

WAKE UP EVERYBODY!

MID-YEAR REVIEW

During 2015 we had a fallow year, the major effect of which was that we did not run Cabaret Connexion. We did this with some trepidation because we knew that it is a lot easier to stop doing things than to start doing them again but by the Autumn we were ready to launch a programme for 2016 and late in the year decided to buy a bus, using the funds already available, rather than to wait for more money hoping that we would be able to aim for a specialist conversion company to do the fitting for us.

As we do every few years, during 2015 we had spent time looking at what makes Dayspring tick and thought that there were legitimate questions about the reality of our commitment to essential charismatic priorities and how they connected to our focus on mission. We knew that Dayspring's survival depended on more people 'getting' the essence of Dayspring so that the constant grind of operating missionally was shared more widely. Consequently, under the banner of ***Wake Up Everybody***, in the opening weeks of January 2016, we revisited some prophetic images that had been important to Dayspring in the first five years of the life of the church.

These images are of

WEATHER CHANGING—looking for a change in the spiritual climate, leading to greater receptivity

WELLS FLOWING—of the Spirit, leading to greater missional impact

WAKING UP OF WILTSHIRE, leading to greater mission response

Each of these images is of an aspect of **revival**, which we define as a time when God is unusually active in an area or among a people group resulting in large numbers of conversions and leading to changes in culture and society well beyond the church. The desire for revival is part of our DNA as charismatic and evangelical Christians. We have tasted God's closeness and the only way that will be widely shared is

through the kind of change in the environment signposted in those images. They are for us, part of praying, 'Your kingdom come'.

While there was a great deal of optimistic talk about revival in the Christian world in Dayspring's early years, what people saw from the mid-nineties onwards fell far short of the hoped for awakening. There was a stress on unusual phenomena inside the church and quite widespread experience of renewal but on the whole, little long term effect outside; either in conversion or in a resurgence of Christianity in the public arena.

Much less is said about signs of revival at the moment, though good friends of ours and the network with which we have our primary connexions are still highly revivalistic and are quick to respond to anything that seems to indicate that a traditional revival is on the cards. Equally, from 2000 onwards, there has been a reflective process going on which asks questions like:

- How far is the kind of movement experienced in the nineties a human construct and how far an authentic move of God?
- Given the possibility of human shaping being involved, what kind of revival might be authentic in 21st century Britain?
- If any contemporary revival is likely to be 'slow burn', where might we look for signs of the weather changing, wells flowing and people waking up?

These images have been much less of a focus since we drew a line in the sand from 2005 onwards when we recognised that central to our DNA (the way we are made) was a belief that **'Lost' people matter most.** Our gradual detachment came about for a mix of reasons. We were already developing commitment to a single organising principle, that of mission. Alongside that we were beginning to see signs that the enthusiasm that went with revivalistic pressure was sometimes accompanied with an inconsistent spirituality and evaporated within a couple of years, sometimes leading to people unable to cope with the kind of charismatic Christianity that demanded long-term commitment seeing gradual impact.

Nevertheless we still find that the success of our mission depends on, gradually or suddenly, things changing. In this regard:

- We are forward facing. We do not expect history to repeat itself.
- We expect diversity. We are looking for responses that are shaped by our context, not packaged by some initiative elsewhere.
- We are willing to accept, long-term, slow-burn change and we do not despise the day of small things. However, we would welcome God's sudden intervention that surprises the stuffing out of us.

SUMMARY OF JANUARY TALKS

Over the first weeks of January we explored these three images, looking at how we now understood their significance and tried to place them in their biblical context.

We unstacked the material above, considering how our expectations were the same as in the early days and how they had changed.

Disappointment issues. Need to reorient to the positive.

The ideas not talked about.

When DAYSPRING started unusual time in the church.

Papers on revival—difference and uniqueness.

- (Fieldwork in Theology) Waking up Wiltshire

First week talked about continuity then about discontinuity.

RESPONSE—Spiritual climate changes (revival— drinking, rugby, metal) increased church attendance.

IMPACT—Miracles are unusual

During the first years of Dayspring thought that

Requires change

Societal change

10 good things. Andy's post. Bear Grylls.

What might awakening mean in our context

Future facing.

Bevans the church is most the church when it is outside its walls

Revival vs revivalism.

We looked at how the three images featured in the Bible

- Water necessary for life.
- Weather affects growth.
- Wakefulness affects intent and expectation

We asked what they might work out in our context?

In the early years of the church we expected

- Exciting meetings many people falling over and making noise.
- Miracles.
- Lots of converts.

We now would much more expect the process to start with spiritual openness, a willingness to entertain the possibility of God being active in the world.

Focusing more closely we brainstormed what waking up might involve—attention, awareness, alertness, energy, activity, relationships.

We looked at three Bible passages.

Judges 1: 12-15—The need for water

Ephesians 5: 14-20—A wakeful lifestyle

Isaiah 29: 9-24—What awakening looks like

Our takeaways from these sessions were:

- Let's talk about awakening rather than revival

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- It fits well with our current emphasis and our statement of purpose to wake up Wiltshire
- It has less pre-formed expectations
- Let's focus our attention on God's work in the world rather than inside the churches because out there there may already be evidence of awakening.
- Let's try to identify positive changes in the spiritual weather that are positively new and different as well as be aware of those that are negative, though the bad as well as the good may be significant.
- Let's regularly learn and practise wakeful behaviours and attitudes. So far we have explored:
Wakeful people are
 - Alert
 - Read the signs
 - Believe God
 - Are on guard
- Let's take the position that by making the changes we can, with the help of God's Spirit, we are involved in spiritual warfare.
- Let's drive our wakefulness forward to our frontlines—where it matters most.
- Let's recommit to our missional value of ordinary evangelism.

And as we develop plans and take action, let's remind ourselves, we want to be fully awake because each day is a new day where we can be increasingly aware of what God is doing and join in.