

Ministries Target Wall Street District

New Yorkers are more open to the gospel since 9/11, say leaders of two ministries in Manhattan

Two charismatic ministers are stoking the fire of revival in the financial canyons of lower Manhattan. Their flourishing congregations meet in office buildings and hotels instead of traditional churches.

The area is begging for revival, reports Leighton D. Smith, pastor of Faith Evangelistic Ministries (FEM) and president of Prompt Courier Service. "I believe God is bringing revival to Wall Street again," he said.

Smith's Pentecostal ministry began in 1995 with four believers studying the Bible in his office near City Hall. Later that year Smith sensed God's leading to establish FEM.

As the fledgling church prospered, he rented space adjoining his company. When that space became too small, services moved to a hotel in midtown Manhattan.

In November a permanent home was located in an office building about two blocks from the New York Stock Exchange. "God is moving," Smith said. "I see people coming from all over. We see street cleaners and policemen coming to our services."

The interracial church attracts workers and executives from the financial district and others from New York City's five boroughs. About 200 people worship on Sundays in a 7,500-square-foot space that accommodates 500. The monthly rent tab

is \$14,000.

Business people spend their Wednesday lunch hours there studying the Bible or listening to testimonies of Christian leaders. "Since 9/11 people are realizing that there is more to life than making money," Smith said.

Rich Sroczynski, a manager with New York University Downtown Hospital, has been attending the Bible study for six months. "It's inspiring," he said. "Knowing there are others like me trying to live out their faith every day, that is strengthening."

When Seni Hazzan, chief executive officer of the JIL Company, worked for Goldman Sachs six years ago, he walked the streets during his lunch break praying in the Spirit and asking God to bring revival to Wall Street.

"I am so touched that now people have a place they can come to have a one-on-one conversation with God and with other believers," he said. "God is moving in the hearts of men and women to get the Word out."

Smith came to faith while suffering from Hodgkin's disease, a form of lymphatic cancer. He left his home in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, in 1983 to get medical treatment in America. While undergoing chemotherapy in a Brooklyn hospital, the Holy Spirit touched his heart through a radio evangelist who quoted Isaiah 53:5: "And with His stripes we are healed."

Smith gave his life to Christ and believed God for healing despite a grim prognosis. "I'm through with treatment," he told his doctor. "I'm not coming back." And he hasn't returned

since.

After leaving the hospital, Smith landed a job as a mail clerk. In 1985 he opened Prompt Courier Service with no money or credit. Working from a donated desk and a filing cabinet, he grew the business to 41 employees. "God did it," he said.

Ordained in 1998 by World Harvest Church, Smith, 44, devotes only 10 hours a week to his business, which is managed by his wife, Marjorie. His prophetic ministry includes a weekly radio program called Countdown and a TV program aired six days a week locally and in Jamaica. Smith and other FEM staffers take no salaries.

Charlie Spence found deliverance in jail while hearing Smith preach on the radio. He is HIV-positive and was addicted to drugs and homeless for more than 15 years. "This church is like a spiritual hospital," he said. "The blood of Jesus is being preached. The people are for real."

Daniel J. Stratton, 42, followed a different path establishing Faith Exchange Fellowship (FEF). A high-flying trader in the frantic silver pit at the New York Commodity Exchange, he became a born-again Christian in 1984. During trading lulls he read his Bible openly on the exchange floor, which invited ribbing from his colleagues. "The guys would start busting my chops," he said.

He stood his ground and launched a Bible study that led to many conversions and monthly services called Spirit of Revival. As the number of believers grew, he searched for a full-time pastor to lead them.

"I went into prayer, and God said, 'The church is yours, too'" Stratton said. For two years he battled the idea of exiting his highly lucrative trading business. "The heart of a pastor and the killer instinct of a trader was not sitting well in one body for a long time," he said.

Stratton and his wife, Ann, hold ministerial credentials with Kenneth Copeland Ministries. They opened FEF as a church in 1997 and rented space at 90 West St., next to the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Their first service drew 40 people.

In 1999 the Strattons took over as full-time co-pastors. When FEF lost its offices on Sept. 11, they moved to 30 Wall St., where lunchtime services are held every weekday. Almost 250 believers meet Wednesday evenings at the nearby Regent Hotel and at other hotels on Sundays. Stratton said he expects to move to larger quarters soon.

"We are going to build a place where the Word of God can be lifted up every day," he said.

Peter K. Johnson in New York City