

DECEMBER 2018

## THE UNAVOIDABLE GENEROSITY OF CHRISTMAS

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BY CREGAN COOKE

**I**t is a commonplace to deplore the commercialization of Christmas. We see the decorations that appear in October, the advertisements urging us to spend, save, and give, all without reference to Jesus, who is the “reason for the season.” But the wonder of God’s lavish generosity in giving his only Son is so intrinsic to the celebration that it is impossible to miss the meaning of Jesus’ birth. We all know in our heart that *giving generously* is what defines Christmas — Immanuel, God with us — the amazing generosity of Christ entering the world, living among us and dying to take our curse.

It is the incarnation that illustrates just how generous our God is. Although, in the words of the hymn we are “self-destroyed,” our Creator has given himself so that we might have new life. The Apostle Paul captured the essence of the incarnation when he wrote:

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*  
(2 Corinthians 8:9)

The Redeemer family of churches and ministries exists to share the amazing riches of Christ with our congregants and neighbors in New York

City so that many more can experience the life-changing power of the incarnation. Literally thousands of people from our community are living examples of the hope of Christmas all across the city. People from every Redeemer congregation serve with HFNY affiliates, provide toys for His Toy Store, serve on Sundays for special Advent and Christmas Eve services, open their homes to Community Groups, and give generously to the Diaconate Mercy Fund and other worthy ministries and causes. Christmas is when we are both giving the joy and hope that comes

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## THANK YOU FOR MAKING HIS TOY STORE POSSIBLE!

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**T**hank you, thank you to the hundreds of you helped us make His Toy Store possible for families with limited financial resources across the city. Because of your generosity in November, we were able to host 13 pop-up stores — from the South Bronx to Bushwick, the Upper West Side to the Lower East Side — where

families were invited to choose new toys for their children.

Through His Toy Store, our affiliates and church partners — including all four Redeemer churches — came together to create a warm and festive experience for families. These stores had hot chocolate and twinkling lights, toys and candy canes, wrapping paper and

wreaths. And, of course, face painting, games, and crafts for the kids! We see His Toy Store as a way to extend God’s lavish love to families in communities across New York City.

But it is certainly more than a one-time outreach. Our hope is that families are able to connect with our affiliate and church

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# THANK GOD FOR HIS PERFECT PROVISIONS

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BY THE DIACONATE

*And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)*

As each of our churches have been diving into the book of Acts and considering the earliest days of the Christian community, one theme that cannot be ignored is mercy and care. From the earliest establishment of Christian gatherings there was an undeniable emphasis on caring for those who were struggling to have their basic needs met (Act 6:1-3). The call of Redeemer's Diaconate is to provide just that for congregants at all four Redeemer churches who are facing seasons of particular difficulty. This ministry is made possible by God's grace working in and through the generous hearts of His people, prompting them to financially

support the Diaconate.

During last month's services we heard the powerful testimonies of congregants whose lives have been touched by the Diaconate ministry. We heard accounts from deacons and deaconesses who have been humbled by the ways God has chosen to use them to embody mercy to others in their church community. And we witnessed congregants, compelled by the cause of mercy, who faithfully offered generous gifts in order to allow the Diaconate to continue creating more redemptive narratives going forward. These stories often resonate in our own hearts. They remind us of moments in our own lives or in the lives of our family members

and friends when the touch of God's love practically and personally changed us forever. One testimony becomes a chorus of thanksgiving for an entire church.

During this holiday season, we are thankful for you, dear congregants, for sharing the resources you have in order to help bring the tender love of Jesus to the needy brothers and sisters in our midst. Please accept our gratitude and our invitation to continue your giving toward our humble efforts to embody God's mercy to those in need through the Diaconate ministry.

Give to our Mercy Fund at [redeemer.com/mercygift](http://redeemer.com/mercygift).

## HIS TOY STORE THANK YOU ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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partners for year-round support and resources as a result of His Toy Store. Our affiliates are doing incredible work on the ground to love and support our neighbors all year long, and His Toy Store really is an extension of that larger work.

Again, we thank all of you

who made this possible. Each year, His Toy Store serves as a great reminder to us of the truth of James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

*Stay tuned for pictures from the stores and learn more about how you can get involved loving and serving your neighbors through Hope for New York by following [@hopefornewyork](https://twitter.com/hopefornewyork) on Twitter, [@hfnny](https://www.instagram.com/hfnny) on Instagram, or find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/hopefornewyork](https://www.facebook.com/hopefornewyork).*

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### REDEEMER REPORT

Cregan Cooke  
Kathy Keller  
Heather Klein

Hunter College Auditorium  
E. 69th St.  
(btw Park & Lexington)  
Services: 10:30 a.m.  
and 5 p.m.

The Redeemer Report is a publication of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church.  
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212-808-4460 (T) 212-808-4465 (F) [redeemer.com](http://redeemer.com)

W83rd Ministry Center  
150 W. 83rd St.  
(btw Columbus & Amsterdam)  
Services: 9:30 & 11:30 a.m.  
and 5 p.m.

West Side Church Plant:  
NY Society for Ethical Culture  
2 W. 64th St.  
(at Central Park West)  
Service: 10:30 a.m.

Salvation Army Auditorium  
120 W. 14th St.  
(btw 6th & 7th Aves.)  
Services: 9:30 a.m.  
and 5 p.m.

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# LESSONS ON DISCOURAGEMENT FROM HAGGAI

BY JOEL KADY

*This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you.*

*Do not fear. (Haggai 2:5)*

The Old Testament book of Haggai has much to teach us about facing discouragement. These lessons are of particular importance for those facing discouragement in their work to help those who are vulnerable — for example, the social workers, community organizers, fundraisers, teachers, legal advisors, volunteers, and even donors.

In the book of Haggai, we see the people who are working to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem go from spirited, well resourced, and effective, to despondent and defeated in a matter of weeks. In this book, we see discouragement happening in real time.

We all know what discouragement feels like, but I want to explore three things we learn about what discouragement is from Haggai.

## 1. Discouragement is spiritual.

When the temple builders are encouraged and working hard, three times the text says that God had stirred up their spirits (1:4). When they're discouraged, God tells the people three times to take courage (2:4). Why? They had lost spirit. That's what discouragement is.

But discouragement is also a matter of God's Spirit. God reminds the beleaguered workers, "My Spirit is abiding in your midst" (2:5). Yet, when we en-

courage each other, often we focus almost exclusively on the human spirit. We say things like, "Look at all the people you're helping, the money you've raised, the goals you've set!" Our ministry of encouragement needs to work on people's connection to God's Spirit, too, using His tools of scripture and prayer.

## 2. Discouragement is pre-occupied with appearances.

The temple builders knew their new temple was nothing compared to Solomon's great temple (2:3). But here's the real gem of Haggai — even though the outside of the temple was small, God says, "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former" (2:9). What the temple lacked in appearance would be made up for with God's presence dwelling in a greater way than Solomon's temple.

What's puzzling, though, is that the Old Testament never says God moved in. When Jesus appears in this very temple, God finally arrives, and He comes saying that even this temple points to another one — Himself (John 2:13-22). Jesus is the Final Temple, disappointing to many on the outside, but God in the flesh (1:14).

In your work, don't be pre-occupied by what appears on the surface, the things you can appraise by what people notice.

Look for the ways that God is working that you might not initially see — in hearts, motivations, structures, and the mystery of His bigger plans.

## 3. God works in the gaps that discourage us.

When the temple builders became discouraged, it seems they also stopped working (2:4). This is precisely when God gets to work on them. In the book of Haggai, God is a sort of foreman. The individual workers at a construction site may not understand the whole plan or where their part fits, but the foreman does.

It's the same with us when we're discouraged that our work is adding up to little or nothing, when we're out of work, or we're discouraged for no apparent reason. You may not understand how all the parts of your life—the highs and lows, the frustrations and unwanted pauses — fit into God's plan for your life and work, but He does. Be especially attentive to God's renovation work on you when your own work is hardest.

Did you know that if you're a Christian you're actually mentioned in Haggai? God says, "I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts" (2:7). Amazingly, God

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# 2018 ADVENT WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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DOWNTOWN | [DOWNTOWN.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT](http://DOWNTOWN.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT)

## **Sunday, December 2 — special combined service**

9:30 a.m. service **only** with regular children's program | 5:00 p.m. service is canceled

## **Sunday, December 9 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m. worship service: Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old in Railton Hall. Children K-5th grade are invited to participate in the worship service with their parents.

5:00 p.m. Family Worship service: This will be our second of three Family Worship services, a service designed to engage not just the adults but the children of our church family as well.

## **Sunday, December 16 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular children's program

## **Sunday, December 23 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m.\* and 5:00 p.m. worship services: \*Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old in Railton Hall. Children K-5th grade are invited to participate in the worship service with their parents.

## **Monday, December 24 — Lessons and Carols service**

5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service: No children's program during this service. Children are welcome to participate in the service with their parents.

## **Sunday, December 30 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m.\* and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular children's program: \*Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old in Railton Hall. Children K-5th grade are invited to participate in the worship service with their parents.

EAST SIDE | [EASTSIDE.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT](http://EASTSIDE.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT)

## **Sunday, December 2 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular children's program

## **Sunday, December 9 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular children's program

## **Sunday, December 16 — Lessons and Carols service**

10:30 a.m.\* and 5:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols services: \*No Elementary classes. Elementary students invited to attend worship with their parents. Regular Mustard Seeds class in Room 206. Regular Nursery and Preschool classes on the 4th floor.

## **Sunday, December 23 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m.\* and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular childcare: \*No Elementary classes. Elementary students invited to attend worship with their families. Limited and combined Nursery and Preschool classes on the 4th floor

## **Monday, December 24 — Christmas Eve**

### **Location TBD**

5:30 p.m. Special Christmas Eve worship service: No childcare at this special family-friendly service. All children are invited to participate with their families.

## **Sunday, December 30 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m.\* and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular childcare: \*No Elementary classes. Elementary students invited to attend worship with their families. Limited and combined Nursery and Preschool classes on the 4th floor

WEST SIDE | [WESTSIDE.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT](http://WESTSIDE.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT)

**Sunday, December 2 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular childcare

**Sunday, December 9 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular childcare

**Sunday, December 16 — Lessons and Carols service**

9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols services: Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old on 3rd Floor. No classes for K-5th grade. Children are invited to participate in adult worship with their parents.

**Sunday, December 23 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular childcare: Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old on 3rd Floor. No classes for K-5th grade. Children are invited to participate in adult worship with their parents.

**Monday, December 24 — Christmas Eve**

5:00 p.m. Christmas Eve worship service: Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old on 3rd Floor. No classes for K-5th grade. Children are invited to participate in adult worship with their parents.

**Sunday, December 30 — regular service schedule**

9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. worship services with regular childcare: Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old on 3rd Floor. No classes for K-5th grade. Children are invited to participate in adult worship with their parents.

LINCOLN SQUARE | [LINCOLNSQUARE.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT](http://LINCOLNSQUARE.REDEEMER.COM/ADVENT)

**Sunday, December 2 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m. worship service with regular childcare provided

**Sunday, December 9 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m. worship service with regular childcare provided

**Sunday, December 16 — Lessons and Carols service**

10:30 a.m. Special Lessons and Carols service: No classes for K-6 grade. Children are invited to remain in worship with their parents, and special LSQ Kids worship bulletins will be available.

5:00 p.m. Special Lessons and Carols service at W83 Ministry Center, 150 W. 83rd St.

Limited children's program for infants to 4-years-old on 3rd Floor. No classes for K-5th grade. Children are invited to participate in adult worship with their parents.

**Sunday, December 23 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m. worship service: No classes for K-6 grade. Children are invited to remain in worship with their parents, and special LSQ Kids worship bulletins will be available.

**Monday, December 24 — Christmas Eve**

We will not be having a Christmas Eve service this year, but our friends at Redeemer West Side invite you and your friends and family to attend their service at 5:00 p.m. at W83 Ministry Center, 150 W. 83rd St.

**Sunday, December 30 — regular service schedule**

10:30 a.m. worship service: No classes for K-6 grade. Children are invited to remain in worship with their parents, and special LSQ Kids worship bulletins will be available.



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## UNAVOIDABLE GENEROSITY OF CHRISTMAS ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

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from Immanuel *and* experiencing it for ourselves.

It brings both a humility and a hallelujah! Christmas is a time to give thanks that the God of the universe came to dwell among us, to be one of us, to die for us, and to save us. It reminds us of his incredible generosity, and it is His great love that motivates our hearts to be more generous. As we give thanks for all the ways God is working in and through each of us and our church, remember that it is our generosity that God uses to extend the hope,

joy, and peace of the gospel to our city.

In order to do the work God has called us to, Redeemer churches and ministries count on individuals like you. So as you think about how you can generously share the hope of Christmas, please be generous with your gifts to Redeemer too. It is the faithful support of many at the end of each year that has allowed Redeemer's ministry to flourish, and year end giving is when we most count on the generosity of the Redeemer community to

help meet our financial needs. Thank you for all the ways you faithfully and generously support Redeemer, and have a joyful and peaceful Christmas!

Across the family of Redeemer churches, we receive over 30% of our annual giving in the month of December. To meet our combined budget, a total of ~\$5.9M is needed by the end of 2018.

To make a year end gift, visit: [redeemer.com/give](http://redeemer.com/give).

## LESSONS ON DISCOURAGEMENT ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

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shares His glory with people so that they can bring it back to Him. The result? "And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts" (2:9).

Peace here is shalom — full-orbed flourishing for all of

God's creation. If that's what you're hoping and working for, you have all the reason to "take courage ... and work; for I am with you," declares the Lord" (2:4).

Download *Hope for New York's 12-month prayer guide to find out how you can be praying for our neighbors in need across the city all year long at [hfn.org/pray](http://hfn.org/pray).*