

The Jesus Tent, Oakey (9-13 October 2013)

After much prayer, we – the Living Grace Lutheran Church – felt that we could take the Jesus Tent of the Supernatural to another place and the place to go was Oakey (30 km west from Toowoomba). Pastor Lloyd Gill and Pastor Stan Rudowski, two local pastors, had been our friends for years and their churches, Grace Community Church and St Paul's Lutheran Church, became the core support base of the tent in Oakey.

From the beginning, we made it clear that we could not come into Oakey unless we received the blessing of the local Christians, the body of Christ in Oakey, and God answered our prayers. On Friday 19 July, the Oakey and District Christian Leaders' Network – with Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Uniting, Pentecostal and Anglican clergy and leaders in attendance – unanimously welcomed the tent into Oakey. We could go forward now.

For four months – all through winter – we prayed once a week for an hour at the very spot where the tent would be set up. The prayer meetings were fun and full of anticipation. During this time, the pastors (Edgar, Lloyd and Stan) and the church members from Living Grace, Grace Community and St Paul's grew closer to one another, exercised faith together and allowed God to expand their vision.

The tent went up on Monday 7 October and the first evening rally was held on Wednesday 9 October. Every day, there were morning meetings and night meetings. On Sunday morning, we had a combined Oakey worship service and, on Sunday evening, we concluded the tent outreach with our last evening rally. Preachers were Edgar Mayer, Eloum Tiya, Ian Watson, Stan Rudowski and Lloyd Gill. Paul Crighton was our tireless electrician and tent mastermind. We had four different worship bands from Living Grace and one from Grace Community. The prayer ministry team was a combined effort and included the Healing Rooms ministry (Toowoomba) under the leadership of Pastor Alan & Robyn Small. There was an army of workers who took responsibility for morning tea, resource table, project coordination, art work, flyers, core flutes, bookings, welcome, hospitality, follow-up, street evangelism, Sunday school, tent construction, security, new Christian packs, offering and simply being there with a heart of blessing.



On the first evening, I was particularly joyful to see the support from other Lutherans across the Darling Downs – especially those that came from the Pittsworth area – because we had been praying about Pittsworth as the possible location for the next tent.

There was a young man who drove himself to the tent but knew nothing about Jesus, the church or anything. He thought that maybe his great-grandparents had been Christians. He was very interested and open about what was happening in the tent – especially how people were touched in the prayer ministry. For instance, when a woman was prayed for with the laying on of hands and fell down under the power of the Holy Spirit, she began to laugh and he wanted to know why. I explained

that I knew this woman. There was much sadness in her life but the Spirit of God was touching her and filling her with the joy of God.



This young man came back on the last night of the outreach and he was again watching the prayer ministry leaning against a pole not far behind. I went up to him and invited him to come to Jesus. He prayed to God from his heart and I prayed for the Spirit of God to fill him. There was no fear or any other resistance and he fell to the ground and was lying on the floor absolutely peaceful. He seemed to be asleep and I called Pastor Stan to talk to him when he came around.

On Thursday, a young woman became a Christian. She turned to God and was filled with the Holy Spirit which made her so joyful that – over the next few days – three other people became Christians in her wake. There was a teenager (thirteen years old) that came with his parents. He was brought up in a Christian household but, on Saturday, he made his own faith commitment and entered into a relationship with Jesus. He was serious and meant his prayer.

On Saturday, God saved a woman that was heavily involved in the occult. She was filled with joy. The next day, I preached on Jesus’ mission to destroy the works of the devil and demons began to stir in her. Usually, we take people that are manifesting demons into a special ministry tent but, since I was preaching on the topic, we did not isolate her from the other prayer ministry. No one was traumatized but the experience was an eye-opener for some. The Holy Spirit does challenge unholy demons and there is freedom in the name of Jesus.



As far as I know, we had nine converts – six of them were first-time commitments. I had prayed and exercised faith for twenty converts but nine people is a wonderful result and who knows whether others become Christians later on. I had also prayed for “real” converts – not shallow versions of the “sinner’s prayer” – and I think that God has answered my prayer and the prayer of many others. These nine people prayed from the heart. As I declared to them the forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name and prayed for an infilling with the Holy Spirit, they experienced the joy of salvation. They seemed to be properly birthed into the kingdom of God and all of them have Christians around them that can help them grow in understanding and faith.

Our best attendance figure was probably Sunday night with about 130 people. Once people were in the tent, we connected with them but we struggled to get them there. We are still learning. This was our first tent outside of Toowoomba and, by the grace of God, we will become better in inviting people.

Initially, I was anxious to promote the Jesus Tent as “supernatural” because I wanted to communicate that there will not just be words but an experience and relationship with the living God. A large number of people seem to be fascinated by witchcraft, spiritual healing techniques that are not Christian, psychics and supernatural TV shows but do not expect anything from the church and Jesus. Our whole church wants to correct this impression but maybe the word “supernatural” makes the tent too spooky and super-spiritual for others and maybe, after three outreach tents, I myself have gained

enough confidence for the tent to be “supernatural” without the label. However, I am not sure. What do you think?

The outlays for the tent amounted to \$9,000 but this figure does include my salary for the time that I invested into the Jesus Tent and does not include the value of all the volunteer hours. Tent evangelism is not cheap but I think that we at Living Grace do not regret any cent that we spend on mission and rather rejoice in the growing percentage of our budget that goes into mission work. We are also receiving donations and are open for more.

The Jesus Tent and any mission work is always an adventure because we never know what is going to happen. God is surprising and creative and wonderful and powerful and absolutely loving and good. Can I encourage you? Join us at the next Jesus Tent.