

House292u0H

magazine

**Why The
House Church?**
By Victor Choudhrie

The Last Snack!
By Steve Atkerson
and Eric Svendsen

**Honk If You
Love Jesus!**
By Jeff Lucas

The church has come full circle.

As we enter this third millennium of the church, many are seeing that the simplicity of the New Testament church, based as it were around homes, families and communities is as relevant today as it was in New Testament times.

“Wherever you look, and within whatever culture it finds itself, the church seems to work best when it most closely approximates to the church we see described in the New Testament.” - Dr. Tony Dale

Vision Statement: We are pursuing the rapid advancement of the Kingdom of God through saturating and transforming communities with a radical, home-based, church planting movement.

House2House Magazine is published 6 times a year by the Association of Home Churches, 1019 Meredith, Austin, TX 78748. Phone 512-282-2322. Copyright 2001 House2House. The views and opinions expressed by contributing authors in articles do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of this magazine. Full contact information is available online at www.house2house.tv.

Editorial by Dr. Tony Dale

Why is the Holy Spirit apparently moving in such power in the parts of the world that most of us will never get to? Why is it that what we long to see God do *here* seems to be out of reach? As the writer of Deuteronomy 30 commented, "It is not beyond the seas, so far away that you must ask, 'Who will cross the sea to bring it to us so we hear and obey it?' The message is very close at hand; it is on your lips and in your hearts so that you can obey it". (Deut. 30:13-14 from the New Living Translation)

So what is "this message" that we are trying to articulate in this new magazine? In essence, it could be summed up by saying "the Bible works." Wherever you look and within whatever culture it finds itself, *the church seems to work best when it most closely approximates to the church we see described in the New Testament.* This church is evangelical, evangelistic, Holy Spirit-powered, community-oriented, Christ-centered and "follows the cloud" wherever it may be moving.

As the song from the 60's put it, "All over the world the Spirit is moving, All over the world, as the prophet said it would be." New churches are emerging with explosive force in many parts of the world. In no previous generation (with the exception of the generation described in the Book of Acts) has there been such power, such growth and such persecution of God's people.

What needs to happen in the West, and in particular in America (where this magazine is being launched), for the church to see such growth and transformational power? The articles in this issue will attempt to set the scene and begin to grapple with these issues.

This magazine will not attempt to be dogmatic, but rather inclusive. Views from inside traditional churches will be welcomed alongside the challenge that comes from the many who have been led outside of "the building." If one thing is clear, it is that none of us has a corner on truth except Him who is "the way, the truth and the life." It is the voice of His Spirit that we will seek to capture in the pages that follow in this and subsequent issues.

Your response to this first issue will be crucial in the on-going story of "House2House." Please send "letters to the Editor" at letters@house2house.tv. This will let us know what you think and whether we are in any sense accomplishing our goal of serving you as we all seek to serve the Lord.

Also, if you have not yet subscribed, please do so now, as your involvement in this way is crucial to the survival of this new magazine at the practical/financial level. Thank you!

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A Personal Journey

God Is On The Move!

By Tony & Felicity Dale

God is on the move! The cloud has lifted, the trumpet is sounding, and God's people all over this nation are preparing to set out on the journey of a lifetime. Something is happening that is akin to Elijah's seeing "a cloud the size of a man's hand." Maybe like him, we need to get ready to run!

Two years ago, Tony and I returned to England for the first time in several years. While we were there, God spoke to us very clearly and told us that we would have the privilege of being part of a powerful movement of His Holy Spirit for a second time. Back in the 60's and 70's, we had seen God move in extraordinary ways in England. Spontaneously, all over the country, churches had started in homes because people were so hungry to experience more of the Lord. Out of this the house church movement was born. This movement now probably represents about one third of British evangelical Christianity. Frequently what are now known as the "new" churches find themselves to be the largest church in town. Every little village and hamlet has one (or more). However, their influence extends far beyond their numbers.

For some years I had been praying that we would again be allowed to be part of such a movement of God's Holy Spirit in this country. My heart has been that this would be a grass-roots movement of "little" people - no superstars, no empire building, the Holy Spirit in control, Jesus alone lifted up, and all the glory going to Him!

Last September, we traveled to India to do a series of conferences on church planting. We were teaching on material that we have used many times before. But God took the materials we were teaching and pushed us into a paradigm shift in our thinking. We found ourselves genuinely believing, rather than just giving lip-service to the fact, that churches could be planted rapidly. Perhaps it was because we were in an environment where we were hearing about amazing things God was doing all over the world, such as with the Choudhrie's (whose Bible study appears later in this magazine). Dr. Choudhrie said to us that they now have a vision to plant a home church in every village in Madra

Pradesh by the year 2007 (a mere 17,000 villages!). What a challenge that one of their ladies started 50 churches last year. We heard via the Southern Baptists of one of their new converts starting 42 churches in the year following his conversion. (See the article on "Church Planting Movements".) In American terms this would translate to a church in every apartment complex, neighborhood, school, retirement home, etc! And we thought we were doing well if one of our home churches "multiplied" once in a year!

Since India, a number of things have happened. Stories from the people who attended

However, we now realize that what to us seemed very small, has ended up touching literally thousands of lives, both inside and outside the medical profession.

the conferences have both humbled and blessed us. Within a couple of weeks of arriving home, we were getting reports of multiple churches starting. One lady, with a team of young people, had started four or five churches in the surrounding villages in just two weeks. Another young man had started two churches among his gypsy peoples in less than a month from the seminar.

Having heard these and other reports, we decided we had absolutely no excuse! So we took the plunge and have gone out in the last two months and started several churches; some from scratch and others where people already in existing local home churches have had a burden to begin something new in their own neighborhoods. These are very fledgling efforts at best, but at least they are there!

Let me share a couple of examples. One of the

most exciting churches to us is in a local, low-income housing project that our church has been praying for over a period of several months. (Lord, deliver us from nice white middle-class churches!) There we decided to follow the principles we had been teaching in India, using Luke 10 as the pattern. One day, Tony and I were prayer walking in the apartment complex. Tony had specifically prayed that we would find the "man of peace". We were caught in a down-pour under a balcony with two ladies who lived there and started sharing with them what we were doing. As a result, they invited us to go and pray with them about some of the problems the area was experiencing. Since then, both have given their hearts to the Lord and have started to involve their families in a weekly time together with us. Isn't the simplest definition of church "where two or three are gathered together in My name?"

Another couple caught us by surprise a few weeks ago. They had visited our January monthly celebration, where the various local home churches come together. Subsequently, we didn't see or hear from them for two weeks while they were out of town. The next Thursday night they came over for supper and to share what the Lord was doing in their hearts. Imagine our delight when they mentioned in passing, "We're starting our home church this Sunday." This is church planting going out of (our) control. Praise God!

The other thing that is happening is that almost on a daily basis we are getting phone calls and e-mails from people all over the country saying that they are doing something similar! Here in Austin, groups that we had never heard of are emerging from the woodwork. All over this nation, people seem to be saying the same things. And the interest expressed by more traditional churches as well has been incredible. God seems to be challenging His people to look at what the home church represents. It feels very similar to the early 60's as the Lord began moving in power in England. This needs everybody, both those in traditional settings and others who have already launched out into new paradigms of church planting.

I enjoy body surfing. I never mastered the real thing standing up on a board! When you are

body surfing, you stand there waiting for "your" wave. You have to be in the right place; it has to be the right size and breaking at the right moment; then you launch yourself out in front of it and kick for all you're worth until the momentum of the wave carries you in to the shore. Our wave is out there. We're in the right place for it and it is just breaking, and this move of the Spirit is gaining momentum. So let my husband and I share how we found ourselves as young university students getting involved in this unfolding drama.

(The following is Part One of a booklet the Dales have written which is currently posted on the web at www.austinfellowship.com on the "Links" page.)

In the late sixties and early seventies, when my wife and I were medical students at Barts Hospital in London, England, we were privileged to be part of an exciting move of the Holy Spirit. We had no idea then that we would look back on this time as a period of genuine revival. However, we now realize that what to us seemed very small, has ended up touching literally thousands of lives, both inside and

outside the medical profession. This booklet, in part, tries to understand the roots of this period of revival. It seeks to explain why it has produced such long term meaningful change in people's lives, leading so many of our friends and colleagues of those years to church leadership positions around the world. As I look back,



Tony & Felicity Dale - "The Early Years"

I realize there are many principles that we learned in those early days of working together that are still applicable to church life today. We were a bunch of young students. We had little idea of what we were doing or where this was going. However, we knew that the Holy

Spirit was doing something wonderful and exciting and we were prepared to follow where He was leading.

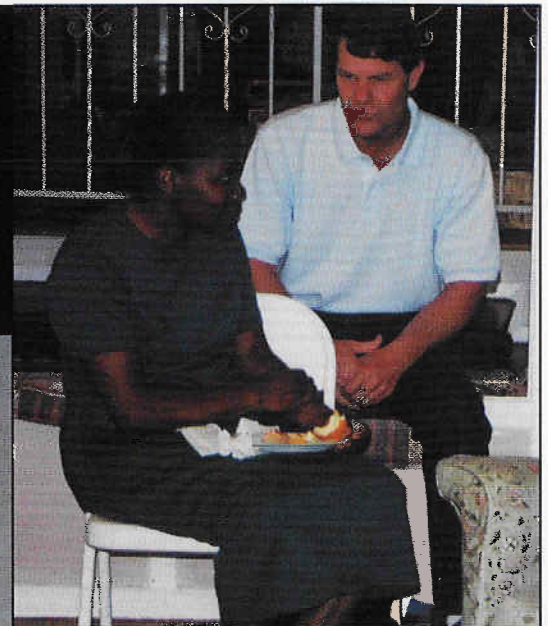
We now sense within ourselves a similar excitement over things we see emerging in the United States as well as around the world. Recent contact with friends from Britain and an increasing opportunity to see the good things that God is doing in many parts of the world, give us great hope for the future of the church.

It has been said that the one thing we can learn from history is that we never learn anything from history. The tragedy is that often this cycle has been replayed within Christian circles. In studying revival, it is not unusual to find that a group formed from a previous move of the Holy Spirit becomes itself an impediment to any subsequent move of the Holy Spirit. In the United States there is currently a lot of interest in church planting. Our prayer is that as new models are explored and as the Holy Spirit is allowed to have His way in multiplying many churches across the nation, those churches started in the last great church planting wave will not be a barrier to the new churches now emerging.

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**Subscribe to
House 2 House
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Fifteen Theses Towards A Re-Incarnation Of Church

(As taken from Houses That Change The World by Wolfgang Simson)

1. Church is a Way of Life, not a series of religious meetings
2. Time to change the system
3. The Third Reformation
4. From Church-Houses to House-Churches
5. The church has to become small in order to grow big
6. No church is led by a Pastor alone
7. The right pieces - fitted together in the wrong way
8. God does not leave the Church in the hands of bureaucratic clergy
9. Return from organized to organic forms of Christianity
10. From worshipping our worship to worshipping God
11. Stop bringing people to church and start bringing the church to the people
12. Rediscovering the "Lord's Supper" to be a real supper with real food
13. From denominations to city-wide celebrations
14. Developing a persecution-proof spirit
15. The Church comes home



Wolfgang Simson

God is changing the Church, and that, in turn, will change the world. Millions of Christians around the world are aware of an imminent reformation of global proportions. They say, in effect: "Church as we know it is preventing Church as God wants it." A growing number of them are surprisingly hearing God say the very same things. There is a collective new awareness of age-old revelations, a corporate spiritual echo. In the following "15 Theses", I will summarize a part of this, and I am convinced that it reflects a part of what the Spirit of God is saying to the Church today. For some, it might be the proverbial fist-sized cloud on Elijah's sky. Others already feel the pouring rain.

(In this issue, we will get in depth on three of the theses. In each successive issue we will cover more.)

1. Church is a Way of Life, not a series of religious meetings

Before they were called Christians, followers of Christ had been called "The Way". One of the reasons was that they had literally found "the way to live." The nature of Church is not reflected in a constant series of religious meetings led by professional clergy in holy rooms specially reserved to experience Jesus; it is in the prophetic way followers of Christ live their everyday life in spiritual extended families as a vivid answer to the question society faces, at the place where it counts most: in their homes.

2. Time to change the system

In aligning itself to the religious patterns of the day, the historic Orthodox Church after Constantine in the 4th century AD adopted a religious system which was in essence Old Testament, complete with priests, altar, a Christian temple (cathedral), frankincense and a Jewish, synagogue-style worship pattern. The Roman Catholic Church went on to canonize the system. Luther did reform the content of the gospel, but left the outer forms of "church" remarkably untouched; the Free-Churches freed the system from the State, the Baptists baptized it, the Quakers dry-cleaned it, the Salvation Army put it into a uniform, the Pentecostals anointed it and the Charismatics renewed it, but until today nobody has really changed the superstructure. It is about time to do just that.

3. The Third Reformation

In rediscovering the gospel of salvation by faith and grace alone, Luther started to reform the Church through a reformation of theology. In the 18th century through movements like the Moravians there was a recovery of a new intimacy with God, which led to a reformation of spirituality, the Second Reformation. Now God is touching the wineskins themselves, initiating a Third Reformation, a reformation of structure.

Book Review

Houses That Change The World

by Wolfgang Simson

"In this book, written from a global perspective, I try to describe a radical new vision of Church...Christianity is not a series of religious meetings in church-houses, but a prophetic way of life, in house churches. These house churches do not only totally change the way Christianity is seen and experienced in the streets of the world, but also allow the Church to develop the City Church, the apostolic and prophetic gathering of the Body of Christ of a city or region, speaking with one voice and acting as one organism under only one head - Jesus Christ. We are in the midst of a global reformation

where God rearranges and prepares the church for both persecution and proliferation, revival and suffering, both the meekness that inherits the earth and finishing The Task." (Wolfgang Simson)

This book has been truly long awaited - the e.book-version has been read by more than 10,000 people, but most important: countless house churches have been started in literally every part of the world.

Some RECENT COMMENTS on the book:

"This book takes exactly the right approach to the most basic problem in missions today." (Ralph Winter)

A far more significant book than I expected. It challenges many sacred cows, demonstrates remarkable biblical, theological and strategic insight. The whole church needs to hear what Wolfgang Simson has to say in this seminal work." (Prof. Kenneth B. Mulholland, Dean, Columbia Biblical Seminary)

"A monumental and marvelous piece of work! It is going to be a very important contribution to the present situation faced by the church." (Ralph Neighbour, Author of Where Do We Go From Here)

"An excellent book, which goes to the heart of the structure problem in our perception of the church. I completely agree with the analysis and much appreciate the book and its message." (Patrick Johnstone, WEC, London)

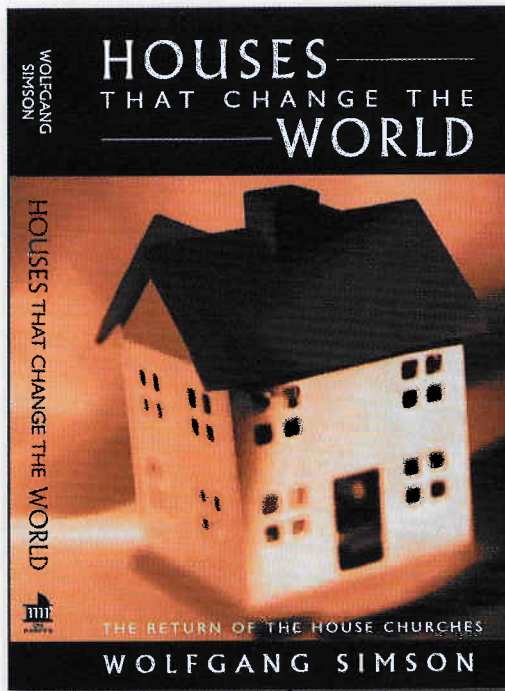
"Sure to be a vital element in the explosion of the church around the world. Tremendous amount of great material. The vision and scholar-

ship of this book is surely the wave of the future. This book is on the cutting edge of things to come. There is no question that if we are going to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord with millions of new congregations, we will have to return to the New Testament model presented here." (James Montgomery, Founder and President, DAWN Ministries, Colorado Springs, USA)

"A unique study, carefully studying New Testament examples of church-planting." (Wes Wilson, Vice President, Every Home for Christ, Colorado Springs, USA)

"Ground-breaking! So new and fresh, that, to the average reader, it will be quite revolutionary." (Clive W. Clayton, Brussels, Belgian Evangelical Mission)

"Wow! This book challenges our understanding of church and how it's done. I strongly recommend this book to every pastor and church leader." (Eddie Smith, Coordinator, US-Prayer Track, AD2000 & Beyond Movement)



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Worship and Open Church

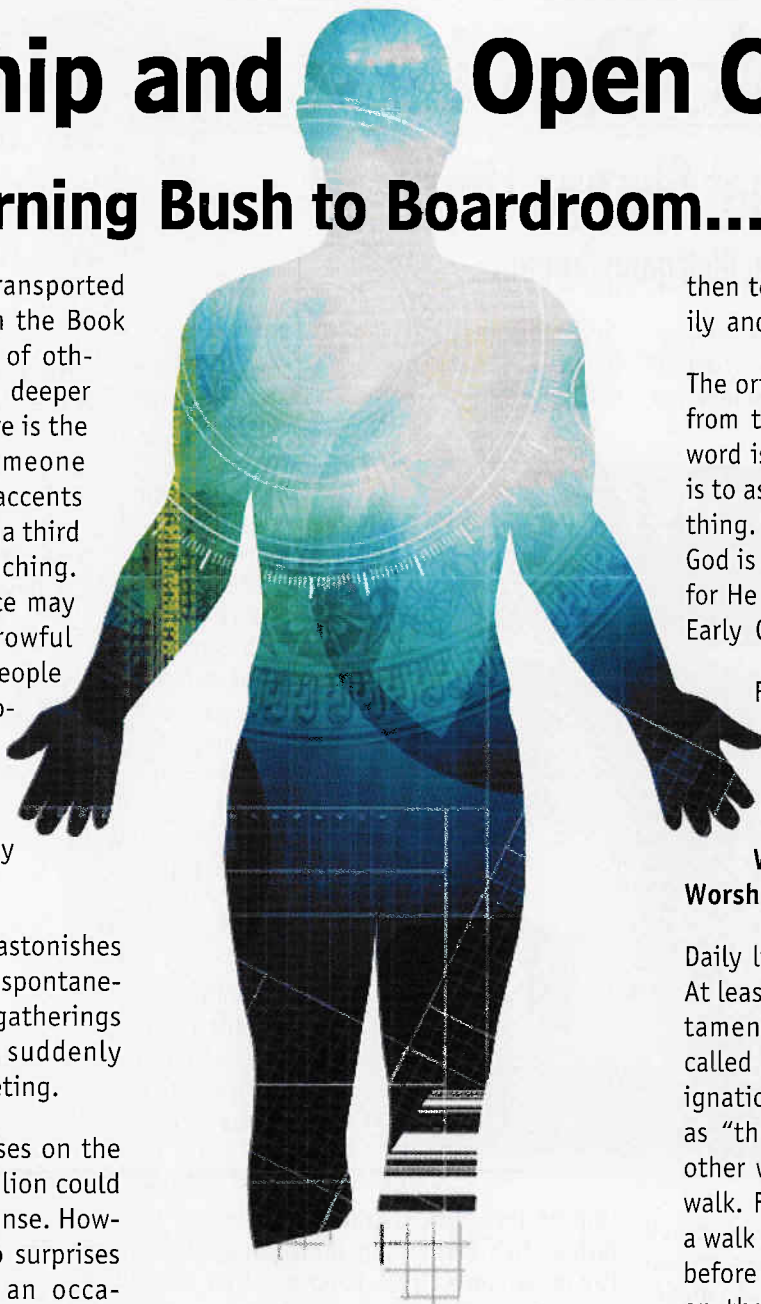
From Burning Bush to Boardroom...and Back

You may think you've been transported back to the church described in the Book of Acts. Standing in the midst of others, all together tapped in to a deeper level of joy and excitement, there is the presence of living Christ. Someone stands to share a song, another accents the theme with a brief scripture, a third follows with a five minute teaching. The next few moments of silence may be broken by weeping; a sorrowful saint confesses a sin. Several people gather around him or her to pronounce forgiveness and offer encouragement. A song by a young girl, a testimony by a mechanic, a spoken blessing by a husband over his wife.

Worship in open church often astonishes people unaccustomed to lively, spontaneous, joyous, and unrehearsed gatherings where the Spirit of God can suddenly break-in and dominate the meeting.

Moses was no stranger to surprises on the backside of the desert. A bear or lion could suddenly appear to test his response. However, he was not accustomed to surprises from bushes, except perhaps an occasional flurry of nesting birds. This bush was different—no birds, just an angel surrounded by fire that wasn't consuming the bush. Quite a flabbergasting sight! So Moses went over to investigate, only to be halted by a voice in the bush, "Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). A holy ambush indeed!

Fast forward some 3,500 years to a church boardroom where the only smoke present is from friction and strife. Many times I gathered there with leaders without inviting Christ's presence or even mentioning His name. Whoever heard of worship in a Georgia boardroom.



then told to share and minister to family and friends (Mark 5:1-20).

The origin of the word "worship" comes from the Old English *weorthscipe*. The word is actually *worth-ship*. To worship is to ascribe worth to someone or something. Ralph Martin writes: "To worship God is to ascribe to Him supreme worth, for He alone is worthy" (Worship in the Early Church).

From an open church perspective, worship—both personal and corporate—is shaped by several factors:

Walking with God Daily: Personal Worship

Daily living can be pictured as a walk. At least thirty-six times in the New Testament the believer's experience is called a walk. Prior to carrying the designation "Christians," they were known as "those of the way" (Acts 9:2). In other words, they were known by their walk. For the writer of Hebrews, this is a walk of faith (Halakhah). So it showed before us. Who we are and what we do on the walk when no one watches is the essence of our being. We were created to walk with the Triune God. Our worship comes from the walk; it is the walk! "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more..." (Genesis 6:9). Consider that his position of righteousness and blamelessness resulted from his walk with God. Judson Cornwall says, "God's ultimate desire is intimate relationship with His people. God wants to walk and talk with us as He did with Adam. God wants us to enjoy His presence as Enoch did on his daily walks with God" (Let Us Abide).

(This article by Lynn Reddick, first appeared in Open Christianity, Winter 2000 edition, and is reprinted by permission.)

Open Church: How We Meet

"What then shall we say, brother? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:26 NIV).

Open churches—meeting in homes, church facilities, or anywhere—focus on "how we meet." There is open worship, open sharing and open ministry described above. Sharing and ministry flow from worship. One has only to recall the instance when Jesus encountered the demoniac who worshiped Him. He was

