

# WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

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*Speaker coming to St. Paul's believes she overlooked warnings of terrorist attacks*

## Prayer as a Path to Healing



RITA BENNETT

Before booking passage here to give a seminar on prayer, Rita Bennett prayed over whether she should make her first flight since terrorists attacked America

in hijacked planes.

"I feel that I'm supposed to do it (come to Winston-Salem), and I'm in God's hands," said Bennett, who will fly here Friday from her home in Edmonds, Washington.

Bennett's seminar Friday through next Sunday at St. Paul's Episcopal Church will be on emotional and psychological healing through prayer. She is a charismatic Episcopalian, a seeming irony she readily acknowledges. "We're supposed to be God's frozen chosen," Bennett said this week from her home.

Yet the charismatic movement, which emphasizes the gifts of the spirit referred to in Acts 2, is sweeping through the Episcopal Church and other denominations across the country. It's a movement that Bennett joined early through her husband, Episcopal priest Dennis Bennett. He became a national leader in the movement about 40 years ago and remained one until his death in 1991.

Rita Bennett carries on his work, emphasizing careful reading of scripture and prayer that emphasizes trying to discern God's word. "When we pray, a lot of times we spend

more time talking to God than listening to him," said Bennett, a lay person in her early 60s.

She doesn't limit discerning God's will to prayer. She believes that he can send messages through signs as well. For example, she said, she now realizes that God may have given her signs earlier this year of the terrorist attacks.

In a Washington church right after a relatively mild earthquake last winter, she said, scripture from Joel about "a day of darkness" was read. In April, she said, she awoke from a dream with the word "woe" on her mind. "I could tell it was like a sign from God," she said.

And in July, she said, she had another dream, one that included a conversation about end times [and a cataclysmic event]. Now, Bennett said, she realizes that she should have prayed more over those signs.

"I don't always get it," she said. "Sometimes I do."

The Rev. Don Goodheart, the rector of St. Paul's, said that a dream led him to Bennett. After her husband died, Goodheart said, he was serving a church in Seattle, near Bennett's hometown. Dennis Bennett had sent him a letter welcoming him to Seattle, Goodheart said, but he had never met him.

He dreamed that he needed to go to Rita Bennett and ask her if she believes that God speaks through dreams, Goodheart said. He met with Bennett, and they began a friendship that continues.

"I don't get messages through dreams all the time, but this was so vivid," Goodheart said. "I really believe that God was in all this."

Discernment of dreams and other signs is a gift of the spirit, Bennett said, and so is faith itself. Bennett said that all Christians have the gifts of the spirit, and the key is in tapping into those gifts.

She said she has seen people physically healed by prayer, but she concentrates on emotional healing. She said that she teaches people how to use prayer to heal their emotional wounds, including ones from childhood, and to pray for the healing of others. "All of our lives, we're working with the healing of our souls," she said, adding that love and forgiveness are needed to effect that healing.

Bennett grew up in Michigan and Florida in Presbyterian, Baptist and Assembly of God churches. After graduating from the University of Florida in Gainesville, she taught elementary school and was a child-welfare social worker. She and her husband wrote numerous books together and toured the world teaching about the gifts of the spirit.

She continues to write and teach, and leads the Christian Renewal Association, a non-profit agency that promotes her work.

**Written by John Railey, Religion reporter at Winston-Salem Journal, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Sept. 29, 2001. For more info see: [www.EmotionallyFree.org](http://www.EmotionallyFree.org)**