

British prayer movement grows

Using old buildings, satellites and Web rings, Britons are forging prayer outposts fueled by hunger for intercession

Christians across Great Britain are making room for prayer—literally. Around the nation, prayer pioneers are setting up hubs of intercession in locations that range from cyber addresses to historic areas—outfitting them with satellite communications, state-of-the-art technologies, conference facilities and, of course, prayer rooms.

It's all meant to answer a growing interest here in "houses" or "rooms" that are dedicated solely to prayer—as well as to meet the increasing demand of Great Britain's Christian organizations and churches to be involved in 24-hour prayer initiatives.

History reports that in ancient Britain there were three centers where unceasing

praise was practiced. Today that same hunger has once again gripped many in the United Kingdom, this time in the form of intercession.

At Ashburnham—a popular conference center in rural East

Sussex near the historic site of the Battle of Hastings—renovations are under way. It is being revived for 21st century use, having been first provided for the Christian community by the Bickersteth family, whose Christian roots can be traced to the time of the Wesley brothers in the 1700s.

Part of the complex is a plush structure that is being called

a “house of prayer for all nations,” which far exceeds its previous use.

“Refurbishment of the stable buildings is now complete, and we’re equipping them with information systems which will assist those who pray for the advancement of God’s kingdom and the wider needs of the world,” said Brian Betts, resident director of the Ashburnham Christian Trust.

The center is used by a rich variety of Christian people—from Messianic Jews to Roman Catholics, from Pentecostals to Anglicans, from Koreans to Africans. Whoever they are, wherever they are from, Ashburnham has been responding to their demand for prayer.

Another initiative is a “prayer house” run by Ichthus Christian Fellowship (ICF), a key charismatic church network in London.

“We have individual people using it, congregational groups and prayer days,” said ICF leader Faith Forster. “It’s pretty steadily used.”

Forster has visited “Prayer Mountain” at pastor David Yonggi Cho’s Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, South Korea—a congregation of 750,000. Cho’s “city of prayer,” as it is called, has been a key inspiration for Ichthus. Forster’s husband, Roger, has had a vision for a prayer house since the couple started the fellowship. They bought their main building in 1977, and 11 years later they had the opportunity to purchase the house next door.

“God told us we should have a house of prayer for all

nations,” Forster said.

Ian Cole has a vision for another kind of prayer house. Son of a Northern Ireland minister, Cole has helped launch some key Christian ministries. But his latest venture will overshadow everything else he’s done if it succeeds.

His dream is for a \$96 million World Prayer Center—possibly to be built on highly sought-after land in the Midlands region of England—to serve as the nation’s heartbeat of prayer.

Cole has ambitious plans for this state-of-the-art intercession hub: a 3,500-seat prayer auditorium, a fully-equipped 1,000-seat theater, satellite communications, prayer rooms, and conference and meeting facilities.

The main purpose would be to encourage corporate and individual prayer. The most up-to-date communications and information technology would be used to link with other high-tech prayer outlets, such as the World Prayer

Center in Colorado Springs, “command center” for worldwide prayer.

“World mission, the family and the poor are all part of the process,” Cole said. “Prayer is the dominant thing, and we’ve got prayer rooms for every continent of the world, for the [United Kingdom] and for Israel.”

Cole admits there’s a long way to go before the dream is reality but says that cash is coming in, as well as practical help from the business community.

Pete Greig of Revelation Church in Chichester was inspired by the "100-year prayer meeting," in which the Moravians of Germany experienced a move of God in 1727 that triggered a wave of nonstop intercession that lasted 100 years. John Wesley was among the Moravians' converts. Greig visited the site of that outpouring last summer.

"I thought that if they can do 100 years, let's try a month! We cleared diaries and warned people. And the [nonstop prayer] just exploded," he said.

At the Revelation Church, a room was set aside for prayer.

"There were times when you could feel God was there," Greig explained. "One guy walked in and just gasped, 'I saw this room in a vision.' We had a lot of things like that."

Word spread about Revelation's nonstop prayer. Other churches wanted to do the same. Suddenly a separate wider movement was being born, and a graphics designer drew up a Web site free of charge.

Now the 24-hour-a-day initiative has become a massive, unceasing prayer meeting across many nations and Christian traditions, focusing on "turning the tide in youth culture." Participating groups pledge to pray around the clock from a week to a month.

"We have now filled every hour of this year with nonstop prayer—all linked by the Web site," Greig said.