

AUGUST 2015

## PUBLIC FAITH: BEING A CHURCH FOR THE SKEPTIC AND THE CHRISTIAN

BY MAI HARIU-POWELL, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC FAITH INITIATIVE

As a church not for our selves, we push ourselves to make Redeemer a safe space for skeptics. Because of my work with Questioning Christianity and Public Faith, I get a lot of pastors who reach out to learn more about Redeemer's evangelistic culture. It's so encouraging to hear from pastors all over the country striving like us to cultivate a culture where skeptics are welcome without watering down our christian doctrine.

Recently a pastor from California processed out loud with us, "Is the church first for the skeptic or for the Christian?" It's a very good meta question.

Here was Tim Keller's response:

*It seems like the question is, "Is the church mainly for building up Christians or mainly for witness to the world?" I don't think I want to choose between the "build up one another" commands and the Great Commission. Let's remember, the Great Commission was given to the church, not just to missionaries. I don't think the Bible puts these mandates to the church in any kind of graded order of priority. It would be most theologically correct to say that the church is first for the Lord, and for his worship. But that worship both builds up Christians and also testifies to the world.*

There is a natural link between evangelism and worship. Yes, at Redeemer we talk about sharing the hope of Jesus out of our gratitude for his love and rescue. Worship and gratitude is a natural motivator for evangelism but there's another link that comes to mind. When I talk to Christians and pastors who have a natural bent towards evangelism, I notice they live their faith very publicly because evangelism is an act of worship. They get to see a glimpse of God's sovereignty, his unrelentless love and pursuit of someone and they get to see the Holy Spirit do beautiful

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## MAKE A DIFFERENCE THIS FALL: MENTOR WITH HOPE FOR NEW YORK

When people ask us at Hope for New York what our biggest volunteering need is we tell them, without hesitation, "We need one-on-one mentors for the kids in our city."

Probably more than any other volunteer opportunity, mentoring a young person one

on one gives you the opportunity to experience transformation and growth firsthand.

Plus, when you join one of our programs like Operation Exodus, Morris Academy Mentors, Mont Lawn City Camp, or Shiloh NYC, you'll meet an incredible community of mentors who meet, encour-

age, and pray for one another throughout the year.

Interested in mentoring, but want to learn more? Visit [hfny.org/mentoring](http://hfny.org/mentoring), where you'll find out information about all of our mentoring kick off activities, including an interest social on September 10 and info session on September 15.

# AN EVEREST-LIKE EFFORT AND BLESSING: VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2015

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BY BRUCE TERRELL

On Friday, August 17, I decided to hang out for a couple of hours during the final morning of our annual summer spectacular — Vacation Bible School (VBS). What a treat. It's so impressive and glorious to watch hundreds of volunteers and numerous staff facilitate what Jesus would heartily commend — "let the little children come unto me." This year's theme was "Everest: Conquering Challenges with God's Mighty Power" and the

memory verse was 2 Corinthians 12:9. Know it? During the week the children committed it to memory ... complete with hand motions!

... "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

At the end of the week I learned that 260 kids and 270+ volunteers were involved over the five mornings and the Fri-

day night family celebration. And many of those (kids, parents and volunteers) were first-time visitors to our Redeemer community. Thanks to the staff, congregants and visitors who volunteered to make this year's VBS a success. You imparted a blessing in keeping with what Jesus did when the children were brought to him.

I'm glad we invest so much energy and effort into VBS. Really glad. I think Jesus is utterly overjoyed.

## HELP CITY TO CITY TRAIN CHURCH PLANTERS FOR GLOBAL CITIES

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On September 5, Redeemer City to City welcomes the 2015 New York City Intensive class. The New York City Intensive is a month-long training residency for pastors who are starting a new church in a global city.

Maybe you remember that Redeemer supports the Intensive every fall with a Special Offering from all 3 congregations. Last year, the Special Offering stepped up in a big

way and generously funded CTC's mission with over \$100k in gifts.

This year we hope to fund even more. On City to City Sunday you will meet church planters from as near as San Francisco and as far away as Johannesburg, and CTC hopes we can raise \$417k to help underwrite training worldwide. Your generosity will help CTC accomplish all of its global training between today and the

end of the year. Please be praying about how God might have you give.

You can already give here. More important, you can follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. We're posting regularly and hope to see you online! P.S. City to City Sunday happens on September 27!

For more information, please contact Nicole at [nicole@redeemercitycity.com](mailto:nicole@redeemercitycity.com).

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### REDEEMER REPORT

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

## EAST SIDE WORSHIP SERVICE TIME AND LOCATION CHANGES IN AUGUST

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On Sundays August 9, 16 and 23, the East Side Worship time and location will change to the following:

*When:* 9:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

*Where:* Danny Kay Theater (capacity 650)  
Hunter College North Building  
enter on 68th St. btwn Park & Lexington Aves.

## BETA GROUPS START IN SEPTEMBER

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Community is central to the character of God and his mission on earth. Scripture is bookended with this truth — from Genesis 2:18, where God declares it not good for man to be alone, to Revelation 21, when the Lord and his redeemed people will finally dwell together in unhindered fellowship for all eternity in the new Jerusalem.

The Creator of the universe reveals himself to be three persons existing in fellowship for all of eternity, and he creates human beings in this very same image. This means we are designed for interdependency, to enjoy God together with others. We cannot experience God to our fullest without others, and apart from community, we will not thrive. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in *Life Together*, “the physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer.”

Since Redeemer began, community has been a cen-

tral focus. We believe the best way to get plugged into the life of the church is to become actively involved in a Community Group. It is in these small, weekly groups where people can experience Christ and the profound influence he has in our lives and through us to others.

This is why Redeemer begins each fall with Beta Groups. Beta Groups are seven-week Community Groups for people new to our church or city, new to community at Redeemer, or new to Christianity. And because it's a short commitment, it's a great way to test community life at Redeemer. Member sign ups open August 30 and groups launch the week of September 27. This year, we hope to launch 65 new Beta Groups, and in the process create new space for community for over 650 people.

Encountering the unique challenges of living in a large, transient city like New York without community can leave

one stranded, alone, and wearied. One Redeemer Beta Group leader from last fall shared this about his experience: “I thought I'd have no problem acclimating to city life, but it was not as easy as I hoped. It was after accepting an invitation to a Community Group that I found others going through similar challenges and we began to face them together.”

The Holy Spirit's work through community can turn questions into confidence, loneliness into relationship, and skepticism to faith. We can't do that without Community Groups, and we can't form groups without dozens of new faithful leaders and hosts. **Help us form these life-changing communities by volunteering to be a Beta Group leader or host, or recommending a friend to do so. If you're interested, or would like to recommend a friend, visit [redeemer.com/beta](http://redeemer.com/beta).**

# HFNY CELEBRATING \$1.4 MILLION IN GRANTS

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Hope for New York, Redeemer's partner for mercy & justice outreach to the city, is excited to announce that we're investing \$1.47 million in financial and capacity-building grants to our network of 40+ affiliate non-profit organizations this fiscal year.

That grant investment — made possible by individual donors to HFNY — includes:

- \$1.1 million in direct grants to fund existing programs (like soup kitchens, after-school mentoring, career clinics) or seed new ones.
- \$200K in volunteer impact grants to support our volunteers with needed supplies or funding for outings and activities so they can serve effectively.
- \$70,000 in capacity-building grants to increase the effectiveness of our non-profit affiliates. These grants fund opportunities like workshops, trainings, consulting services, and

leadership development throughout the year.

- \$55K in incubation grants to fund brand new programs serving the poor and marginalized.

Our grant investment is wide-ranging, and represents everything from funding a healthy food initiative to supporting several affiliates in implementing impact assessments to gauge the effectiveness of their work.

A few themes have emerged from this year's grant making that we're especially excited about:

## **Strengthening nonprofits**

This year, some of our capacity-building dollars have been devoted to partnering with our non-profit affiliates to avoid common nonprofit pitfalls. For nonprofits that are largely founder-driven, we're working with them this year on developing succession plans, to make sure that their work continues well into the future. For nonprofits with concentrated revenue sources, we've given chal-

lenge grants — if they're able to find new revenue sources to fund a certain amount, we'll match it.

**Investing in start-ups** We are thrilled to be able to fund two new non-profits this year. Last year, we fully funded The Open Door (one of our newest affiliates) to launch their Manhattan location of ESL classes and connected volunteers to teach the classes. This year, we'll fully fund a second night of ESL classes. We're also providing significant seed funding and capacity-building support to the Center for All Abilities, a new non-profit serving people with special needs and their families.

**Leveraging the power of our network** We love that our grant making is made even more effective by our broad network across the city. Throughout the year, we'll convene our nonprofits to share best practices and troubleshoot together. Instead of hosting one workshop for each non-profit, we can gather groups of non-profits serving the same population

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## LEAD OR HOST A BETA GROUP

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Each fall we launch Beta Groups for people new to Redeemer or new to community group life to try it out for seven weeks. At this time we are looking for leaders and hosts who would be great at welcoming others into community. We're looking for people who have a passion for God, compassion for others, a teachable spirit, and attend Redeemer regularly.

# JOIN TEAM HFNY FOR ANNUAL CHARITY BIKE RIDE ON SEPTEMBER 26

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Join others from Redeemer to cycle and fundraise as part of the annual HFNY Charity Bike Ride on September 26. Riders of all levels are welcome to join Team HFNY, and can choose one of four

routes: 25, 50, 65, or 100 miles. Team HFNY training rides start in August and will go through September — this is a great way to meet other riders and join our community of people raising funds for mercy

and justice across our city!

Learn more at [hfny.org/bikeride](http://hfny.org/bikeride), and sign up by September 1 to enjoy all the team activities!

## THE LOOK ON HIS FACE

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BY RACHEL

The second retreat for this year's Gotham Fellowship began with a thought exercise. We were asked to close our eyes and imagine the look on God's face when His gaze came upon us. I sat in the room with my classmates, eyes closed, and I saw a look of disappointment. The only thing sadder than this look was the fact that it made sense to me — it was neither surprising nor unfamiliar.

I have been a Christian since I was five years old, and for as long as I can remember, I have believed that God was disappointed in me. A tumultuous childhood combined with being a pastor's daughter fostered a tenuous and contentious relationship with the church and with many Christians.

In addition to my challenging childhood, I have spent 13 years as a social worker working with abused children and impoverished families. My experiences have caused me to question God's sovereignty and care for the world. I have been so disappointed with Christians' platitudes about suffering

that I had completely given up on the idea that the Church could be a refuge for those who suffer.

Even after being accepted to the Gotham Fellowship, I remained skeptical. The thought of willingly entering a Christian fellowship made my stomach churn. The day before the first retreat, I composed an email explaining why I was dropping out. The summer had been turbulent, and I was not willing to face nine months of people cheerleading for God.

But I received my own email first. One of my husband's friends sent a note to say he was praying for me, for the retreat, and for my upcoming year. It felt like an intervention from God — I couldn't believe someone else cared enough to be praying for me. At that first retreat, I wrote in my journal that I needed spiritual surgery.

Now that I have finished the fellowship, I can say that God used the Gotham year to save my faith and give me a new life. I learned a theology that corrected the dogmatism of

my evangelical upbringing. I learned how my idols spiritually immobilized me. I have been embraced by a community of believers who are loving, gracious, kind, and encouraging. I experienced a true shepherd in David Kim, who quelled my angst when I tearfully asked him to help me understand how a loving and sovereign God exists alongside the underbelly of humanity I face daily in my work with children who have been severely physically and sexually abused.

During the final retreat, we were asked again to visualize God's countenance as He gazed upon us. I did so reluctantly. But this time, I looked into His face and saw him beaming with a smile at me; He opened his arms and hugged me. I wept, and my friend sitting next to me hugged me. In that moment I realized I had experienced the spiritual surgery I so desperately needed. I had the most loving, painless surgery from a Father who knew what his broken daughter needed.



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## PUBLIC FAITH ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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things in their midst. Lyn Cook, a Community Group Director with Redeemer's East Side Congregation, told me one time, evangelism is one way God reaches into her heart and reminds her of his grace and goodness. He reveals himself to her by giving her hope and compassion as she prays, listens and talks with non-believing friends. God's sovereignty and relentless love are the foundation for evangelism and the way that many Christians, like Lyn, experience God as they live out their faith publicly.

And yet, those who experience God this way are not necessarily "better" at evangelism or Public Faith, it just happens to align with their experience of God. And also, like Tim said, the Great Commission in Matthew 28 was given to everyone; not just those who are gifted in evangelism.

With the start of a new ministry year just around the corner, it is a great time to think through some of these questions. "What does it mean for me to live out my faith publicly?" "What does the Great

Commission look like in my life?" "Who are the people God has brought into my life?" "What do I want my prayer life to look like?" "What did I learn about God in my most recent dialogue with \_\_\_\_?" Each week this fall, as we worship God and engage our friends, let's pray that God would bring people and circumstances into our lives that lead us to live out our faith publicly. And that through his Spirit our hearts and the lives of our friends would be changed and renewed by the gospel.

## HFNY CELEBRATING ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

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for training and discussion

**Involving our community in decision-making** For the past two years, we've convened a Community Grant Circle of volunteers, church staff, donors, and friends to participate and advise on our grant-making

process. Because our grant-making process is so transparent and involves a range of stakeholders, we're confident that the investments we're making in our affiliates.

For those of you who are donors to Hope for New York,

thank you for enabling us to invest in organizations to serve the poor and marginalized of our city this year. We can't wait to see how God will use these resources to change lives and communities across our city!