

Oregon church says gold dust, feathers fell during meetings

Tiny white feathers and gold flakes reportedly appeared at First Assembly of God in Prineville, Ore., in April during two days of services in which more than 45 people were baptized. Encouraged by the unusual sight, the revivalist couple who led the meetings say the phenomenon is part of God's strategy to wake up the church to a revival that's coming.

"They appeared halfway through," according to Deborah Gliebe, who with her husband, Tom, ministers in churches in the Pacific Northwest and around the world via their Well of Bethesda Ministries based in Battle Ground, Wash. The Gliebes are dubbed by many as "revival igniters" and have hosted their own radio program and appeared on TV programs, including TBN's Praise the Lord.

Tom Gliebe said he placed one of the feathers in his Bible but that when he went to inspect it later, it was gone.

"I'm not saying what it was," he said, smiling and shrugging to indicate that he believed the manifestations to be miraculous. Gliebe added that he knew of no tests that had been performed on the feathers or the gold flakes.

According to the Gliebes, whether or not the unusual appearances in the baptismal font were a miracle of God did not matter to those who experienced spiritual transformation.

"What matters is that God was there," said Deborah Gliebe, an

enthusiastic evangelist with a penchant for “holy laughter” and a message that says “anyone who is hungry or thirsty, come drink of the living water.”

That was the message she preached during a meeting at Scoggins Valley Church in Gaston, Ore., in May, during which most of the few dozen people in attendance came to the altar to receive a touch of what she calls “revival juice.” The meeting lasted more than five hours, and some of the participants said they left feeling “nourished by the Word.”

The scheduled four meetings led by the Gliebes in Prineville grew to 22. Their two meetings scheduled in Sisters, Ore., turned into 40. Churches in Oregon cities from Springfield to Bend to Beaverton were in revival, and the attendance at meetings ranged from gatherings of about 30 people to crowds in the hundreds, according to the Gliebes.

Senior Pastor Dennis Swift of Beaverton Church of the Nazarene, a denomination that hasn't yet embraced what many believe are supernatural manifestations that mark many of today's revivalist meetings, was thrilled with what he views as Oregon's spiritual rebirthing.

At his invitation, evangelist and revivalist Ruth Ward Heflin preceded the Gliebes during stirring meetings in March at Swift's packed sanctuary. The meetings cost Swift his job, which was terminated by the Nazarene elders by a vote of 16-4.

“[Heflin] prophesied Oregon would no longer be dry,” Deborah Gliebe had written to ministry supporters after the vote against Swift while calling on them to “pray and intercede for the pastor, his elders and God's perfect will.”

The Gliebes see Swift's removal as a sign of times to come. They believe revival is the most important challenge that faces the American church today.

The type of meetings the Gliebes are known for are "the cutting edge of revival and restoration of the body [of Christ]," Deborah Gliebe says. She urges people to "come and participate in these meetings to establish your agreement with what God is doing."

During the meeting at Scoggins Valley Church she had preached that "man is like an onion, with many layers of sin that God peels off one at a time because it isn't so very nice." While heads nodded in agreement and murmurs rippled across the pews, she had continued: "Man can reason God right out of existence. God says come and reason with me."

With that, about a half dozen people had come forward and prostrated themselves around the tiny altar, including the church's pastor, Joanne Rogers. Others wept at their seats. Most prayed. Some left.

"No feathers this time," Deborah Gliebe had said. "Just the almighty presence of the Lord."

The Gliebes say they want to "cut the bonds of fear, crack the gates of godless traditions, and proclaim liberty to the captives" in a revival sweep of the Pacific Northwest that they hope will match their last 60-week revival tour overseas. More than 126,000 people came to seek Jesus when revival broke out with signs and wonders after a service at a small rural church in Kawana Waters, Australia, they say.

"We're seeing things in services that don't usually happen," says Deborah Gliebe. "God's trying to get our attention."