Here we have the message of the Gospel, the result of the compassionate ministry of Jesus to which He has called us. Through us, He can achieve the impossible, giving abundant life to those who are discouraged, despondent, and dying! Someday, community members whom God has healed and made alive will be transferred with you to the Place where there is another River—the ultimate River flowing from the throne of God. There will be no deserts, no dryness, no drought. This is Eden restored, which also had a River of Life (Gen. 2:10).

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1, 2, 14, Ezek. 47:2).

In the meantime, while we wait, God wants our churches to be “river churches” from which flow healing and life—abundant life—to the community around us. He wants to work through us to revitalize and transform the deserts and Dead Seas in our territory. Jesus, through us, will come to the needs of the oppressed” (Isa. 58:10), the Lord guided community members whom God has healed to be “like a spring whose waters never fail” (verse 11). He guided them to begin working on a very obvious need—housing. They partnered with Habitat for Humanity and began recruiting volunteers to join them in restoring the rundown tenements all around them. From the “spring” within their small faith community, a river of healing started to flow out into their neighborhood.

The church focused on 15 of Sandtown’s 72 blocks. Street by street, they rebuilt the ruins, leaving a trail of lovely, affordable, restored homes and happy new homeowners.

The new owners of these homes worked with the volunteers (providing “sweat equity”) and were given the keys to their new homes in a community-wide ceremony when each home was completed.

The river of healing continued to flow out into the community around this congregation, growing deeper and deeper. They raised money and built a new $5 million school for the children of the revived community. The healing river deepened as they started a health center, a job development program, and a drug rehab center. The Sandtown Children’s Choir is nationally famous, traveling far and near to share the experience of hope revived in a community that flourishes once again.

“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundation; you will be called Repairer of Bro- ken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings” (Isa. 58:12, NIV). God continues to use the New Song Community Church (also known as New Song Worship and Arts Center), a church from which a river of healing flowed and transformed a dying community. Wherever the river flows, everything lives (Ezek. 47:9)."}

**IS YOUR CHURCH A RIVER CHURCH?**

Does a river of healing flow from your church? Is this river growing deeper or shallower? Is your church healthy within, or is it growing deeper? Go and flow! Be a source of a great healing flood to transform your community for Jesus’ sake!

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**ARTICLE** by May- Ellen Colon

**WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE**

During 2008 many people around the world had traumatic experiences with flooded rivers. In May, rivers in Myanmar were overwhelmed by Cyclone Nargis, which caused flooding that brought widespread devastation and harming—killing more than 84,000 people. In July, tens of thousands of homes in Ukraine were covered with floodwaters. The United States experienced a springtime punctuation with overflowing rivers across America’s Midwest. Wherever these rivers flowed, destruction followed.

The Bible has river stories, too. One of my favorites is found in Ezekiel 47; however, the Ezekiel 47 river does not bring destruction—it brings healing and life. When this river flows, it heals the damage and destruction done by Satan. So what does the Ezekiel 47 river look like? How does it flow? Ezekiel reports his vision: “The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east) . . . ” (Ezek. 47:1, NIV).

If you look at a map of Ezekiel’s part of the world, you will see that east of Jerusalem is the Salt Sea (also known as the Dead Sea), the lowest body of water on earth. It is not the Dead Sea, the lowest body of water on earth. It is not the Dead Sea, the lowest body of water on earth. It is not the Dead Sea, the lowest body of water on earth. It is not the Dead Sea, the lowest body of water on earth. It is not the Dead Sea, the lowest body of water on earth. It is not the Dead Sea, the lowest body of water on earth.

As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep” (verse 3, NIV, emphasis supplied). This can be likened to the Colorado River in the United States that begins in the Rocky Mountains as a shallow brook.

“He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep” (verse 4, NIV, emphasis supplied). The little brook is getting deeper as it becomes a river that makes its way into the desert around the temple. The Colorado River does the same thing as it continues downstream.

“He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist” (verse 4, NIV, emphasis supplied). The temple river is now up to the waist. It is getting deeper and bigger, just as the Colorado River does as it continues toward the Gulf of California.

“When you read verses 6-10, you see a very exciting picture. The bottom line is that “where the river flows, everything will live” (verse 9, NIV).

Wherever the river that comes from God’s church flows, there is life—and the river becomes deeper and wider. Maybe a compassionate project or ministry to your community seems small and insignificant at the beginning, but, by the grace of God, it will grow until it transforms the area where you are serving and floods it with compassion, healing, and life! When you read verses 6-10, you see a very exciting picture. The bottom line is that “where the river flows, everything will live” (verse 9, NIV).

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