

APRIL 2017

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS...

BY KATHY KELLER

So if an editor is faced with a deadline and has no lead article, she might choose, as I have done, to fill the space with my, our, hopes and very real prayers for the life of Redeemer as it moves on post-founder.

As Tim and I keep pointing out, we are *not* retiring, just moving out of leadership roles in Redeemer and into teaching/mentoring roles at the Seminary and the New York Project. We will still worship at the congregations and participate in all that God is doing in NYC.

However, there is no denying that we will be leaving the roles we've had since Redeemer began, and that our influence on the culture and philosophy of

ministry will wane as other leaders take over the reigns.

This is what I meant when I said that THIS was Redeemer's defining moment. Will it go from strength to strength, proving the power of the Gospel? Or will it become "church as usual," with lots of nice, helpful programs and services, but without the driving engine of gospel-centered evangelism?

The Gospel is the Power ...

... not programs, or clever preaching, but the Gospel. Yes, I know Tim is a good preacher. I've heard him more than anyone. But I've also sat under the preaching of pastors who did

not have good speaking gifts and wept, and seen people converted. It was the clarity of gospel, not the level of giftedness.

Friends, always trust the power of the message of the mystery of Christ, God come to save his people through his life and death applied to our need. Knowing that you are not facing the Ultimate Taskmaster and Judge, but the open arms of your loving Father changes everything.

The Gospel must stay Central to everything ...

... and not just be a department or a line item on our statement of faith. Many gospel
(Continued on page 5)

REDEEMER MEMBERS: SAVE THE DATE! CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ON SATURDAY, MAY 20

All Redeemer members please mark your calendars for the upcoming Congregational Meeting. This is a critical event, as members will vote on Redeemer becoming three particular churches. Reception to follow with heavy hors d'oeuvres and drinks.

Saturday, May 20 at 6:00 p.m. at W83 Ministry Center, 150 W. 83rd St.

If you are a Redeemer church member, it is very important that you attend this meeting as we take this important step of becoming three particular churches to better love and serve the city.

REDEEMER LINCOLN SQUARE CATALYST

BY TAYLOR FORAN

For the past two months, I've had the privilege of watching the vision for Redeemer Lincoln Square turn into a reality on Monday nights. This meeting, which takes place every week at the W83 Ministry Center, is called Catalyst, and there are about eighty of us who have been attending.

A class called Catalyst — which Google defines as a change agent — initially raised some questions as to its meaning and purpose. Would we talk about how to change congregations? Perhaps we would focus on what might make this Redeemer congregation different? While both are good questions, they turned out not to be the focus of Catalyst. This class is about something else.

When we meet, we sit at tables. Around mine there's an immigrant, a West Side Deaconess, a professional musician, and a comedian. While Michael Keller always opens with a teaching, the bulk of our meeting is spent considering the evening's topic in discussion with the people at our tables. Topics have ranged from cities and idolatry to faith, work, and justice.

For me, the most intimidating topic we've discussed is evangelism. As a native New Yorker, the thought of sharing my

faith with classmates, colleagues, strangers and neighbors has always been agonizing. Even scarier is how they might respond to my openness. At Catalyst we wrestled with this as a community, and I'm glad we did.

Together, we considered Christ's call to be witnesses and salt to those around us, and what it means for the church to be a city on a hill. I was encouraged to learn that evangelism, or witnessing, isn't a one-man job.

First, if you're a witness, you have to actually be a witness of something. That means listening, knowing and understanding not only God's Word, but also the stories of our neighbors. Second, evangelism is salty — it's culturally preserving and socially sustaining. Third, it can be the work of our entire church — a safe, supportive and welcoming community.

Evangelism is about being emotionally engaged in the lives of the people around us. It's about listening and earning their trust, encouraging their spirits, and, if allowed the opportunity, sharing our hope with them. I wondered, "Who does this?" And more than that, I thought, "How can this happen in New York?"

Then I looked around my table. Eight weeks ago, we were

strangers. But with time, vulnerability, and grace, we had changed. Today, we're friends. In many ways, without even knowing it, we were already learning the skills needed for evangelism.

I've learned a lot at Catalyst. But what I will remember most about this class won't necessarily be the material we've covered, but the divides we've crossed. I've seen how God's grace connects people who would have no reason to be friends otherwise. And I've learned how, together, we can help each other — not only how we can better understand our role in the city, in our jobs, and in our homes, but also how we can respond to God's call to make disciples of all people, even to the lower ends of the Upper West Side.

Far from being a class about the things that are changing at Redeemer, Catalyst has provided an opportunity for me to experience grace through a new community. And though the class is over, I'm looking forward to the next chapter: leading a community group in the Lincoln Square neighborhood. I really don't know who will show up, and frankly, I'm not too concerned about that. God says he's there where two or more are gathered in His name, and I'm excited to witness that.

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

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.

2017 HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SCHEDULE

DOWNTOWN CONGREGATION

Thursday, April 13, 6:30 p.m. | Maundy Thursday

The Salvation Army, 120 W. 14th St., between 6th & 7th Aves.

Maundy Thursday is a celebration of the events at the Last Supper. There will be a worship service and an optional communal meal afterwards. RSVP to attend the communal meal as space is limited (meal is optional and costs \$10.00 per person, pay when you register: **redeemer.com/maundy**). You do not need to RSVP to only attend the worship service. Childcare will not be available, and all children are welcome to be in the service.

Sunday, April 16, 9:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m. | Easter Sunday

The Salvation Army, 120 W. 14th St., between 6th & 7th Aves.

Full children's program (nursery to 5th grade) at 9:30 a.m. and no children's program at 5:00 p.m.

EAST SIDE CONGREGATION

Friday, April 14, 5:30 p.m., 7:00 p.m. | Good Friday

All Souls Unitarian Church, 1157 Lexington Ave.

Childcare through age four. RSVP required, email **rosanna.lok@redeemer.com** with your service preference and age of child(ren).

Sunday, April 16, 9:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. | Easter Sunday

Hunter College Auditorium, E. 69th St. between Park & Lexington Aves.

There will be full children's programs for all ages (through 5th grade) at both the 9:45 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. service. There is no childcare or children's programs at the 6:00 p.m. service.

LINCOLN SQUARE CONGREGATION

Sunday, April 16, 10:30 a.m. | Easter Sunday

New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. & Central Park West

Childcare available from nursery through 5th grade.

WEST SIDE CONGREGATION

Friday, April 14, 5:00 p.m., 6:30 p.m. | Good Friday

W83 Minstry Center, 150 W. 83rd St.

Sanctuary open for prayer on April 14 from noon to 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, April 16 | Easter Sunday

8:30 a.m., 10:00 a.m. 11:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m., 6:45 p.m.

W83 Minstry Center, 150 W. 83rd St.

Childcare available from nursery through pre-K at 8:30 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. services. No children's programs at 6:45 p.m. Elementary school age children will remain in the service with parents at all services.

PULITZER PRIZE WINNING AUTHOR MARILYNNE ROBINSON RECEIVES CFW INAUGURAL COMMISSION OF FAITH & WORK

Redeemer's Center for Faith & Work (CFW) is honored to announce its inaugural Commission of Faith & Work to Pulitzer Prize winning author Marilynne Robinson, for her notable integration of faith and work and remarkable contribution to the humanities.

"CFW has been committed to supporting and highlighting the bright spots of faith and work integration. There are few brighter, and with greater depth of soul, than Marilynne Robinson," says CFW executive director David Kim. "Her already singular body of work exhibits a confluence of imagination, beauty, and intellectual rigor that will nourish the humanities for a long time to come, a much-needed voice for these days. Robinson's writing achieves a level of thought and craft that CFW has aimed to model to our constituents, and we are thrilled to foster and further share her work through this exciting new commission."

The commission aims to address the tide of uncertainty that the humanities now face with distinctly Christian support. Historically, in times of uncertainty and transition, the humanities have provided reminders of hope and grace to combat our fear and doubt. They center us in the miracle of the *Imago Dei*, sounding the peal of God's presence in our lives. As Robinson so wisely states in one of her many erudite essays: "I experience religious dread whenever I find myself

thinking that I know the limits of God's grace, since I am utterly certain it exceeds any imagination a human being might have of it. God does, after all, so love the world."

Robinson is the author of four novels: *Lila* (2014), winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award; *Home* (2008), winner of the Orange Prize and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize; *Gilead* (2004), winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award; and *Housekeeping* (1980), winner of PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Fiction. Her five nonfiction books include *The Givenness of Things: Essays* (2015) and *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* (1998).

Her many other honors include the American Academy of Arts and Letters Mildred and Harold Strauss Living Fund, the National Humanities Medal, and the American Academy of Religion in the Arts Award. Robinson, a longtime faculty member of the University of Iowa Writers Workshop, is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Robinson lives in Iowa City, Iowa, where she is a deacon for the Congregational United Church of Christ. This September, she received the Library of Congress' Prize for American Fiction.

In light of the commission, CFW will facilitate several community-building opportunities

where Redeemerites and New Yorkers can engage with Robinson's writing. Most recently, CFW hosted a book discussion group on Robinson's latest PEN Award Finalist book of essays *The Givenness of Things*. In addition, five of CFW's artists-in-residence created new work on the theme of Givenness, inspired by Robinson's essay of the same name. The final projects from their residencies will be presented across the city in various forms.

Resources and introductions into Robinson's work:

The Givenness of Things: Essays (2016)

Gilead (2004),
winner of the Pulitzer Prize

Home (2008),
winner of the Orange Prize

Lila (2014),
winner of the National
Book Critics Circle Award

Housekeeping (1980),
winner of the PEN/
Hemingway Award

The New York Review of Books:
President Obama and
Marilynne Robinson
In Conversation

The Paris Review
on Marilynne Robinson
and The Art of Fiction

To learn more about the commission, Robinson's work, and CFW's programs and events, visit faithandwork.com.

DIACONATE TESTIMONY

BY NAME WITHHELD

Last spring and summer I found a community at Redeemer that helped me navigate through what felt like one of the darkest periods of my life professionally, personally and spiritually. Last February to August, almost every Thursday, I took the F train to Bryant Park, walked a couple blocks to Redeemer's midtown office and joined Diaconate's Job Search Round Table.

While I attended Redeemer every Sunday and was an active member of my Community Group, the Round Table provided a sense of community that supplemented Sunday service and my Community Group. At Round Table, I spoke openly and freely with other job seekers about the trials and tribulations of job search, without secretly wondering in the back of my mind if the person I was talking to thought something was wrong with me because I wasn't employed. Round Table also provided spiritual guidance specifically designed for job seekers. I remember attending Round Table for the first time and feeling like I was having my first drink

of water after wandering through a desert. (I should've paid better attention to Redeemer's church bulletins! By the time I arrived at Round Table, I had already been looking for opportunities for quite some time.)

During my time at Roundtable, I learned two key lessons: 1) we are designed for certain jobs; 2) to stop being afraid and start trusting God. While those two lessons are very easy to write, they were very difficult to learn! It took a lot — and a different kind — of prayer to learn those lessons. Faith has always been important to me, but it wasn't until I was going through over a year of being unemployed after having steady employment at many prestigious companies for almost 20 years that I prayed to God from the fierce belly of who I am to ask Him what was the right path for me. Over the years, I had taken a variety of personality tests to see what roles were right for me, but I never thought about it from the perspective of my faith and God's plan for me.

God had to take me to a very scary place financially before I "woke up" and began to

truly trust Him. In that moment of extreme financial discomfort, I finally realized that I was stopping myself in my own tracks from finding the right opportunity. In some ways, I was so scared to return to the workforce that I was self-sabotaging my own search process. It's not until I let go of that fear and started truly trusting God that I found the right opportunity.

This past winter I did that same walk from the Bryant Park F train stop to Redeemer's office, but this time to give my talk as a Job Search Roundtable alumnus. My eyes began to water with tears of joy as I came closer to Redeemer's lobby. God provided the right role for me in His own time.

Thank you to the Redeemer Diaconate for the Job Search Round Table Community and praise God for his faithfulness!

The Redeemer Diaconate provides practical assistance and holistic care to those with needs in our congregations. Please partner with us to keep this ministry of mercy going by providing a financial gift redeemer.com/mercygift.

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

preaching/teaching/faithful churches nevertheless allow the gospel to slide out of central focus. Instead of the *Good News* being heard in every sermon, testimony, seminar, and mercy/justice/f&w program, *Good Advice* takes its place. How To — live a better Christian life, have better relationships, be more

compassionate to the poor and marginalized, more humane at work — all of this *is* good advice, but it is *not* the power that changes everything.

Keep the Gospel in the center and everything else will spin around it — put something else in the center and it all falls apart. Let's not let happen what often

does happen — departments jockeying for budget and air-time, leaders with individual agendas, decisions made for the sake of someone's taste rather than the needs of those who don't know Christ. Not here, O Lord, we pray.

(Continued on page 7)

EASTER STORY OF HOPE: STEVEN JOHNSON, NEW YORK CITY RESCUE MISSION

Steven Johnson, originally from Brooklyn, New York, is a resident at the New York City Rescue Mission, one of the non-profit affiliates of Hope for New York. Below, he shares his story of how Jesus has given him a new life and purpose after spending nearly 30 years in prison.

I grew up in a one-parent household with my mother and my sister. My mom had me when she was 14, and things weren't too bad until she started to work. She was still so young, and wanted to have her life, and when she met her husband, she shut me out. I felt unwanted and unworthy. I also became responsible for caring for myself and my sister, something I wasn't really equipped for.

When I was nine years old my sister hit her head while fighting another girl at school. No one knew that she had diabetes as well. The next morning at breakfast, my mom sent me off to school and took my sister to the hospital. That was the last time I saw her. I asked my mom if I could visit her, but she wouldn't let me. I didn't know it then, but it was because my sister had passed away. The resentment and abandonment I felt towards my mom really solidified after that.

It was overwhelming and I started to act out. I felt I had to do everything on my own. I ran away, got involved doing and selling drugs, and ended up in prison. I felt that nobody cared about what I was going through

— so that cycle only continued. I spent almost 30 years of my life in and out of prison. I kept masking my feelings and pain, first with marijuana and then with cocaine and heroin. Things just spiraled down.

Faith was not a part of my life growing up. I'd heard my grandmother say "Jesus loves you," but I didn't pay it any mind. I was focused on me and looking out for myself, because it felt like no one else was.

The last time I was in prison, I wound up doing 14 years and I went through some painful moments in that time. I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. I didn't think I could deal with it. I loved to play basketball, but I couldn't even walk. After three years things with my MS started to get better. But even though I was feeling better physically, I still held onto a deep resentment towards my mom that I'd never told anyone about.

When I came home from prison, my spirit was completely broken. At the time, I had no place to go. I started to pray. That's when God stepped into my life and allowed me to surrender. He showed me that everything I had tried to do on my own, it didn't work. I needed Him and His grace.

That same day, I wound up at my grandmother's, and I broke down. I told her I was sorry for everything I had done. She told me to turn my life over to God and everything would be all right. He would never leave me. In that moment, He put his

hand on me and that's when I found out I have a friend, and His name is Jesus, and He is always by my side.

The next morning, I woke up feeling renewed. I told my grandmother, "Ma, I'm going to a place that can help me," and I went to The New York City Rescue Mission. I used to go there to eat sometimes. By the grace of God, He made a way for me, and when they let me in, it felt like the world was lifted off my shoulders.

From that day forward, I felt like I was set free. I was able to trust the Lord, and that feeling is like no other, to know that He is guiding my life. The Rescue Mission helped me immensely with getting closer to my God. He also worked through my counselor, who took me through some things I needed to hear and work on. Christ really stepped in and changed my whole life. He removed my shame and guilt and gave me peace. He let me know that I have Him, and I don't have to hold onto resentment anymore.

That was six months ago. Now, I strive every day to be His vessel to work with. Today, I work in the kitchen at the Rescue Mission, and I feel like God put me here to serve these people, because this is who He came for. Before, I was all into me. It was my world. I was using my gifts for the wrong purposes. But, now? It feels so good to be faithful, and it's only by the grace of God that it's possible.

(Continued on page 7)

EASTER STORY OF HOPE ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 6)

Every Easter, Redeemer receives a special offering to support the poor of our city through Hope for New York, our partner for mercy and justice. Would you prayerfully consider giving to Hope for New York this Easter to strengthen work that makes possible stories of hope like Steven's? 100% of your gifts will help support New Yorkers in need, including at-risk youth, low-income families, immigrants, the homeless, and the elderly.

- You can donate online at hfny.org/easter.
- You can also give during your Easter Sunday service or by sending checks (payable to "Hope for New York") to Hope for New York, 1166 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 1610, New York, NY, 10036.
- You can incorporate generosity into your daily life, throughout the year, with The Hope Exchange, HFNY's monthly giving program. Learn more at hfny.org/hopeexchange.

YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

The Gospel must be clearly seen, heard and felt in worship.

This is harder than you might think. One must always be thinking of the people who *aren't* in the congregation, not the people who are. If you worship at Redeemer, presumably you are here because your heart most desires that the Gospel reach those who are furthest away from hearing it.

That means several things: that our communication must be Christian-jargon free. As Director of Communication, then Assistant Director, and editor, I have gotten to see and hear a lot of material produced within Redeemer. It is so easy to slip into Christian-talk, and I don't just mean the sub-cultural buzz-words that are fairly easy to catch. We can't make assumptions that the people to whom we are speaking don't share, and to

avoid that, you have to spend actual time listening to non-believers, reading their books, magazines, and newspapers.

It also means that our worship must be what Edmund Clowney, former president of Westminster Seminary, called "doxological evangelism," by which he meant worship that led people into the presence of God where they could experience for themselves his reality. So often we assume that our own tastes and experiences will be shared by everyone else, but, oh, it is not so! Believers are exhorted by Paul to give care to how they worship so that when (not "*if*," you notice) unbelievers attend they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "*God is really among you!*" 1 Corinthians 14:25

Additionally, when part of the worship service becomes

"and now these commercial messages." Testimonies (something I have spent a great deal of time with) can so quickly degenerate into *This-Is-a-Really-Worthy-Use-of-Your-Time or I-Was-Nervous-About-Doing-This-But-It-Turned-Out-All-Right-and-I-Made-New-Friends-and-Learned-a-Couple-of-Valuable-Lessons*. We are so caught up in the needs of those who are already believers that we forget to tell non-believers that it was the Gospel that changed us, and that can change them.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:23 that he would only preach "Christ crucified." That is our lodestar, our plumb line, and our fountain of youth. It is what will keep Redeemer evergreen and faithful to its call, and we pray it for you all.



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