



SEPTEMBER 2017

A TWENTY-YEAR-OLD COMMITMENT FULFILLED

BY MAI HARU-POWELL

I began attending Redeemer as a congregant in 2004 and then joined the staff as a project manager in 2012 to open West 83rd, and then was on the team to launch the Downtown congregation. It was an exciting time to be on staff, as we were stepping out in faith to move Redeemer from a mega-church to a collegiate model. Once the collegiate model was in full swing, I started working with the leadership on some of our internal discussions of what would be next for Redeemer. And those discussions quickly became not about Redeemer, but about a movement that was happening in the city. I was blown away by the vision for what could be —

what if God could bring a gospel movement in our city to a tipping point? These conversations later became what is now called the New York Project and gave birth to the Rise campaign at Redeemer.

At the time I thought this focus away from Redeemer but towards the city as a whole was something new for us at Redeemer ... until I came across the Redeemer Presbyterian Church annual report from 1998. This was back in the day when we only had worship services at Hunter, we had just started talking about holding worship services on the West Side, and Hope for New York was only 4 years old. Redeemer was only 9

years old at the time and already Tim and our leadership were starting to communicate that a mega-church was not the end goal. And in fact, the annual report starts with a cover page that bluntly states this:

Redeemer is about to embark on a deliberate and innovative strategy to reject the mega-church model. Instead of becoming a mega-church, we want to raise a whole new generation of leaders and churches. Instead of keeping our gifts to ourselves, we want to become a movement of churches and a servant of the whole Body of Christ in New York and beyond.

We have two basic strategies for this: adopt a Multi-Site model

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LOOKING FOR BETA GROUP LEADERS AND HOSTS

Redeemer launches new, seven-week Community Groups every fall called “Beta Groups” in an effort to help people new to the city, new to Christianity, new to Redeemer, or new to intentional community to find life-giving and life-transforming community. In order to do this, we need people who are willing to lead and/or host groups.

What we look for in a leader is simple: someone who loves Je-

sus, who believes his gospel and seeks to live out its implications in all of life, and who loves others. Someone who has a genuine desire both for their own growth and the growth of others.

For hosts, we look for someone who can create an atmosphere where people will feel welcome, like they are at home.

Remember that God doesn't ask us to do anything out of guilt. Jesus has put away our guilt. Rather, it is his grace changing

our lives that motivates us to be a part of changing others', and it's his grace that teaches us to look beyond ourselves and towards the good of others.

The gospel teaches us that it's only when we forget about our own happiness that we actually find ourselves to be truly happy.

In Mark 8:34-35, Jesus says, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow

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THE PROBLEM WITH OUR “ME-ODOLOGY”

PETER ONG

Understanding the comprehensiveness of God’s reign must lead us to a comprehensive understanding of discipleship, where spiritual formation is not limited to our prayers or Bible studies, but extends to serving the needs of others as we seek to actively engage in God’s redemptive plan.

For many of us, our view of the gospel is limited to personal morality. We often measure our faith by our disciplines of grace — how often we do devotions or pray, or our attendance at church gatherings. Most of our goals in our practice of our Christian faith focus on personal moral development and spiritual therapy.

In other words, our “theology” has been replaced by “me-ology.”

“Me-ology” limits the Christian faith to “my story” and not God’s larger story of redemption in which our deeply engaged and sovereign Christ is working. “Me-ology” understands the “personal revival” of the gospel, but not how it extends to others. “Me-ology” reads Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God,” and releases a sigh of comfort, but ignores the following line: “I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

If the goal of our faith never goes deeper than these personal achievements of a personal faith, then the gospel is merely a decorative piece on the presentation of our identity. It’s merely part of our own story.

The key question is which story captivates us? Ours? Or a greater story in which God is calling us to participate in His comprehensive work by demonstrating Christ’s love in word and deed to a broken world?

Because we have been formed in the image of God, all of humanity shares a deep conviction that there is something wrong with the world. But if the gospel we believe is one in which our personal piety is the goal, we are hopeless when confronted by the evil in the world around us — the forces are too big, too overwhelming. So we turn away — retreating at best, disdaining at worst.

Therefore, it is vital to our call as the Church that when we are confronted with a vast reality of injustice, we believe in a comprehensiveness of God’s reign — that he is not only redeeming and renewing us as individuals, but working toward a vision where every person experiences social, spiritual and economic flourishing.

Understanding this comprehensiveness of God’s reign must then lead us to a comprehensive understanding of discipleship, where our spiritual formation

is not limited to our prayers or Bible studies, but extends to serving the needs of others as we seek to actively engage in God’s redemptive plan.

It is only then that we see a gospel not abbreviated by self-help platitudes, but one that genuinely has answers to these profound questions of brokenness. This gospel doesn’t retreat from or ignore brokenness, but looks toward Christ — who takes evil so seriously that He was willing to die to conquer it. We must see ourselves as faithful stewards, serving those who are in need because Christ first reached out to serve our greatest need.

To state it plainly: practical service to the poor is part of our Christian call and discipleship. As Abraham Kyuper wrote in *The Problem of Poverty*:

Never forget that all state relief for the poor is a blot on the honor of your savior. The fact that the government needs a safety net to catch those who would slip between the cracks of our economic system is evidence that I have failed to do God’s work. The government cannot take the place of Christian charity. A loving embrace isn’t given
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REDEEMER REPORT

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Kathy Keller
Heather Klein

Hunter College Auditorium
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(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.

THE REDEEMER LINCOLN SQUARE REPORT

BY JOE AND CONNIE RICCI

Walking through the doors to Redeemer Lincoln Square's first service on April 16, was like Christmas morning! What a gift it was to be at the birth of a brand new church. To experience with our senses what had been envisioned, planned and prayed for by so many felt surreal. We could tell that every detail of the service was intentionally thought out to make this church a home for the stranger, no matter who you are or what you believe. We immediately felt comfortable enough to start inviting "strangers" of our own.

In fact, 27 years ago, we were the strangers being invited. A couple we knew who were attending Redeemer casually asked us to join them one Sunday. A bit reluctantly, we accepted their offer and eventually attended their community group. Their hospitality led us into a deep relationship that we continue to have to this day. The writer of the book of Hebrews instructs us, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby

some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2), and that is exactly what our friends showed us.

We tend to think of hospitality as merely coffee, cake and polite conversation. But if you take away the *ity* from the word hospitality, you are left with the word "hospital." You go from "welcoming strangers" to "nurturing and caring" for them. This is an accurate description of how we became vulnerable with one another, becoming "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). Having been the recipients of this hospitality nearly three decades ago, we are excited and encouraged to welcome in the strangers who come to Lincoln Square.

So on April 16, as we celebrated the resurrection of our Savior, we looked out on our congregation, all of us new and everyone just as thrilled as the next, and we wondered, "Do you know that the people you meet today might change from strangers to friends, and from friends to fami-

ly, and that New York City might become home?" As our lead pastor Michael Keller preached at that first service, "Who knows? Your best years may be all ahead of you!" By God's grace the apostle Paul's words will be true of us all that "though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (1 Corinthians 4:16). We look forward to renewing and being renewed as we continue on this journey together.

This fall, Rev. Michael Keller will lead Redeemer Lincoln Square in a new sermon series called "Conversations With Jesus" as we continue building a church that is for others, not ourselves.

Additionally, we are excited to invite our congregation to participate in our expanding Community Group system as well as launch a brand-new season of Catalyst (based on the Gospel in Life curriculum). For more information on Redeemer Lincoln Square, visit lincolnsquare.redeemer.com or email lsq@redeemer.com.

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and establish an Urban Church Development Center.

1998 was the year Redeemer boldly stated what we wanted instead of a mega-church was a gospel movement of many churches — a movement beyond us and all over the city to renew our city. A renewed city was our end goal, not a mega-church. The Urban Church Development Center, which is our present day Redeemer City to City,

was being developed as the catalyst to grow and cultivate gospel movements all over the world.

The annual report continues to explain what this will mean for Redeemer specifically in the coming years. In the section entitled, "Where is God leading Redeemer?" I was shocked to read the following:

First, we will become a single church that meets in multiple places. In fall 1998, we plan to

open a West Side Site, the first of three or four such locations to be started around Central Park. Each site will be "equally Redeemer," with the same preaching from the Senior Pastor and the same range of ministries, but will focus on its neighborhood and local communities.

Next, during a seven to fifteen year transition period, each site will develop its own pastoral and
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MOVING FROM MY STORY TO HIS STORY

BY BEN WALLER

Through research, doing critical discourse analysis, and narrative research in education, I have learned that narrators instinctively seek moral authority. We are driven by the goal of making ourselves “come out good” in the end. The Gotham Fellowship, though it concluded for me three months ago, is still teaching me how to resist this common narrator’s impulse.

I was failing spiritually when I moved to New York in 2010. Initially, I practiced cultural Christianity. I spoke to my agnostic friend about “sin,” and of course he didn’t understand! At church, as a “country girl” from the U.S. south, I quickly gave up on building community. I didn’t believe that I could get a word in edgewise, even with Christian acquaintances. I met my amazing husband the first year, but we were not vigorously engaging our faith. Then, life happened. And, I drifted further from God

until one day early in 2016, I cried out “Lord, I want your glory back in my life. I just want your glory back.”

Glory is a kind of weightlessness that you can experience when you know that God is in charge of everything. Even when things are going badly, we can feel God’s glory when we are totally surrendered to His reality: He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things, and He will take care of all that belongs to Him.

My spiritual failings before Gotham can be explained in terms of my narrative focus. I was the protagonist, and “my story” was not going the way that I had wanted. Personally, I felt alienated. Professionally, things were moving too slowly. I learned from Gotham how to see myself within God’s creation and redemption narrative, where He was sovereign despite my loneliness and despair.

If you are considering Gotham, you probably “know” that the world does not depend on you. Even if you are a medical doctor, you probably “know” that you don’t save lives: God does. Gotham, an important part of God’s creation itself, is uniquely positioned with a robust and community-centered curriculum to help you live in and live out of the truth — *the glory* — that you are living inside God’s story. It’s not the other way around!

This experience is life changing in that it forms a new kind of accountability for living where the daily question becomes “Did you live out, in faith and knowledge, the reality of the redemption story?” rather than checking off a list of do’s and don’ts. This kind of accountability is what we all desperately need if we hope to live a spiritually abundant life in our beloved New York City.

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lay leadership. The Senior Pastor will continue as the main preacher at all sites equally, but instead of being the main pastor/leader of Redeemer, he will put his energies into mentoring and training a new generation of young preachers and lay leaders who will all lead individual congregations. When the Senior Pastor retires, each church will call its own Senior Pastor.

Finally, these sites will eventually become a tight network of sister churches, each of which

can be smaller and closer to its neighborhood, yet together supporting mega-church quality ministries in the areas of missions, mercy and social justice, counseling, music and the arts, midweek and weekend evangelistic forums, publishing and family and youth ministries.

How did we have the foresight for this in 1998? These are massive organizational shifts that have now come to fruition in 2017! It is amazing that the leadership and the members held

true to a unique vision for almost 20 years. Organizations implement this type of change over 2 or 4 years; it’s much harder to do over 20 years.

How did we have the foresight? How did we actually pull it off slowly over the last 20 years? I know we say this a lot at Redeemer ... but it must be God. His faithfulness to us is shockingly beautiful. Clearly, His desire for us to be a church not for ourselves is relentless. Praise be to God.

FORMATION: IN CHRIST WITH COMMUNITY, FOR THE CITY

Theories abound on how change happens in the life of individuals and cultures. In the bestseller, *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg explores the science of habit and explains that our experiences are a product of the habits that we've intentionally or unintentionally adopted into our lives. Christianity tells us something similar, when we encounter Jesus and walk in his ways, our lives are changed.

Picture these stories from the Bible: Paul was in a Roman prison, shackled and unjustly accused, yet he sang. Zaccheus filled his bank account by cheating others, then after meeting Jesus he gave away half of his wealth. The disciples abandoned their livelihood to spread the news of salvation through Jesus. What gave a jailed man a joyous song? What became more important to Zaccheus than money? What changed the the disciples' mission?

Jesus met them and called them to follow him. When they answered yes, everything changed — their words, their deeds, their purpose. Christians today can answer the same call. When Christ is our identity, his love transforms our daily practices, community and callings. Then we live not for ourselves, but for his purposes through our work, relationships and neighborhood.

Redeemer wants every attendee to follow and be formed in Christ, with community, for the city. For this to be true, we need growth — spiritual formation.

We are being formed all the time. Whatever we choose to prioritize, ponder and pursue shapes us. Think of your daily patterns — how are they shaping you as you wake up, commute, relate, work, eat, connect, create, exercise, end the day? Redeemer wants to equip you with practices to help you grow as a disciple of Christ, not just for your own

sake, but for the good of the city.

This year, we will start with five practices that inform all aspects of our lives: devotion, worship, accountability, hospitality and rest. Through Sunday worship services and Community Groups, from Children's Ministry to membership, we will be encouraged to begin these practices because Christ's love has transformed us. As we live out our call to serve and bring renewal in the city through our relationships, work and neighborhood we pray to see God use us for his good in the city.

Join with us in being formed. Together we can know the joy of following Christ and seeing him transform the lives of many around us.

Acts 2:42, 47, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

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me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."

To "lose your life" means more than just to flat-line. It means to give your heart, mind, and will — everything that makes you "alive" beyond the biological — to Jesus.

These words are as challenging today as they were then. Yet millions of people over the last

two millennia have accepted Jesus's call and found that no matter what they have given up for his sake, it does not compare to what they have gained in him.

These words are true in an ultimate sense, but this truth plays out in our lives in a thousand different, ordinary ways. Every day, we are being asked to "lose our lives" in small ways — to give up our desires, our comfort, and our convenience for the sake

of another. Jesus so often asks us to give up things that we think will make us happy for him and for the gospel.

It's the peculiar pleasure of a Christian to be able to say that by doing this, by ceasing to seek our own happiness and to give our lives to Jesus and his mission, we actually find that we are happier than we would have been otherwise.

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with food stamps. The care of a community isn't provided with government housing. The face of our Creator can't be seen on a welfare voucher. What the poor need is not another government program; what they need is for Christians like us to honor our savior.

When Christ was confronted with the question of “Who is my neighbor?” he described to the questioner not the qualities of a good neighbor, but rather a Kingdom in which “to neighbor” is a verb: the act of restoring

someone who was robbed and binding up their wounds was our King's picture of discipleship. It is in this space of discipleship, a space in which we live out our call as Christ followers to actively demonstrate his compassion to a broken world, where we encounter the power of what the gospel can do to us as well as to those whose lives are shattered by the fallenness of the world.

The call to Christians, then, is to view their faith not just in terms of personal transformation, but Kingdom renewal. If

we are to truly grow as disciples, we should be open to God's invitation into a deeper commitment, one that necessitates a complete change of attitude — a new heart, mind, and eyes to see the needs of others that involves neighboring and serving those we have kept at distance. We have the power to do this not in and of ourselves, but through the power of the gospel. Through this, we draw closer to our humanity that God wants to show us, and more importantly, to what he wants us to know about Himself.

BETA GROUP LEADERS ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 5)

Yes, leading and hosting will take effort, and it won't always be easy. Yet this may be a small way that Jesus is asking you to “lose your life” this fall — to give up your comfort and convenience

for the sake of another. As you serve others, you may find that you've forgotten about your own happiness, and in that, you are truly happy.

This is one practical way that

you can live out Jesus's call this year. Would you prayerfully consider leading or hosting a Beta Group this fall?

For more information, visit redeemer.com/beta