

Gift of Living Waters

*In Christ
alone my hope
is found;
He is my light, my
strength, my song;
This cornerstone,
this solid ground,
Firm through the
fiercest drought
and storm.*



By Andrew Comiskey



LIVING WATERS is a gift from the God who became vulnerable. Subject to the mercilessness of men, God transformed our cruelty into mercy. He allowed His life to be poured out—divine blood to transfuse ours, holy water to cleanse us from sin and restore our souls (John 19:34). Augustine claims that Jesus' blood and water was the Church's source; it is also the source of our new lives and service.

I marvel every week as we the broken members of His body gather in our Living Waters group in the sanctuary of St. Thomas More parish. Before Christ Crucified and the Divine Mercy image, we bow and honor Him as Lord and healer. Vulnerable too, we can see the flood and hear the roar, the roar of love pouring from the God-man who broke and still bleeds for sinners like us.

Sinners aren't pretty. Let's not romanticize ourselves. Divided souls are not readily made whole. Everyone is vulnerable, thin-skinned, like burn victims bumping into each other. Only these sins and wounds and

distorted desires are unseen, having been concealed for years. Infections this deep and smelly prompt us to return quickly to our 'shells' when mishandled. We are vulnerable, seeking to heal (while tempted to conceal) together. God accomplishes the impossible among us. He comes; His flood is good and rising in the temple where we have determined we want to be whole.

That's why Living Waters is a gift to me, that's why I need it. Gathering before the Cross with fellow sinners reminds me that I am still vulnerable. God asks this vulnerability of me so that I may continue to grow with Him, He who became vulnerable for me. My greatest temptation today is not illicit sex or a misbegotten identity; rather, it is the lure of taking matters in my own hands, relying on tricks from the trenches rather than the Source. Suffering people need more than clever counselors. Only Divine Mercy will do. We need Jesus and we need to learn how to wait for Him together.

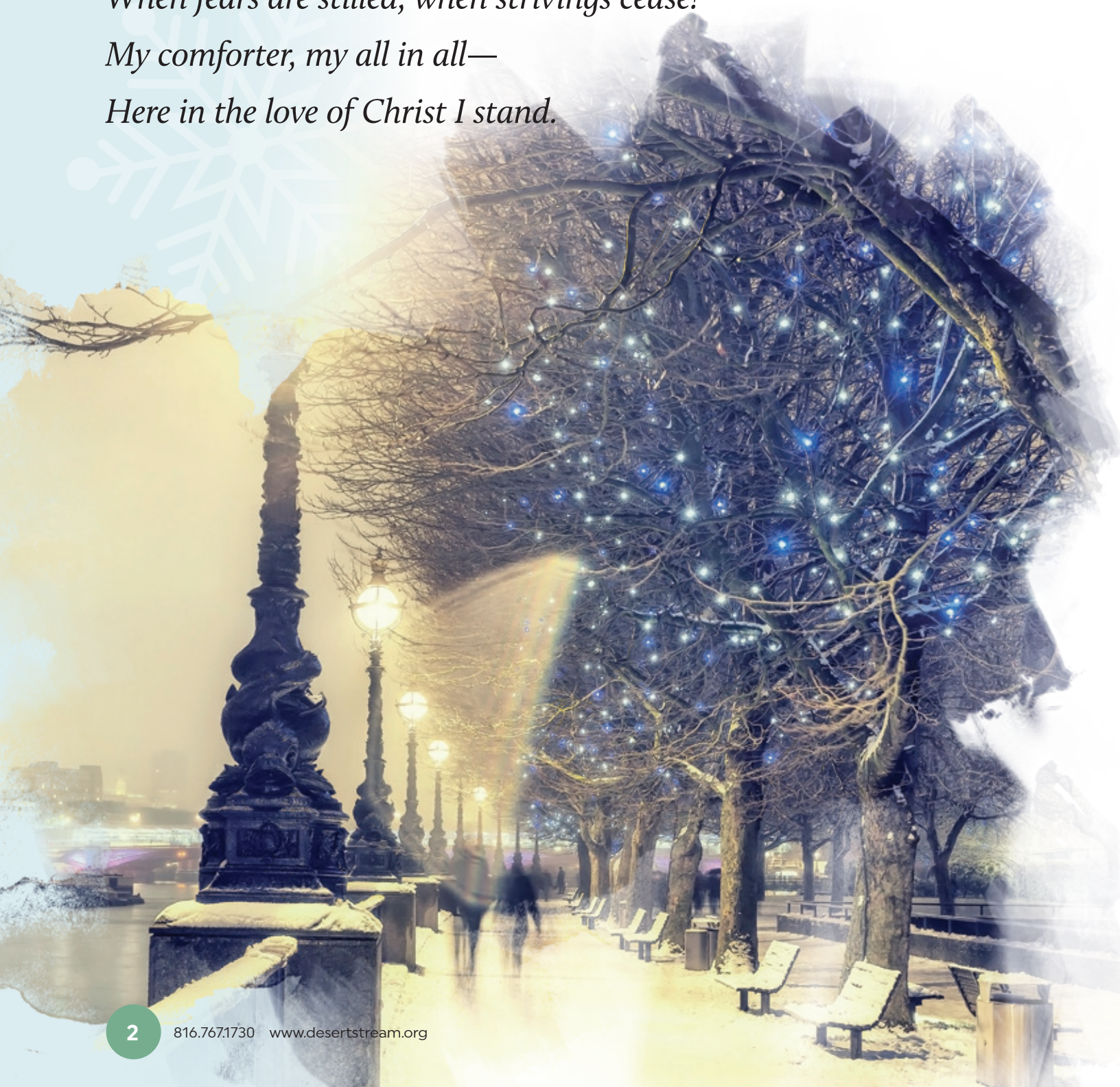
On a recent Saturday our Living Waters group met for a whole day

to confess our sins to each other and to renounce our idols. I have gathered like this continuously for the last 30 years. As we opened up years of unspoken violations before the Crucified, I apprehended Jesus in

the flesh with us—standing among us, able-bodied yet broken to heal us. His tears loosed ours, His water washed us and His blood made us new. Partaking of real mercy made it easy to refuse other gods. He gave

all, and as we bowed before Him, we saw the flood and heard its roar. Living Waters is the roar of love, a gift from the God who became vulnerable to gain us. **DSM**

*What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.*



Celebrating Beauty

By Abbey Foard, Assistant Director of DSM/LW

LIVING WATERS has been dear to my heart since 2008, when I started with the ministry at Church of the Apostles in Atlanta, Georgia. I realized immediately that I had found “my tribe!” Here was a community that loved Jesus passionately and was learning to live honestly and transparently with one another. I was so blessed by these individuals—people aware of their weaknesses and not hiding them, but knowing that it was in their weaknesses that Christ would be glorified.

Though God had been progressively healing parts of my heart before I discovered Living Waters, I found that the healing only increased once I was there! At Living Waters God unraveled some “stuck” places of shame and unsettling images/ emotions that took up space in me. I learned of the foundational power of confession—both to God *and* in community, learning to regularly bring both sin and shame to the Cross. More than just exposing my shame, it was about making an exchange. The offering of my sin and shame opened me to receive Jesus’ indwelling life and the more I confessed, the more His power would flow. What a gift!

In the community of Living Waters, God also grew me in my ability to relate freely with others. I was celebrated for the beauty of who I am, and invited to share myself more fully with others. Being blessed in my femininity was healing and affirming! As I hung around these male and female “image-bearers,” I

found joy in integrating more of my truest self.

How thankful I am for this ministry! It has been such an important part of my own journey, and I believe Living Waters is such an essential offering for the healing of Jesus’ bride, His church. I am honored to come on staff with Desert Stream this year, and all the more grateful to walk closely with others who believe in the transforming power of Christ. I am blessed to join in the work of helping to beautify His bride, of which I am a part. **DSM**

Abbey recently moved from Atlanta to Kansas City, Missouri. She is the Assistant Director of Desert Stream/Living Waters, she is involved in most aspects of the day to day running of the office and in both Living Waters US and Living Waters International.

*In Christ
alone, Who took
on flesh,
Fullness of God in
helpless babe!
This gift of love
and righteousness,
Scorned by the
ones He came
to save.*

God's Merciful Pursuit

By Meric Perez

“JESUS ANSWERED and said: If you knew the gift of God and who it is who says to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water (John 4:10).”

The great lie is to believe that our sins cause us to be unworthy of His love and mercy. We might be tempted to believe that He is a God of rejection and harsh judgment.

This is the testimony of my life— how I learned to accept His unconditional love, regardless of who I believed I was and how I acted in the past.

I have always doubted myself; my abilities, skills, and whether I was worthy of receiving love. I spent many years away from Him in the fear that I did not deserve His love. I lived this out in broken relationships with others. I isolated myself for fear of being rejected.

Yet I was always eager to be accepted and loved by others. I always thought that I did not care what others said about me. In truth I was desperate to be valued and accepted by others. I always doubted whether I was beautiful or good enough.

I had this great need to be near Him. I longed to experience for myself what it was like to be His beloved daughter. Believing that I was not, I wandered and ran from Him for many years. Despite His pursuit of my life, I refused the opportunity to experience His love.

I began to live an isolated life without friends, a life made emptier

by several sexual encounters outside of marriage. Increasingly, I grew distant from God in my shame.

Then I discovered that my thirst was actually for Him! His hands were always outstretched towards me every time I felt betrayed by men. I knew that God wanted me to respond to His love. Yet my unworthiness frustrated that response.

Despite all this, God encountered me and filled the foundations of my heart with love. The Lord gave me a good husband and I marvel daily at our two beautiful children who have shown me the purest expression of God's love that I have known.

However, our marriage had not been blessed by the Church.

*Till on that cross
as Jesus died,*

*The wrath of God
was satisfied;*

*For ev'ry sin on Him
was laid—*

*Here in the death
of Christ I live.*

God was faithful; I was hired as a psychologist in a Catholic school. My hunger for God's best grew in me and my husband and I decided to receive God's blessing by having our marriage recognized by the Catholic Church. Officiating over this was Fr. Ricardo, a classmate of mine and my husband Francisco from high school.

Despite these great gifts, I struggled and still failed at times. I fell into the practice of masturbation in a vain effort to comfort myself rather than rely upon the One who can fill the void.

Fr. Ricardo invited us to participate in the Aguas Vivas program. This experience has filled my life with great joy. The Lord has helped me to see through eyes of the Spirit and recognize how precious and loved I am by our Heavenly Father. The mercy I discovered there purified my heart, washed my wounds, and is healing these wounds more deeply every day.

When I agreed to drink deeply of His Living Water, I discovered that

Gift of Integrity

By Miguel Ramos

my thirst was quenched and my life would never be the same. Now I live as one open to Him, saying 'yes' daily to Him with an outstretched heart, able to welcome His Living Water for me.

I also delight in being a part of releasing this river of Living Water to others in their healing process. God is doing great works through our little team in Guadalajara. Jesus is encouraging us deeply as we join with the rest of the saints in Mexico and throughout Latin America in order to impart His infinite mercy, our freedom.

"Thank you for the best job in the world. I have the privilege of partnering with You in helping others to experience your love and mercy." **DSM**

Meric and husband Francisco are the Aguas Vivas Coordinators for Guadalajara, Mexico

BECOMING involved with Aguas Vivas has allowed me to align myself to our Heavenly Father's love. This deep connection allows me to live fully dependent on Him. I recognize that I can be fragile and vulnerable in my humanity. I continue to find my refuge in the Cross. It is the place where I can come and die to everything that tries to distance me from my true identity and freedom to bear His image. In my healing process, I find that the Cross allows nothing and no-one to rob me.

Deciding to go the way of the Cross for my freedom been a path full of challenges. However, Aguas Vivas and my leaders inspire me to keep my eyes on the One whose love

never fails. His mercy meets me and empowers my faith; it is His mercy that continues to be the medicine for my wounds during times of difficulty.

Living the truth in love--becoming a man of integrity--has been the best representation of Christ and the work of Aguas Vivas in my life. It is a powerful testimony to my church and community.

As He did with the Samaritan woman, so it will be with anyone who decides to partake of the Living Water which quenches the deepest thirst and heals the soul! Feliz año Nuevo 2017!! **DSM**

Miguel lives in Puerto Rico where he has served Aguas Vivas for the last four years.

Unexpected Fountain

By Ondine Morales

I RECEIVED A SPLASH of living water when I was not looking for it! My husband had been transformed through Living Waters and insisted that I drink water from that same source.

I wish I could say I responded like the Samaritan woman, but my response was quite the opposite. Yet curiosity about my husband's renovation prompted me to dip my toes into the water. As I was going through the program, God started to be very personal, very gentle as He revealed my insecurities; He showed me how I had been acting hurtfully towards others as I searched for love and acceptance in the wrong places. No wonder I was never satisfied! All of the sudden my "normal and fine" ways of living were not so enjoyable.

As my personal healing journey continued, we as a family moved

to Mexico to start Living Waters (Aguas Vivas) there; we dug hard in rocky soil in order to release a little stream of water for beloved ones. I witnessed how God directed some people to come to the well and that encouraged me to continue healing in my personal life - to open up some wounds from my childhood and repent of some personal sins.

This year at the Aguas Vivas training in Mexico, I witnessed this little stream of water becoming a flowing river. I was amazed at the response of the Spanish-speaking team who wanted to partake of this water and immerse themselves in deeper personal transformation. At the same time, the team invited even more people to enter the

healing waters and to leave their hurt and pain at the Cross.

Some years back, I would have been the last one to believe that God truly planted in my heart a desire to help others in deep areas of pain in their lives. Even though I had some resistance toward what He had in store for me, I am so thankful to be who He changed me to be today. I am blessed to be able to serve at Desert Stream Ministries and to walk with others who believe that God has more for their lives and the lives they will touch. **DSM**

Ondine, her husband Raul and their children are now living in Texas. Ondine works alongside Daniel Delgado to coordinate Aguas Vivas and the yearly training.

*There in the ground
His body lay,
Light of the world by
darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in
glorious day,
Up from the grave He
rose again!*





Unfailing Father

By Werner Loerschter

AS AN 8-YEAR-OLD, I lost my dear mom through death. No one could comfort me, so I grew up as a complex rebel desperately seeking the feminine tenderness that mom had given me. I started dating girls and became sexually active early. My girlfriend got pregnant and we tried to have an abortion; her Christian father refused and we decided to get married. Neither of us had any knowledge of a loving heavenly Father, so our marriage broke up six years later.

That's when I became a Christian. Though grateful to have fathered a fine son and to have been plucked out of the flames like a firebrand, I sadly found no healing, not even a chance to make a real confession of my sins. Through

God's grace and a bit of His humor, I soon became a pastor.

I was working at a charismatic Reformed church in the inner city of Paris when we experienced a Holy Spirit revival with many flooding to our services. Our fast-growing congregation included many broken folks, heavy laden, and disappointed by their Christian walk. I had the privilege to spend time with them as a pastor who would listen and pray for their healing. Soon I found that I was not able to meet their needs in an appropriate way. Too many of their problems reflected mine: sins, dependencies and co-dependencies in my life that I had yet to face squarely.

Therefore, I carried a lot of guilt, shame and inner accusations that hindered the work of the Holy

Spirit in my pastoral care. To speak plainly, I lived a kind of double-life: the inward rotten sinner walking hand-in-hand with the outward good Christian. I did my best to hide my shame and frustration.

Furthermore, I was not equipped to understand the struggles of persons with SSA or with sexual abuse backgrounds. So I was thirsty and hungry for Living Waters when I discovered the program at a Vineyard conference in Switzerland. Along with another man, my new wife and I started the first Living Waters (Torrents de Vie) program in Paris in 1995. Honestly, I had yet to surrender in full my brokenness and discover my true self in Christ, victories that I had preached about often.

God is faithful. By walking with others through the first program, the good Lord took me through the painful and sinful stations of my life and welcomed me at the foot of the Cross. There I finally discovered the real Christ, the One who met me at the bottom of my sin and shame, where I would never have wanted Him to come. But He had been there before, when He died at the Cross. There Living Water started flowing for me and through me.

'As a mother comforts her child, so shall I comfort you.' (1S 66:13) **DSM**

Werner and his beautiful wife Charlotte led the first Living Waters Training in Paris in 1998 and since then have guided and multiplied the ministry of 'Torrents de Vie' in churches throughout the French-speaking world. I count them as my closest and most fruitful colleagues. Thank you beloved friends (editor's note!).



Corporate Corner

By Annette Comiskey

2016 HAS BEEN A GOOD YEAR for Desert Stream Ministries! We have experienced much growth both at home and all over the world.

On a personal note, this year was the year a private hope was met – Living Waters at my home church! I have been a part of Christ Church Anglican Overland Park for five years. The first few years there I spent time learning what it meant to be Anglican and serving the church in “non-Living Waters” ministries.

Two years ago, the Lord started showing me the time was nearing to start a group at my church. Around that same time a new pastor came on staff as the pastor of Pastoral Care as Nick (our second born son) moved from that position to Associate Pastor; Nick had wanted Living Waters released in this church but I found it easier working under someone other than my son!

Amanda, our new pastor, has a heart for the broken and was immediately open to me starting a group. So last January we had our first Living Waters group! It was a blessing in every way – we are building a leadership team and plan on Christ Church becoming a permanent home for another Living Waters group in Kansas City.

We also grew our staff this spring. We have had a need for an assistant director who could oversee the day-to-day work of our office. We found a God-given gift in Abbey Foard. She is also working with Andy in overseeing Living Waters outside of the US and with Dean in overseeing LW US.

We also moved the location of one of our two national Living Waters trainings from Missouri to California; following a great training there last January, we have decided to keep one training in Kansas City and one in Southern California.

Probably the most exciting event this year was an international gathering last June. We had Living Waters leaders from the United States, Europe, Asia and South America. It was an amazing time of healing, equipping and envisioning for future growth.

I am hoping to have our livingwaters.international website up and running by early summer of 2017! We have had Living Waters trainings this past year in Lithuania, France, the Philippines and Mexico. This upcoming year we have trainings in France, the Philippines, Poland and Argentina. For more information, please email Abbey at afoard@desertstream.org.

The need for Desert Stream/Living Waters is greater than ever! This year we have had more calls for support and information for family members and parents of grown children in same-sex relationships or living transgendered lives. We are also hearing from fellow believers whose churches are leaning towards becoming “gay-affirming” and want to know how to reach out to their pastors.

To this end we have started offering a half-day seminar **Open to Life: How Jesus through His Church Transforms People with Same-Sex Attraction**. If you would be interested in your church hosting this offering to churches in your area, please contact me at annette.comiskey@gmail.com. **DSM**



2016 Year End Report

PUBLISHER/EDITOR
Andrew Comiskey

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Kevin Williamson Design

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.

Staff

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Andrew Comiskey

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Abbey Foard

DESERT STREAM PRESS
Annette Comiskey

LIVING WATERS USA COORDINATOR
Dean Greer

DIRECTOR OF INTERCESSION
Ann Armstrong

RESOURCES & AGUAS VIVAS
Daniel Delgado

TECH SUPPORT
Eric Spady

INTERN STAFF
Amanda Smith

SUPPORT STAFF
Becky Turner, Lori Harry, Nate

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Please address all inquiries to:

DESERT STREAM
706 Main Street
Grandview, MO 64030

(816) 767-1730 Fax: (816) 767-7221