

A PUBLICATION OF
DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES



The GIFT

BY ANDREW COMISKEY



'Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing of water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.'
(Eph. 5: 25-27)

God became an infant to make us holy men and women. A baby becomes the basis for our full stature as saints! Let us marvel this season in the Child-King whose gift of divine life enables us to become more than we thought possible.

'How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given...' In the haste of holidays, Jesus invites us to simply consider what He has done, how He has offered Himself to us as a babe. He could not have become more vulnerable. He gave Himself up for us. He could have come like a fire or flood, a thunderous Presence who shook the sin right out of us.

Instead He spoke to us in a still small voice, a babe who cooed in His mother's arms and cried when hungry. He waits in luminous quiet for us to cry out for Him. His whole life was a continuous offering to poor ones like us: advocating for prostitutes and moral lepers, raising a dead son for his mother's sake, stopping decades of bleeding for women under the boot of boorish men.

His life ended when He offered Himself to false witnesses and murderers. There on the cross He gifted us with the flood of blood and water which is our cleansing, our healing, and our deliverance.

How blessed are we who know our filthiness: He cleanses us! How beautiful are the broken who welcome His healing! And how privileged are the poor who know we are bound and set free only by His delivering hand. Hail the gift, at once Infant-King and Crucified-Lord. May we welcome Him afresh as the gift that opens the riches of heaven to our impoverished humanity.

Becoming Gifts

Our freedom is never only personal. He gifts us that we might become good gifts to our fellow humanity. That is the goal of the Living Waters healing group: to know Him more, and so become

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TI. 2:13, 14

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The Gift

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good gifts to one another in our broken, being healed humanity. Throughout the world, Living Waters groups gather before the Crucified in diversity. Men and women, heterosexual and homosexual idolaters, the abused and addicted, Pharisees and prostitutes, those who love too much and too little, all find their place on the level ground established at Calvary.

We are unified in Christ and in our goal of becoming mature expressions of the gift. That involves a baseline commitment to chastity—the integration of sexual desire through the power of the Holy Spirit that frees us to love without lust. It also involves a commitment to complementarity—the activation of one’s call to know and honor the other gender as blessed counterpart in the whole of life. We walk together in diversity, yet become one in the Gift, who is Christ.

With each confession, each prayer, every blemish and wrinkle we expose to the broken body of Christ, He is taking ground in us. Humbled, we become healed and

begin to see that He is recovering the gifts that we are. We activate these gifts in growing to understand and bear with one another, in praying for one another so that all may be healed.

That takes time, a lengthy 20-week commitment, in order to establish trust among members. That trust must include good boundaries in order to ensure that deep disclosures are protected. And such a gathering must have momentum, the movement of grace that is only possible when truth and generous mercy meet.

The newly revised *Living Waters: Restoring Relational Integrity through the Broken Body of Christ* guidebook is a beautiful expression of all the above. After a focused 2-year effort, we at DSM/LW are blessed to ‘gift’ our colleagues with this guide, an exquisite expression of Jesus as the Gift that frees us to be gifts.

Though essentially the same material as the original manual, Living Waters had not been thoroughly revised since 1993. So we streamlined and augmented it, drawing upon tried and true voices from the breadth of the Christian tradition. And the guide has been laid out in a way

that can only be described as a gift to the eyes and as a grace to the reader; (s)he can now reflect and pray and meditate upon its truths with unprecedented ease.

Our goal is to gift the whole body of Christ with this practical tool. We desire that all Christian men and women become good gifts to each other and to the greater body around them. We are simply saying ‘yes’ to Jesus’ purpose in becoming a gift for us! Might we come broken and so discover the wholeness that is realized when we welcome Him as author and redeemer of our humanity.

Gift to a Broken Church

One unique opportunity for healing involves the way that Living Waters is uniting Catholics and Protestants. Let me give you a little history here. Most of you know that I have become a Catholic. Over the last few years, my heart has been opened to both the riches and the poverty of my new church home: wealthy in spiritual and moral truth, poor in activating saints to know their inheritance and awaken others to it. Religious formalism can defend one from dealing straight with moral cancer. Yet how deep and rich is the well of the Church, a fount of mercy waiting to set captives free!

My hope

is that the new guidebook will provide a genuine ecumenical opportunity for all Christians to gather before the Crucified Child-King...

The Gift awaits His unfurling, especially as applied to church members shamed by abuse, addiction, and homosexuality. Historically, Living Waters groups have been blessed when Catholics crossed 'party lines' and entered into the 'waters' of mercy with us. They became vulnerable to us in order to receive holy communal support for their struggle.

In their depth and humility, Catholics in Living Waters have imparted riches to impoverished evangelicals. And they have testified to the truth that whenever Jesus graces us with deep knowledge of our poverty, those who seek Him will find Him, even if outside their church 'home.'

My hope is that the new guidebook will provide a genuinely


ecumenical opportunity for all Christians to gather before the Crucified Child-King and discover the relevance of His gift to our frustrated gift-giving.

Might Jesus employ these most difficult and shameful problems to unite the deeply divided body of Christ? Only humility will do: a willingness to suspend judgment and behold in this 'other' the living presence of Jesus Himself. I recall our Mexican training last summer, evenly split between Catholics and Protestants. As we allowed ourselves to be broken before each other, God gifted us with a fresh appreciation of the 'others' exquisite gift.

We had to face and forsake our biases in order to welcome the other as Christ. But as we did, we were aware that God

was doing something deeper than healing out personal brokenness. He was bridging the greatest breach in Christendom, the divide between Catholics and Protestants.

The Bridegroom is returning for one Bride, without spot and wrinkle. Gift us, Child-King, with Your heart for the whole, broken Body. May Living Waters be one instrument of preparing the Bride for Your return.

'We wait for our blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who offered Himself up for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.' (Titus 2: 13, 14) 



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gift for us!"



Living Waters: One Body, One Faith

BY DEAN GREER



"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Eph 4:2, 3

As the day's move forward, I have become more grateful for the many differing aspects of the one body of Christ Paul writes of in Ephesians 4.

I grew up in a Pentecostal church and attended Baptist school all the way through high school. These two very distinct communities had many differences to navigate. I remember the scandal when our Baptist principal's wife began speaking in tongues. There were some who discretely enjoyed dancing and others who fervently prayed for the salvation of those caught dancing. Minor differences today, but as a child there was a strong divide among the Protestants of my community.

The Catholics invoked a much greater divide. A few of my extended family members were Catholic. I was taught (erroneously) of the heresy these ones believed: Jesus was still on the cross, Mary was equal to—if not greater than—Jesus,

you can—and should—pray to dead people, their Bible had "added" scriptures, etc. Some went so far as to tag the Catholic Church a cult! There were tracts passed around my school with huge warning signs emblazoned with fire and brimstone. It was scary and confusing.

I remember having a conversation with my parents about it: "What if they are right and we're wrong? After all, they believe as strongly as we do..." My parents told me, "That is a matter of faith that you need to work out before the Lord." That was often their answer to my many questions about faith. It continues to be a good answer.

Since then I have been working it out. I can appreciate the wealth of wisdom I glean from other denominations. I can grow from valuable things and can hold lightly what I do not understand. With most denominational differences I find I can agree to disagree. I don't

carry within me the wounds or scars inflicted by spiritual abusers so my defenses are not great. Unfortunately, what I do carry within is my pride. When I do face significant conflict, it often comes down to my need to be right and for them—whomever the "them" might be—to be wrong.

The Lord is always willing to give me opportunities to work it out. In the last few years I was introduced to John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*. I attended a week-long immersion course taught by the excellent Christopher West. This seminar was the most significant Catholic experience of my life. I attended daily mass, though I was not allowed to participate in communion because I was not one of them. It required working out my faith before the Lord like never before.

As my boss and mentor I have always been aware of Andrew Comiskey's penchant for the mystics. You can't participate in Living Waters and ignore the

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"You can't participate in Living Waters

and ignore the concepts and great quotes he extracts from Catholic writers.

I have gained much from their insight and have come to greatly appreciate them myself."

I can appreciate the **Wealth of Wisdom** I glean from other denominations. ...**With most** denominational differences. I find I can **Agree to Disagree.**

Living Waters: A Unifying Force



BY MAITE RODRIGUEZ

LIVING WATERS WAS A PLACE WHERE I WAS ABLE TO RECEIVE THE HEALING I LONGED FOR. I AM STILL IN THE PROCESS AND THAT IS A GOOD SIGN FOR ME THAT GOD HAS MORE IN STORE FOR ME.

That is part of the reason I do this; I desire to share with others what God can do when we give Him permission.

I still remember vividly when I did my first Living Waters training (May 2007); I was the only Catholic in a group of 60 evangelicals from all over Latin America! Truthfully I had many reservations. I knew I needed healing but I was a little apprehensive of what was going to happen there. The Lord knew my heart. During the first ministry time He sent a Chilean pastor who prayed for me about the “unfounded fear of been there” and that “I was where I had to be and to surrender those fears”. Truly he read my mail! Through these words, the Lord confirmed that He knew best for me.

That experience opened my heart to receive the mercy I was looking for. The seed planted has blossomed in the last couple of years as I have yielded my denominational fears to the Lord. I now interact with men and women from all denominations in Latin America and the USA.

This year DSM/LW had the privilege of hosting our 1st Aguas Vivas (Living Waters) Training in Mexico: 50% Catholic, 50% Protestant. I received the appli-

cations and I was concerned! I spoke personally with most of the participants and let them know that this was an ‘interdenominational’ ministry. In Spanish we say: ‘In war we warn you of death’. In other words: ‘we told you in advance what you signed up for.’ In Latin culture, the line between Catholics and Protestants is black and white.

But God did not let us down! He heard the plea of our hearts and the prayer for unity and camaraderie. I would like to share with



you some of the feedback from participants about their healing and ecumenical experiences in our training.

“The Training for me has been a huge experience of light, where I could see the action of our Lord Jesus from the Paschal mystery of his Cross and Resurrection.”

“Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Andrew and his team, Living Waters has deployed a charisma with anthropological and pastoral basis (in small groups), which enables praying and receiving the healing graces of our Lord Jesus in each of the broken areas of our sexuality.”

“I have marveled at the content of each course as well as by every testimony received. Real-life stories have endorsed and confirmed the veracity of such experiences. The transforming journey is real and possible.”

As an ecumenical experience:

“The Lord closed the gap for me in relation to the Baptist Church. I felt a great distance from them due to events that occurred decades ago and very recently before leaving for the training.”

“I came, Spirit-filled, ready for the Lord to generate new opportunities of fellowship. He showed me and us some of the reasons for the differences that have divided us, opening another door to the prison of our injuries and losses.”

“Aguas Vivas (Living Waters) needs a lot of support and

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“... ‘He showed me and us some of the reasons for the differences that have divided us, opening another door to the prison of our injuries and losses.’”

Corporate Corner



BY ANNETTE COMISKEY

In our last newsletter, I wrote about revising the Living Waters Guidebook. I spent much of the summer working on the guidebook with the small team that makes up

Desert Stream Press. In September, with much anticipation and little fanfare, the first shipment of books was delivered to our office.

Seeing it in its completed 'state' was very exciting; sending off the first orders to Living Waters Coordinators was a relief! It is everything I hoped it would be? For the most part, yes! I always see things that could be improved upon, but all-in-all I'm very proud of the guidebook.

I love, love, love the stories of healing and restoration from Living Waters leaders around the nation. Each one is amazing.

In a world that doesn't often believe the Lord can and does transform lives, this guidebook proclaims the Lord's authority and kindness to heal and restore our broken bodies, souls, spirits and minds.

What I didn't anticipate was some of the apprehensions about revising the guidebook. Some are worried about the new format. Having taught Living Waters for so long, in many different settings, I find the new layout much easier. It is better organized: simpler to read and teach from than the previous edition. The chapters follow a more logical order; the prayers are easy to find and follow. Highlighting the homework questions make them harder to ignore!

Even the revisions to the text clarify complex concepts and truths. In its depth, Living Waters will never be a simple "user-friendly" program but the new guidebook is more accessible.

The one concern a few have raised it that it is too "Catholic". While the guidebook makes a clearer way forward for Catholics to participate in Living Waters, it still holds true to the basic principles and beliefs on which Living Waters was founded.

As a Protestant, my walk with the Lord has been enriched by learning more about Catholicism. I appreciate the high view of communion and confession that Catholics carry to the altar. I choose not to worship that way precisely. But we are far more joined with Catholics than we are different from them.

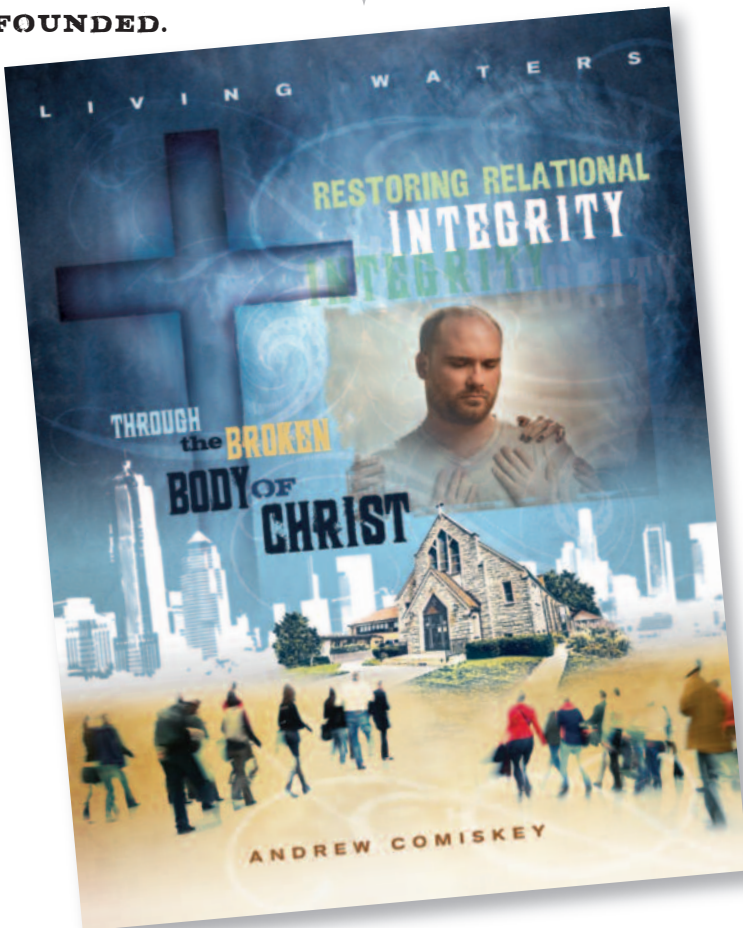
The culture of today's world stands against Christian values and beliefs. It grieves my heart to think that we cannot give grace to our brothers and sisters and receive grace from them in our differences. We need to stand with all who proclaim Jesus as the Son of God, as the only true Authority and the only One who can heal and transforms us into the good gifts He created us to be for each other.

I am expectant about how the Lord will continue to grow Living Waters in our familiar "streams" but also very excited about the new "streams" opening up. My prayer is that Desert Stream/Living Waters will be an expression of healing throughout the whole Body of Christ as never before!

I have also included a very brief summary of each of the new chapters. I hope they make you thirsty for more....

...“THE ONE CONCERN A FEW HAVE RAISED IS THAT IT IS TOO “CATHOLIC”.

WHILE THE GUIDEBOOK MAKES A CLEARER WAY FORWARD FOR CATHOLICS TO PARTICIPATE IN LIVING WATERS, IT STILL HOLDS TRUE TO THE BASIC PRINCIPLES AND BELIEFS ON WHICH LIVING WATERS WAS FOUNDED.



RESTORING RELATIONAL INTEGRITY THROUGH THE BROKEN BODY OF CHRIST

1 INTRODUCTION TO LIVING WATERS

We begin by identifying the gifts that we are, and how Jesus reclaims those gift through His broken Body. We conclude by agreeing upon certain expectations that help make the group safe for all.

2 ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED

God gives us what we need, not what we deserve! Sorting through those needs includes an examination of good and bad shame, and how unmet needs for love can tempt us to meet our needs the wrong way.

3 BECOMING RESPONSIVE TO THE FATHER'S LOVE

The Father initiates His rule and reign in our lives. Such divine initiative requires our response. We explore this rhythm of initiative and response through three women named Mary—from Bethany, the Magdalene, and God's mother

4 THE FIGHTING FATHER

At Calvary, both Holy Father and Son fought for our dignity. And won! We consider how the Cross becomes the locus of our restoration.

5 REVEALING CHRIST THROUGH THE GIFT OF OUR BODIES

Our bodies reveal the mystery of God on earth. We explore what it means to bear His image in our relationships.

6 THE CROSS AND CONFESSION: RESTORING THE TRUE IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMANITY

In order to love well, we must turn from our sin. We prepare for confession so that the depth of our sin can be surpassed by the depth of His forgiveness.

7 RENOUNCING IDOLS

Loving well means worshipping only One: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We explore the idols tied to our sexual and relational sin.

8 OVERCOMING ADDICTION THROUGH THE REAL MEAL

God wants to satisfy our desires with good things. We explore the roots of addiction and the loving way God bears with us as we learn to let go of our addictions.

9 HOW WOUNDS MAKE US MORE WHOLE

Our hearts bear pain from the past up to the present. In His wounds, Jesus helps us to identify ours. We learn to grieve in hope, and to love unencumbered by past blows.

10 IDENTIFYING BROKENNESS, RESUMING THE JOURNEY

Facing the sources of our pain is never easy but can yield the fruit of new mercies for self and others.

11 RESTORING BROKEN BOUNDARIES

Abuse comes in many forms and impacts how we offer ourselves to each other. We will explore how Jesus begins to restore our boundaries and our trust en route to relational wholeness.

12 THE TRUE SELF FORGIVES

United with Christ in His wounds and His resurrection, we can become like Him toward those who have damaged us. We learn how to forgive.

13 THE TRUE SELF ASPIRES TO WHOLENESS, REFUSES DESPAIR

Raised with Christ, the new creation aspires to great things. We watch for the boundless horizon He has opened for us and break bonds of sloth and despair.

14 THE TRUE SELF UNITES WITH GOD IN WEAKNESS, OVERCOMES NARCISSISM

Our true selves are not perfect selves. Raised with Christ, we place our confidence in His perfection and thus can admit our ongoing weaknesses.

15 THE TRUE SELF LOVES HIS/HER OWN GENDER

Hearty and intimate same-sex friendships are the basis for whole gender selves and the freedom to offer ourselves well to the opposite gender.

16 OFFERING THE GIFT

We explore the goal of offering ourselves wisely to the opposite-gender. That is based on the good gifts we each are, and the theological mandate to dignify the other with our offering.

17 RESTORING WOMAN'S HONOR

Woman's essential responsiveness is damaged by sin. Jesus reclaims the true feminine in woman.


18 RESTORING MAN'S HONOR

Man's focused strength and power is also subject to brokenness. Worldly ways of asserting himself must die in order for Christ to raise up what pleases Him.

19 FOR THE BRIDE

To know Jesus, we must know them, members of Christ's Body. Wholeness involves integration in local communities of faith, in light of, not in spite of, our historic weaknesses.

20 HOPE AND WHOLENESS

Hope that is realized ceases to be hope. Such is the nature of our journey to relational integrity: we are never finished this side of heaven. 



...“WHOEVER
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(JN. 4:14)

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concepts and great quotes he extracts from Catholic writers. I have gained much from their insight and have come to greatly appreciate them myself. I admit I felt safe knowing I could glean from them without needing to admit their chosen faith was the right one and that mine was wrong.


When Andrew converted to Catholicism, I found myself needing to work out 'the Catholic thing' a bit more before the Lord. With the announcement of his conversion, many of my Living Waters

colleagues needed answers. Each inquiry tempted my own Catholic prejudice. I expected the worst when I was told he was revising the guidebook to make it more Catholic-friendly.

When I received it, I read through the chapters that I anticipated being too Catholic. I positioned myself defensively, ready to defend my Protestant beliefs. However, I was delighted with the finished product. Yes, it does contain more quotes from Catholic writers. Andrew acknowledges the relevant traditions of the Catholic Church that differ from Protestant traditions, but he does so inclusively, beautifully. While it may infringe on my comfort zone,

there is nothing that contradicts my theology.

I see the revision as a work that expresses more completely God's heart for reconciliation within His one body. God's heart for reconciliation is what Living Waters is all about. I'm gaining a greater appreciation for my Catholic brothers and sisters. We can and should stand together rather than on different sides of the cross.


"From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" Eph. 4:16 

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A Unifying Force
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a permanent prayer covering so that the communion of fellowship can continue. Together, we can confront the mystery of suffering with the assurance of the victory of Jesus Crucified and Risen."

Some of the beauty of this training clearly involved the unifying impact upon the Body of Christ. Not only were we united from eleven countries but we were united in faith in our one Lord Jesus Christ. On Thursday night we celebrated Communion led by the Baptist Pastor and the Catholic Priest. Both were grateful of the opportunity the Lord gave

them for personal healing and growth in love for the Bride.

I am so grateful for being a witness of God's saving action at our first training. It strengthens me to know that our efforts and sacrifices for the Kingdom of God are not in vain. Stay tuned for our next Aguas Vivas Training in Mexico: Summer, 2014! 

Mission Statement

Based on the biblical foundations of compassion, integrity, and dependence on God, Desert Stream Ministries proclaims to the world the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We equip the body of Christ to minister healing to the sexually and relationally broken, through healing groups and leadership training for the local church.

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