

Lakeland Revival Intensifies

Twice daily meetings in Lakeland, Fla., move into fourth straight week of revival. Starting Apr. 24, the meetings are being moved to Auburndale Life Church about 10 miles from Lakeland.



[] Thousands of people longing for a physical or spiritual touch from God are flocking to central Florida for ongoing revival meetings that some have dubbed the “Lakeland Healing Outpouring.”

The services, which are being broadcast live daily on GOD TV to millions of potential viewers, reveal the excitement radiating from this area of the Sunshine State, prompting some people to jump on planes and fly in from across the country and even from abroad.

Todd Bentley, the 32-year-old Canadian healing evangelist with a boyish grin responsible for the meetings, reported on Friday that people’s faith alone has healed them even while they were booking their flights online or boarding planes bound for Lakeland, a city of about 90,000 between Orlando and Tampa along Interstate 4.

The 700-seat sanctuary of host pastor Stephen Strader’s Ignited Church can no longer contain the crowds. More than 1,000 worshipers stood inches apart at Friday night’s service, jamming every aisle and altar area. Their bodies rocked back and forth, and their faces wore peace-filled, lovesick and euphoric expressions.

The cars parked outside were also inches apart, with every grassy parcel of land on bordering properties used for overflow. During worship, song lyrics on PowerPoint were replaced with a warning to drivers parked at a nearby store that their cars would be “towed immediately.”

"We are all shocked that each night a minimum of 60 percent [are] first time [visitors]," Strader said yesterday.

Fire marshals locked the church doors at last night's meeting, forcing 400 people to remain in front of the church. The crowd watched the service on a large TV, and more than 200 waited until midnight for Bentley to come out and pray for them, Strader said.

John Arnott, who pastored the historic revival ignited at his Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in 1994, wrote in a letter last week to Bentley: "Todd, you need to keep going in these meetings as long as the Lord is moving. I feel that this is a prophetic sign that another wave of revival is coming to North America."

John Kilpatrick, who pastored Brownsville Assembly during the Pensacola Revival of the 1990s, told *Charisma* today that he wants to visit Lakeland as soon as possible in order to encourage Bentley. "It saddened me that many weren't willing to at least come and check things out," he said of his early meetings with revivalist Steve Hill. "I made a vow before God that if revival ever broke out again, no matter where it was, that I'd at least go."

Kilpatrick added that revival is not something that can be controlled and that people hungry for God need to simply ask Him to touch them. "I feel in my spirit very strongly that there's another wave of the Holy Spirit coming, a tidal wave of the glory of God," he said, stifling his sobs on the phone. "I'm sorry, there's nothing like the presence of God. It has ruined me for life."

Wendy Alec, co-founder of GOD TV, just released a prophecy to Bentley in which she said God has called what's happening in Lakeland "just a warm-up party" that would eventually go global.

After long periods of worship, Bentley invites to the stage all those with testimonies, much like the late healing

evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman did in her meetings.

At Friday night's meeting, the mother of a 6-year-old girl said her daughter broke her elbow about two weeks ago and was healed after a word of knowledge from Bentley. The little girl told the crowd: "Jesus came out of heaven and touched my elbow." The girl's before-and-after X-rays are posted on YouTube.

Amber, a thin 15-year-old girl born with scoliosis, said she was healed and could now carry her schoolbooks as well as bend over and touch the floor, which she did publicly during the meeting. One man said he was healed of Hepatitis C. An elderly woman said she went to the doctor for confirmation first before telling the crowd she was healed of glaucoma.

Others on Friday night said they were healed of rheumatoid arthritis, panic attacks, ruptured discs, deafness, post traumatic stress disorder, cancer, leukemia and emphysema.

After a half hour of testimonials Bentley asked the crowd "to give the Lord the glory." For at least 40 minutes people continually cried the words "holy" and "glory" in a chorus.

Some worshipers fell to the floor weeping. From behind his keyboard, a blonde-locked worship leader named Roy Fields led the procession, his face beaming heavenward.

"What is happening is so much bigger than anyone in this building," Bentley said from the stage where he was kneeling. "I hear the angels joining in. ... The Holy Spirit is taking over."

Bentley, who looks more like a gang leader than the founder of a Christian ministry, came to Lakeland on April 2 and has shown no sign of leaving since an angel, he said, visited him the day after he arrived.

Prophetic minister Bob Jones told Bentley he believed the angel's name was "Winds of Change"—the same angel, Jones said, that visited healing evangelist William Branham in the 1940s.

Aside from heavily reverential moments of worship, services can turn comical, as Bentley listens to accounts of healings and becomes filled with anticipation. He asked one woman on Friday, "Why are you here?" and after she responded, "I have a tumor on my rib," he cried: "Good! That's good!"

One man brought his small son to Bentley, saying the youngster was in need of a kidney. "Where does it hurt, boy?" Bentley asked before praying for the child and seeing him fall out.

The boy lay motionless on the platform, and his father bent over him, pressing his forehead to his son's. "I feel he's in some kind of vision or something," Bentley told the crowd. When the boy got up five minutes later he said bright angels had come to him and "put their hands on me."

The meetings have been extended due to swelling crowds. Bentley announced Friday the revival would continue daily through at least May 4. He also said he believes the same revival will hit Kansas City, Mo., next. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli in Lakeland, Fla.**