Dear Friends,

Five years ago we held our first Capital Fund Campaign. This year we saw the fruition of the vision and the sacrificial giving of that campaign.

God has blessed Redeemer in many ways that has led to numerical growth, but some years ago it became clear to us that in the long run New York City would be far better served by a whole movement of multiplying, city-loving, gospel-centered churches rather than by one single huge church — no matter how large. So in 1998 our congregation and friends gave $4 million dollars for the purpose of becoming ‘a movement, not a mega church.’ While most congregations raise money to buy or build a building, Redeemer raised funds for two different purposes. First, we determined to become a ‘multi-site’ church. Instead of holding all our services at one location, we planned to locate services in different neighborhoods which would eventually become distinct but cooperating sister congregations. Second, we decided to establish a Church Planting Center. By 1998 Redeemer had planted two daughter churches (in Rye, New York and Greenwich Village) and had helped in the planting of three other congregations in the city. But we wanted to create an organization that could plant dozens of daughter churches and aid in the establishment of hundreds or even thousands of others.

This year, with the opening of our West Side morning site, this vision has become a reality. We now have a congregation meeting on the West Side for morning worship (9:15 am at Ethical Culture Society, 64th Street and CPW) and another West Side congregation meeting in the evening (7:00 pm at First Baptist Church, W.79th and Broadway). On the East Side we continue to have congregations meeting both in the morning and the evening at Hunter College. Already these worship services are beginning to acquire their own personality and ‘community-feel.’ As time goes on they will develop distinct identities and eventually (when I reach retirement age) they will each call their own pastors and staff.

Meanwhile the Church Planting Center has been established and the number of new churches has “multiplied exceedingly.” Since 1998, Redeemer has planted six daughter churches and helped in the planting of seven others. We have also begun a “Partners” program that helps other churches in the city with a similar commitment to the gospel plant their own daughter churches. Last year we worked with 12. This year we will double that.

Without the Capital Fund Campaign we could never have accomplished any of this. The vision is truly becoming a reality. Nevertheless, this is only the first stage. Our ultimate goal is nothing less than to see New York City become a faith-filled city, a center for gospel-driven cultural renewal.

Despite how far we’ve come — we have only just begun.

In Him,

Tim Keller

Our ultimate goal is nothing less than to see New York City become a faith-filled city, a center for gospel-driven cultural renewal.
**Where New York City is going**

**IMMIGRATION** A huge wave of immigration is changing New York City from what a century ago was an Irish-Italian-Jewish city into a multi-ethnic city drawn mainly from the southern and eastern hemispheres. These are the areas of the world where Bible-believing orthodox Christianity is growing the fastest.1 A new post-western World Christianity is emerging and growing at an enormous rate, especially in Africa, Latin America, China, and Korea.1 The first western city in which this new spiritual force will be felt is New York City. Thousands of new indigenous church leaders are streaming into the city,2 and they will change NYC from the outside-in. As other immigrant groups have, they will move up in society and into the center city professional sectors over the next two to three generations and will come to wield great power in the areas of finance, media, and culture. This has the potential to radically change NYC spiritually.4

**NEW GENERATIONS** George Gallup has pointed out that both non-white people groups, and all Americans born after 1980 show significantly more interest in spirituality in general and Christianity in particular than their older Anglo counterparts. Gallup predicts that as the country becomes more multi-ethnic, and as the younger generation rises up into influence, faith should become much more influential in our society.5 In a related trend, Christian young adults are deliberately moving to major cities like New York to work and live. This has the potential to radically change NYC spiritually as well.

**THE CRACK-UP OF SECULARISM** In academic and intellectual circles there is a remarkable vacuum.6 The older confident scientific secularism is being abandoned.7 There is even a new movement away from the newer post-modern relativism and skepticism of any truth at all.8 The number of orthodox Christians in philosophy departments in this country has gone from 0% to nearly 25% in just 30 years. For the first time in 80 years there is ‘intellectual space’ for Christians to do scholarship, art, and cultural production in center cities like NYC and LA. But despite the secular world’s inability to provide a basis for justice and moral behavior, there remains enormous hostility to Christian expression in the public square.

**How Redeemer must respond**

**CONCLUSION** New York City continues to be the single most influential city in the U.S. (and maybe in the world) in the areas of finance, media, international relations, art and culture.9 In general, as this city goes, so goes U.S. society.10 Through the past century it has been almost monolithically secular at its center. But now social trends provide a historic opportunity to change NYC from a secular to a ‘faith-filled’ city. How can we help this happen? Redeemer must respond with ministry on five ‘city-changing’ fronts. If we are effective with God’s help in every one of them we may see a historic change in New York City.

First, we must be a catalyst for a major movement of new churches. If over the next generation we could see 5,000 new churches in the NYC area it would increase the number of active Christians living and working in the culture-forming center by 10-20 times. To see this accomplished, we must assist grassroots Christian leaders to plant thousands of new churches to reach the fast-growing new populations now rising in the city. Indigenous leaders need financial support and training in order to effectively plant and lead churches in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, urban setting. Younger leaders need mentoring and support to reach the younger generations who, though far more interested in things spiritual, are nonetheless extremely wary of the church or any institutional affiliation.

But what kind of churches must we propagate if we are to capitalize on the historic opportunities and make a true difference in NYC? They must be gospel-centered churches. The historic Christian gospel is “I am accepted through Christ, therefore I obey”. But functionally the human heart, both before and after conversion, continues to operate on the principle “I obey, therefore I am accepted”. Luther’s fundamental insight is that this leads to continual deadness, divisiveness, fear, pride, and spiritual stagnation in the church. This is the normal state of the church unless the gospel is continually applied to Christians to renew them. A number of unique balances show up in a church that understands this. They provide four more ‘fronts’ on which to minister.

There must be a balance between evangelism and edification in the worship, since the radical gospel (which is different from both moralistic ‘religion’ and relativistic irreligion) is the main thing that everyone needs in every service. The main thing Christians need to grow is application of the gospel to different points of need. That is the main thing non-believers need as well. So worship and preaching...
must present the gospel in a fresh way each week. Thus our evangelism is worship-centered, and our worship is evangelistic in its reach. The gospel—changed heart is uniquely attractive to those who do not believe. The gospel produces virtually the only people who do not disdain those who disagree with them.

There must also be a balance between the individual and community in spiritual growth. Many who get an ‘A’ on their doctrinal exam will still be mired in spiritual blindness and deadness unless the implications of the gospel are worked out practically through continual reflection, admonition, and modeling in community. Growth in grace and wisdom and character does not happen so much in classes and instruction as in deep family-relationships and in counter-cultural communities where the gospel’s distinct implications for our use of sex, money, and power are lived out. There is a strong individualistic strain in American Christians. They often will drop in to church for inspiration but not give themselves to a) the city in service and b) to the Body in deep community. But only that kind of commitment will work the gospel into every part of their lives.

There must be a balance of emphasis on ministry in both word and deed. The Bible’s basic narrative plot-line shows that the restoration of the whole world — material and spiritual — is the aim of salvation. Christian churches therefore must work for justice and peace in their neighborhoods through service even as they call individuals to conversion and the new birth. Indifference to the poor and dis-advantaged means there has not been a true grasp of one’s salvation by sheer grace. A church that grasps the gospel will be more sacrificially involved with the poor than many ‘liberal’ churches and more effectively evangelistic than many ‘conservative’ churches. It will be ‘wholistic’ in its ministry.

Lastly, there must be an emphasis on integrating faith and work for cultural renewal. Most American Christians ‘seal off’ their faith-beliefs from the way they work in their vocation. The gospel is seen as a means of finding individual peace and not as a ‘world-view’ — a comprehensive interpretation of reality that effects all we do. But the gospel has a deep and vital impact on how we do art, business, government, media, and scholarship. Therefore Redeemer is highly committed to support Christians’ engagement with culture, helping them work with excellence, distinctiveness, and accountability in their professions and in ‘secular work.’ Developing humane yet creative and excellent business environments out of our understanding of the gospel can be part of the work of restoring creation in the power of the Spirit. Bringing Christian joy, hope, and truth to embodiment in the arts is also part of this work.

CONCLUSION If we can fill the city with churches that are gospel-centered — that is evangelistic, strongly communal, wholistic, ‘world-wise,’ and church-multiplying — this will change New York City and eventually our entire society and culture.

CHURCH PLANTING The Church Planting Center has a potential to plant 30 new churches in 2004. In 2003 we hired our first associate director for the Church Planting Center, Dr. Mark Reynolds. Rev. Terry Gyger is Acting Director until we can hire a new Executive Pastor to replace him. Thereafter Terry will serve as the director of the Church Planting Center. Two major new church plants include the Infinity Church, in partnership with Bethel Gospel Church of Harlem, pastored by Rev. Dimas Salaberrios, and a daughter church in Park Slope, Brooklyn, pastored by Rev. Matt Brown.

WORSHIP OUTREACH Our worship services seek to edify believers while reaching out to those who do not believe. The quality of our music arts and the shape of the preaching aim to do both. The preaching seeks not only to address the concerns of non-believers, but also models to Christians how to articulate the gospel coherently in a secular, pluralistic culture. The major new development in this area is, of course, our new West Side morning worship service at 64th and CPW. From this great location West Side believers can reach out to their neighbors and friends in the area. Our Worship arts department has called Jonathan Gilley to be an associate director with special responsibility for the West side service’s music and outreach. The Sunday Service ministry has also shouldered the burden of supporting a whole new Sunday congregation.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING A large percentage of our staff and lay leadership is devoted to creating community in the city. Our cell-group system has a staff of six. Our church life ministry effectively helps people ‘plug in’ to a large and mobile church. The counseling center provides skillful pastoral care, as does our family and children’s ministry. A major new development this year is our Gospel and Life Sequence of three conferences, a small group curriculum, and Sunday classes. It is community-based discipleship, designed to expose participants in the course of a single year to all the topics for effective Christian living in the city. This discipleship course will be completed and perfected in 2004. Also, we plan to add a family pastor to our staff, a crucial measure for helping families flourish in the city.
WHOLISTIC MINISTRY  The Bible asks: If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Let us not love with words or tongue but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17-18). During the last twelve months Redeemer made unusual strides in answering this Biblical call. Despite the recession and the loss of jobs and income in 2002, the congregation last Christmas gave the Diaconate fund triple what it had given previously in response to the economic needs in our midst. This level of giving and ministry has been maintained in the 2003 offering for the year 2004. Redeemer continues to meet needs in the city through the unique ministry of Hope for New York and through our partnerships with ministries like New Song church in Harlem and City Seminary.

FAITH, WORK, AND CULTURE  In late 2002 Redeemer called Katherine Leary to be its first full-time staff to oversee this critical component of city-changing ministry. In 2003 a curriculum has begun to be developed, and vocation-based fellowships have been launched for those working in Law, Financial services, education, and writing, in addition to the groups for musicians and artists that we have had for some years. In 2003-04 we are doing intensive planning for a ‘Center for Faith and Work’ that will link Christian scholars and teachers with practitioners, equipping men and women to work with Christian distinctiveness in journalism, education, business, the arts, social work, urban planning, law and government. This ministry will be unique and comprehensive, linking with campus ministries and churches to produce a new generation of culture-change agents.

Let us not love with words or tongue but in deed and truth.

1 John 3:18

SUMMARY  The vision of ministry that has emerged at Redeemer over the years is uniquely balanced and comprehensive. We cannot sacrifice evangelism for community-building or vice versa. We cannot sacrifice wholistic ministry for faith-work integration. If we abandoned some of these emphases and concentrated exclusively on others we might see faster growth and progress in those chosen areas, but in the long run it will take all of these to change the city.

The ministry of Redeemer is also uniquely located. If in New York City we produce thousands of new church-communities which regularly win secular people to Christ, which seek the common good of the whole city especially the poor, and produce thousands of Christians who write plays, make movies, do creative journalism, begin effective and productive new businesses, use their money for others, and produce cutting-edge scholarship and literature then we will see our society move toward hope, peace, justice, and unity.