

JANUARY 2015

THE CITY, THE CHURCH, AND THE FUTURE

BY TIM KELLER

City to City Europe held a conference in Paris in October with over 500 in attendance from dozens of countries. Besides me, one of the other speakers was Professor Grace Davie, emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Exeter in Great Britain. Professor Davie's lecture on "Religion in Modern Europe" was a great encouragement to European Christian leaders who are incessantly told that religion on their continent is dying out and that a Christian mission there is a hopeless cause. I think it also should be encouraging to us here in New York City.

She explained that for centuries in Europe religion had been inherited — that is, most

people were born into their church and remained a member of it unless they did something quite drastic to end the association. Most European countries had one national church that was a part of the racial-national identity. So if you were Polish you were Catholic, if you were Swedish you were Lutheran, if you were Scottish you were Presbyterian. We could add that in past times even in the US, where there has never been one dominant church, you were not considered a good American unless you went to a church of some kind.

It is this inherited religion that is declining rapidly, especially in Europe. Our late modern culture is marked by what

Robert Bellah called *expressive individualism* — the belief that identity comes through self-expression, through discovering one's most authentic desires and being free to be one's authentic self. This powerful belief has weakened all institutions in society, not only the church, because it insists that no external authority has any right to tell the individual what is right and wrong or how to live. Because of this individualism, the numbers of people in Europe who go to church and who identify as Christians are declining. Those figures are also declining in North America, because even here inherited religion is losing its influence.

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SAVE THE DATE – JANUARY 29, 7 P.M. PRAYER: REBELLING AGAINST THE STATUS QUO

As part of our ministry-year emphasis on prayer, please join us for this event and hear Tim Keller share insights from his newest book on prayer, followed by Q&A and a reception.

Registration opens January 11. For more information and to register go to redeemer.com/prayerevent.

JANUARY IS MISSIONS MONTH AT REDEEMER!

Every Sunday in January will feature a special coffee hour missions table, and on January 18 (West Side) and January 25, (East Side and

the population to whom these churches serve. On past trips, our teams have

children's village, new dental equipment was bought and installed, children were taken on field trips, and even a motorcycle was purchased for a local pastor! For a comprehensive recap of our 2014 trips, please visit our newly updated website at redeemer.com/missions.

Our teams are looking for people of all skills sets and experiences. Some trips are planned around a group of people who are in a particular profession (i.e. healthcare or business), but many trips are planned around the skills & hobbies of those who join our teams. We prepare by meeting together regularly before the trip, often gathering for fundraisers and socials



Makaphutu Children's Village, Kwala Zulu-Natal, SA

Downtown) Redeemer's 2015 overseas mission trips will be highlighted during all services. Looking ahead to next year, we will be offering even more trips that will send over 200 people around the world to share the love of Christ in India, South Africa, the Philippines, and more.

Short-term mission trips are the culmination of many months of preparation so that our volunteers can work alongside international churches and ministries effectively. These teams of volunteers are made up of 10 to 20 people who use their unique skills and abilities to minister to local church and ministry staff as well as

- Mounted a full production of a classic play with formerly sex-trafficked victims
- Provided a children's program during the local schools' Winter Break.
- Taught employment work-shops on skill development and job readiness.

- Offered continuing education classes to those in the local healthcare field.
- Offered a "day of beauty" for housemothers and teenagers of an orphanage.

Many projects for these churches and ministries were supported or completed by funds raised by our team members. A new security fence was bought and installed around a



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in order to facilitate a closely-knit team. Team members return from their trips seeing the world in a new light.

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REDEEMER REPORT

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.
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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.

CFW 4TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER: *MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: IMAGINATION AND INNOVATION REQUIRED*

BY DAVID KIM

After the conference was over and the huge relief of having finished an event we've been planning for a year, we felt the need to hear from our attendees how they might have experienced God in distinct ways that weekend.

The accounts of encouragement, conviction, and inspiration that have poured out of that weekend exceeded my expectations. Kept private, this impact can be easily lost in the melee of our individual lives. Collectively, we can see God's Spirit at work. And that is worthy of praise. So, I wanted to share a few of these responses.

One conference participant wrote us that his experience

“was honestly life-changing. As an artist, I have been searching for a proper, godly community who can encourage, push, and support fellow artists. I found that place at Redeemer. David Brooks' words [that] work is our common humanity and worship unto God... gave me a deeper sense of purpose and quite honestly, courage to step out and begin to work in the talents that I have been empowered with.”

Another said, “I certainly felt the moving of God's Spirit throughout the conference... specifically the presentation of poems by Christian Wiman, and, of course, the oneness of voice among attendees singing

the hymns at the end together. It was really beautiful to participate in as well as to behold.” And others remarked of Brooks and Wiman that “it felt holy listening to them in that room.”

Of Friday events, an out of town guest commented, “I was not expecting such diverse and creative presentations. At first, I was a bit lost in all the new experiences, trying to make sense out of it. But, God has opened my eyes to see what you were trying to do: entrepreneurship (creating business) is an incredible expression of God-given creativity.”

A participant that is re-branding his family plumbing
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BEYOND ABUSE SEMINAR

Recovery for survivors of abuse, exploitation and sexual trauma.

Saturday, January 31 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Redeemer Church Offices, 1359 Broadway, 4th Floor

Do you want greater freedom from past traumas? Or for someone you are ministering to? The Redeemer Diaconate is sponsoring a one day seminar for those affected directly and/or indirectly by past abuse, exploitation and sexual trauma. As we enter a new year, we encourage one another to renew our commitment to live a new life that is given us through our Savior. Whether you're a survivor, a partner, or a friend who just wants to learn more, this seminar will help you understand what abuse teaches, what issues survivors struggle with, how God factors into abuse recovery and the sub-text of Christ's experiences for survivors and strategies for stress.

For more information and to register, visit redeemer.com/beyondabuse or contact Andrea at andreactf@gmail.com.

business said of the expo that he hopes “to incorporate the Adventure Project’s water well program into our model. I am watching for Godly invitations as we move forward in our work. God bless you.”

A married couple is already implementing imaginative change after hearing Tim Keller and Margaret Newman, whose conversation left them “asking ourselves what areas in our own life lack imagination. We took the question beyond work and applied it to the way we parent, how we order our home and even how we plan

our menu.”

And still more were deeply moved by Richard Middleton’s talk, calling it “extraordinary. He made me feel all space is sacred, that imagination is crucial (as in the Cross). Everyone I spoke to liked him enormously, felt moved. Wanting more. Desiring imagination. Wanting to review his words and the Word. The weight of his love of the Lord just kept pressing on my heart.”

These are just a few of the hundreds of testimonies of impact from the conference. I hope these words serve as a

reminder to you as they have been for us of the new things that God is doing in our midst and city. It is easy to have our faith slip into the background of our day-to-day work, but stories like this are a vivid reminder of this calling we have received to allow the gospel to penetrate more deeply into every facet of our lives.

In the next few months, you can expect to see full videos of the conference talks, available on our website, to hopefully fan the flames of imagination and innovation that might have ignited that weekend.

CITY, CHURCH, FUTURE... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

However, Davie pointed out that this is by no means the whole picture. Yes, “nominal” or inherited Christianity is declining. This is why overall fewer people attend or belong to churches. On the other hand, against all expectations, even in Europe other forms of Christian faith have grown and reentered public life. One reason for this is the influx of Christians from the global South. In China, Africa and other places in the world, Christianity is growing rapidly as those societies are modernizing. As people immigrate to Europe and the U.S. from Africa, Latin America, and Asia, they plant new churches or strengthen other churches that are growing and reaching Europeans as well.

Why? Because while inherited religion will decline in

the modern age, religion that is *chosen* need not do so. The growing Christian churches are evangelical and Pentecostal and they emphasize the biblical call to “choose this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15) and the biblical teaching that we must confess our own faith, not the merely go along with the choices of our family or community (Ezekiel 18). These churches teach that nominal, formal religion is not enough, that there must be a radical, inward conversion (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 9:25; Romans 2:29). Christianity that highlights these important biblical concepts and lifts up heart-changing personal faith can reach many contemporary people.

Davie, drawing on her sociology background, also ob-

served that it is in cities that much of the religious growth can be seen in western societies. While cities, she says, have in the past been seen as the “beacons of a more irreligious future” now it is in the cities that religion in general and Christianity in particular is thriving, because they are more multi-ethnic and globalized and because “new forms of religion” that reach out to modern people are being deployed there. (Davie added, for example, that London is now has more growing churches than anywhere else in Great Britain.)

In short, in the western world — including North America — our societies are becoming *both* more secular and more religious at the same time, and this is, as Davie says, “a

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MISSIONS MONTH... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 2)

I was drawn to the idea of helping in a part of the world where access to healthcare is very limited. On the Madagascar trip, we offered a basic medical screening to some of the poorest people who otherwise would have no access to care. Our team taught classes in new therapeutic practices that would be of benefit to local healthcare workers. The Ministry of Health of Madagascar not only sent an official to our training sessions, but also even granted certificates of continuing education to those who attended. I encourage

you to consider joining one of the many Short Term Mission teams this year. It's an amazing way to see God's work in the world.

-Dr. Timothy Grau, Madagascar Team, 2013 and 2014

Don't forget to look for the Missions Table at Coffee Hour after services in January. Literature on our upcoming mission trips will be available, and former team members will be on hand to answer any questions you might have. Team



Outreach in India to the slum district with local Pastor Guy



Mumbai office of our ministry partner International Justice Mission

members from past trips will also be sharing testimonies of their personal experiences during the services. A scripture that our missions teams often refer to comes from Acts 20:24. "But I do not account my life of any value, nor as precious to myself, if only that I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." Please prayerfully consider joining one of our missions teams this year!

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challenging combination." The reality is neither that belief in God is inevitably disappearing, nor that in some simplistic way "God is back." Davie says that the religious landscape is now "paradoxical." What is going away is inherited, institutionalized Christianity — what many would call "nominal Christianity." Yet new patterns of orthodox Christian faith (and of other religions) are growing too. Contrary to the con-

fidant predictions of its death, religious faith "is an increasing presence in the modern world order."

Grace Davies' message is both exciting and challenging for Christians in cities today. It means that we should expect increasing skepticism and perhaps greater opposition. Gone is that great "canopy" of nominal Christians who were not personally devout but who thought religion was a good

thing and important for society — and who were not very difficult to draw into Christian churches. On the other hand, contemporary people have the same intuitions of God and sin and spiritual longings for love, meaning, and grace that their ancestors did. People will hear the same message and some say, "You are mad!" (Acts 26:24) while others will be cut to the heart and ask, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).



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