Revival After Lockdown

Euan MacRae 10 September 2020



Over the past eight years, a prophetic word has lingered over Living Hope West. It is a word that has been spoken over the congregation eight times by eight different people and has focused our belief that the Lord wants to bring revival to the Isle of Man.

The word is found in the book of Isaiah, “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities.” – Isaiah 54:2-3 (ESV)

Seventh Congregation in St Johns

Trusting that the Lord’s desire was for us to ‘stretch out our tent lining,’ we planted our 7th congregation in January of 2019, into the heart of the Island, St Johns. St Johns is a small village that hosts the world’s oldest, continuous parliament, Tynwald.

Our launch team initially began with around 30 people, and we carefully selected a broad spectrum of spiritually gifted people from our morning congregation. I found this a painful process as our morning gathering was in a particularly healthy place, but we could not escape the Father’s call to stretch out our tent.

The Immovable Ceiling

Over the early months, we saw many interesting salvations – a practising ‘white witch’ amongst

others. But we struggled to connect new people to the family. The congregation grew to around 50 people after the first year, but seemed to hit an immovable ceiling. During this time, and particularly in the summer months of 2019, the wider Living Hope leadership team (led by Jonathan Stanfield) began to sense the need to press into God and pray for revival.

> **In my human thinking, I wondered what could possibly be achieved by the church when every member is locked in their home?**

Praying for Revival

Inspired by tales from the revivals of old, Living Hope prayed with a new passion, faith levels began to rise, and the atmosphere began to shift. It seemed we were entering a season of breakthrough and then, low and behold, a pandemic struck the earth and church doors across the globe began to close rapidly. In my human thinking, I wondered what could possibly be achieved by the church when every member is locked in their home?

During lockdown, I taught a series on the letter to the Colossians. I was deeply challenged by the effect of Paul's ministry from prison, and ruined by his statement in Colossians 2:1, "I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally" (NLT)

Paul contended for people in prayer. He knew he did not need to be standing next to somebody to see the power of the Holy Spirit consume a person.

Exploding from the Blocks

Lockdown presented an opportunity for the church to "agonise" in prayer for people, and clearly the Lord heard our cries. Exiting lockdown was a strange experience: our leadership team braced for a process of steady rebuilding, but actually the church exploded out of the blocks like an Olympic sprinter.

> **… it is not a work of man, but the hand of God moving.**

Immediately, salvations began to flow and for four consecutive weeks we witnessed new people coming to church and new people saved in church. One girl, invited by a work colleague, was randomly contacted by another friend who 'wanted to try church'. Both came and were saved that night!

Our Favourite Atheist

Perhaps our greatest recent encouragement was a close friend of mine who had become affectionately known as our ‘favourite Atheist’- a lovely, yet seemingly unreachable staunch atheist who, for 40 years, had completely dismissed the Christian faith. He came to church one night when the Lord visited us in a powerful, supernatural way. I was convinced this would scare my friend off. As I tentatively asked him what he thought, to my surprise he answered, ‘I’m ready to open my heart to Jesus’. And what a transformation we have seen!

Doubled Since Lockdown

Since lockdown, we have been staggered to see our evening congregation almost double in number and we see regular salvation responses and baptisms. If asked why this has happened, I could not honestly quantify the reason or share a formula. It is not a work of man but the hand of God moving.

We sense that revival is in the air. The Lord wants to populate the desolate towns and villages of the Isle of Man with new life and He is wowing us with His power to reach the unreachable, love the unlovable and move the immovable.

*Since this was written, Living Hope has continued to grow and has planted another congregation. Have a look here to see where they meet.