

JANUARY 2019

STEALTH MATERIALISM

BY KATHY KELLER

The Christmas season is an easy target to attack for its rampant materialism. We enter the new year emotionally and financially exhausted, both corporately and individually, And I'm not going to disagree with that assessment.

However ...

Most people think materialism is the desire for many things, or expensive things, or unique things (or all three). But the truth is one can be a materialist at any income level (or none.) All that is required is you look to the material comforts of *this* world for your happiness.

C.S. Lewis exposed the breadth of gluttony in his famous *Screwtape Letters* by showing a sinful relationship to food doesn't only take the form of over-indulgence; sometimes it's just an insistence on "a cup of tea, weak, but not too weak, and the teeniest weeniest bit of really crisp toast" no matter what has been offered. (*The Screwtape Letters*, Letter XVII)

Similarly, materialism does not only express itself through a desire for enormous quantity or superb quality of this world's goods, but by *locating*

happiness in the things of this world. You may have no craving for designer fashion or statement jewelry or cars or yachts or other symbols of elite status. But ask yourself this: how much of my contentment is based on this world providing me with _____ [fill in the blank.] Fitting into my size 6 clothes (even if I bought them at Century 21). Being able to take the family out to Shake Shack without counting pennies. The affection of a pet. Not losing the light and view from my windows because a new building is blocking them out. ... and so on.

The loss of any of those commonplace comforts will always cause a degree of regret, but will it overthrow your happiness? Then you are a materialist. Materialism simply means that our happiness, joy, contentment, and satisfaction is tied to something in *this* material world. A salary, however small. Status, however low. Possessions, however modest or threadbare. If our hearts are inordinately tied to these things, beyond just the affection we feel for the familiar, then we are materialists.

And since this world is passing away, materialism is in the same category as building your house on the sand, or eating food that does not satisfy — it is doomed to ultimate failure.

The old proverb "You can't take it with you" could be enlarged to read "You can't even hold on to it in this world." When sorrow, or age, or other loss robs us of those material comforts, we materialists have nothing left.

Only if we have learned to locate our joy in God's Kingdom, his presence, and his love are we safe. Paul counsels the Corinthians not to be discouraged by trials and loss, but to "...fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." *2 Corinthians 4:18*

All that strips us of our dependence on this world is to be welcomed. The old saints called it "being weaned from the world." No child welcomes the day she or he is weaned, and it is impossible to make them understand the glories of ice cream and strawberries and lasagna and guacamole that will

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CREATING UNEXPECTED CONNECTIONS AT W83 MINISTRY CENTER

BY CAREY WALLACE, COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING MANAGER AT W83

The portraits are stunning: eighteen formerly incarcerated women, all given sentences of up to life in prison, photographed in the rooms they call their own now that they are free again.

Photographer Sara Bennett, a former public defender, first picked up her camera as a way to give one of her *pro bono* clients a face and a voice in a system that had reduced her to a name, number and rap sheet. But it led to a new vocation. Her first major photography exhibit, *Life after Life In Prison*, documented the lives of several formerly incarcerated women in the months after they were released after long sentences. The Gallery at W83 showed *Life After Life* in 2016, and welcomed her current show, *The Bedroom Project*, with an opening in November and a panel conversation with the artist this December.

Bennett's work as an artist is never just about her eye for a good shot. It's always about giving a voice to her subjects. And in both W83 shows, she has invited her subjects into

the conversation to share their own stories.

One guest at Bennett's December 4 panel discussion surprised even Bennett. As W83's Uri Frazier moderated the discussion between Bennett and two of the women she had photographed, a man in the crowd stood up. "My name's Jim," he announced. "I just came home two months ago. I did forty three years in prison."

Instantly, Bennett knew who he was. Although she no longer works as a public defender, she still receives a handful of messages from people in prison, asking for legal help. Usually, even if she can't help them, she at least offers them the dignity of a reply.

Jim had written her several years ago. But when she first got his message, she was already overwhelmed by another case she'd been working on. She dropped the letter in the trash.

But then something began to tug at her heart. Days later, she fished the letter back out. And this time, she read it. Jim wrote that he'd been in prison

since he was eighteen. With a sentence of 18 years to life, and a record of good behavior, he should have been released around age thirty-six. "But by the time he wrote to me, he was almost sixty," Bennett says.

Touched, she told him she'd see what she could do, then connected him with lawyers who took his case on and worked with him until he was finally released, this year.

"I feel like my piece was so small," Bennett says. But Jim saw it as key. She was the first one who had taken the time to listen to his story. And done something about it. "Because of this woman right here," he told the crowd gathered in the gallery, "I'm free."

But the two of them had never met in person. So he had come to her event at the Gallery at W83. "I wanted to see you in person and thank you," he told Bennett before hurrying home to make his parole curfew. "I'm glad I could thank you publicly, in front of everybody."

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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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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.

KATHERINE LEARY ALSDORF RETURNS TO CFW

Welcome back and thank you to Katherine Leary Alsdorf, who has agreed to step back into the leadership role of Redeemer's Center for Faith & Work (CFW) to provide some stability and direction following the departure of David Kim and Amilee Watkins this past summer.

For those who don't yet know her, Katherine founded CFW in the fall of 2002 and was its Executive Director for the first decade, mobilizing hundreds of Redeemerites into Vocation Groups, launching the pioneering Entrepreneurship Initiative and Arts Ministries, and then the Gotham Fellowship, which was led by David Kim. She also worked with Tim Keller on the writing of *Every Good Endeavor*.

After turning over the leadership of CFW to David Kim in 2013, she went on to launch a Gotham-based Fellows program in Raleigh, NC and help numerous other churches develop faith and work ministries. This year she'll also be assisting City to City as they plan and launch their faith and work initiatives.

One of Katherine's first assignments has been to help clarify the role and organizational structure of faith and work ministry in both the Redeemer Churches and City to City. Some of you may recall that last January, Redeemer leadership and City to City agreed to move CFW from Redeemer, where it was founded

and developed, to City to City in recognition of its plans to serve all three Redeemers and their church plants as well as a growing number of churches around the world.

However, following the departure of David and Amilee last summer, Redeemer and



Katherine Leary Alsdorf

City to City agreed that it would be better for each organization to have their own faith and work ministries and leadership.

Katherine led the effort to formalize a Memorandum of Understanding between Redeemer and City to City that strongly supports the extension of CFW's theological vision and programs to other churches and church plants around the globe, but also retains a strong and innovative ministry presence within the Redeemer family of churches. CFW will remain a part of Redeemer's shared ministries.

City to City is in the process of creating a strategy and plan for its own faith and work

organization, building on the work of CFW the last 15 years. Scott Calgaro is the Program Director for CFW at Redeemer, providing leadership to the Gotham Fellowship, faith and work classes, as well as various events and lectures throughout the year. Lauren Gill is the Global Gotham Network and Communications Manager at City to City supporting and expanding the current network of fellows programs in cities around the world. Both organizations will be hiring additional staff over the next several months.

When asked about her plans for CFW, Katherine shared, "I'm impressed and grateful to see the progress and new initiatives that David and Amilee have led at CFW over the past five years and am deeply saddened by their departure. In my 5 years working with other churches in other cities, there is no question that Redeemer's CFW is an inspiration and resource far beyond NYC. I'm committed to do what I can to steward this legacy — invested in by everyone from Tim Keller to the volunteer leaders to the many participants over the years — and continue to innovate new ways to help our congregations understand and be equipped for their calling as workers for Christ in their chosen vocations. The influence of the Church in our city is most felt as we serve him in every vocation and sphere in

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JANUARY IS MISSIONS MONTH AT REDEEMER

BY CHRISTINA STANTON

Redeemer's 2019 overseas short-term mission trips will be highlighted throughout the month of January. Short-term missions are an excellent way to jump start your spiritual growth and formation as a disciple of Jesus. This year we hope that more people than ever before will join these life-changing teams.

We have 10 trips scheduled, with the goal of sending up to 200 people to South Africa, Madagascar, Japan, Guatemala and more. Each team will consist of 10 to 20 people, who will serve in a cross-cultural context.

Short-term missions has operated under City to City in the

past, but this year each church is sending out their own teams. Teammates will now serve alongside other Redeemerites from their same congregation. Further, each church hopes to strengthen their relationships with our international church hosts by returning to serve at the same locations year after year. This type of consistency allows for building strong bonds as our teams encourage and support the work of these host churches.

Redeemer mission trips will continue to travel to and serve the churches who are in the City to City network as they develop and implement social justice and mercy proj-

ects while spreading the love of Christ.

Past trips have included projects such as finance and business courses for local entrepreneurs, medical services, education initiatives, and hosting and assisting with outreach programs.

Want to learn more about serving on a short-term missions team? January 27 is Missions Sunday. Come to coffee hour to speak with alumni of these trips, who will be happy to discuss their personal experiences and answer questions.

Please consider a short-term trip in your 2019 plans. See you soon!

UNEXPECTED CONNECTIONS AT W83 ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 2)

W83 Ministry Center's mission is to provide opportunities for real connection, between viewers in a gallery and the women who gaze back at them from their portraits, between members of the church and members of the neighborhood: a space for the incredible diversity of voices on the Upper West Side and beyond to come together in conversations that provoke real change, both in our hearts and in the world.

W83 has hosted a wide range of events this year, with

guests from Mako Fujimura to John Cleese, art openings and talks, concerts, galas, youth groups, mom's groups, men's groups, food programs, and language programs. And we've hosted gatherings and celebrations for Redeemer West Side's members and many of our neighbors, including schools and universities, synagogues, and the NYPD.

Along with a handful of other innovative churches around the country, we've been conducting an experiment in how urban churches

can use our unique spaces to bless and activate our communities and our congregations. We hope our experiments will lead us, and perhaps others, into possibilities we're only beginning to imagine.

But every time we open our doors to welcome our community, the moments we're most grateful for are moments like the one we saw when Jim got to his feet to greet Sara for the first time since he'd been set free: surprising, meaningful connections between people.

FIVE WAYS TO PRAY FOR DON'T WALK BY AND OUR HOMELESS NEIGHBORS

BY HOPE FOR NEW YORK

Homelessness in New York City is now at its highest levels since the Great Depression, with more than 60,000 New Yorkers sleeping in city shelters each night and thousands more sleeping on the streets, in the subway system, and in other public spaces. The large majority of our neighbors sleeping on the streets are living with mental illness and other severe health problems. The winter months are particularly difficult for those who are without shelter.

That's why Hope for New York works alongside The Rescue Alliance, a collaboration of faith-based organizations, to host four Don't Walk By outreaches in February (rescuealliance.nyc/dontwalkby). Each Saturday during February volunteers walk the streets of Manhattan, offering the men and women they encounter personal care kits and an invitation to return to an anchor church for a hot meal, medical care, and connection to holistic recovery programs.

Over the past decade Don't Walk By volunteers have met more than 10,000 individuals on the streets and invited them back to a host site. Join us in praying for the outreaches happening next month — and, most importantly, for our

neighbors who are experiencing homelessness.

Here are five ways you can be in prayer:

PRAY for every man, woman, and child in our city who has no place to call home. Pray that they would be connected to the resources they need to meet the most basic and essential needs and find access to shelter, adequate food, and health care.

For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever. (Psalm 9:18)

PRAY for the healing hand of the Lord on the men and women living on the streets. Pray that He would remove any physical, emotional, or mental barriers and illnesses they face to finding stable housing and/or employment.

The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. (Matthew 11:5)

PRAY that the Holy Spirit would be moving during these outreaches. Pray that Jesus would meet our neighbors on the streets in undeniable ways, that they might know Him as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Fa-

ther, Prince of Peace.

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)

PRAY for the volunteers who will be participating in the four outreaches. Pray that they would be bold in proclaiming God's love for every single person made in His image, and that the Lord would give them hearts that are properly motivated and aligned with His.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, and that the oppressed will be set free. (Luke 4:18)

PRAY for the organizations, including many of our affiliates, who day in and day out serve our neighbors experiencing homeless. Pray that they would be encouraged in their work and that God would ignite a fire in their hearts that allows them to endure all difficulties.

If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. (Isaiah 58:10)



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STEALTH MATERIALISM ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

be theirs if only they graduate from the temporary to the permanent.

So it is with us. We cling to what cannot satisfy, nor even last, instead of walking by faith as citizens of heaven and enjoying the security of an inheritance that can never be shaken. Worse, when God, in his mercy, takes steps to wean us from our unhealthy dependence on this world, we accuse him of injustice, or unkind-

ness, or lack of love for us, just as would a nursing child, if she had the words, when the comfort of her mother's breast is removed and food (oh, icky!!) is substituted.

I confess my own materialism. My furniture may be decades old, my wardrobe ordered from catalogues, my carpets unraveling at the edges and bare in the middle, but they are *mine*, and the life I have woven around me is one

I do not care to have changed in even the slightest particular. Yet at my core I *want* to want to see God's face, and to live in joy with him eternally; just, you understand, without having anything change ...

God save me from my materialism. God save us all, and fit us for his kingdom, where we will live in joy with him forever.

K. L. ALSODORF RETURNS TO CFW ... (CONT'D FROM PAGE 3)

which we work." This spring, CFW and the faith and work ministry at each church will be launching several new courses and vocation groups, as well as a mentor program.

For more information contact cfw@redeemer.com.