

DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES

# 2022 Mid-Year Report

# Mind The Gap

## Two generations square off over the future of Living Waters

By Andrew Comiskey and Marco Casanova

Andrew Comiskey: Living Waters is a guide for groups of people seeking relational integrity. Yes, this guide is now available for individual use. But Mercy heals us when we gather 'to confess faults and pray...' (Jas 5:16). We meet responsibly, with proper guidelines that dignify us and liberate gifts of the Kingdom from our fellows who glisten on our deep needs and help restore us.

Marco Casanova: Ok, sounds good. You developed this, Andrew, over 42 years of group meetings. Aren't 'recovery' groups 'boomer' history? How relevant to my generation could a 20-part-series be?

Andrew: The Kingdom of God breaking into lives frustrated by abuse and addiction is for NOW. My young friends live in layers of moral ambiguity and with levels of sexual temptation unknown to my generation. Living Waters preps persons to be faithful to one spouse. Or simply to become a friend of God and a non-confusing friend to others. 20 gatherings aren't enough!

Marco: A 20-session commitment can be a hard sell to my generation: gotta show up despite the 'inconveniences' of mood,

shameful relapse, dating/marital tension, and work stress. That's real life. Living Waters teaches my generation to work out challenges in-the-flesh, person-to-person, incarnationally. Andrew, you've created a healthy, bounded place for people to work out deep issues in community.

Brilliant.

Is that why you forbid zooming Living Waters? Hard sell for persons who now live on screens.

Andrew: Relational problems require relational solutions. We gather to forge healthy honest bonds with our own gender and to understand the wonder and wounds of the opposite sex. Close your computer and gather! Welcoming the other's good yet flawed offering demands up close and (inter) personal exchanges.

*"... a robust, ordered Kingdom vision for transforming wounded members..."*

Marco: Sounds archaic but I can't disagree with this incarnational ethos. We must gather in-the-flesh. To forgo in-person community stunts healing. Screens fail to supply adequate 'nutrition' to our deep needs, leaving us dissatisfied and isolated.

You talk a lot about group 'limits'. What are they?

Andrew: A trained coordinator, requirements of relational integrity for team leaders, confidentiality for all, limiting interactions outside the group to ensure impartiality, and each group must be sponsored by a greater faith community.

Marco: Really? Do churches want to take on something like Living Waters? Especially when we dare to believe that persons from LGBTQ+ backgrounds can be restored to God's design as male for female, and vice-versa?

Andrew: Well, some churches do. Most Catholic and evangelical pastors still believe that sex is purposeful only in marriage as to bring forth children (novel ideal!). Yet they are beaten down by a culture that demands allegiance to sexual idolatry. That erodes their faith in Jesus to

transform lives; they hold to a form of truth but deny its power. But if empowered lay persons under that pastor take up Living Waters and offer the pastor (and church) a robust, ordered Kingdom vision for transforming wounded members, what orthodox pastor could resist?

Marco: Right on. Most pastors I encounter love the idea of a 'lay-run' healing program. No need for Father/Pastor here...only his oversight and approval. Pretty good deal. The current cultural climate is undoubtedly aggressive when it comes to LGBTQ+ stuff. And Living Waters can be seen as unsophisticated in the face of the 'sophisticated' psychological-political advances for the LGBTQ+ affirming. What is attractive to me about Living Waters is the profundity on which you've built it. This guide to wholeness draws from thinkers that span the

centuries, and the witness of the Church that lives robustly today. I especially love the challenge of Catholics and evangelicals working together. The evangelical spirit healing some deep divides and brokenness in me! Ecumenism can't heal important doctrinal disagreements. But Living Waters unites all Christians in pursuit of sexual and relational integrity. I especially love the challenge of Catholics and evangelicals working together. The evangelical spirit healing some deep divides and brokenness in me! Ecumenism can't heal important doctrinal disagreements. But Living Waters unites all Christians in pursuit of sexual and relational integrity.

Andrew: Marco, I am almost exactly your father's age. How can I best help you lead

Living Waters for the USA?

Marco: You've built Living Waters for over 4 decades. Following your trail-blazing leadership isn't and won't be easy. Many evangelical-born initiatives depend on a personality. I would hate for this work to die with you! Maybe the Catholic dimension of Desert Stream is a saving grace. Living Waters needs longevity, and the Church has that! Just pray I gain some of your Holy Spirit anointing.

Andrew: Marco, how would you change Living Waters?

Marco: I can't imagine changing anything major about Living Waters. Its integrity is effective and wise. I just want to change its face. With my ugly mug. I will seek with all my heart and strength to draw a wounded generation to Jesus' mercy.

unrestrained indulgence: I abused chemicals, used bodies, and became violent.

Eleven years later, after a painful breakup with a woman, God revealed Himself to me. I found myself face down on the floor crying in the pages of a Bible my mom gave me. When I lifted my head from the tear-soaked pages, I surrendered to God who gave me a heart to please Him. I declared war.

*"I surrendered to God who gave me a heart to please Him. I declared war."*

# Idolatry and True Worship

By Amanda Smith Adapted from Living Waters Guidebook, Chapter 7 Perspective

My fight against idolatry has left me wide-eyed in wonder at the power of the Cross and true worship. A pastor of mine recently said: 'Children are great observers but terrible interpreters.' What I observed as a child caused me to interpret the world, my gender, and my worth wrongly. The enemy deceived me and tied me in knots. Afflicted by mental illness,

my mom locked herself in her room day and night throughout my childhood. I longed for her nurture yet hated her withholding.

I started craving the affection of women. I acted badly just to get attention from female teachers. At 15, I acted on same-sex attraction with an older girl in school. This took me down a dark path of

For the next 3 months, unspeakable sexual images tormented my mind. I absolutely hated this filthy flood! Demons behind those idols (1 Cor 10:20) raged at my sudden conversion. I am grateful for those who prayed and wept with me.

Yet nine-years-later, I found myself battling intensely with unwanted same-sex desires. The battle was on. Again!

As a new intern at Desert Stream, God asked me to forsake all entertainment with explicit sensuality. I couldn't handle it.

I loved Paul's exhortation: 'But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality' (Eph 5:3a). I repented and found myself at my first Living Waters Leadership Training in

California. In that surrender, Jesus gave me new authority to refuse idols and to renounce the spirits behind them. He lit me on fire with His love, and I physically felt His power on me. A prayer team member prayed for me; God showed him my 'fire' and he experienced the same Holy Spirit burn! Tears of joy were coming down my face. I knew that no matter how hard the battle, I always had the Lord fighting for me. I received a new fire to worship only the One who set me free. I knew I was a dearly loved child of the Father who could stand free from the idols seeking to divert true worship.

Amanda Smith lives in Kansas City. After Desert Stream, she joined a local church staff as a minister where she oversees Living Waters.

# Corporate Corner

By Annette Comiskey

This Lent and Easter I made a special effort to talk about Jesus' Death and Resurrection with my oldest grandchildren, a very complex story that they accepted and understood better than many adults I know! One part of the story they loved was Jesus appearing to Thomas. Jesus' scars were apparent and urged Thomas to feel His wounds for himself.

Right after Easter, the revised Living Waters launched. For the first time in 42 years, the guidebook became available to anyone! I have been

involved in the production of every version of Living Waters, from typing the first outlines on my 'Selectric' typewriter to overseeing the design, production and publication of this newest one.

How do these two things relate? Living Waters is many things: one part is that Living Waters helps us acknowledge how we have been wounded by others. It also helps us admit we have been the wondrous. Then, through the mercy and healing of Lord, we become 'wounded healers'.



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### Mission Statement

Based on Jesus' mercy and the dignity of men and women made in God's image, we equip Christians to gather in pursuit of radical wholeness.

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We do that most effectively by telling others of our healing; our testimonies bear witness to a host of doubting Thomas' in today's world. Living Waters equips us to say with confidence "Stop doubting and believe."

The Living Waters Guidebook is for you but it's also for those wounded ones who need to know the transforming power of Jesus' love. The revised version is clearer and more concise than ever. Read it and see!