

the *Kerygma*



NEWSLETTER OF REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:42

Cultivating Community

In his book, "Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places," Eugene Peterson writes these powerful words, "There can be no maturity in the spiritual life, no obedience in following Jesus, no wholeness in the Christian life apart from an immersion and embrace of community. I am not myself by myself. Community, not the highly vaunted individualism of our culture, is the setting in which Christ is at play" (*Christ Plays In Ten Thousand Places*, p. 226).

Some of you may know that this is one of my favorite quotes. I love this quote because again and again it grounds me in my calling as the Pastor of Congregational Life here at Redeemer. When I get down or begin to lose sight of the task before me, this has been one of the quotes I turn to in order to shake off the cobwebs of doubt and despondency so as to get back to the great work that lies before me.

However, I love this quote for more than pastoral reasons. I love it because it captures the very essence of what it means to be a Christian. To be a Christian means being and living in community, in the community Jesus came to form through his death and resurrection and in the giving of his own Spirit. As the Apostle Paul tells us in Titus 2:14, "Jesus gave himself up for us...to purify for himself a people (not isolated individuals) for his own possession who are zealous for good works." Jesus is zealous for community so that we, in turn, might be zealous for one another and zealous for making him known in and through our deeds of love and service.

The Lord Jesus knows that community is the

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only place, the only training ground we have for growing in the knowledge of him and living lives that reflect him in love, service, and forgiveness. He, as the Peterson quote makes clear, knows that when cultivation of community is lacking, identity, holiness, discipleship, and growth in grace will be

stunted to nonexistence. Jesus knows that even if we grow in our grasp of Christian information, we will never grow in Christ-like transformation apart from dwelling in the community he has given us as a gift.

Now, as Christians we've been taught that we need community. We've heard that we have been made in the image of the one true God, who has eternally existed in the community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We know that it is not good for man to be alone. We know this, but more times than not it remains only in our minds. The idea of community is embraced with our heads, but the question remains, do we embrace it with our lives?

As a follower of Jesus, one of the first things we must realize is that we are in community whether we like it or not. By virtue of his work on our behalf, Jesus has brought us into his family. It is done by grace, so that now by that same grace we may begin the work of cultivating it in our lives (Eph. 4:1-7). This work can begin with simply and honestly asking, "Have I embraced the truth of being in Christ's community as the deepest truth about me and if so, am I living this out?" It's a big question because community is a big deal.

At Redeemer we speak of community as being a core value, as a fundamental

Continued on pg. 3

By Brandon Eggar

REDEEMER EXTENDING THE KINGDOM

Mission Minute

Zach & Leah Ellis

"What is the theme of the day?" asked Pastor Victor in Spanish. Thirty eager Peruvian kids shouted back, "¡Dios nos cuida!" which means, "God cares for us." Our team hosted a VBS for the orphanage in Limatambo, and one of the lessons was "Dios nos cuida". For our mission team this teaching became the theme of the week as we were tempted to worry about the details of our mission. "How can we get chemicals for dental x-rays plus a 90 lb. winch through customs? What will we do now that 14 of our 16 bags didn't make the flight? How can we catch a train that leaves in ten minutes when we're twenty minutes away?" Every day presented questions like these, yet the answer was always the same: God cares for us and He will provide. In every detail His grace abounded toward us. We walked through our week blessed with timely provision at every step, and our faith was strengthened.

We are so thankful to God for the support the church provided over the course of our mission trip, through prayers, contributions and practical help. We know that your voices have been heard in the courts of our Lord, and in His great mercy He looked on the humble estate of His servants. Thank you for sending us as your ambassadors. Over the course of the week, our most immediate objectives were accomplished: pastoring, teaching, community-building, and providing medical and dental services. As we carried out the tasks set before us, we were reminded of how the church is one body composed of many parts. It became so clear how each of us was brought to Peru to play an important part in the collective work God had prepared for us to do.

Driving through the Peruvian countryside we could see crops growing on expansive terraces or even treacherous hillsides. Like farmers, we worked with the Sandersons in sowing seeds of grace among our Peruvian friends, and we hope that now even after our departure God will give the growth and the gospel will bear fruit among these amazing people. Perhaps what we did not expect was that seeds would be sown in our own lives - seeds that have only begun to grow into something transforming us and growing deep our love for every tongue, tribe and nation. Already we miss our Peruvian brothers and sisters, and we love to think of returning as soon as God provides so that we may again join the gospel work already in progress - that we may visit the orphans and bring glad tidings of good things. Our Peru team has returned and we can all bear witness that God has been at work among us, and He is mighty. Dios nos cuida.

PERU MISSION TRIP



REDEEMER EXTENDING THE KINGDOM

Continued from page 1

principle of Gospel Transformation. That is, we truly believe that God changes us, not in isolation, but only as we learn and are deepened in the reality of Christ's community, the Church. So how do we go about living this out in our common life? We do so first and foremost in the formative practices of singing together, praying together, confessing our faith and our sins together, in our listening and submitting to God's Word together, in eating and drinking together at his table and in the giving away of the abundance of talents and resources that we've been given to steward for the sake of his larger mission to the world. In other words, we believe that worship is first and foremost a communal event where God is at work forming us into his faithful people, a people who exist for his glory and the good of his world. This is the reason worship is not to be neglected (Heb. 10:23) and why it's never to be regarded simply as 'me and Jesus time'. What this means in practice is that in worship we must not simply focus on the vertical aspect of "my relationship with God," but also on the horizontal - "my relationship with this community." Primarily you are to come to worship to honor your King but one of the ways he is honored is as we together present ourselves to him and encourage one another in his love and truth (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:16-17).

Remember this, community cultivation doesn't cease with the benediction. It is to continue on in the way we relate to one another in the hallway after worship; as in the way we fellowship, the way we drink coffee and eat cookies, and the way we listen to and ask questions of one another. Then from the doors of Edison it is to continue in our shared meals, emails, texts and phone calls. Embracing community, in other words, means embracing life together with those God has placed in our lives.

Therefore, it is for this very reason that we place such a high value on community groups. We want those in your community group to be the first place you turn in applying the gospel to your lives. Next to worship, community groups are the heart of community cultivation at Redeemer. Just because the 'official' meeting of community groups has ceased for the summer does not mean the need for reaching out and getting together is past. Reach out. Make the phone call. Open your home. Embrace the community in which God has placed you. It may not be easy or comfortable, but if you want to grow, if you want to be changed and if you want to know Jesus, then the context he has given is community. Jump in and trust that Jesus will meet you in the face of another.

Missions and Ministries that we support:

For more information about Local Missions please contact Victor Martinez at victor@redeemersa.org. USA and World Missions contact Jason Smith at Jason.smith@optimaliq.com or contact the office, 930-4480.

MISSION SAN ANTONIO:

Agape Pregnancy Center

Stan Young,
Executive Director
Gwen Bridgeford,
Northwest Director

Christian Medical/Dental Association

Scott Phillips, Area
Director
Kelly Hooker,
Assistant
Area Director

Rogers Elementary

Marie Rodriguez,
Community Liaison

Young Life

Annie Mays

Strong Foundation

Jim Gipson, Director

International Shelter

Lupe Fernandez,
Director

Redeemer Annual Events

Christianity &
Contemporary
Culture Conference

Christmas Food
Baskets

Redeemer Fine Arts
Series

Redeemer Serves: the
City!

MISSION USA:

Leadership & Ministry Preparation (L.A.M.P.)

Southwest Church

Planting Network

Bill Thomas, Director

Church Planters:

Carlos and Andrea
Cano,
Iglesia La Vid
Laredo, TX

Whitney & Heather
Anderson,

Christ Presbyterian
Church
Georgetown, TX

Reformed University Fellowship

Michael & Rachel
Novak,
Trinity University

Derek and Joy
McCollum,
University of Texas

Ben and Beth Hailey,
Texas A&M University

MISSION WORLD:

Mission to the World

Greg & Amy
Sanderson,
Limatambo, Peru

Paul & Dawn Fisher,
Guadalajara, Mexico

Doug & Masha
Shepherd,
L'Viv, Ukraine

Reformed University Fellowship

Peter Dishman,
Mexico City, Mexico

BEAMM

(Border Evangelism
and
Mission Ministries)
Gene & LuAnn
Bowman,
Texas/Mexico Border

Campus Outreach

Janet Pursell,
New Zealand/
Alabama

BOOK REVIEW

Far as the Curse is Found

By Matthew Beham

How can I find purpose in a world that is under the curse of God? This question had been nagging me recently, and only compounded by the ‘vanity of vanities’ that our church is learning about in Ecclesiastes. For that reason I was very thankful to pick up Michael D. Williams’ book *Far as the Curse is Found* to write this book review. In it I found my faith grow as I saw again how God will set all things right, and how he has called me into that great project with him.

Taking the name of his book from Isaac Watts’ famous lyric in *Joy to the World*, Williams traces God’s words and actions in history to show how God makes his blessings flow as far as the curse is found. Williams asserts that God’s heavenly blessings come to man through the covenant that He has graciously established with his people. God’s covenant with Abraham is a good example: “I will bless you and make your name great, *so that you will be a blessing...*and in you *all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”

When we look through the pages of the Old Testament, however, we see a different story. Israel constantly breaks covenant with the God who promised to bless them and everyone through them. How can God bless the entire world if the bearers of that blessing break covenant with God?

This has always led me to frustration. If God is about saving the world through the covenant he made with Israel, it seems like he made a bad choice. Curse and futility appear to win. But then God promises a *New Covenant*, by sending Jesus. He was faithful where Israel was not. Williams says, ‘Jesus is not just the savior of Israel; he is also the embodiment of what Israel was meant to be.’ God has always intended that Jesus himself will keep covenant with God where Israel failed.

Williams goes on to say that in Christ we have sure grounds for believing God’s concern for the entire creation: On the cross, the curse of Israel’s covenant breaking has fallen on Jesus’ shoulders so that the blessings of God would spread to the ends of the earth.

The promises and blessings of God are now ours by faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus has once and for all secured the blessings of God. And Williams writes to remind us, the people of God, that we are called into this mission on the sure foundation of Christ. Now, in Christ, his purpose of being a blessing is now our purpose: “**We** come to make his blessings flow—far as the curse is found.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 10—Redeemer in the Country

July 21—Women’s Fellowship Event

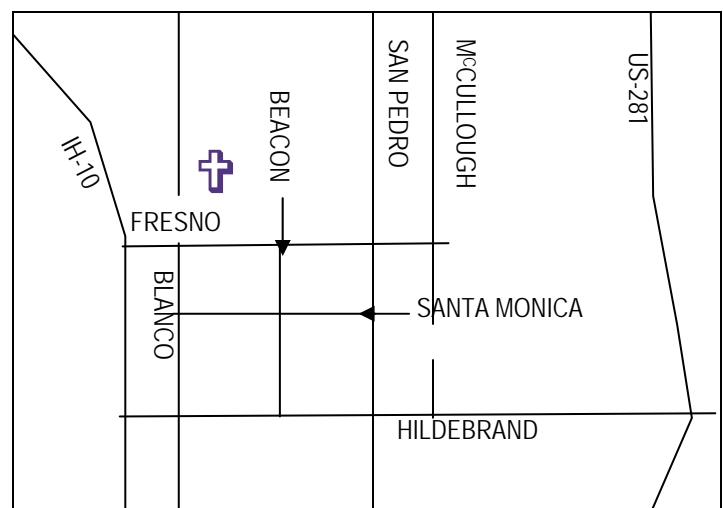
August 3—YP 1st Wednesday

August 19, 20—Intro to Redeemer Class

August 28—1st Day of Christian Education

**August 28—Introduction to Christian
Theology Class begins**

MAP



Sunday Morning Worship Services
are held in the auditorium
of Edison High School,
located at
701 Santa Monica
San Antonio, TX 78212.