Dear Wendy

It's Time to Get Up Off that Pew!

After spending years in the advertising business, I now spend most of my time as pastor of a church in New York City. We worship in a beautiful historic building, with massive stained-glass windows that were created by the famous American artist-in-glass, Louis Comfort Tiffany, founder of Tiffany and Company of New York City.

There are comfortable pews in this beautiful 1881 building, and that may be the problem. As in most churches, people love sitting in those pews. Of course, they come
to worship God; some come to enjoy the music, and some attend church looking for someone to date or even to marry. On occasion, when I give a boring sermon (which is not very often), a few even take the opportunity to catch up on their sleep. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with any of these pew-sitting or -sleeping opportunities.

Is this all there is to church worship? I think not. Although I love being the pastor of this wonderful congregation, I am looking for partners to help me start small groups all around the city. In fact, I have a challenge for some of you: I need help in starting an expanded ministry here in New York City.

I am looking for people who are tired of just sitting in a pew, week after week, playing it safe and doing the same old things, with the same old people, or the same old young people.

Okay, most people have logged off. Now, the few of you who would be willing to get up off that pew can read on.

I need people to help expand this ministry into a wonderful location in the Union Square area of New York City. It has a room where we can gather to study the Bible as well as a small, intimate chapel where we can worship together.

I also need some interested people to help me establish another church meeting at 7 p.m. in Greenwich Village, one that is geared to those who are looking for a bold, new, yet simple context in which to keep their journey with God growing. I need guitarists, classically trained pianists, violinists, poets, folksingers, writers, artists, lawyers, employed and unemployed individuals, and people who love other people and want to share the Gospel.

I need doctors, nutritionists, trained vegetarian chefs, and many other talented professionals to help us in our programs as presenters at many of our health-related gatherings. I need committed people to work alongside us at REACH-NYC to do great things for God. We want to have a team so that no one person gets burned out.

We have yet another terrific location just off the corner of Fifth Avenue and West 40th Street, across the street from the New York Public Library (you know, the one with the lions out front), which has served us well in the past.

Here is the problem: Our small, dedicated team can't be everywhere at once. We need help. I need you to get off that pew!

The idea is to have large and small groups meeting all around Manhattan in relaxed venues to share Jesus Christ, in a loving and accepting way, with other New Yorkers.

This is the sort of help we need from people of all faith traditions who want to study the Bible and make Christ the center of their lives. Think about it: There were certainly religious institutions when Christ was on Earth. But instead of finding help in places of worship where people were very comfortable sitting in the pews of their time, Christ chose a few fisherman who knew what hard work was all about and a few other wonderful people who were tired of just sitting there, being entertained week after week.

There is a real need for people who aren't afraid to get up off their pews and do something different, say something different—and in an imaginative way. In other words, like the Marines, we are looking for "a few good men" and women to help grow a Christ-centered ministry here in New York City.

Working in advertising has taught me one important thing: "The truth isn't the truth
until people believe you, and they can't believe you if they don't know what you're saying, and they can't know what you're saying if they won't listen to you, and they won't listen to you if you're not interesting, and you won't be interesting unless you say things imaginatively, originally, freshly."

--Bill Bernbach, Founder of Doyle, Dane, Bernbach Advertising

Bernbach was right, and each week we try to make our gatherings interesting, imaginative, original, and fresh. To do this, we need you and your talents. I pray that the Holy Spirit motivates you to get up off that pew and help us.

When I first started in ministry as a young man, I was attending art school here in New York City, but wanted to get involved in sharing the Gospel. My mentor at the time was a wonderful pastor named William Jackson, a gifted and talented individual who is now retired but still working for God. We had started a little Christian coffeehouse we called The Catacombs, and it was located in the same Greenwich Village church I now pastor. It was a fun place to be and lots of interesting people visited us.

It wasn't merely our talents that helped make the place a success. It was a Bible quote that still rings true today. This simple phrase was posted in one of the small meeting rooms we now use for some of the programs REACH-NYC sponsors. Perhaps it can be your motto in some of the ministries in which you are involved. Certainly, if you join us in ministry here in New York City, you will come to understand, as we have come to understand, that we can do what we do only by the Grace of the Spirit of God:

"'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty."

--Zechariah 4:6

May God richly bless you. If you can help us with your talents and your time, and are looking for a wonderful and rewarding challenge, please let me hear from you and join us in ministry to the people of New York City.

You can contact me by simply writing to: romeo.anthonyj@gmail.com.

Best regards,
Tony Romeo, Pastor

P.S.: If you would like to support this ministry with your gifts, as many have done from around the world, please make your check out to REACH-NYC and send your donation to:

REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560

All donations are fully tax deductible. REACH-NYC is a registered not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Thank you for all your help.

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Special Mother's Day Worship Service,
this Saturday, May 12, at 11:20 a.m.
at historic Manhattan Church
232 West 11th Street, New York City
Just 1.5 blocks west of Seventh Ave. South

Celebrating Mothers in Music and Poetry
Manhattan Church is very easy to get to by bus or subway. The little map below will help you find us. Please join us in ministry to the people of the City of New York.

Saturday Morning, May 12, 2012
9:15 a.m.
FREE Breakfast with the Word
Study begins at 9:50 a.m.

Join us for a nice, warm breakfast of a healthy whole-grain NYC bagel, oatmeal, fresh fruit, and a hot drink, and wake up your mind with the study of God's Word.

This is a relaxed setting where all are invited
to join in, no matter what your faith tradition.

We meet on Saturday mornings at historic Manhattan Church in the West Village, at Cafe Reach: 232 West 11th Street, NYC just a block-and-a-half west of Seventh Avenue. Breakfast is served at 9:15 a.m. Study begins at 9:50 a.m.

See you for "Bible with a Bagel." Invite your friends.

This free breakfast is sponsored by supporters of REACH-NYC and we thank them.

Click here for map of location of Manhattan Church

Donations to REACH-NYC help us in our efforts to reach out to the people of New York City. REACH-NYC is recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt corporation, and all contributions are fully tax-deductible.*

Contributions can also be made by check payable to: "REACH-NYC" and mailed to: REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560

Thank you for helping the REACH-NYC ministry!

*A receipt will be sent recognizing all contributions at the end of the year for tax purposes.