

Lutheran Renewal

Australia
New Zealand

2015 Edition • May • Volume 1

Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you – 2 Timothy 1:6

www.lutheranrenewal.org.au

Welcome

How would you feel reading the following headlines?

Lutheran pastor visits heaven
Lutheran pastor heals blind man
Miracles in a Lutheran Church

Amazingly, all of these headlines are true. On Good Friday 2004, forty-year-old Pastor Dirk Willner died in hospital. It took two minutes to revive him, but in this time he experienced a visit to heaven. In 2007, Pastor Peter Steicke led a mission team from Paravista Lutheran Church to Uganda and – with the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Uganda serving as interpreter – he prayed for a blind man who was healed after three attempts. And on the last Sunday of 2009 and ever since, a miracle occurs in the Living Grace Lutheran Church in Toowoomba whereby ‘gold sparkles’ appear on people’s skin – mostly on their hands. It came after preaching on the glory of God.

The aim of Lutheran Renewal – a new movement among Lutherans – is to make these testimonies known. We want to encourage one another with them, stir up our faith and debrief all of our experiences – our relationship with Jesus – in the safe environment of studying the Bible and our Lutheran Confessions.

Lutheran Renewal already existed as a national movement in the LCA (Lutheran Church of Australia), beginning in the late 1970’s and lasting until the early 1990’s (when it seemed to peter out). A regular newsletter was published and national conferences were held, with guest-speakers even from the United States. The movement established a national coordinating body, with representatives from

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a movement of renewal
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each state, and engaged with the official LCA leadership. I would like to invite you, the reader, to join us and see value in reconnecting with the Lutheran Renewal of the past: receiving its heritage, stirring up our hunger for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, encouraging one another and remaining connected.

As in the past, Lutheran Renewal is not a formal organization within the LCA but we simply choose to relate to one another and support one another.

To become involved:

- You may commit to the Lutheran Renewal Newsletter by emailing your details to office@lutheranrenewal.org.au or registering on our website: lutheranrenewal.org.au.
- You may plan to attend our first national Lutheran Renewal Conference to be held in Toowoomba, from 20th - 22nd November 2015.
- You may correspond and share feedback, testimonies and encouragement.
- You may also consider financial support for the production of the newsletter (that is being sent out free of charge).

God is good and he loves our Church. Going on the journey of Lutheran Renewal – giving shape again to a movement of renewal across the LCA – promises to be a great adventure. Do you want to come? There is a place for you.

Dr Edgar Mayer (Toowoomba, Qld)



Relaunching Lutheran Renewal at Living Grace Lutheran Church, Toowoomba on 29th March 2015



To Heaven...

I was forty years old. It was Good Friday 2004 and, for two minutes, I was dead (before hospital staff were able to restart my heart). My first encounter with death was an experience of utter complete darkness. As I drifted out of this forsaken darkness, my eyes began to see the shape of a grand mansion. The architecture of the building was elaborate. Huge windows indicated that it would have had very high ceilings. The place shimmered in a golden light.

Flowing out of one of the huge windows streamed a substance that looked like honey, moving in midair towards me. It rushed out and embraced me before I could get any closer to the mansion. Every part of my being was saturated with this glorious golden substance – it seemed to be the source of all of this golden light. I could feel every part of my body coming fully alive; I was so completely covered and infused in this light which enabled me to receive the full outpouring of joy that came from the presence of God's own glory. I have never felt or experienced anything remotely like it.

I don't remember how long I stayed bathed in that outpouring of joy, but the golden light now accompanied me wherever I went. I was glowing with the stuff as it ushered me closer to the front-door of this mansion. The door opened before me; it was grand and solid. Immediately my eyes were overcome by the intensity of the white brilliant light shining from the inside. Every step I took

into this heavenly realm became an experience of increasing intensity. After my eyes adjusted to this white sparkling light, it revealed a cascade of intense colours that eventually revealed a grand hall filled with people. Everything glistened and glittered.

There was a staircase at the far side of the entrance hall lined with precious jewels embedded in gold covered steps. I knew immediately that there was so much more to this place than a first glimpse could reveal.

I felt as if all these people, this large crowd enjoying themselves, casually chatting with one another, somehow anticipated my coming and gathered to greet me here in this grand hall. I noticed that there was a person standing by the entrance, whose presence I had completely overlooked in my fascination of the dazzling sights inside this hall. He seemed to have all the time in the world. He just allowed me to take it all in. When I noticed him, I became aware that his appearance was a bit different from all the other people. His appearance was an intense dazzling white. He welcomed me and his voice spoke right into my being. It was as if I heard him with my soul – deep in my spirit.

I didn't ask his name. I didn't even look up to see his face. It was holiness personified. It was Jesus, the anointed one of God. He held a crystal goblet filled with red wine. This goblet had a golden ring around its rim. He handed it to me

as he welcomed me, but at that very instant, another such being passed by and briefly spoke to him as if in an uncomfortable hurry. Then I was addressed once again by Jesus: "It looks like you'll just be a moment before you return, so I'll leave this cup right over here waiting for you at the door (pointing to a small side table). It will be there waiting when you come back." With those words, I started to come back into an earthly awareness. Slowly I could hear the words of the nurses and doctors saying, 'Come back!'; 'Stay with us!'; 'Open your eyes!' I remember coming back as if floating up from the bottom of a swimming pool.

About seven days later, I was sitting upright in my bed at home, praying. Suddenly, a group of five angels appeared around my bed. Each angel was standing tall and independent, but united in purpose. They looked larger than humans and broader across the shoulders. Their stature was strong and instantly gave the appearance of a force to be reckoned with.

The appearance of the angels was impressive. They seemed to be full of sparkle; every inch of their body was radiating this vibrant sparkling energy. I remember that they gave the impression of being very task-orientated; there seemed to be very little interest in chit-chat. Apparently no introductions were necessary.

The angel on my right side seemed to have had a higher rank, and I say that simply because he took the



and back

lead with this question: "What instructions have you got for us?" I could hear him as clearly as if I was having a conversation with a friend right there in the room with me. I responded with surprise: "Instructions? I don't give you instructions. If you want instructions. Go to God. He will give you instructions." He leaned forward and said: "Give me your hand!"

I remember seeing his hand as he stretched it out toward me. I could see the same anatomy as that of a human being; my eyes examined their features – five fingers, just like us, a hand, just like us, an arm, just like us. It was fascinating. I thought to myself, 'well, I'll see where this will go,' and put my right hand into his. It was a firm handshake.

Immediately I was speaking a heavenly language. It just started to come out of me as if I had always known it. The words were articulate. There was a distinct sentence structure. But I had no way of knowing what was being said. I remember God speaking into my mind saying, 'Don't worry, you know that I give this gift through my Spirit as I will. I am giving instructions to the angels through you.' As I had finished giving instructions to the first angel, then the second one put out his hand. Again I put my own hand into his and began speaking yet another completely different language – and the same for each of the other angels.

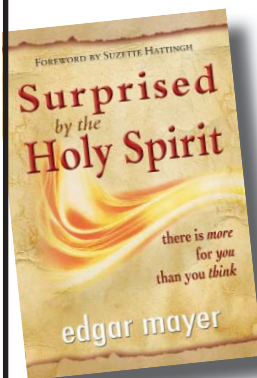
When I had finished giving them instructions as the Holy Spirit enabled me, they vanished. They just turned around and could not be seen anymore. But right there, sitting at the end of my bed was a sixth angel, much less war-like and imposing in his appearance; very personable and friendly. I said to him, 'And what can I do for you?' He simply replied, 'Nothing, I'm here for you.'

Then he too vanished and I continued on in prayer – now really perplexed and confused as to what I had just seen and participated in. 'This is going to be really hard to explain,' was a constant thought. 'What would people think about this?' More importantly, 'what should I make of all this?'

Pastor Dirk Willner (Molendinar, Qld)
(More @ <http://lifebeyondbnow.com>)

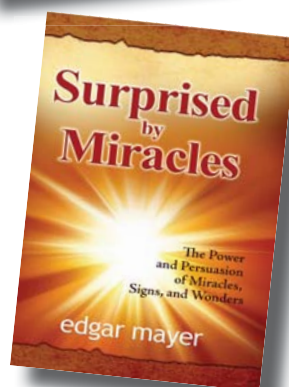
Resources

To purchase resources call or text 0491 147 228
or email office@lutheranrenewal.org.au



The book '*Surprised by the Holy Spirit*' explains the promise that Jesus would 'baptise you with the Holy Spirit' (Luke 3:16).

'Surprised by the Holy Spirit'
\$15 + postage



The book '*Surprised by Miracles*' explains the use of miracles in mission work and the role of Christian experience.

'Surprised by Miracles'
\$15 + postage

'Surprised by the Holy Spirit' and *'Surprised by Miracles'* can also be purchased from Koorong or online from Amazon or Book Depository.



The course '*Healing God*' contains two teaching series on healing in the Bible. Six teaching sessions by Dr Edgar Mayer and eight teaching sessions by Rev Les Holmes. 6 DVD'S & 1 CD plus small group study guide in pdf format
\$15 + postage

'But Wait There's More' and *'Healing God'* are only available through the Lutheran Renewal office: office@lutheranrenewal.org.au



The course '*But Wait There's More*' is a six session teaching series on the Holy Spirit by Dr Edgar Mayer. 2 DVD'S & 4 CD'S with study guide in pdf format.
\$10 + postage



(stock photo)

Blind Man Healed in Uganda

The service started over two hours late and then lasted three and a half hours. I was exhausted. All I wanted to do was sneak off. However, I saw a man with a white stick – blind – standing straight ahead. That small voice inside of me, which I now recognize as the Spirit’s prompting, compelled me to go over to him. As I went over, I grabbed Noah, the President of the Lutheran Church in Uganda, as he would need to translate, and Donna, one of our team members.

I asked the blind man, “What would you like Jesus to do for you?” “I want to see,” was his reply translated by President Noah. So, nervously, I prayed over him. I was also a little embarrassed, because I wasn’t really expecting anything to transpire. I can’t remember what was prayed, but I assure you, it wasn’t anything profound. Much to my surprise though, immediately after I’d prayed, Noah started waving one of his hands in front of the man’s eyes to see if he could detect any movement. “As if!” I thought. But, praise God, the man said he could sense a shadow passing before his eyes.

So with Noah holding his hands and Donna joining me in laying our hands on the man, I prayed again. When Noah tested him this time, the man thought he could make out the shape of fingers. Well, I was ecstatic. That was enough for me. The man had received some partial healing which seemed too good to be true. I was ready to pray a prayer of thanksgiving and leave. But this is why we always minister in teams of at least two!

Donna sensed there was more and suggested we ask Father what he would want to happen next. So we both prayed and ask for his further direction. Hmm, I certainly didn’t want to share what I sensed I’d received, because as soon as we had asked our heavenly Father I got the picture in my mind of Jesus putting mud into the blind man’s eyes. But to my amazement, Donna had received exactly the same prompting! Now that was some confirmation! Long past embarrassment now, we shared with Noah who explained to the man what we were going to do.

Then we poured some water into the dust, made a little bit of mud, placed it over the man’s eyes and prayed. We then washed the mud away and Noah asked the man to open his eyes.

For as long as I live I’ll never forget the expression on that man’s face. He opened his eyes, blinked a couple of times, and then broke into a smile that was a mixture of astonishment and sheer elation. He didn’t say a thing. He just kept looking around with this startled grin covering his whole face. Noah was still holding his hands and was dancing in front of him like a kid (I’m convinced more bishops should dance like this). The man was staring at people and nature, but especially the trees which, he said, were much bigger than he’d imagined. We prayed over him and blessed him and went on our way. But what a trip home.

Pastor Peter Steicke (Mount Torrens, SA)

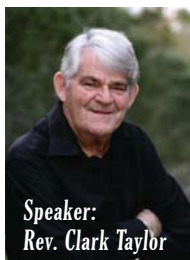


20 - 22 November 2015 | Toowoomba | Queensland

Please register by 14 November. Registration is free with an opportunity for a love offering.

1st Lutheran Renewal conference

CONNECTION • ENCOURAGEMENT • SPIRIT-FILLED • FUTURE FOCUS



Speaker:
Rev. Clark Taylor

Anyone interested in personal renewal and renewal among Lutherans (and others) are welcome.

We want to go all out for God, be filled with the Holy Spirit, connect with one another and plan for the future.

You don’t have to be a Lutheran to attend but please come with a heart for the Lutheran Church Australia.



Speaker:
Dr. Edgar Mayer

Turning Point



at Victor Harbor

Last year in August, I had the opportunity to attend a conference at Victor Harbor on the theme “Surprised by the Holy Spirit”, with Edgar Mayer as the key speaker. The experience of that conference has been a turning point in my life. I believe the message and Holy Spirit experience was God’s prescription for what I needed in my life at that time. To understand what happened there, and its relevance to me, I need to relate where I was at prior to the conference.

Prior to the conference, I guess you could say that I was like a whole lot of people today. In short, tired of life. Sure, life was good – I had a family, absence of sickness, sound employment, a church community ... What’s not to like? But I was finding church life a dry and meaningless routine, my volunteer work a grudge give, my work a treadmill and home life a continual stream of short-term dramas to be managed. Does any of this sound familiar to you? So I was ready for change, but really didn’t see how I could change anything.

I had been reading Edgar’s book “Surprised by the Holy Spirit” over a couple of months leading up to the conference, and I found the teaching quite compelling. It was compelling because I could identify with much of what Edgar had been experiencing within traditional Lutheran church practice, particularly our focus on “head knowledge” rather than spiritual power. I also found his teaching on Spirit baptism and water baptism a revelation to me and welcomed the understanding that the two are not in conflict with one another, or one overriding the other, but rather they complement one another and are both necessary to be in close relationship with God.

Notwithstanding the previous paragraph though, you don’t just cast off 40+ years of reservations about Pentecostal behaviour overnight. I remained

wary and suspicious of hands-in-the-air worship and falling down praying, tongue talking and other spiritual manifestations. I did acknowledge that these are biblical and real occurrences, but I am conservative and this kind of behaviour is not for me. It is fine for other people who are that way inclined.

So heading into the conference, I reached a point where I was desperate enough for change so that I was willing to be open to God’s Spirit in ways that I had not been comfortable before. There is also the point that I was going to a place where I would be mostly amongst strangers. Among them anonymous – I would be liberated from shyness, pride and judgement, as I would be trying new things.

The conference started Friday night and ended Sunday. Over the couple of days, there were some fantastic worship sessions, and some more excellent teaching, all of which were laying foundations for my understanding and willingness to open up to God and allow him to overwhelm me. Some of the key areas of understanding that helped build my foundation were:



- If you receive a spiritual gift, you should use it! It is given for a purpose. God wants you to use it and it is not up to you.
- The reservations which I had about manifestations of spiritual gifts are normal for people unaccustomed to them. But give it a chance. Why reject something God wants to give you?
- How did the Gospel spread initially? By what they said and by what they did – demonstrating power with signs and miracles. As the Spirit confirms the truth and authority of the Gospel with his power, he works conviction and helps unbelievers to believe. This is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago.

- The Spirit is uncontrollable, so we need courage, faith, trust and humility to be filled with him.
- Christianity is not logical. It makes no sense – on purpose! (For instance, see the virgin birth, Jesus being fully God and fully human, death and resurrection ...) The story of Jesus and salvation confounds human wisdom and creates a reliance on God. So when it comes to the Holy Spirit, I need not try and understand every last detail of him working and manifesting in my life. I can just go with it and trust God.

There was more to be had. By now, I could see justification for wanting and requiring God’s Spirit to be more tangible and powerful in my life. I say “more” because I soundly believe that God’s Spirit was already in my life, but I had grown distant from him.

The highlight of the conference and the “game changer” for me were the prayer sessions held on Saturday and Sunday. As I was having several one-on-one prayer sessions with people from the ministering team, I would say that God was gradually revealing himself to me and leading me to him at a speed that I could handle. At my final prayer session, I was absolutely overcome with the presence of God. How can I explain it?

If you had been looking on, you would have seen me standing there, talking to people quite normally one moment, and then – upon prayer commencement – suddenly being reduced to an emotional wreck! Tears flowing, diaphragm heaving, uncontrollable sobbing, tissues plastered all over my face. On the inside, I was aware of a sense of the love of God. It is so vast that you could freefall into it for a thousand years and not hit the bottom! His love is like a warm mist you could get lost in, but never want to come out of. And it made all of my self-righteousness look so puny and contemptible. In the tears were my confession, a purging of all my pride and good works. In the tears was my ‘sorry’. In the tears was my thankfulness that God still loved me, and that is all I need.

I’m not sure how long the prayer time lasted, or what the prayer person even said, but eventually it ended and I managed to regain some of my composure! As I was recovering, another lady told me that God was asking her to pray an “impartation” for me. “Do you want to receive this gift from God?” she asks. Still in recovery mode, I say, “Sure”. She puts her hand on my chest and starts praying. Well, if I was emotional before, this was just another level again! Once again I’m reduced to a gasping, sobbing, crying state. She is praying things into my life like that I would be a leader and comforter to men, that there are men out there who have lost their headship identity and don’t know what to do or how to lead their families, that I would lift a huge burden from my wife by giving leadership to my family, to not worry about how to do it because God will show me and

it will be easy! She also prayed healing on my spiritual wounds that she could see. So, needless to say, I left the conference pretty scatterbrained on an emotional and spiritual level. It was a lot to take in, particularly as I had never experienced the presence of God’s Holy Spirit so tangibly before. But I was then, and am now, in no doubt that God is real. He loves us, his Spirit is powerful, and death is not to be feared, if it means what I sensed – the love of God completely envelops us.

Coming away from the conference, my spiritual experience continues. What else can you do? You can’t just go through that kind of experience, then turn it off for work on Monday morning! Changes that have happened in my life include:

- God has given me so much more optimism and an improved attitude
- Following the impartation about leadership, I prayed long and hard about standing as chairperson for our church as our current chairperson was retiring. I ended up standing and being elected to the role, where I’m doing my best at leading.
- I shared my experience with our men’s small group, and encouraged them to stand up and become involved in the leadership of our church. Many of them have risen to the occasion and volunteered to be on our church council.
- The Pastor at my church has been really great and is willing to allow some new things into our services. During one of our services, I was able to give a testimony to our congregation about my experience. We have been offering one-on-one prayer after services to parishioners.
- I was able to approach and be reconciled to people with whom I had previously been in conflict. With God’s power, these strongholds have been pulled down.
- Prayer life is so much more vibrant. It is a two way conversation rather than a list of dot points!

But it is not all roses. After six months, the raw emotion of the experience has faded somewhat, which is to be expected. The enthusiasm and passion for pursuing God’s work have been tested with feelings of discouragement and apathy at times. Unfortunately, none of us can treat faith and relationship with God (or anyone else for that matter) as a checklist that we can tick off as being “done”. It requires everyday prayer, seeking, practical work and deeds. This can wear us down and make us fall away. However, I still vividly recall how God refreshed me so completely and instantly. So I do not give up hope and I keep exercising faith. God showed me how near he is to me and I will learn to receive even more of him. He will keep refreshing me and equipping me for the next part of his Kingdom’s work which he has in store for me.

*I pray this testimony will draw you closer to God.
Nick Schuster (Tanunda, SA)*



The Value of Experience

(The following is a segment from the book “Surprised by Miracles” by Dr Edgar Mayer.)

Luther never saw the cross and experiences of God as being in opposition to one another. The cross and its intense feelings of pain were not Jesus’ permanent reality. He suffered for a season and died; but then He rose from the dead in triumphant glory, experiencing freedom from the grave and new authority to reign in power. The cross was a moment of crisis. Although it was long enough to be terrible in the extreme, Jesus had wonderful experiences of breakthrough and intimacy with God the Father before and after the cross:

“...And as he was praying, heaven was opened ... and a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ (Luke 3:21-22)

“...God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death ... exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear (Acts 2:24,33; Philippians 2:8-11).

It is the same in the Christian life. There is the cross. We experience its humbling nature. Confronted with what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we despair of our own efforts. But this despair leads to the opposite—the joy of salvation which can and must be experienced. If there were no joy or peace or any other positive experiences of God, how would we know where we stand in our relationship with Him? Despair over sin or discouragement in suffering cannot be our permanent state. Each is there only on occasion, for a season, for the purpose of calling us back to Jesus and deflating our pride; but then, as the children of God, we are to come into peace and joy:

“...For the kingdom of God is... righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit... (Romans 14:17).

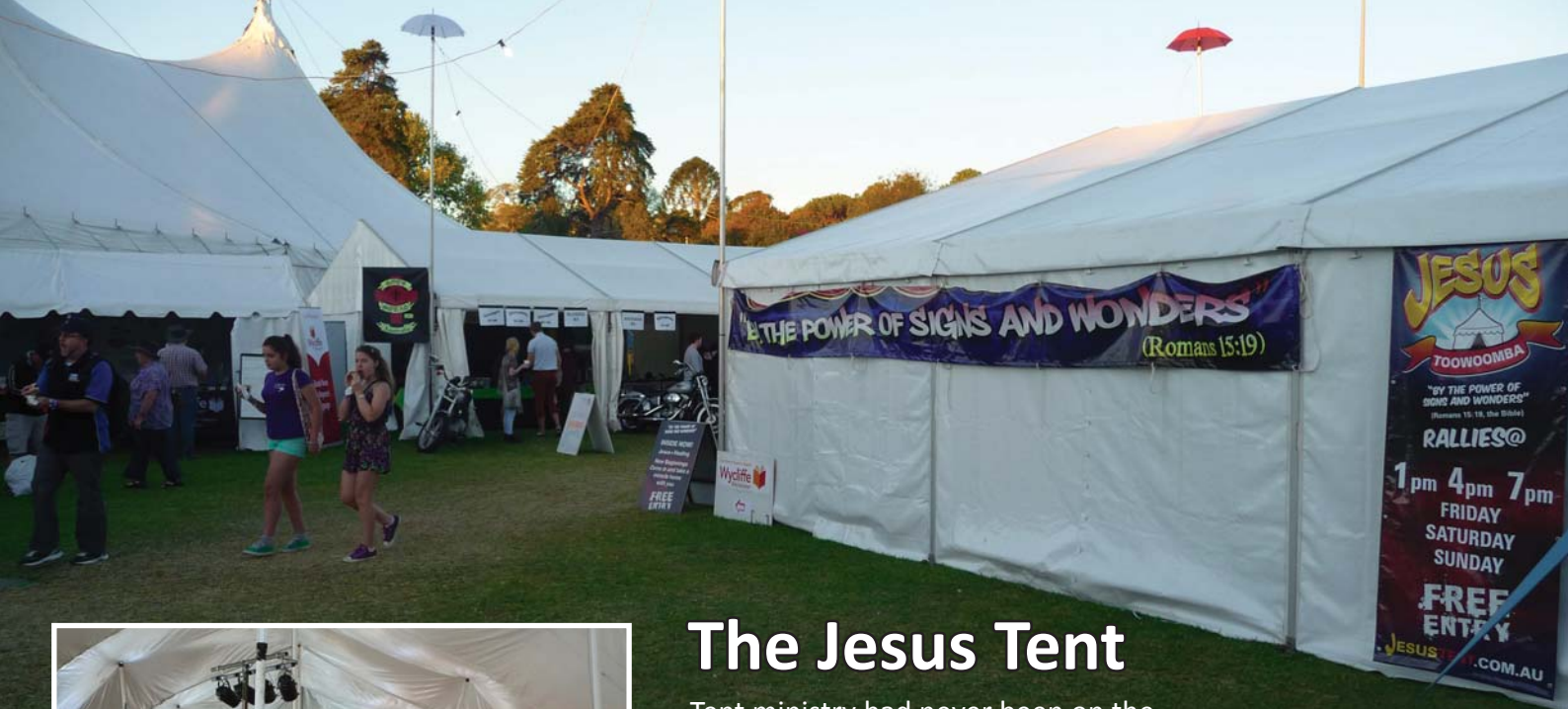
“...you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

Luther himself also experienced

joy when he first reached out to God trusting him with justification by faith. For Luther, what God did at his conversion and what happened to him was extraordinary. Experiencing God, Luther felt like he was walking through the open doors of paradise—reborn and full of the inexpressible sweetness of greater love. From this day forward, Luther knew God by experience. For the rest of his life he would uphold the value and necessity of Christian experience:

‘No one can correctly understand God or his word unless he has received such understanding immediately through the Holy Spirit. But no one can receive it from the Holy Spirit without experiencing, proving, and feeling it. In such experience the Holy Spirit instructs us as in his own school, outside of which nothing is learned but empty words and prattle.

[Luther as quoted in Eric Gritsch, Martin Luther: Faith in Christ and the Gospel (New York: New City Press, 1996), 36].



The Jesus Tent

Tent ministry had never been on the agenda for Living Grace Lutheran Church. However, in 2012, God clearly spoke to the community and surprised everyone. As a result, the first Jesus Tent was held in Queens Park (Toowoomba) and – true to his word – God healed people, saved a good number of those that were seeking for him and performed miracles. God set people free and filled them with the Holy Spirit. There was no need to talk anyone into faith and believing in Jesus Christ and him crucified but God confirmed the preaching with experiences of him, as the Bible promised:

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

The Jesus Tent is available for booking.
www.jesustent.com.au

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