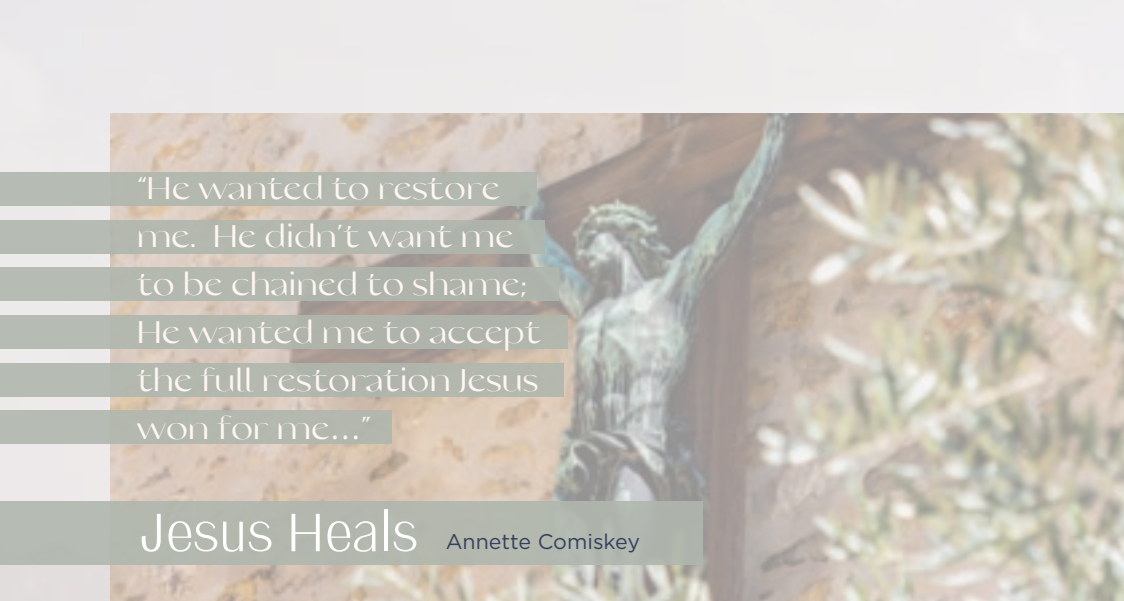


DESERT  
STREAM™  
MINISTRIES

**2023 Mid-Year Report**





“He wanted to restore me. He didn’t want me to be chained to shame; He wanted me to accept the full restoration Jesus won for me...”

## Jesus Heals Annette Comiskey

*Jesus Revolution* was a surprise box-office hit; it captured well the 1968 Jesus People movement in Southern California. Although my personal “Jesus Revolution” came a few years later at the Vineyard West Los Angeles, our pastor Kenn Gulliksen (founder of the Vineyard) was one of the first pastors on staff at Calvary Costa Mesa under Chuck Smith.

My favorite scene in the movie: Lonnie Frisbee sharing prophetic words during a church service. Jesus was on the move—healing, comforting, delivering His people. Andy and I started attending the Vineyard in 1979: I needed a word and touch from God. Deeply wounded as a child from sexual abuse, I loved Jesus but felt unworthy to receive His love.

Revolutionary Jesus disarmed my defenses at our first Vineyard service.

The musical worship was unlike any I have ever heard. My heart opened and God deposited in me a spirit of singing open-heartedly to God that remains to this day. Kenn’s teaching declared simply and profoundly the love of Jesus. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, I was delivered that day of a stronghold of unworthiness by the tender love of God. I remain free for Divine Love today.

Holy Spirit-led prayer times at the end of each service deepened His healing work in me. I would stand before the Cross with others and await the Spirit’s movement. As the music played, sensitive prayer ministers offered words aimed at my broken heart. Simple yet nuanced, these were kisses from God to me, utterly personal!

I would lift my hands in surrender and

soak in the love that flowed freely from wounded healers. Amazing that they didn’t offer platitudes, didn’t try to “fix” me; they just waited expectantly for God to heal me.

I discovered that God wasn’t content for me to just accept my abuse wounds—He wanted to restore me. He didn’t want me to be chained to shame; He wanted me to accept the full restoration Jesus won for me in His death and resurrection.

As I received more healing, our pastors released me to be one of the wounded healers who prayed for others: I felt expectant and anointed to bring healing.

Obviously, the Vineyard believed in God’s power to heal through exercising spiritual gifts. Yet we loved therapy and relied on recovery groups. This multi-faceted approach to the healing of people was revolutionary, ahead of its time.

And thus, the birth of Desert Stream and our first Living Waters group! Andy and I knew the complexity of sexual and relational brokenness. We knew it would take a lot of prayers, a lot of gathering, and a lot of time to mediate trustworthy love for the wounded.

We were happy to take our places in the Revolution. We never looked back. Jesus healed then and still does. He’s on the move. Join us as we follow the Revolutionary Lamb.

# Limitless Grace

Marco Casanova

*“Grace does not destroy nature but fulfills its potential.” – St. Thomas Aquinas*

I surrendered to Jesus in 2015. The weight of my hidden homosexual life reduced me to the mercy of God. As I yielded my disintegrated life to Jesus, He invited me into relationship.

Jesus can't bypass the truth of our nature. God doesn't manipulate or ignore His design. His saving love acts in accord with the blueprint of our being. Grace –His *indwelling*– is the key to my becoming. God's life in us elevates and perfects our nature.

In other words, Jesus is unsatisfied to leave anyone in homosexual domination. He and His Church can't bless “gay” anything. Jesus reconciles me to the “purity of my origins” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church 2336*) and releases me from eternal adolescence.

Homosexual compulsion exhausted me and left me unfulfilled. I needed Jesus' supernatural Life to resurrect my ragged one.

At first, I thought that Jesus' saving grace would free me from bad behaviors and free me for life as a contented priest. It didn't occur to me that Jesus wanted to break the back of my homosexual disorder.

Jesus' rule and reign prevailed. He helped me to see the damage done by mortal sin and brought me into a deeper realization of the wound beneath my same-sex attractions. My wound became a map: I began to navigate my desires and “read my wound” properly.

My surrender to Jesus deepened and matured at every turn. I took more responsibility for my integration. Skilled helpers helped me deepen my integration. Living Waters provided something else. I needed a community of integration in which people witnessed and prayed with Kingdom authority. His grace became boundless. I began to long to align with the purity of my origins. I could see the horizon.

I felt an awakening desire for woman. Deeper than my ‘gay’ fantasyland was a purpose and direction of my sexual human nature.

I was becoming ready and responsible enough to offer my gift to her, whoever and wherever she was. Unencumbered by mortal sin and becoming increasingly more integrated in the good of my masculine sexuality, I began to experience the fruit of faithful friendship with Jesus.

Benedict XVI writes: “The disciple who walks with Jesus is thus caught up with Him into communion with God. And that is what redemption means: this stepping beyond the limits of human nature, which had been there as a possibility and an expectation in man, God's image and likeness, since the moment of creation” (*Jesus of Nazareth Part 1 8*).

Jesus helps me “step beyond” the limits of same-sex attraction into gift giving—the fulfillment of my nature. Amazing grace made marriage possible for me. Each person possesses the raw material for His redemptive work. Trust His indwelling life. It's limitless.

“Amazing grace made marriage possible for me. Each person possesses the raw material for His redemptive work. Trust His indwelling life. It's limitless.”

# Confirm or Reform?

Abbey Foard

I recently spoke with a Catholic priest who believed that “married” same-sex couples should have their unions “blessed” by the Church. He didn’t think the Church should change its definition of marriage but reasoned that these “committed couples” would be better served if they could enjoy the Church’s confirmation.

I bristled. While I could appreciate this priest’s zeal to love generously, I expressed my concern: “We cannot bless a lie.” If we believe the Church’s teaching on marriage, are we not cruel to affirm anything other than a commitment between one man and one woman?

After some dialogue, I could sense a deeper question—*what, then, is our recourse?*

He is hardly alone in his wondering. I knew this priest (in the spirit of Pope Francis) wanted to break the mold of the stodgy cleric, incapable of engaging real people on real issues. He wanted to reach these ones! But his solution was superficial— the equivalent of cheering a person building his house on unstable/sandy foundations. What could be less loving?

I submitted some simple considerations. Though we meet people wherever they start, our exhortation is never “remain how you are.” Rather, we cry out with St. John Paul II: “become what you are!” (*Familiaris Consortio* 17.) This encouragement rests on the foundation of our God-given human dignity and our responsibility to steward it. John Paul II sees deeper than the social structures we have crafted (e.g., our definitions of marriage or LGBTQ+ identification). He calls us to build everything on God’s foundation.

We don’t get there through preachy lectures on moral platitudes. Instead, we submit our humble starting points—our barren lands—to Him and begin our “crosswalk.” We follow Jesus in progressive and deepening

surrender. We open ourselves to every level of healing and reform necessary to become the priests, prophets, and kings we are.

That is why I love Living Waters. Our premise: everyone is disintegrated, everyone is invited to heal in the mercy pool—all expressions of barrenness accepted!

Surrendering to wholeness is as much my task as it is the “gay” married. We all must forsake identifications, behaviors, and thought processes contrary to Truth—a glorious and complicated adventure! Secured on true foundations of what it means to be human, this effort opens us to Jesus’ abundant life.

“We follow Jesus in progressive and deepening surrender. We open ourselves to every level of healing and reform necessary to become the priests, prophets, and kings we are.”

That was my answer to the priest. I welcome the “needy” member by revealing my own humbled walk. I expose my own vulnerabilities, both present and historic, and practice repentance, reform, and being shored up. In this way, it is easy (and not dramatic) to invite others to do the same.

This is one reason I appreciate my Kansas City pastors. They consistently speak of ways the Lord has led them in moments of wandering, questioning, and need. They willingly share how following Jesus called them to release lesser things and take up true provision.

In this way, they preach a message that reforms, not confirms, worldly solutions. Like John Paul II, they inspire us to our original beauty and dignity, no matter how messy the starting point. Let us do the same.

Continued on back →

# Miracles of Becoming Whole

Andrew Comiskey

Jesus heals the sexually disintegrated. I know this because He healed me of homosexuality, one miracle at a time. Becoming whole involves a series of miracles, each elicited and sustained by His saving grace.

Miracles of integration invite an active response on our part. That response involves our mind and our will. He reveals something of His good for our divided humanity and gives us a choice: will we accept that good and act on it, or not?

In inviting us into wholeness, Jesus summons the depths of how He made us to represent Him in our sexual humanity. Fundamental to that representation is our capacity to know the good and to choose it. God made us that way!

Sin dulls our awareness of the good in myriad ways. Redeemer Jesus frees us to reclaim that good and actively engage it for our healing. That differs from Jesus' instant restoration of a person beset by disease or demons. Healing a soul divided by identity confusion and disordered passions requires ongoing engagement.

We participate in a series of miracles as we become good gifts to others. That's a good definition of Living Waters: a well-defined 'track' on which we welcome a series of miracles! What a Savior! In gratitude, our 'becoming' results in eternal devotion to the One who made and redeems us.

**First Miracle: Owing Disquiet**  
Jesus frees us for Reality. Contrary to popular belief, there is 'an objective reality of being', including our human being. I have a human nature! No amount of sin can dissolve that nature; sin only obscures my awareness of it.

Jesus is kind. He woos us and invites us 'to mind the gap' between our ragged self-perception and who we want to become. Holy disquiet! This is

nothing less than the miracle of conviction—I am a sinner, and distress over my disorder draws me out of dark waters and into baptism: Water, Blood and Spirit. Only Jesus, and our 'yes', can cancel out the domination of whatever disquiets and disorders us.

**Second Miracle: Owing Our Good**  
Jesus opens our eyes to the goodness of our unique masculine or feminine selves. That was harder for me than owning disquiet! So inclined to disavow my masculine adequacy, I had to straighten up to own my masculine good. Both Karl Barth and St. John Paul II mused biblically, eloquently, on essential man and womanhood and I caught the vision, as well as the responsibility I had to woman. Eyes open, I could no longer dodge her but seek to dignify her. Holy Spirit empowered me to take baby steps toward one woman; desire trickled then flowed as I grew to love Annette.

**Third Miracle: Owing Immaturity**  
I discovered quickly that arousal is a small part of loving a whole person. Jesus was asking me to give beyond myself, something I had never done in 'gay' relating. How does one become faithful in love—body, soul, and spirit? Real relating exposes our limits then Jesus helps us to expand the bounds of self-giving. His prompts and empowerment are nothing short of miraculous! That includes refusing childish props and caring with courage for those most in need of us.

Immature expectations, lustful escapes, and unhealed fears must go through the fire of His love—His love for us, yes, but equally love for those who need us.

**Fourth Miracle: Fruitfulness**  
Actively dignifying others engenders new life. A miracle—our human gift is achieving the purpose for which we gave it! I don't refer only or mostly to having children. I mean building others up—making them better—through the deposits we make in them.

At 65-years-old, I can now step back and reflect on the fruit of Jesus' miraculous, everyday impartation. He has taught me to give myself away freely. Faithful Jesus makes us faithful and fruitful in love, a series of miracles in which we joyfully participate.



## 2023 Mid-Year Report

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### PUBLISHER/EDITOR

Andrew Comiskey

## Mission Statement

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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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