

Christians, Jews March in Streets of St. Louis

'March Through the Arch' united various ethnic and religious groups in prayer for Israel.



[] Urging Christians and Jews to “embrace their common ancestry,” a pro-Israel group organized a march in downtown St. Louis Sunday, during which nearly 1,000 people walked several blocks to the Mississippi River to pray for an hour under the city’s famous Gateway Arch monument.

Organizers of the “March Through the Arch” called the event a “religious and political activist demonstration” that stressed the solidarity of the international Judeo-Christian community with the nation and people of Israel.

“Christians used to feel separated from Jews,” said Angus Wootten, founder of the Tennessee-based Messianic Israel Alliance, which sponsored the event. “[But] today, millions of Christians have embraced their identity as brothers to the Jews and part of Israel.”

Some local Jews expressed caution concerning the purposes of the event, since international Jewish-Christian relations have historically been strained over matters such as Christian proselytizing. But organizers said the agenda of the march was purely prayer.

“We just wanted to get everybody to stand and support Israel

together and
focus on what we have in common rather than what divides us,”
John Diffenderfer,
Messianic Israel Alliance spokesman, told *Charisma*.

“People from both Jewish and Christian backgrounds [came],” he
said. “But
it was primarily ... an ecumenical event. We weren’t out to
convert
anybody.”

Instead, Diffenderfer said the rally consisted of prayers of
repentance
over the divisions that have existed among various ethnic
groups through the
years, as well as between Jews and Christians.

He said that representatives of the African-American, Native
American and
Caucasian communities participated in praying as well as Jews
and Christians
from as far away as South Africa, Australia and Mexico. “We
repented for the
generations and for all that has gone wrong over the
centuries—the last 2,000
years, really,” Diffenderfer said. “We humbled ourselves so
that ... God [could]
provide unity.”

According to the group’s founder, the location and direction
of the march
also held special significance. “The arch is symbolic in that
it signified the
westward expansion of civilization,” Wootten said. “Biblical
prophecy states
that the people of God will return to the land of Israel from
the West. We
[marched] east, toward Israel and through the Gateway Arch, to
indicate our
impending return.” **—Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**