

Welsh Outpouring Focuses on Jesus

“Don’t fall over. Don’t expect an appeal for cash. Don’t follow celebrity preachers.” These are not the usual announcements at revival meetings. But they’re part of the message from the so-called “Welsh Outpouring.”

Leaders of the nightly events at Victory Church in Cwmbran, Wales, steer away from the big claims of other renewals, though they report more than 300 conversions in six weeks. They also have muted references to money and manifestations and have placed an emphasis on all ages, not just youth.

These remarkable—and some say refreshing—moves have come under the leadership of pastor Richard Taylor. The 38-year-old minister recently left his church’s continuous round of revival gatherings to speak at the King’s Center, Burgess Hill, England—and drew a capacity crowd there too.

Dressed in a smart suit and entertaining in his delivery, Taylor distanced himself from more flamboyant leaders with such sayings as, “I’m not a prophet ... I’m an ex-drug addict who loves Jesus.”

This father of five is no less energetic than other charismatic speakers, but he rejects some of their practices, drawing applause when he slammed the idea of pushing people over in prayer lines. “If another preacher tries to push me over, I’ll punch him in the face,” he laughed.

Yet as much as they downplay the drama, his church has seen attendance boom at its midweek meetings since April 10. That was the day a crippled man allegedly left his wheelchair in the church’s service. Visitors have since come from across the globe.

Taylor offered *Charisma* some context for this outpouring. As he sees it, the Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Fla., was about salvation. He went there in 1995 and saw hundreds of people get saved. The Toronto Blessing, he adds, was about blessing Christians.

“What’s happening with us is quite different, because it’s both of those things and something else,” he says. “I think the ‘something else’—as well as blessing Christians and seeing salvation—the other thing is seeing Christians get a real hunger for Jesus again and His presence. The best reports are these: ‘I’ve never been so close to Jesus as I am now—my life has changed.’ When I get those emails in my office, I say to my staff, ‘That’s a miracle.’”

Taylor doesn’t criticize other movements. He’s inspired by the history of revival in his homeland, which has seen many awakenings in the past 200 years.

Church-growth researcher John Hayward has visited the current Cwmbrian meetings and finds them no different from other “renewal days” held in Wales over the years. But when he talked to people, Hayward says, “something exciting started to come out, that God is really changing people.”

Hayward acknowledges Victory’s Pentecostal style won’t please everyone. But in his view, the style is almost irrelevant. People are being affected.

One attendee summed up their Cwmbrian experience this way: “I don’t understand it, but I feel I’ve won the spiritual lottery!”

Hayward finds similar testimonies from a number of people. “The outpouring is like a window on what God’s been doing over a longer period of time,” he says. He compares what’s happening in Cwmbrian not to the Welsh Revival of 1904 but to a previous awakening in the 1700s, which saw “a real movement among God’s people” that led to “real growth and real

conversions," he says.

"You can never tell at this stage of a movement if it's real," Hayward admits. "But you can tell if God is changing you."

And God is already using Cwmbran to affect other churches. "Cwmbran and Richard [Taylor] are part of our story," says Andy Robinson, pastor of Kings Church, Horsham, England. "It wasn't the beginning. We've been experiencing beginnings of this kind of a move of God in the church. We've just started to see some salvations and some healings."

Robinson's link with Cwmbran started when he carved out time in his diary for a prayer retreat and decided to check out Victory Church. "What really struck me was, this isn't that far removed from where we are as a church. But what is it? What's the difference? It was just that hunger," he says.