



Spring Report 2008

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Twenty-Eight Years of Healing, Equipping, and Proclaiming.

Loving Well: *A Brief History of Living Waters*

By Andrew Comiskey



*Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the desert and
streams in the wasteland.*

Isaiah 43: 18-19



Andrew Comiskey

How do we love well? By admitting that we do not. Then, with the help of God and others, we can embark on an exhilarating path toward maturely giving ourselves to our fellow humanity, a heavenly goal with concrete benefits for those around us.

Loving well is the goal of Living Waters. 2008 marks an important anniversary for our primary 30-week pathway to loving well. Twenty years ago, in July of 1988, we held our first training for the Living Waters program. That training set a standard for how our groups would be run; we discovered a track that others could reproduce in their own churches.

On that track, the key insights I had learned in the previous decade found a form, a framework that measured our truth gracefully. That freed people to expose hard things in safety; they could then begin to discover how God through His body really had power to meet their needs, and to remove obstacles that prevented them from loving well.

I will never forget our first training. It was held at Loyola Marymount—high atop a hill overlooking all of Los Angeles. For the Desert Stream staff, the weeklong training marked our second week of hosting large gatherings,

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Loving Well: *A Brief History...*

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the first being the annual Exodus International conference. Needless to say, we were exhausted but game. (Ah, sweet resilient youth!)

I remember hosting all the participants at our home the night before, which just happened to be the 4th of July. With our three small children underfoot, Annette bravely cooked a large meal only to discover the kitchen sink had clogged, forcing her and volunteer Mario Bergner out on the front lawn to hose the dishes. Alongside of neighbors celebrating America's Independence, they tried in vain to wash out tomato stains with cold water.

A humble beginning. But a good one. The first training included a few internationals, a glimpse of what lay ahead. In 1990, we held our first overseas training in England (Bless you, Chris and Lisa Guinness!). Such an effort requires a national leader with an administrative team that can sustain not only the training but its follow-up: overseeing trained leaders as they seek to run groups in their churches.

Since then, our trainings have been run in over 20 nations, on very continent, and most of them annually.

This year alone will mark trainings in

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(and we gratefully let go of our Living Waters manuals!)*

three new countries: Indonesia, Bahrain, and Italy. I praise God for His favor upon this ministry, as well as for the many saints that have taken up the exhilarating task of training others to love well via Living Waters.

Just last month we wrapped up a Living Waters pilot program at our church in Kansas City. For the first time ever, I was not the leader but simply on the team as a small group leader and occasional teacher. I loved it! It invigorated me to behold the process of change that occurs through the cross.

I experienced afresh the combustion of worship, teaching through story, and listening prayer. Most importantly, I witnessed the power of longstanding fears and defenses coming down as broken ones dared to trust Jesus through fellow strugglers. Men and women resumed the journey toward loving well.

Awesome. I am in this for life. One Living Waters lesson jumped out at me: Chapter 14 on 'Embracing the Process.' Several insights from it may be pertinent to this theme of loving well.

The first is Living Waters' view of the process of healing. Our understanding is essentially theological, derived from the Kingdom perspective popularized by Dr. George Eldon Ladd. The process of loving well is set between two Kingdoms. The first is now, the present—in Christ, God's Kingdom has already broken into the human realm, granting His followers full privileges as sons and daughters of God. Through His blood and Spirit—crucifixion and resurrection—we become new creations.

On the basis of the new creation, we can then dare look at the aspects of our lives

that have not yet been brought under His rule and reign. New life in Christ is not instant freedom from such brokenness—the 'new creation' grants courage to engage with Him and others squarely in order to be made whole!

Here we admit along with Paul that we are 'being saved.' We are justified by faith in Jesus' alone. Yet the process of being sanctified or 'made holy' continues over the course of our life's journey. (1Cor. 6:9-11) That includes reckoning with wounding, immaturity, sin, as well as distorted perspectives and affections.

All of these bar us from loving well. We face them in the light of Christ, whose primary goal for us is to love. He loves us perfectly, and frees us one step at a time to let go of what we must in order to take up this call to love maturely.

Our goal is the Kingdom yet to come: the culmination of our salvation when we see Him face-to-face (and we gratefully let go of our Living Waters manuals!) And so we journey on earth toward heaven—toward unfettered fellowship with Him. In the meantime, we accept the inspired and frustrating process of engaging with Him and others on earth as we progressively grow in love.

Edna Hong describes this process as a 'downward ascent.' I love that, and how well it applies to Living Waters! Truly we often feel worse before better as God shows us things we haven't wanted to look at before. But how precious it is to begin to actually receive His Kingdom where it is most needed, and to grow in humility and trust with our fellows at the same time.

We may find on the pathway that God reorders our plans. Before we can proceed

toward an expressed goal, like healthy heterosexuality, we must first settle foundational issues like overcoming a bad habit, or reconciliation with our own gender, or just trusting in God as a powerful and tender Father.

The process humbles us. But because our course is under God's Kingdom rule and direction, we can trust Him to lead us onto higher, truer ground on which we will bear the fruit of love.

That hope frees us for:

Honesty. Living Waters grants space and grace for longstanding Christians to express shameful areas of their lives. How freeing for the religious to finally get saved! That occurs as we acknowledge that we are still in need of the Kingdom in core areas of our lives (Ps 51:6). Especially in sexual and relational brokenness. Such honesty invites love, and the wisdom and insight that help us to face what we truly need. And how God through His people can provide for us there.

Honesty necessitates **Obedience**. A wise man said: "If confession is not in the service of repentance, it remains in the service of sin." Honest disclosure of struggle necessitates decisions as to whether or not we will walk God's way. I can smash the exquisite insight God has given me by sinning. For example, if the Spirit sensitizes me to the nature of Annette's greater

Why are you downcast,

O my soul?

Why so disturbed

within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise Him,

my Savior and my God.

P S A L M 4 2 : 1 1

need and I refuse to care for her in it, then 'sensitivity' means little.

The same with deeper healing and forgiveness. If I become aware of a profound wound in relation to the opposite gender and I refuse to share it with my small group, I am contributing to my conflict with women. I've no-one to blame but myself for not following His lead, beginning with the awareness at hand.

The arduous road to obedience is lightened by **Patience**. The Scripture refers to Him frequently as 'the God of all patience' who conceives and nourishes patience in us as one of the main virtues associated with the process of sanctification (Rom. 5: 1-5). As He is patient with us as we move in 'fits and starts', so we learn to be patient with ourselves and grant grace to the particularly weak and unaffirmed areas of our lives. We who become patient bear gracefully with our weak fellows who are learning also how to 'suffer long.'

Lastly, we walk onward with **Expectancy**. As we learn to yield to Him and trusted others, we catch glimpses of His beauty in the new and beautiful way we are beginning to care for others. We are preparing for Heaven. Our gait quickens, and we become among those who help others prepare for eternity in the power of our love. On the healing journey that Living Waters envisions, we walk in **HOPE: Honesty, Obedience, Patience, and Expectancy**.

May thousands more be envisioned to walk accordingly. Happy 20th, Living Waters Training! **DSM**

Do you not know

that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?...

And that is what some of you were.

**But you were washed, you were sanctified,
you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
and by the Spirit of our God. 1 COR 6: 9A, 11**

Sheila's Testimony

HEART for Healing, *in the Heartland*



By Sheila Ruffin

More than fifteen years ago, I went on an extended time of prayer and fasting for a Christian friend of mine who had been struggling

with homosexuality. I had picked up a copy of Andrew Comiskey's book, "Pursuing Sexual Wholeness-How Jesus Heals the Homosexual," at a conference. I began to read about the nature of sexual brokenness, and I realized that my reason for reading this book had nothing to do with my friend. I was the one who was in need of healing.

I found out there was a church that offered a Living Waters course two hours away in Kansas City on Tuesday nights. This was a tremendous challenge for me, as I was a wife and mother of four children (with a full-time job!) but I was desperate.

Each Tuesday for nine months, I bolted out of my job to make it to the 7:00 p.m. class,

which often lasted until 10:30 pm. Depending on traffic and weather, I wouldn't make it back to Columbia until 1 a.m. Wednesdays became difficult because I had to be at work at 7:30 a.m. Looking back now at how physically and mentally exhausting that period was, I know it was only the grace of God that allowed me to keep up this schedule. It was well worth it.

After the drive and a long day at work, I would arrive at the class and just stand in the back and cry. Sometimes I would cry all the way home because of some new insight I gained in class. Every week I would find myself in the chapter. I would wonder as I read the material: "Isn't there one chapter that I could sit out and say, this one is not me?" It never happened.

Yes, I was saved; I had been a Christian for almost 20 years and very active in a (primarily) African-American church in my community. I knew all the right scriptures. Every time the intercessors were gathering at church or a citywide meeting, I'd be there.

But meeting with the Living Waters group was different. For the first time in my life, I found people who could pray into my broken parts and call forth healing – healing I didn't even know I was in need of. I learned there was an answer to why I had been in constant pain for years. Most importantly, I found help for my pain.

*"Through
Living Waters,
God started a healing
process that has
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relationship with Him."*



The church had not offered me the relief I needed. Clichés were not enough—I knew them all; I needed a way to integrate the words of the Bible into my life in a living way. Through Living Waters, God started a healing process that has opened me up to a completely new dimension of relationship with Him.

I prayed for ten years that God would bring Living Waters to Columbia. I can say with great confidence that He relocated Desert Streams Ministries from Southern California to the Heartland so that I could have access to the training and so that people in Mid-Missouri could have a drink of Living Waters. **DSM**

Dorothy's Testimony

Healing the HEALER



Dorothy Greco

My husband, Christopher, and I are in our bedroom, very interested in something other than sleeping. Suddenly, doors magically appear in the walls of our bedroom and people begin pouring in and milling about, wanting to interact with us. I scream, "Get out!! Get out of our bedroom!" but to no avail. They persist.

Welcome to my recurring nightmare. It began some time during our third year of coordinating Living Waters, while caring for our two young sons and coping with Christopher's three part-time jobs.

When he suggested that I consider attending the Living Waters training in San Juan Capistrano, I secured my plane ticket and rental car reservation in less than 15 minutes. "I don't have to give anything to anyone? You'll cover the kids? California in February?" I was all over it.

About a week later, I wondered if I had made a huge mistake. It occurred to me that though I knew how to give well, I wasn't so fluent in receiving. What if I "lost it" at the training? What if the team felt that I was unqualified to be coordinating? What if my small group leader was significantly younger and less experienced than me?

My pride kicked in and tried to cover up my insecurities. Hadn't we just finished our 3rd successful LW program? Weren't we doing pretty well training and raising up leaders? Wasn't I making progress in dealing with my own issues? Christopher gently prodded me to consider that, even with this measure of God's blessing, perhaps there might be more **for me**.

And frankly, I needed more. The very things that gave me pause about going were the reasons I needed to go. Yes, the ministry was off to a great start and our marriage continued to grow deeper and more satisfying. But, behind the scenes when no one was paying attention, I knew there remained within me a reservoir of fear that had not been drained. Early in life, I found my place

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within our family unit by taking care of everyone. While caretaking is an admirable trait and has its place, by focusing on others, I had circumvented my own needs — hence, the crowded bedroom in my dreams.

During the training, God met me in more ways than I have space to recount. I had the privilege of sitting under wonderful, more experienced, small group leaders. The team modeled compassionate truth telling while extending the love and grace of Jesus. (This was worth the cross country trip in and of itself!) I "lost it" multiple times which totally liberated something inside of me.

More importantly, God began the process of freeing me from my deeply rooted fear of abandonment. God revealed to me that ministering out of my need for acceptance was neither sustainable nor wise. Furthermore, I would lack authenticity in such ministry if I neglected to go after my healing. This revelation has not only allowed me to serve more freely and joyfully, it's cleared out our bedroom. I haven't had that nightmare in more than two years. **DSM**



Mauricio's Testimony

From Desperation *to Deeper Healing*



Mauricio Arce

Mauricio Arce

It was April 2006 and I was desperate. I had been to psychiatrists, psychologists, pastors and exorcists in my home country Costa Rica, but none of them could help me to gain freedom from my longstanding same sex attraction. Finally, after much persistence, I was accepted to participate in the Living Waters leadership training in Cordoba, Argentina.

The first night of the training, it was as if a dam broke on the inside of me and I cried and cried through the whole week of the training. In every teaching I heard about the roots of my wounding, how hurt I was because of the sexual child abuse I had endured, because of my family and church relationships. It made me feel so sad but at the same time there was so much hope! It was the first time I opened up my heart in a small group, a circle of trust I had never been in before!

Nevertheless, my head and my heart were still disconnected on some levels. I could describe hurtful things that happened in my past without showing any kind of pain, just like telling someone else's story, not mine.

A year later, I took part in my second Living Waters Training in Argentina, this time not as a participant but as the assistant of a small group leader. It helped me to see how the Lord was blessing my life and the distance I had already walked. In my heart I wanted to do an internship at Desert Stream Ministries and to my surprise Andrew asked me to consider it and I agreed!

My internship in the US was a transforming experience! I took part in the 16 week Living Waters pilot for leaders and in every teaching I was surprised how the program seemed to be designed especially for me! The group seemed to be answering my endless questions about my behavior, roots of isolation,

shame, resentment of my family and country, reactions to my own gender. The process was not easy: I cried a lot, but every time it happened, I felt release from the pain and the memories associated with it. My heart and my head finally connected!

While I was in Kansas City, the weeklong US- Living Waters training took place and I thought I was going to help organizing it. Unexpectedly, I was asked to be a small group leader, and I accepted it as a challenge, with fear and trembling. It was an incredible experience, the first time I did listening prayer, and to my surprise the Lord gave me

words for the participants and it was a blessing for them! It was something I will never forget, the Lord gave the right words to everyone in perfect English that I usually don't speak!

The program finished and the balance was completely positive. I am a more whole man of God, more secure in Him and myself and proud of what the Lord continues doing in my life! Now back in Costa Rica, I am planning to start a SALT group this March with the full approval of my church leadership. By the grace of God, it will eventually develop into Living Waters. **DSM**

“The first night of the training, it was as if a dam broke on the inside of me and I cried and cried... I heard about the roots of my wounding... (I felt sad but at the same time there was so much hope!”



Andrea's Testimony

Good News in the *Depths of Human Hearts*



By Andrea Oostertag,
Lausanne Switzerland

I was raised by war survivors and knew profound fears from an early age. Haunted by memories of violent death, my parents tried to make me independent as soon as possible. Apparently I grew up and matured very quickly. But in the secrecy of my heart, I was starving for tenderness, softness, intimacy and female attention.

At the age of 13, I realized that I was attracted to people of my own gender. I didn't know how to handle this strange sensitivity. A personal encounter with God appeased these longings for several years. From the age of 18-years on, I was the "model" pastor's wife; I lived a "normal" heterosexuality with my husband, had 4 children and invested myself fully into pastoral ministry.

However, the homosexual impulses re-surfaced with a powerful intensity. I was terrified. I wanted to remain faithful to my husband and not destroy what I had built. But I could not remove this part of me that was so painfully in need. I lived in a continual fear of losing my mental health. This fragile condition finally pushed me to open up to a compassionate pastor.

As there was not yet a Living Waters group in my part of Switzerland, I discovered Andy Comiskey's manual. I studied it alone. Far from the corporate church reality, hidden and ashamed, I finally named in my prayers what lived in me and God joined me with His paternal but also maternal heart. Thanks to various testimonies of the manual, I dared to believe that Jesus on the Cross had really broken through the agony of my suffering; I began to believe afresh in His power to set me free.

My long loneliness began to be surpassed by the benevolent Presence who loved my entire



being as a woman, even this part which humiliated me. Today my freedom lies wholly in Him; I know with assurance that One greater than myself lives in me and gently grants me His strength and will at the very heart of my temptations.

As a pastor's wife, I knew that I was specifically to devote my wounds to Christ; I represent many people like me who don't know where to go and who fight in the shadows, torn between their tendencies and what they know to be right.

As soon as the opportunity arose, I did the Living Waters Training in Paris. Then the Lord pushed me to name my "Egypt" in front of the counseling group for which I was responsible and which became the Living Waters pilot group. That opened a door which has never closed since!

Hundreds of people took part in this course since and we are amazed to see the obvious pleasure of God in restoring the reality of our genders. As the majority of the participants already had tried everything before coming to us, we know that we can count only on the intervention of Jesus. We are so small and powerless vis-a-vis the immense needs of our brothers and sisters.

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Testimonies express that the love of God enters into broken hearts when we welcome Him without judgement and with our very simple faith in the Work of the Cross. In spite of past bad experiments in seeking help, we express a childlike confidence towards our Heavenly Father; we see Him act powerfully in areas as diverse as various forms of abuse, sexual and/or relational addictions, gender confusion, shame, self esteem, marital conflicts, etc.

Whether in our community or our region, many are impressed by the ministry of Living Waters, which seems to be very specific. However, we only announce the Good News into the depth of human souls. And there in the middle of our hearts, Jesus frees us from our captivities and proclaims His grace and His truth. Praise the Lord! **DSM**

Leela's Testimony

Freedom from Shame, *Freedom for My True identity*



Leela Tangnararak

By Leela Tangnararak

I came to know this ministry in 2000 when I attended Andy Comiskey's first seminar in Thailand called "A Pure Life by the Power of the Cross." The real life testimonies and teachings from various speakers affected me greatly. It was my first time to hear people speak so openly about their sexual struggles.

I was profoundly touched when I heard that Christ had the power to heal and set people free from an area most Thai people regards as a shameful thing. The message of Christ, the Restorer of our sexual and relational problems, filled me with much needed hope at the time.

In 2002, God touched and healed me throughout the week long training held in San Juan Capistrano. The program was well integrated and balanced that included a time of worship, teachings, prayers in the small group and a safe environment. These right ingredients helped me to receive deeply from God. I wept and wept most of the time. A lot of my pain, sadness, depression, shame and fear from my past were released. I went home feeling like a different person.

As a Chinese descent born in Thailand, I used to struggle with my identity. I had difficulty in identifying myself either as a Thai or a Chinese. I remember my real sense of freedom and pride for the first time



as I walked through the sign "For Thai" at the immigration section on my trip back from the States. Indeed, God has healed me of my true identity

Recently, I realize that I no longer have the recurring dream I had in the past. I often dreamed that I was half naked or wearing torn clothes in public. I tried so hard to run away from people or hide myself. In the dream, I experienced real shame. The dream revealed my deep shame and fear due to childhood abuse.

I came from a broken family. At the age of five, I was raped by a neighboring teenage boy. The distressing event plus my childhood deprivation changed the way I viewed myself, others (especially men) and God. I lived my

adolescent days in powerful fantasy and masturbation. These brought me further shame and guilt.

My struggle did not go away even when I became a Christian thirty-three years ago. In fact, I felt so guilty and condemned and this affected my relationship with God. I used to think that I was sexually abnormal.

Christ has healed me from my wounded past through a series of Living Waters Programs which I attended both as a participant and a team member. There I was able to come to the Father of mercies and receive His help in the area I needed Him the most – my sexuality. I have experienced the power of Christ's resurrection. He set me free from shame and fear of rejection from people because of my weaknesses.

Not only is my sexuality healed; so is my relationship with God—the Source of my true identity.

Today I want to reach out to other broken strugglers with the same life-giving message that I have received: "Jesus is the answer to all of our needs" – the needs for love, acceptance and intimacy. **DSM**

*"Today I want to reach out to other broken strugglers
with the same life-giving message that I have
received: "Jesus is the answer to all of our needs"*

Ron's Testimony

The Gift *of New Life*



Ron Brookman

By Ron Brookman

Having same-sex attraction as long as I can remember, I struggled as a young Christian to find an immediate cure. It didn't come, so I kept my passions, lusts and voyeurism hidden. This led to pornography addiction and finally to a secret life as a senior pastor, delving into Sydney's (Australia) gay scene.

Finally fellowship with another pastor, who I grew to trust, enabled me to find freedom and a measure of healing. He knew of the Living Waters Program and led me through its principles. I participated in the first Australian Leadership Training held in Sydney in November of 1997, but was so much "in my head" that the Holy Spirit didn't penetrate my heart until the 'True Feminine' teaching at the week's end. My stony heart broke open in preparation for healing.

Hungry for more, I resigned my pastorate, and took Ruth, my new wife, and our 2 toddlers to the US to join the Desert Steam Intern program in 1999. Finally I had the opportunity to work through the Living Waters Discipleship Course thoroughly.

Early in the internship Ruth and I participated in the US Leadership Training. The Lord used that week to take a jack hammer to my now yielded heart to break the crusted stone from 40 years of homosexual yearning and bondage. He revealed my mum's emotional distance and healed me from its effects. He had me face my father's abuse and led me to forgive him. These were huge in freeing me to receive God my Father's healing love, deep into the core of my soul.

Over the next 26 weeks Ruth and I worked the program. The impact of the Training was progressively deepened and reinforced in my life. The section

'Breaking Generational Ties' released me into perhaps the most significant aspect of my healing journey. Having to contact my Dad to research family bondages enabled us both to put aside our mutual distrust.

For a couple of hours we spoke by phone across the Pacific Ocean (until then Dad and I would not have sustained a conversation for longer than 5 minutes!) For the first time I came to hear about his earlier insecurities and abuse that had caused him to transfer so much rage upon me.

This understanding enabled me to forgive him from my heart, which in turn led me to a deeper worship of my Father God, and the capacity to hear His voice.

I liked the Program so much I bought the Franchise!!! NO, but when Andy asked Ruth and I to take up the Australian LW leadership we were so impassioned about the ministry and its effect that we couldn't refuse! We have now led 9 Australian Trainings and have seen the same healing power released to many others, who in turn

"The Lord used that week to take a jack hammer to my now yielded heart to break the crusted stone from 40 years of homosexual yearning and bondage."

have taken the Program to bring healing across the nation!

Through this powerful ministry in our country, God has spoken *LIFE* into individuals, marriages and even children who otherwise would never have been! **DSM**



Laurent's Testimony

Living Waters' *Baby*



Laurent Andre

By Laurent Andre

I am a Living Waters' baby. The Desert Stream affiliate, Sought Out, started in my house in Virginia Beach, Virginia when I was 5 years old. My fate was pretty much sealed. As I grew up, I met many whose lives were changed through this program: many who walked away from lives that were leading to death, marriages were saved, relationships and true freedom in Christ were birthed. My own parent's marriage was saved, though I did not fully understand this until the past few years.

This tangible evidence strengthened my faith beyond anything that was available at the time, and I was not even a participant! As I grew older, and the world around me rapidly changed, I found myself, slipping into the grips of death through pornography and masturbation. Yes, even though I had grown up surrounded by Living Waters, with both of my parents highly involved with the ministry to one degree or another, I still managed to mess up.

But through it all, God's hand was clearly on me, and saved me from a much worse fate. I know that if it wasn't for God's amazing grace, mercy, and specifically His call on the leadership of Desert Stream and Exodus, I would not be the man I am today, continuing to grow and strengthen in God's call on my life.

In the spring of 2004, I participated in my first group. There I experienced God's amazing power, mercy, and grace. I began the process of getting my life in order so that I could be best used by and for Jesus. Over the course of the next 4 years, I went to training as a participant where God further worked on me. I became a leader in assorted groups, taught people older than me, and ministered at the National Training in Kansas City. Today, I am a leader in a Living Waters group here in Virginia, watching God work mightily on the participants and leaders.

In my personal life, I am experiencing freedom to live in God fully and wholly. Does this mean that I am completely free from temptation and "humanity"? No. But I am better equipped than I ever was or ever could have been to deal with the uncontrollable things in life. I am equipped with the knowledge of God's indescribable love for me. Living Water's has given me the tools, and the knowledge of how to use those tools. I need this to survive in this world where the enemy is especially laying waste to my generation, even in the local church.

Living Waters helped saved my life more than I will ever fully understand. I have developed relationships through this program that have freed me from caving into the desires of my flesh and the lies of the world. The level of discipleship that I have witnessed is unparalleled. **DSM**

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Spring 2008

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DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES
PUBLISHES THE FOLLOWING:

Newsletter (Spring and Fall)

Mid-Year Report (Summer)

Year-End Report (Winter)

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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