

by ***Jonathan Stanfield***

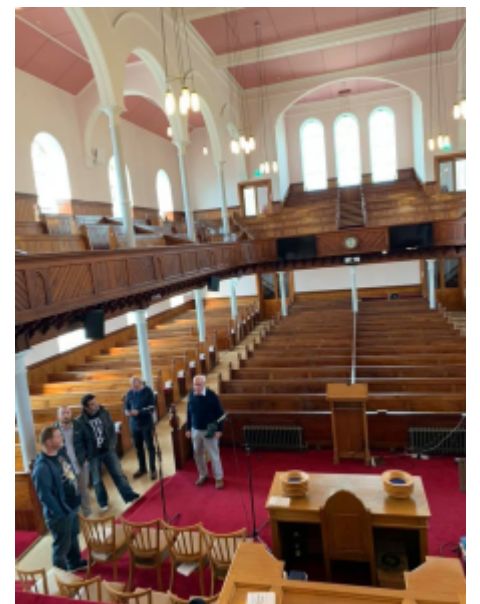
In August 2019 I took some of the Living Hope lead-pastors/elders on a study tour, back to my roots, to the land of my birth – Northern Ireland. We feel it was a life-changing experience for us as we sensed the Lord calling us to believe that it is His desire to once again pour out the Holy Spirit in revival.

It was a special few days together led by the pastor of my home church, Tom Shaw, who had actually served alongside Duncan Campbell for several years. Duncan Campbell is the man whom God had previously used greatly in the Hebridean revival 1949-52. Although Tom, now 79 (still preaching most weekends and at 3 evening prayer meetings most weeks), would say that he has never personally experienced revival, the churches that he led have been ablaze for Jesus, and he has lived with a daily expectancy and prayed for God to move in revival power.

In the 1859 Ulster Revival over 100,000 people were converted in Ulster alone (a province in the north of Ireland). In the County Antrim villages of Connor, Kells and Ahoghill a move of God began. Spiritually, although church attendance was quite strong and many were theologically sound, the reality was that the church was sound asleep and the nation was in the midst of a moral decline.

In 1857 the minister of Connor Presbyterian Church challenged the young people to do something more for God. Four young men began praying weekly in the neighboring village, Kells, at the Old School House. In due course the prayer meeting grew and lives were transformed as revival broke out in 1859.

Church records only rediscovered in the last year revealed that in the year after the revival, Connor Presbyterian Church had 600 children in Sunday school!



Inside Connor Presbyterian

The revival spread throughout the province. We visited the town of Coleraine on the north coast which saw a powerful move of God. Although it only had a population of 6,000, a crowd of 4,000 gathered in June to hear the Gospel preached on the banks of the River Bann. The new town hall for Coleraine had just been built but so many people responded in these open-air meetings that the hall was used as a place of counseling and for prayer meetings. An exhibition by the council we visited stated that the “building used to shelter people ‘overcome’ by 1859 revival”. I love that word – ‘overcome’. In fact it’s official opening only occurred 150 years later.

At a time when in many western countries schools are embracing a secular agenda and closing to the gospel, one story from the revival in Coleraine really filled me with renewed faith. God was bringing such conviction of sin – not only among adults (who at times found it impossible to work) but also among the children.

One young boy from the Irish Society Primary School Coleraine was under such deep conviction that he was sent home by the headmaster (accompanied by an older pupil). On the way home, the older lad led him to Christ. Immediately they both returned to school. The headmaster recounted that within hours every single boy in the school was kneeling in the playground – praying and receiving Jesus as their Saviour and Lord. The girls would respond in the same way.

God’s Spirit can’t be restrained by people or governments. There is no junior Holy Spirit! Our children can be a Daniel to their generation.

We are fully committed to planting and building healthy New Testament churches and living a life that is led and powered by the Spirit, however, when the Holy Spirit is poured out in revival power we see God at work in amazing ways.

In the Hebridean revival it is believed that 75% of those who were saved were converted outside of



Outside the Irish Society Primary School, Coleraine

church meetings or organised outreaches. Heaven came down and the Holy Spirit was poured out as people slept in their beds, worked in the fields or walked along the road. With the outpouring He brought ‘conviction of sin, righteousness and the judgement to come’.

“In times of evangelism, the evangelist seeks the sinner, in times of revival the sinner comes chasing after the Lord!” - J Edwin Orr

On the day of Pentecost Peter preached, “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...” (Acts 2:17 ESV) We are in the last days of the last days. We desperately need a fresh outpouring in our nations.

“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...” (Acts 3:19-20)

After the healing at the Gate Beautiful, Peter spoke of ‘times of refreshing’. It wasn’t just a promise for those who had recently experienced Pentecost but for our day too. As we repent, turn to God in prayer and receive His forgiveness we can experience a fresh outpouring – a time or season of refreshing.

I am deeply aware that in Jesus’ ministry there were occasions when people missed out on a move of God. (cf. Mark 6:5-6) Similarly in many of the accounts of revival there were parts of the church that were bypassed by the Holy Spirit.

It has been said that “those who are the most resistant to the new move of God are those who experienced the last move.” We need to stay humble and continually desire to step into the more of God. God is seeking for new wineskins into which new wine will be poured, not old bags.

“Got it all? Well, if you have ‘got it all’, I simply ask in the Name of God, why are you as you are? If you have ‘got it all’, why are you so unlike the Apostles, why are you so unlike the New Testament Christians?” Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones

God is calling on us to believe for even greater things in our day.

“Won’t you revive us again, so your people can rejoice in you?” (Psalm 85:6 NLT)

In studying many outpourings and revivals you discover that there is no cookie cutter or secret recipe

as it is clearly a sovereign work of God. One observation I will make, however, is that in all instances it would appear that God spoke in advance to a handful of people, often the unusual suspects, and birthed within them a desire to earnestly pray for a move of God.

As an apostolic and prophetic partnership of churches we often say, “if you want to experience what the early church experienced you will need to do what the early church did.” They were a devoted church, not only to apostolic teaching, the fellowship, and the breaking of bread, but also to ‘THE’ prayers (Acts 2:42). Note the definite article in the original text and correctly translated in the ESV.

They certainly prayed but more than that they had a rhythm of prayer, likely modeled on the daily Temple prayers. Clearly they had prioritised regular corporate prayer in the life of the local church. They were devoted to ‘the prayers’.

I don’t think I will ever be the same following my recent visit back to Ulster. The Lord made me aware of a crucial blind spot in my personal life and in the Living Hope churches that I lead. I had become so dependent upon my grace gifts, on the deposit of the Spirit within, on the anointing on my life, even on the ‘New Testament blueprint’ for church along with the apostolic and the prophetic, that I was not prioritising prayer both personally and corporately. The early church was devoted... to **the** prayers.

We are now committed to not only praying for revival personally but to gather together more regularly as a church to pray together for such an outpouring.

Our prayer is “Do It Again Lord!”



5 lead pastors on Downhill Beach

[The next Four12 European Conference is July 7-9 July 2020 on the Isle of Man. We're considering an 1859 Ulster Revival two-day study and prayer visit to Northern Ireland also around that time. Contact jonathan.stanfield@livinghope.im for

more information.]



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan serves at [Living Hope Church](#), a seven congregation church on the Isle of Man. He's married to Annette with four daughters and has a passion to see the saints equipped to fulfil their calling in Christ Jesus. You can follow him on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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