DENNIS BENNETT: Episcopal Priest Gone Charismatic

Talk about early adopters. Although the phrase usually describes people who are the first to embrace cutting-edge technology, it also describes Dennis and Rita Bennett.

One Sunday morning in 1960, Dennis, a popular Episcopal priest, made an explosive statement, telling his Van Nuys, California, congregation he had received something called the "baptism of the Holy Spirit."

He was experiencing a miracle, felt a closeness to God he'd never experienced and, yes, he even spoke in tongues.

The resulting outcry was so strong that Bennett resigned—stepping out of the pulpit and into history. The news swept the nation and soon appeared in *Newsweek, TIME* and even Encyclopedia Britannica, helping to ignite the charismatic movement.

Bennett moved to Seattle and took over a dying Episcopal church where the local bishop said, "Bring the fire with you!" The tiny church exploded into a revival center where tens of thousands experienced the baptism.

Dennis' book *Nine O'Clock in the Morning* chronicled those early days of the charismatic movement. A few years later he and Rita co-authored *The Holy Spirit and You*, a "study guide to the Spirit-filled life," or as one new believer called it, "a do-it-yourself baptism in the Holy Spirit book." Thousands read it and were filled with fire that has lasted decades. It still ranks among Amazon's top 115,000 books.

Dennis and Rita were also early adopters by praying for people to be healed from what they called "soul hurts"—or "inner healing," a ministry they taught about in books and magazines,

including *Charisma*. Dennis passed away in 1991. Today Rita is president of Christian Renewal Association, which she and Dennis founded in 1968. She continues her ministry of emotional healing through prayer and counseling.—*Diana Scimone*