

NOVEMBER 2014

OUR PLACE IN THE STORY: PART 2

BY TIM KELLER

In our June 2014 newsletter I traced out the decline of orthodox Protestant Christianity in Manhattan after the middle of the 19th century. When the city became more multi-ethnic and materialistic as well as less middle-class and culturally Christian, the churches found their numbers dwindling. The decline came because most people no longer came in to church to hear the sermons and those who did lacked the vocabulary to grasp the meaning or feel the power of the Word as it was being preached. In response to the crisis, some churches (especially Presbyterians) rejected the authority of the Bible and became social service and educational centers, while others (especially Baptist) took a highly combative stance toward society. While maintaining their high view of the Bible, these conservative churches became mainly Bible teaching centers with emphasis on denouncing the moral evils of the culture. By the middle of the 20th century, evangelical ministries and churches that reached center city Manhattan residents were either very weak or they

left the city.

When we began Redeemer in 1989, we had in mind what we had learned from John Stott's and James Boice's ministry in central London and downtown Philadelphia respectively. They had combined elements that the churches of NYC had divided — they preached and evangelized for conversion, however they also mobilized for outreach and service to the city. They discovered dozens of ways to serve the practical needs of their neighbors, especially the neediest, and to engage people outside the church's walls. And yet both Stott and Boice held to a very strong view of the authority of the Bible, as well as a rich, historic evangelical theology. With great intentionality, they avoided both withdrawal or assimilation to the spirit of the age. In a way, both Stott and Boice were forging the kind of church that the ministers of Manhattan in the late 19th century should have created — in the face of the city's changes — but did not. Redeemer followed in their footsteps and has served as an ice-breaking vessel

that has, as it were, opened the shipping lanes for almost 100 new churches in center city NYC over the last twenty years.

Nevertheless, even from our start, we realized that we face things that John Stott and Jim Boice had not. In New York City we live in an urban society that is not merely uninterested in but deeply suspicious of Christianity, whereas forty years ago most people still saw religion as generally something good. Now people lack the basically Christian vocabulary and background beliefs that nearly all residents of the U.S. shared 100 years ago. Not only that, they have a new set of beliefs about identity, society, morality, and history which make Christianity not merely implausible but a threat to the good. How do we communicate and serve people in this situation?

In New York City Redeemer has been a path-breaking ministry and, if God will continue to bless and use us, there still is much more such work to do. We must find ways to preach the ancient message of the gospel in ways that both

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NOVEMBER IS MERCY MONTH

Mercy is spontaneous, superabounding love which comes from an experience of the grace of God. The deeper the experience of the free grace of God, the more generous we must become.

– Tim Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*

Diaconate – Redeemer’s expression of mercy ministry:

Modeled after Acts 6, the Redeemer Diaconate is a group of men (deacons) and women (deaconesses) that walk alongside of those in our church family who are experiencing difficulties and/or in crises. Through meeting practical needs, we strive to contribute to the building of a repentant and rejoicing community where hearts are being changed through encounters with Jesus and one another.

Partner with us:

Nominate a fellow member

Much like the historic church, our deacons (our affectionate term for deacons and deaconesses) are nominated, trained, elected and appointed by Redeemer elders and members. During the month of November, nominations will be accepted for deacon and deaconess; we also need new elders. We especially need Redeemer members’ help to identify

candidates for both the Diaconate and the Session. With three congregations the Session and the Diaconate are in need of new leaders.

Elders are men of solid character with a gift of being a spiritual leader. Deacons are compassionate people, great listeners, the ones that people always go to for help. By nominating a Redeemer member who is known for these qualities, you have an opportunity to contribute to the care and oversight of the church.

Come meet the Diaconate to learn about this prayerful and holistic ministry at our Open House Friday, November 14 at the Redeemer Offices 1359 Broadway, 4th Fl. at 6:30 p.m.

For more information, visit redeemer.com/nominate.

Provide a financial gift

Sunday, November 23 is the Diaconate’s Annual Special Offering. Every year, the Diaconate takes a special offering for its Mercy Fund. Out of this fund our deacons care for and minister to congregants in need.

In 2013, the Diaconate helped over 500 individuals and families with various needs. Direct financial assistance totaling over \$385K was disbursed to 185 individuals and families in need. Estimated aid for 2014 will be close to \$310K in funds provided by the Diaconate to assist those in need within our church family. We thank you in advance for preparing your hearts to give on Sunday, November 23. Your help is instrumental in enabling us to carry on this ministry of mercy. You can donate online at: redeemer.com/mercygift. When submitting your gift, choose “designated gift” and select “Diaconate.”

Pray with us

We are only able to care for and serve our fellow sisters and brothers in need because of God’s sustaining grace and the wisdom he grants us.

Thank you so much for your prayers and gifts. Your faithful partnership is making a difference!

REDEEMER REPORT

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Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

Hunter College Auditorium
E. 69th St.
(between Park & Lexington)
Services: 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.

W83rd Ministry Center
150 W. 83rd St.
(between Columbus & Amsterdam)
Services: 9:30/11:30 a.m., 5 & 7 p.m.

Salvation Army Auditorium
120 W. 14th St.
(between 6th & 7th Aves.)
Services: 9:30 a.m. & 5 p.m.

CHURCH PLANTING INTERNATIONAL INTENSIVE: A RESTAURANT REVIEW

Bruno, a church planter from Naples, Italy, was part of a cohort of church planters from 12 cities around the world who participated in City to City's 8th annual International Intensive training.

As an Italian, and one who likes to eat, I know well the sensation of going to a great restaurant to eat all kinds of great dishes only to leave the restaurant full to the point of exploding.

That is exactly what the Redeemer City to City Church Planting Intensive is. It's a great restaurant with such great dishes that it will take a couple of years to digest!

I cannot talk about all of the dishes but I some really left a great taste in my mouth and some really changed me.

The first dish that I appreciated was actually the "anti-pasto," or appetizer. The Intensive did not start with Content but rather with Discovery of our fellow brothers and sisters. What a change from other educational approaches! To recognize that the people that you are doing the Intensive with are as important as the content you are about to discover was a great plus. To discover other planters' stories and walk with

God teaches us as much as the content itself.

Main Course: The format of class and the content was ministry changing! I came out deciding to change my church's name, liturgy and approach to ministry. Throughout the classes I came to realize many of the mistakes I was making



in my recent church plant and have received the instrument to actually bring the changes needed.

The Wine: This was the best part. Prayer has become once again a main focus of my ministry. It is so easy to fall into the lie that everything depends on your effort that prayer becomes a second activity and not the fulcrum of it. Both Tim Keller's example and the class's emphasis have brought that point home to my heart and mind.

Dessert was outstanding: every Friday afternoon we got invited to go to a Happy Hour with all of the CTC staff.

BY BRUNO INTERLANDI

It is just beautiful to get to know them, see their passion and know them outside of the class environment.

A word of warning. Both before going and throughout the whole time I experienced incredible challenges to remain focused on what God was teaching me. First finances, then relationships kept trying to distract me, but by God's grace I made it through.

So, would I recommend this restaurant? You bet. 5 stars, almost as good as an Italian one! I know have to digest lots of great food and I know it will bring great fruit to my life, my family and our ministry ... and to Italy.

Surprise Dish: Besides all of the good dishes we ate, they took us into the kitchen to cook with us! We went to see many different church plants in New York City, walk their neighborhoods and listen to the pastors (all of them were very honest). We debriefed many of the classes and learned to be critical with our own food. We had sessions with Tim Keller where we could ask him anything we wanted! That is cooking together.

THIS MONTH, GIVE TO HIS TOY STORE

His Toy Store, Hope for New York's Christmas outreach for families in need across our city, starts this November!

All month through November 30, Hope for New York will be accepting online donations for toys for families in need all over our city.

This year, we're working with our affiliate partners to host 7 His Toy Stores in strategic neighborhoods in December. At these stores, parents can shop for toys at no cost and are also able to connect to local ministries.

These parents include the working poor in low-income neighborhoods, formerly incarcerated individuals reconnecting with their families, and

moms and dads in residential recovery programs. For many of them, His Toy Store is the only opportunity they have to provide gifts for their children.

Last year, we met parents like LaToya, who has been involved with A House on Beekman's "Mommy & Me" program in the Bronx for three years and received toys for her three children: a lullabye Elmo for her 6-month old, a baby doll for her 2 year-old daughter, and toy cars for her 7 year-old son.

"When their dad lost his job, I thought, 'How am I going to do everything? Here comes rent, but what are we going to do for toys?'" she said. "It took a weight off."

However, we don't see this outreach as just a one-time

giveaway — our hope is that parents connect with a caring community for year-round support and spiritual community. Last year, LaToya brought two of her neighbors to the outreach, and she told us that A House on Beekman has given her the supportive community she has been lacking.

"I don't have to think that it's just me and the kids," she said. "It's a family."

How to Give:

Our goal is to raise enough to stock our stores for 750 families: that's around 2,100 toys. This year, giving to His Toy Store is completely online! Simply go to hfn.org/HTS to make your gift by November 30.

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defy the illusions of the age yet resonate with the good aspirations and hopes of our neighbors.

That means several things. It means to contest the self-narratives of secularity, especially its claim to inclusivity. It means to appeal to people's deepest intuitions which do not fit the secular view of the world — intuitions about moral truth, human value, and the reality of both love and beauty. It means to expose the secular culture's idolatry of prosperity and power, even as we humbly admit the church's own failure to op-

erate on the basis of love and generosity. It means to admit the church's historic failures to execute on its own Biblical principles — the *imago Dei* dignity of every human being, love for opponents, universal care for the suffering, and justice for the oppressed — even as it argues that the source of this warranted critique is Christian truth itself. It means to neither dominate nor withdraw from society but to provoke and yet serve. It means learning how to set forth gospel truths in an uncompromising way but also

in a manner that directly answers people's most poignant questions in a disarming and compelling way. It means to offer people a meaning in life that suffering can't take away, an identity so rooted in God's love that the world's pressure is off, and a hope beyond the walls of this world. It means to be doctrinally solid but not sectarian, civically active but not partisan, committed to the arts but not subjectivistic about truth.

The last paragraph describes the kind of church that I think

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SIXTH ANNUAL GOTHAM ALUMNI RETREAT: ARE WE MATURING OR JUST GETTING OLDER?

Each Columbus Day weekend, the Alumni community from Redeemer's Gotham Fellowship (a 9-month faith & work leadership development intensive offered by the Center for Faith & Work) gathers in Princeton, NJ. This year, 94 men and women (and 2 children!) working in diverse professions arrived from near and far (including Denver and London) to spend 2.5 days together at the historic Nassau Inn in downtown Princeton.

Our guest speaker Jim Skillen, former Executive Director of the Center for Public Justice, provoked the group with the following question: *Are we maturing or just getting older?* The cultural climate of today encourages us to think about how much we are achieving as we get older: how many of your own goals have you reached? Are you progressing up the ladder of your profession as you should? Are you properly saving for retirement? etc, etc.

But little of that leads us to ask whether we are maturing, becoming wiser, and more patient, able to serve those around us in ways that are really best for them. Hebrews 5-6 talks about the need for us to mature and not remain as children. What does real maturation mean for us as persons in relationship to others in all areas of life? What might it look like to grow in

our vocations — as employees, employers, family members, and citizens?

To ask the question of maturation requires us to understand who we are as humans and how fully developed humanity is actually defined. Christianity



posits that to know ourselves we must know God, as those made in his image and created to reveal his glory! If we ask the question, "What does Scripture tell us about who God is and who we are?," we can tend to conclude: We are sinners; Christ is Savior. And while this salvation narrative is essential to God's redemptive plan, this conclusion is an abridged version of the fuller story unfolding, the story that begins in creation and ends in new creation.

It is in this larger narrative that we discover a new purpose for our work, and can put it in its proper place, as the expression of our humanity and not the source of our identity. We see that we were created to be revelatory of God with our whole selves, and that the redemptive work of Christ restores us to

the task of being fully human, working towards the reconciliation, renewal, and fulfillment that He is going about doing.

To mature in our work, therefore, means that we must grow in discernment, discerning good from evil in every

sphere of life, seeking to push back the evil and enhance and flourish the good. To do our jobs well, then, means to seek the knowledge of God as it is being revealed in every part of creation. We are to fulfill our responsibilities in a way that brings glory and honor to Him, and allows a fuller expression of His love to be revealed to all of creation.

While the implications of these grand truths can certainly not be worked out in the course of a weekend retreat, it is our hope that this annual gathering will continue to serve as a place where the Gotham Alumni community might be renewed by God's Spirit and reinvigorated and spurred on to do the good work God is already preparing ahead of time for each to do.



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will be fruitful in the coming secular, global city. There's nothing in that list of qualities that is not inherent in the Biblical doctrine of the church. And forms of the church have emerged in the past that have

similarly addressed well their cultural moment. I don't see any church today fully realizing such an ideal, of course, but this is what Redeemer must aspire to in the immediate future. If we even take some good steps

in this direction, we will do much good and will continue to occupy our place in this chapter of the story of Christianity here in this most great and difficult of cities.