

## Revivals And Church History :: Arctic Revival

Arctic Revival - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/9/9 15:26

### Arctic Revival

It started like thunder, and at first no one knew what was happening. Moses Kyak, who was operating the sound system, turned the volume off but the noise kept getting louder. Then people began falling down without anyone touching them. James Arreak, who had been leading worship, began to shake. The building began to shake. For about a minute the noise continued to fill the church, like a mighty, rushing wind.

"It sounded like Niagara Falls," says Rev. Joshua Arreak, who was helping lead an afternoon youth service at St. Timothy's Anglican Church with his younger brother James. And then the sound went away.

Along with the Arreak brothers, about 40 people were in attendance for the service in Pond Inlet, a community of 1,200 high on the northeastern coast of Baffin Island. It was the conclusion of several days of Bible teaching and, as is common in northern church services, people were praying fervently for God's Spirit to come down on them. Some asked for deliverance from sins and others for healing from deep emotional wounds.

"Baptisms have become common at many church services and conferences in the Arctic."

Photo courtesy The Sentinel Group/Transformations II.

As James Arreak, a house church pastor in Iqaluit, was leading worship, Looee Arreak, now his wife, was praying for those who went forward. Rev. Joshua Arreak, rector at St. Timothy's, was praying for people at the back of the church, while another pastor, Moses Kyak, was watching the sound system.

"And suddenly," says Joshua Arreak, "without our expecting anything supernatural, there was a visitation. The noise started to happen."

At first, no one talked about it. It wasn't until later that day, Feb. 28, 1999, that people realized how powerfully they had been shaken by God's Spirit. In a service that evening, Arreak remembers, "I was up in the front leading the worship and I realized that something spectacular had happened earlier that afternoon."

Then someone realized the event had been taped. "I asked for the tape to be played to the congregation to let them know that this happened. That's when we realized that it was a very powerful visitation of God. As soon as that tape was on, people started praising God."

Why did this happen in Pond Inlet, a remote little town that dwells in darkness half the year, is accessible only by plane and is thousands of miles removed from any population centre? All Joshua Arreak knows is that people had been praying for the community, especially for the young people, on a regular basis. A few years earlier, they had gotten together to destroy, in a huge bonfire, about \$100,000 worth of heavy metal music, pornography and drugs. "That's maybe partly why God was so gracious to us," says Arreak. "We've been really humbled by this."

It was probably the most dramatic event marking revival in Canada's Arctic.

It was probably the most dramatic event marking revival in Canada's Arctic, but it was neither the beginning nor the end of a movement that has swept across the North, touching communities and transforming lives in a way never seen before (see sidebar).

### Missions to the Arctic

Revival in the Arctic has been hard won. Anglican and Catholic missionaries first ventured into the north a hundred years or more ago, fascinated by a culture that had not changed for centuries. The people were ingenious in the way they lived off the land, dwelling in houses made of snow or caribou skins and harpooning seals and walrus for food and fuel. They believed in spirits, but they had no concept of God, maker of the universe. Female infanticide was not uncommon, and murder was a practical means of dealing with jealousies and revenge. The first two Catholic priests to go to Coppermi



ne (now Kugluktuk) were killed in 1913 by two Inuit men, possibly for their robes and rifles.

To the east, on Baffin Island, a young British missionary, Canon John Turner, established an Anglican church at Pond Inlet in the late 1920s after sensing he was called by God to minister to the Inuit. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the work, learning the language, translating the Bible and traveling thousands of miles to bring the gospel. A few years later he brought his equally adventuresome bride, Joan, to the Arctic. The couple had two children, but when Joan was pregnant with the third, Canon Turner accidentally shot himself upon returning from a hunting trip. He died soon afterwards.

"Pond Inlet: A 'sudden, supernatural visitation' of God sparked a revival in this remote Baffin Island community."

Photo courtesy The Sentinel Group/Transformations II.

Yet his death did not close the door to the gospel's work in the remote community. In an interview on the video Transformations II: The Glory Spreads, Joan Turner describes a vision she had: one day, young people would be singing in the streets of Pond Inlet, praising the Lord.

The Anglican Church became well established throughout the Arctic during the early 20th century. Eventually other denominations also began evangelizing and planting churches in the North. In 1956, 22-year-old Kay Gordon left her home church, Glad Tidings in Vancouver, for the western Arctic, where she traveled with reindeer herders and lived in tents before starting a church in Tuktoyaktuk, in the far northwestern corner of the Northwest Territories. She spent the next 40 years preaching and teaching in the Arctic, starting a Bible school, now in Rankin Inlet, and planting Glad Tidings churches in a dozen locations.

### Cultural Change

While the Christian church was making inroads into the Arctic, the traditional society was changing at an alarming pace. The Rt. Rev. John R. Sperry, a British missionary who went to Coppermine in 1950 and later became bishop of the Anglican Diocese of the Arctic, documents some of these changes in his book *Igloo Dwellers Were My Church*. One of the most profound came from the establishment in the 1950s of the DEW (Distant Early Warning) Line, a string of 58 radar sites located every 50 miles across the Arctic coast, to protect North America from a possible invasion from the U.S.S.R. Construction of the stations brought new outsiders to the Arctic; it provided jobs for many Inuit; and it introduced them to alcohol. Loss of a traditional lifestyle, the availability of television, and the ability to travel and ship goods added to the massive cultural change that took place during the 1950s and '60s. Social problems that once were foreign began creeping into communities all over the North. Alcoholism, drug use, sexual abuse, domestic violence, despair, unemployment, and ultimately suicide began to characterize many places that had been previously untouched by such things.

"In my first 20 years of ministry I saw one suicide," recalls the Rt. Rev. Christopher Williams, Anglican bishop of the Arctic and Sperry's successor. When he moved to another community, there were three. Then the numbers began to escalate, and today Arctic Canada has six times the rate of suicide in the south. "It's become all too common, and that to me is a tragedy," says Williams.

Other statistics are also staggeringly high: the rate of heavy drinking is three times the national average, solvent abuse is 26 times higher, the percentage of the population in jail is three times higher, and teen pregnancy rates are six times higher, with the infant death rate twice that found in southern Canada. One study noted that the younger the girl giving birth, the less likely she was a willing sexual partner.

Sometimes it is those very desperate circumstances that lay the groundwork for revival, says Roger Armbruster of Niverville, Man. Armbruster is a pastor who travels frequently to the Arctic for Bible conferences and healing services.

### Influence of the Gospel

"Those Inuit who are experiencing transformation and revival were not good people," he suggests. "They will frequently tell you that they were some of the worst drunkards in their communities, some of the worst abusers of their wives and children, some of the worst adulterers, some of the worst perpetrators of domestic violence."

Far from being discouraged by the statistics, Armbruster looks at the process. When reports of transformation seem to conflict with a new spate of suicides or stories of abuse, he tries to put things into context. Change "is measured against the backdrop of what these communities once were, not against the backdrop of imperfections that persist in the present," he says.



Bishop Williams is circumspect about the change that should be evident in people who are fully committed to Christ. "One of the challenges that is coming with this spiritual revival is to see the relevance of the gospel on a person's life," he points out. "Hopefully as people are drawn to Christ they will recognize that the gospel is more than salvation, that there are also implications in your own life of what God is calling you to do."

Nain, Labrador, a community of 1,200, 95 percent of whom are Inuit, was devastated by 11 suicides in 2000. When a team was invited for ministry that November, "there was like a cloud of oppression that hung over the town," recalls James Arreak (who, besides pastoring, is director of financing for the Nunavut government). Knowing a week of meetings could not possibly fix the problems there, "we just went in there to plant the seeds, and we left."

Christians across the country also prayed for Nain. Arreak and others made a second visit in September 2001. "When we landed there, it was like a totally different place," he says. "It was like the cloud of oppression that used to hang over the town was not there." Evidently crime was down, there had been no suicides all year, "and the spirit of the community was as up."

"It's not perfect. It's just the progress that took place in just 11 months—only God could do that."

#### Prayer and Unity Precede Revival

Desperation may have made people ready for God; but none of this new movement of the Spirit would be taking place without prayer, say those who have witnessed dramatic changes. The event at Pond Inlet was preceded by a year of fervent, regular prayer. Before the youth conference in Baker Lake, "the young people out here had been praying about it for the past two years and fasting over it," says Rev. Bill Kashla.

And when Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson asked Harry Tulagak of Puvirnituq, Quebec, what was the major factor that had caused change in the community once fraught with suicides and other problems, he replied emphatically, "Prayer!"

Besides healing from traumas and tragedies and forgiveness of sin, the revival movement has had two other important outgrowths: unity among the churches and the development of dynamic Inuit leaders.

Renewal in the northern church "did not come without controversy," says the Rt. Rev. Andrew Atagotaaluk, Nunavik regional bishop for the Anglican Diocese of the Arctic. "Sometimes we went through periods where the congregations were split in two. Families were divided."

Until a few years ago, Anglicans often felt threatened when newcomers arrived, especially when they purported to be bringing the gospel for the first time. And some of the new charismatic preachers were critical of Anglican traditions. But eventually, "as things developed, all the painstaking incidents began to slowly dissolve and people began to totally commit themselves," says Atagotaaluk. Missionary Kayy Gordon agrees. "I don't think the animosity is there that once was," she observes.

For Gordon, who now lives in Abbotsford, B.C. but still travels north a few times a year, one of the most exciting developments over the last few years is the growth of indigenous pastors. People whose background was drinking, gambling and promiscuity are now solid Christians, and some are pastoring churches. "The new mantle of leadership is falling on Inuit shoulders and they are carrying it," she says. "They're not dependent on us."

In Pond Inlet, Rev. Arreak has seen changes in his town and in his church since the Spirit of God paid that special visit almost three years ago. More people have come to Jesus and have committed their lives to Him; and financially the once struggling parish is now flourishing. Joan Turner's vision of young people singing in the streets has come to pass.

The tape from that Sunday afternoon has been heard all over the world, and the tiny church in Pond Inlet has had calls from England and Florida.

Arreak doesn't want to make too much of his church's role in renewal. "It's not that people in Pond are better than anybody else," he says. "It's very humbling."

Nor can the Christians there regard Feb. 28, 1999 as the ultimate experience. "I found out that we cannot go on yesterday



ay's visitation," Arreak says. "It has to be renewed every day."

**Re: Arctic Revival - posted by enid, on: 2006/9/9 16:39**

Have seen the video of this event. It was awesome! It was unexpected. You can feel the awesomness of the event, even just watching it.

It just goes to show that we can have revival.

If we pray and seek God, with all our hearts, He will answer, as He said He would. Matthew 7v7.

Either that scripture is true, or it isn't. It's true, so let's seek Him. God bless.

**Re: Arctic Revival, on: 2006/9/9 16:51**

Greg, I saw that segment in Transformations a few years back, and it was one of the most precious testimonies I ever saw. When the pastors start to recount the fire falling, and they start to weep in remembrance of that meeting....wow....Bless God!!

You just reminded me that I want to order a copy of that video (DVD?) and watch it again. A brother in Cali had turned me onto it, now I want my own!!

Thanks my brother.

If the Lord leads you to Chicago, you know where you can stay....

**Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2006/9/9 18:04**

Quote:

-----I want to order a copy of that video (DVD?) and watch it again.  
-----

Brother Bartle,

If you find out where to get the video/DVD of this, please let me know. I'd like to get a copy too!

Paul

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/9/9 20:51**

Quote:

-----**Desperation may have made people ready for God**; but none of this new movement of the Spirit would be taking place without prayer, say those who have witnessed dramatic changes. **The event at Pond Inlet was preceded by a year of fervent, regular prayer.** Before the youth conference in Baker Lake, "the young people out here had been **praying about it for the past two years and fasting over it**," says Rev. Bill Kashlala.  
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Do we want revival? we need to be praying and fasting over it! It is not something that will come easily. Perhaps revival we never come till we really start to desire and want it. Lord birth this hunger in our hearts!

Quote:

-----If you find out where to get the video/DVD of this, please let me know. I'd like to get a copy too!  
-----

Transformations II - The Glory Spreads (DVD) - NTSC

Alcoholism. Sexual abuse. Drug addiction. Suicide. Violence. Civil war. Can anything stem the tide of rampant evil? God's heart is as big as the sea, so join The Sentinel Group as they continue the journey to seek how God's grace destroys wickedness and transforms people and communities. **Visit Canada's Arctic**, the Outer Hebrides of Scotland and the nat



ion of Uganda as the wind of the Spirit blows revival across the lands.

"Visit Canada's Arctic" could this be that video clip?

<http://www.sentinelgroup.org/dvds.asp>

Quote:

-----Desperate Prayer (DVD) - NTSC

Desperate Prayer instructs us how to pray according to the will of God -- breaking through the barriers of our limited understanding and knowledge of His ways. The status quo will no longer be enough. Only then can we raise the bar of our expectation for community transformation, healing of the land and authentic revival.

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This seems interesting! perhaps someone can send it to me ;-)

In this article they speak of Kayy Gordon and interview her! She is my aunt! I am hopefully going to try and meet up with her this year. We have never formally met since I was a small child.

**Artic - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/9/9 23:31**

No pun intended here, but if you could see the chill's that went up across my arms;

Quote:

-----In this article they speak of Kayy Gordon and interview her! She is my aunt! I am hopefully going to try and meet up with her this year. We have never formally met since I was a small child.

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Incredible! It had crossed my mind, a possible relative but... Brother, what a wonderful thing!

**Re: Artic - posted by enid, on: 2006/9/11 4:23**

Here in England the videos are available at any regular Christian bookshop.

I also have the video of the revival in Fiji, which is also available from the Sentinel Group.

God bless.

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2006/9/12 1:48**

Here it the video on google video and is downloadable in mp4 format here:

**Revival Video - Artic Fire**

<http://video.google.ca/videoplay?docid=-169363027935195454&q=revival>