

Supernatural Encounters Mark Texas Prayer Garden

Dru Williamson was six years into recovery from a 35-year cocaine addiction when she had an exhilarating experience with the Holy Spirit that made her feel she was flying over the top of the empty cross. "And when I came down on the other side, I was talking in tongues."

Becky Bowen was an unbeliever carrying the baggage of three divorces and the recent deaths of four family members, saying she only wanted to die when the Lord set her free from years of bondage, sin and darkness.

Shirley Scott suffered chronic knee pain for three years until she says she was healed instantly during worship at the cross and has not suffered a twinge in two years.

These testimonies and many more come from people who have visited a 24-acre patch of high ground next to I-10 in Kerrville, Texas, a small town 60 miles northwest of San Antonio. There, The Coming King Foundation is building a sculpture prayer garden. Among the \$3 million worth of sculptures donated by three Christian artists is The Empty Cross, which reaches toward the sky from the top of the park's 1,930-foot hill.

It is inside the 7-foot-wide space at the base of the cross where attendees report the most healings and other miraculous encounters, says Max Greiner, president of the foundation and creator of several of the park's sculptures, including The Empty Cross. People report seeing flying orbs of light that they take to be angels, and many come away covered with an unexplained coating of sparking particles that Greiner calls "glory dust."

"We created this art park so people might experience the

presence of God. The miracles happening at the garden are not our fault! Jesus Christ is doing these things,” says Greiner, a fourth-generation Southern Baptist who was filled with the Holy Spirit at a Christian booksellers conference in 1989 when a Presbyterian man in a wheelchair offered to lay hands on him and pray for him to receive the gifts of the Spirit.

Within 24 hours, Greiner says he was praying in tongues. Soon after, he began to see healings manifest after prayer. And just two days after receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Greiner said he had to cast a demon out of someone.

According to his account, thousands of people report being supernaturally transformed by the power of God during their visit to the prayer garden, which is still under construction and is being built debt-free. At least seven people canceled suicide attempts after praying inside The Empty Cross, Greiner says. Others claim freedom from addictions, abuse and physical ailments.

Greiner says the garden is special because “we’ve kept it pure, we’ve kept it holy, we’ve avoided denominational distinctiveness. We allow nothing commercial. We just invite the Holy Spirit to come and do whatever He wants.” The park is open 6 a.m. to midnight daily, admission is free, and tour guides are not clamoring to witness to people, pray with them or lay on hands. “So people can get through to Him without having to fight through a bunch of religion.”

A ‘Type’ of Last-Days Tabernacle

“God called us to create a ‘type’ of last-days tabernacle [as described in] Amos 9:11 and Isaiah 2:2, filled with monumental Christian sculptures and scriptures, where people could find God,” Greiner says. “This would be an outdoor tabernacle where people could encounter God without having to go to a church or through other traditional forms of Christian evangelism.”

The result, supporters say, is the presence of a “spiritual

vortex" in the Texas hill country where people can seek God and often find answers to prayer. Hundreds visit daily, some by the busload. Over Easter weekend this year, more than 1,700 people visited.

Louada Raschke says she has seen angelic manifestations, the "glory cloud of God," and that mysterious sparkling dust that seems to float down from heaven to settle on worshipers' skin, clothing and hair.

"I had been doubting and secretly judging these things to not be of God," Raschke says. "However, many souls were, and still are, being saved on a daily basis, lives were being changed, addictions broken, baptisms of the Holy Spirit, healing and miracles at the TCKF Sculpture Prayer Garden. How could there be so much lasting fruit for the Kingdom of God if what was happening there was not of God? By their fruit you shall know them!"

Hundreds of photographic images of strange light manifestations have been taken at the garden. Many people believe the unusual "orbs of light" are a type of angel described thousands of years ago by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezk. 1:15). More than a thousand visitors also have been sprinkled with an unexplainable sparkling dust after entering the garden property. Greiner says many believe this is the visible Shekhinah Glory of God, described in Exodus 34:29 and Isaiah 60:1.

Williamson, who lives in Kerrville, had heard about the prayer garden and Empty Cross while they were still in the planning stages. She said she couldn't wait to get there. When she finally did, she says, "It was the most exhilarating experience of my life."

Of her first visit, she says, "I wasn't really asking anything. It was a magnet that drew me there deep in my soul. I felt that was the completion of my journey from addiction.

"I walked right next to the cross. It totally overpowered me. I wanted to look at it, but my head would not turn. I had to physically turn my head with both hands to see it. When I did that, I felt my body soar up and over the cross. And when I came down on the other side, I was talking in tongues."

She continued, "I think it's part of that demonic addiction that didn't want me to see it. That was the cut of the tether of any darkness. ... It was my first experience with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. My walk with the Lord has been intense ever since. I've been immersed in the Word ever since. It started a contentment inside me that I had never known before. I no longer had to be somebody I didn't want to be."

Now, Williamson says, she returns to the garden regularly to pray for others and often receives words of knowledge of how to pray for people. Before the sun comes up, she says she often sees angels flying in the form of orbs of pinkish light streaking toward the cross. She described their movement as "a calm swish."

"We've got a spiritual tsunami that's starting to roll," she adds. "I encourage people to take one step at the time with one hand in the air."

Opposition Tries to Derail Project

While the prayer garden was birthed out of a prophetic word in 2001, the project almost didn't happen. Opposition came not only from neighbors who objected to the tall metal cross on the highest point on the property but also from atheist groups and others who Greiner says spread falsehoods about the project—even to the point of triggering an Internal Revenue Service audit and a costly lawsuit.

But Greiner and his supporters prevailed. In 2005, rancher Hershel Reid felt led of the Lord to donate \$500,000 to buy the property after laying out a modern-day "fleece." While

praying with a group of supporters on the land, Reid said he silently asked the Lord to show him a hawk in the sky when he opened his eyes from praying if he was supposed to donate the funds. Instead of one hawk, Reid and the others with him saw nine Northern Harrier hawks soaring overhead.

After acquiring the property, Greiner and the foundation's trustees determined that the Sculpture Prayer Garden would be built with donated funds and artwork. Greiner and artists Beverly Paddleford and David Broussard have given more than \$3 million worth of sculptures. The garden also features plaques and signs with Scripture laid out among the cross-shaped garden.

Greiner said that prayer supporters of the Texas project have included many distinguished Christian leaders. He has a letter of support from former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and has been photographed with Franklin Graham, James Dobson, Vonette Bright (widow of Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ), Max Lucado and others.

"We're building this garden for the people who hate us," Greiner says. "We ask God to touch them and save them so they can become on-fire, born-again Christians."

Additional roads, landscaping, permanent restrooms and a visitors center remain to be built when funds become available. Commercially zoned property on the frontage road someday may house restaurants, shops and a motel.

Part of Greiner's vision is that this prayer garden be replicated in other states and nations. Already, a group in Owatonna, Minn., about 35 miles south of Minneapolis, is at work on its own sculpture prayer garden next to Interstate 35. A church-based group has acquired the land and the first of its sculptures.

"I think if we aren't careful, we as the body of Christ can be divided when it comes to the miraculous, signs and wonders and

thereby miss out on the unity needed in order to carry out the Great Commission in these last days," Raschke says. "We don't worship the signs and wonders, but we do need His manifest presence and power to do the work of the Lord. Many times the lost are initially drawn to the Lord through a manifestation of the miraculous. We, then, must stand ready to give our testimony and preach the Gospel."

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