHICH CONGREGATION DO YOU CALL HOME?

For the last couple of years Redeemer has worked to multiply into three distinct congregations, while remaining one church. By doing this, Redeemer has been able to minister to more of the city, as well as better serve both our congregants and our neighbors. Many of us have now settled into a particular congregation as our home while some are still exploring which congregation is the best fit.

If you desire to be relationally connected and missionally engaged at Redeemer, ideally you need to be part of a con-

gregation. As we move forward as a church, our desire is to connect you to the Redeemer ministries, groups and events that help you love and serve God, your fellow congregants and your neighbors in the city.

We need your help to make Redeemer's records accurate. If you do not know what congregation you are identified with in our system, please go to <https://myaccount.redeemer.com> and log in to your account. There you can indicate your status by choosing one of the following options:

- I am part of the Downtown Congregation
- I am part of the East Side Congregation
- I am part of the West Side Congregation
- I have not decided on a congregation
- I do not attend Redeemer

By making your status in our database accurate, we hope to serve you better as we serve our city together.

Thank you for your help.

UPDATE: ELDER, DEACON AND DEACONESS NOMINATIONS

As Redeemer members, you have the privilege and important responsibility to nominate and elect your fellow members to serve on the Session and the Diaconate. This past November, the Session and Diaconate accepted nominations for the roles of elder, deacon and deaconess. Thank you for sending in your nominations! The following members have been nominated and have begun the process of training and evaluation.

Deaconess Nominees

Niya Bekele
Euree Chun
Fiona Dieffenbacher
Meghan Gregory
Lia Kim
Katherine Nesbeda
Susie Park
Caroline Yoon

Deacon Nominees

Chuck Armstrong
Andy Lee
Andrew McMahan
Andrew Protain
Nick Shatraw

Elder Nominees

Keye Chow
Jim Gregory

Please pray for these nominees as they go through training in theology and ministry skills and prepare for their interviews. They will be evaluated on their character, Christian life and experience, theological understanding, and giftedness and readiness to serve the church as an elder or deacon/ess. Our current elders will then determine which individuals will be presented for election at the May congregational meeting. If you have questions about the nomination, evaluation and training process, please contact Jenny Chang at (917) 206-1407 or jenny@redeemer.com.

CONFERENCE ON BEING SINGLE: SATURDAY, MARCH 1

When Redeemer first began holding services 25 years ago, up until the present day, the majority of our attendees have been single men and women. This is in line with the overall demographics of Manhattan, but it brought with it the “law of unintended consequences.” Because we were and are so largely single, we have not worked to *focus* on singles or their needs. The joke used to be: “Where do I find Redeemer’s singles group?” Answer: “Redeemer IS a singles group.”

The result is that there has been very little teaching specifically designed to help Christian singles consider how to live in a way that glorifies God, as well as addressing the challenges of doing that in New York City in the 21st Century.

Late being better than never, we have worked for the past six months on a conference and follow-up groups for those endeavoring (with whatever level of success or lack of it) to follow Jesus faithfully as a single person. Honestly fac-

ing our failures as a church, as well as our failures as individual Christians, we will try to bring the resources of the Gospel—repentance, forgiveness, renewal, and community support—to bear on the issues of greatest concern for singles. Loneliness, sexuality, confidence in God’s wisdom and love, and a theology of singleness will all be addressed.

Arrive early to see video of person-on-the-street interview expressing opinions about singleness.

Saturday, March 1 from 10:00AM to 3:00PM (Check in begins at 9:15AM)

W83 Ministry Center, 150 W. 83rd St.

Registration fee: \$15. (Space is limited.)

Register at <https://redeemer.bvcm.com/OnlineReg/Index/1747>



1359 BROADWAY
4TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10018

FIRST CLASS MAIL
US POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK NY
PERMIT # 349

DOUBTERS WELCOME... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 2)

them to show the way back to their Creator and Redeemer. Jesus responded positively to a man who was in “process” who asked, “I believe—but help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24), and at Redeemer we want to do the same.

Where do we do this?

Everywhere. At Redeemer we put out the Doubters Welcome Mat at every service and meeting, always expecting and hoping to be “overheard” by those who don’t believe.

First, we believe that worship must be done in such a way that believers can understand and be included. In I Corinthians 14:24–25, Paul asserts that “seekers” are to be expected and accommodated in Chris-

tian worship. He demands that the service be conducted in a way that is comprehensible and convicting to outsiders.

Second, we provide classes and “after meetings” where people can be debriefed after services and helped to understand the Christian faith. This is patterned after Acts 2, where non-believers were first impressed with the worship of the disciples (“*we hear them declaring the wonders of God*”), and then received a more thorough exposition of the gospel in response to their question (“*what does this mean?*” v.11).

Third, we seek to have most of our small groups and service ministries open and inclusive of people regardless of where they are on their spiritual journey.

We are extremely fortunate to minister in a large city, where Christians are not totally able to segregate themselves from others in their relationships. Urban Christians tend to have more good friends among people who don’t believe. At Redeemer, we aim to create a climate where the Christian comes and quickly realizes, “if I brought my unbelieving friends here, they will be surprised to see how attractive and sensible Christianity is.” As long as Christians are having that thought, Redeemer will continue to change many lives.

This is a reprint of a Redeemer Report article by Tim Keller, originally published in 1996.