

MAY 2017

## YOU MUST REMEMBER THIS: PART 2

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BY TIM KELLER

Several big ideas have shaped Redeemer over the years. Kathy wrote about the most important one last month — the centrality of the gospel. One that I’d like to reflect on is the importance of city ministry.

The Bible teaches several things about the city. First, respect for its importance, and second, realism about its evil. Theologian Geerhardus Vos wrote that the city, *while accumulator of the energy of culture, is also an accumulator of the potencies of evil*. The city draws and aggregates people’s talents together in such a way that the greatest works of culture are produced there. But it does the same thing with human sin. So the city is like a magnifying glass, bringing out both the best and worst in human beings.

Further, the Bible teaches that the city should draw out our love. God chastises Jonah for not being moved to compassion for the massive spiritual need in the great cities of the world (Jonah 4:11).

Christians today have several different attitudes toward cities. Some romanticize the city, and often they use the language of “loving the city.” But it might

be more accurate to say they love the *experience* of the city — the excitement, energy, and options. They don’t put time and effort into supporting the life and health of the city, and they tend to remain in the cool and sophisticated parts of it. Others disdain the city. They don’t come to the city, or, if they have to be here, they hold their breath until they can leave. They often resent the pride of the big city, or the liberal politics of it — with much warrant. They may dislike the competition, the expense, and the difficulty of working in such dizzying plurality.

There is another group who is simply indifferent to the city. They don’t particularly love or hate the city, but they are not keen on making any special investment of time, money, and life in city ministry. They don’t see why it should be treated any differently.

I would say that each of these attitudes fails to be informed and shaped by all of the biblical teaching.

Those who romanticize the city forget the spiritual darkness that cities generate: the power in the city of the hu-

man idols of sex, money, and power. Christians with a naïve view of cities will not be attentive to the ways in which the city can seduce us into ‘the spirit of the age.’ They also can make believers who are *not* called to city living and ministry feel guilty.

Those who disdain the city forget the call to love — they forget God’s reasoning with Jonah. “Should I not have compassion on the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than *a hundred and twenty-thousand* people who do not know their right hand from their left ...?” God is not saying that Jonah should love urban life and experience — he is asking how Jonah could fail to be moved by the size of the spiritual need.

Those who are indifferent to the city forget the importance of the city. Vos’ astute observation that cities are ‘accumulators of the energies of culture’ is exactly right. If Christians are not willing to live and work in cities, then we should not complain that the culture is reflecting less and less of the wisdom of the Bible.

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# THE FAMILIAR MADE NEW: REDEEMER RETURNS TO LINCOLN SQUARE

BY WILL ANDERSON AND ELIZABETH BLAUFox

Redeemer Lincoln Square signals a return to Redeemer's former upper west side home at the Society for Ethical Culture on the corner of 64th and Central Park West. For anyone who was a part of Redeemer's West Side congregation prior to our move to 150 W. 83rd Street five years ago, this is a return to a familiar space. By the same token, Redeemer is largely known to our neighbors in Lincoln Square. But though this is a return to something familiar and some of us may remember the ways things were "back then," our prayer is that Redeemer LSQ be *made new* — that we would find new ways to reach our



neighbors, rethink how Redeemer does community, and better serve the city from this location.

As God is prone to do, He showed us a glimpse of that reality on Easter Sunday with an incredible influx of old friends, new friends, familiar faces, families with kids, seekers with questions, and everyone in between. With only 650 bulletins printed, the crowd of 939 quickly exceeded our expectations. By the size of the crowd, it was apparent that many had taken the opportunity to invite friends, co-workers, and family members from outside the Redeemer regulars. The experience of coming to a new church, and especially of inviting someone from outside the church, has a refreshing and enlightening effect, as it forces us to see and hear the crowd, music, service, and sermon through a visitor's eyes, ears, and questions.

The very act of asking questions is central to the vision for Redeemer Lincoln Square: Our motto is "We are a church that values questions and the people who ask them." This is a breath of fresh air to many visitors and

seekers who have been battered by unloving religious experiences in their past — and



we can't forget that. But this posture also holds incredible potential for the leaders, volunteers, and established congregants among us as well. We, too — as Michael challenged us in his sermon — must be real and vulnerable with our doubts and ask questions; this not only helps us to anticipate the needs of newcomers, but also to grow deeper in our own faith.

For the deacons and deaconesses who are committed to LSQ, eleven of us in all, we have a unique opportunity to serve and be served by some of the brave and vulnerable among our congregation each week — to listen to their doubts, struggles, and prayers.

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## 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.

# UPHOLDING THE NECESSITY OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

BY LEON M. BROWN

At the 2016 General Assembly of the PCA, I was one of thirteen men and women chosen to study the biblical and historical basis for women in ministry. We were tasked to report back to the Assembly in 2017. The report was released in April and will be discussed publicly as a denomination in June. It is a consensus document that seeks to uphold biblical inerrancy and infallibility, the importance of historical theology, a robust complementarianism, and the significance of women in the church.

During our first meeting, the committee immediately affirmed the importance, dignity, and value of women in the world and in the church. Women image their God, and, therefore, demand respect and equal treatment. The committee was unified in this biblical assessment, also confessing the harm some churches have done to women. The reduction of their role to cooking, playing the piano, and administrative responsibilities has unnecessarily limited the gifts that they can provide to Christ's Church.

We hope to demonstrate that the church *needs and desires* women's opinions, teaching, and service, especially in light of the culture that is often fostered in churches that seeks to focus on what women cannot do rather than what women are called to do (Judges 4-5; John 4:1-30;

Acts 18:24-28; Romans 16:1-2; Titus 2:3-5; cf. BCO 9-7, *et al*).

One area of importance was their service along side and potentially within the diacon-



Leon M. Brown

ate. The PCA's *Book of Church Order* (BCO) 9-7 permits non-ordained men and women to serve alongside deacons. "It is often expedient," the *BCO* maintains, "that the Session of a church should select and appoint godly men and women of the congregation to assist the deacons in caring for the sick, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners, and others who may be in any distress or need." The *BCO* addresses non-ordained women as co-laborers with the deacons; however, since the committee was tasked to study ordination, we were required to look into the possibility of women serving within the diaconate as ordained members. This further caused the committee to study the biblical and historical precedent for a non-ordained role, which is sometimes called "deaconess."

We focused on key passag-

es in the New Testament that contribute to the possibility of female ordination within the diaconate and the role of deaconesses. The conversation of this important issue occurred via conference call, email, and face-to-face meetings at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO. After consideration of key passages (e.g., Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 16:1-3, 6-7, 12; 1 Cor. 14:26-40; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:8-11, etc.), our convictions of the importance of women in ministry were affirmed. That affir-

mation, nonetheless, also recognized that God has instituted roles within his church.

Our focus was not femininity or mere outward expressions of what it means to be a woman. These are culturally fluid and often spring from mere human traditions. Rather, our sight was set on the unchanging and unfailing word of God, which objectively defines gender roles within the church, though allowing much cultural freedom of expression within those roles.

Our conclusion led to a recommendation that churches continue to pursue *BCO* 9-7. Further, our interpretation of the main passages confronting the issues of the diaconate and women's ordination led the majority of the committee to conclude that ordination is for called and qualified men. What

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# WRITING ABOUT GOD TO KNOW GOD

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BY WHITNEY BAUCK

When I introduce Christian Wiman's work to others, I often say he's 75 percent of the reason I still call myself a Christian.

Wiman's work entered my life at a time when I desperately needed it, and it would be difficult to overstate the affect that his prose volume *My Bright Abyss* had on me. It made faith not only seem possible, but also sane and holy and even necessary, for the first time in ages.

It's unsurprising, then, that I jumped at the chance to learn from Wiman in a poetry workshop hosted by the Center for Faith and Work in January.

One of the themes that arose during the workshop was an emphasis on highly specific language. In prose, you may get away with blabbing on and on. But poetry is by nature a sparser medium, and even epic poetry tends to have meticulously-chosen syntax. With shorter poems like Wiman's, selecting each word with painstaking intentionality becomes paramount.

This practice has theological implications. In *My Bright Abyss*, Wiman quotes George

Lindbeck saying "you can no more be religious in general than you can speak language in general." If it's true that we can't conceive of something we don't have adequate language for, then finding better words for God isn't merely an intellectual exercise. It's a matter of getting closer to describing the reality of who and what God really is, and thus being able to experience that reality more fully.

This is the experience I've had with Wiman's writing. His unwillingness to rely on familiar clichés has made it possible for me to experience God afresh by clearing new language pathways through which God might be accessed.

Another theme stressed by Wiman in our time together was that of "contemplative attention." He had workshopers write in extensive sensory detail about a moment from earlier in the day, practicing a strategy Wiman uses as a jumping-off point in his own writing. By being fully present in the moment in front of him — whether watching sparks fly off train tracks or noticing the thump of

a bee against a windowpane — the poet invites his readers to experience the mundane in a way that becomes transcendent.

This too has theological implications. It is harder to hear what God is saying *now* if we are too wrapped up in memories of the past or dreams of the future. Paying scrupulous attention to the world around us in a given moment becomes a means of opening ourselves to what God is up to and giving ourselves a chance to respond to it.

I cannot pretend Wiman has blasted the ceiling so thoroughly off my day-to-day that I now experience God's light pouring in with the blinding constancy I dream of. But Wiman's words, and the tools he's offered in specific language and contemplative attention, have helped create cracks that let a bit more sun in. For someone accustomed to living in shadow, that's worth a lot.

*Whitney Bauck is an assistant editor at [fashionista.com](http://fashionista.com) who has written for the New York Times, the Washington Post, Christianity Today and more.*

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## NECESSITY OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

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about the non-ordained position of deaconess? At a minimum, church history supports that role (see Calvin and Warfield, for example). The committee therefore recommended that PCA churches "select and

appoint godly women of the congregation to assist the ordained leadership; these godly, unordained women have historically been referred to as deaconesses." Deaconesses would be recognized through

commissioning, though not ordained.

A second area of considerable importance was complementarianism. We desired to set forth a biblical, rather than cultural, *(Continued on page 6)*

# MEET FOUR AWESOME VOLUNTEERS

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Hope for New York volunteers are constantly thinking through how they can best serve their neighbors in need as a response to the grace shown by Jesus. Maybe that means hosting a dinner to engage peers to address homelessness. Or inviting college students to use their design skills to serve non-profits across the city. Maybe it means serving faithfully at one specific ministry, or growing closer in community with others by serving together.

Let these stories from four Hope for New York volunteers inspire you to pray through how God might want to use you to bring greater peace and flourishing to this city. Looking to get involved as a volunteer with HFNY? Find great opportunities at [hfny.org/volunteer](http://hfny.org/volunteer).



## JANE KIM

### Redeemer East Side

Last month, my friend Mel and I hosted an Exchange Dinner on behalf of Hope for New York's Young Supporters Committee. We go to Redeemer East Side, and planned the dinner to engage our friends and colleagues on homelessness in this city, to connect them with ways to volunteer, and to vask for a financial commitment toward The Hope Exchange, HFNY's monthly giving program.

This was the first of HFNY's Exchange Dinners, so it was a bit of an experiment. But we ended up bringing together 14 strangers! We weren't sure how the group would mesh or how receptive everyone would be to the program. Leading up to the dinner, we prayed for our friends' hearts to be open to the message of supporting the poor of our city. Of course, God had it all worked out!

Not only did all 14 people get along very well, but also we had engaging conversations and even spent time assembling care packages for the homeless from items everyone had donated. God is unfailingly good, and He always keeps me on my toes. I'm so thankful to God for this unique opportunity to reach our friends. The next day, a non-Christian friend told me she wanted to volunteer with us next month at the Relief Bus. I look forward to many more Exchange Dinners!



## CARMITA SANCHEZ-FONG

### Redeemer West Side

As a professor in the Interior Design department at the Fashion Institute of Technology and a Redeemer West Sider, I try to help our students master abstract academic concepts while fostering social responsibility. To that end, I founded the Integrated Service-Learning Project at FIT in 2013, which encourages students to gain experience by participating in pro bono projects that benefit their communities.

We've had the opportunity to partner with many of Hope for New York's non-profit affiliates. In 2015, a group of students re-furnished the Bowery Mission Women's Center bedrooms. They also presented proposals for the facade at Living Waters Community Center. It's incredible to see the students' desires to serve others by sharing their talents as a way of responding to issues of social justice in the public square.

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It's also gratifying to hear from the non-profits we've served — like Restore NYC. They were so grateful our students were able to turn their dreams for their space into a reality. The interactions our volunteers have with those they serve has given them a lens through which they can see beyond themselves and become engaged in the complexity of the world's struggles for human dignity. I'm excited to see how they'll serve our neighbors this year through our partnership with St. Paul's House.



### **JAN KOMRSKA**

#### **Redeemer Downtown**

Shortly after I moved to New York from Denmark, I decided to volunteer at The Bowery Mission's Wednesday meal service after finding out about Hope for New York at Redeemer Downtown. While the concept of serving others wasn't foreign to me, my busy schedule always got in the way of making serving others a priority.

But after I started serving at the Mission, I met a number of volunteers who had similarly busy schedules, yet still managed to prioritize service. As they encouraged me, I slowly started to make room in my agenda. Now, I serve as a Hope for New York Volunteer Team Leader with The Bowery Mission. Not only do I directly serve people in need, but also I'm also able to assist the Mission and my fellow volunteers. And I've learned an important lesson: Service is not about me. It's about God! But God can use me only if I humbly let Him lead me.

Certainly, there are times I feel discouraged. When volunteers don't show up. When efforts aren't appreciated. But I've also been so inspired by the many people in New York who genuinely want to help others — and by the way many of the people in need bear their difficulties in faith. Their attitudes are humbling and encouraging. Serving others has a way of bringing enormous blessing and joy to you.



### **KATE MCMILLAN**

#### **Redeemer Lincoln Square**

My first Christmas in the city my community group from Redeemer West Side volunteered at His Toy Store in the South Bronx with A House on Beekman. We've continued serving there alongside each other every year, and it has been one of the great gifts God has given me since moving here five years ago.

It is a gift to see the joy on kids' faces as we jump rope together or paint faces — not to mention interacting with parents as they choose gifts for their children. Our shared experience of serving has allowed my community group to grow closer, and it has also connected us to people we might not have known otherwise — and, ultimately, it's drawn us closer to Christ.

And as we've understood more of who we are collectively in Christ through serving, He's grown our desire to share His love outwardly. His Toy Store opened our eyes to the needs of our neighbors and has given us a heart for serving together in other ministries, like Don't Walk By and The Bowery Mission Women's Center. Volunteering has been an incredible way for us to live out our faith and grow deeper in community. God has graciously given us the gift of Christ, how can we not serve those around us and share His love with others?

## REMEMBER THIS: PART 2 ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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Those who hold together all the biblical insights about cities should love the city *itself* (not just the experience) through witness and sacrificial service to the well-being of neighbors, whether they believe what we do or not (Luke 10:25-37). They should expect hostility, to never be fully accepted (1 Peter 2:12) and yet not bristle or be hostile in turn. They should love the city by praying for and seeking its good (Jer. 29:7).

There is one more balance that I think we should strike. We must never give the impression that every Christian is called to live in the city. I've met and heard of believers who have come to believe that they are simply being disobedient and selfish if they do *not* come to minister in the city. But not only is there no biblical statement to that effect, and therefore no one's conscience should

be bound to live in cities (see *Westminster Confession* Chapter 20 "On Liberty of Conscience") but it only makes sense that we should have Christians living and ministering everywhere there are people. Jesus told us to go into "all the world" and make disciples of "all nations." That means *all*.

On the other hand, social scientists tell us that across the whole planet, there are **at least 5 million people moving into cities from the countryside every month**. The number of churches per capita in the country and towns far exceeds the number in cities. People are moving to cities where there are fewer places of gospel witness for the population, and that situation is worsening by the day. For example, New York City will be gaining a net of one million people over the next 25 years. That is bigger than Charlotte,

North Carolina. Will we be planting as many new churches here as are in Charlotte? Probably not.

So put the balance like this. We need churches everywhere there are people — but the people of the world are moving into cities much faster than the church is. Jesus told us to go into the world to make disciples (Matt 28:18-20). If we fail to go where the world is going then we are not heeding our Lord's command. So certainly we must never rigidly insist that everyone should do city ministry, nor that gospel ministry in one place is intrinsically better than in another place. But we should not shrink from emphasizing city ministry as never before.

Don't romanticize or demonize or shrug at the city. Love the city, Redeemer Church, as Christ loved you.

## NECESSITY OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 4)

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approach to gender roles. Informed by the many places Jesus describes himself as a servant and insists his followers do likewise, we concluded that God-ordained differences in role were not for the purpose of accruing self-serving power and privilege, which can lead to abuse. Instead, these God-appointed differences in role were for sacrificial service. Men who use their roles of leadership to oppress and abuse women are acting sinfully and not as followers of Christ and his Word.

Our time together as committee ends at the 2017 General Assembly. The Assembly will vote on the recommendations. Additionally, there will be an Assembly-wide panel with the members of the committee to answer questions. On this panel, we hope to reinforce that our conclusions in the report were molded by the word of God. Our desire was never to create unrest within the PCA. Rather, we wanted to uphold the necessity of women in ministry that accords with the Word of

God. Our prayer is that our report will be used to foster an environment where women can serve Christ's Church joyfully, faithfully, and according to the Scriptures.

*Leon Brown received an M. Div. from Westminster Seminary California in 2011 and an M.A. in historical theology from Westminster Seminary California in 2012. Rev. Brown is pursuing his Ph.D. in Hebrew at the University of the Free State.*



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## REDEEMER RETURNS TO LINCOLN SQUARE ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 2)

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You may have noticed we've moved the weekly after-service prayers from "Deeks Up Front" to "Deeks on the Side." This is our effort to make it a little less intimidating to approach us, particularly for those relatively new to church. It's a small change, but it is one example of how we want to respond to the specific needs of this congregation, move away from a "one-size-fits-all" approach to community, and more carefully tailor what we're doing to the neighborhood we're serving.

So how can LSQ take this momentum, and this familiar venue made new, and carry it

forward? The answer — also familiar made new — was brought out beautifully in Michael's sermon that day: We need to see Jesus's wounds. Jesus put everything before the doubter's eyes to show that all the injustices in the world — loneliness, disease, belittlement, unemployment, slander, hatred, murder, rape, abuse, sexism, racism, and classism — do not escape His eyes and they cut Him deeply. He, too, is outraged by the brokenness we see in the world.

While the diaconate is here and ready for people to come to us, we recognize that in

our relationship with God, He came to us first. So as we continue to knit our community together here at Redeemer LSQ, we pray that everyone who walks through those doors becomes vulnerable and willing participants to seek each other, weaving in and out from familiar to new, friend to visitor, neighbor to foreigner, doubter to believer, known to unknown ... because "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Only in that space, and with that posture of heart, can we witness God's growth in us and become a truly transformed community.