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Organizers announced during the June march that the 13-year-old event is officially over. March for Jesus is no more. The annual day in which Christians walked the streets of their cities in parade style for a public celebration of Jesus took its last step June 10, drawing to a close 13 years of an event that began as a simple “prayer walk” but ended as a day of observance by millions worldwide.

In London, where a group of Christian leaders co-founded the march in 1987 before it rose to international importance for Christians worldwide, marchers heralded the event with symbolic fanfare and gave it tribute as an hour to remember in Christian history. Participants in England are praying, in particular, that a show of unity between Anglicans and charismatics that began even as the worldwide event came to an end will yield greater friendship and cooperation in the future between the divergent groups.

In what was seen as a symbolic gesture by Britain’s “old” and “new” Christian bodies to unite for a common goal, the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey—who leads the historic Church of England—walked in unity alongside Gerald Coates, a key leader of the “New Churches,” a modern network of charismatic congregations. Together they led a throng of 30,000 in London’s March for Jesus.

The symbolism extended further as the planned route took the procession across Blackheath, an ancient field where in 1660 the king of England was welcomed back to the country with “shouting and joy” that was “past imagination,” according to 17th-century diarist Samuel Pepys.

The same could almost be said about June’s gathering. “What really surprised me was when everyone was encouraged to pray out loud,” Coates told Charisma. “Suddenly from the crowd came this noise like a rumbling train. I was on the stage thinking, ‘This is different.’

“There was a lot of fun and support, but I felt there was also a greater depth than at previous marches.”

London police said “Jesus Day”—as it also was called—was one of the happiest demonstrations they’d ever had to monitor.

The event also was the last centrally organized, internationally coordinated March for Jesus, though independent local or regional events almost certainly will continue in the future. Event leaders have maintained they would conclude it in 2000, and its brief history has been marked by criticism and controversy over spiritual warfare issues.

In a closing address, Archbishop Carey issued a challenge for Christians to become a missionary church and encouraged marchers to be more direct in sharing Christ with those they work with.

Worldwide, close to 12 million Christians took to the streets for separate millennium marches. A “live” phone link for the

events held in the United States, Northern Ireland and Australia allowed other march leaders to share stories about their gatherings.

There was a spontaneous roar from the London crowd when Texas pastor Tom Pelton, the U.S. leader of March for Jesus, came online and "Greetings from the United States!" boomed across the sound system. Pelton told the marchers that across America—where hundreds of cities take part in March for Jesus—the event took on various forms including praise marches, outreaches and acts of compassion for the poor.

"We woke up realizing something massive is coming this way," he said of the U.S. movement.

March for Jesus was introduced to the United States after Pelton witnessed one of the events in London in 1990. Since then, millions of U.S. marchers have been involved, and the initiative also has evolved into a social-action program. "We're calling it a day on earth as it is in heaven," Pelton told London listeners.

In a separate report from Australia, a Sydney leader said: "We've had a wonderful time here. I'm inclined to understate the story, but some would say we may well have seen an authentic revival break out today."

It was revealed later that more than 40,000 people had gathered in Sydney's Olympic Stadium for prayer and worship. A reconciliation event between Aborigines and white Australians set the scene for a youth concert throughout the night in which hundreds reportedly gave their lives to Christ.

The link shifted to Belfast, where the national assembly was recently restored after a new breakthrough in the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

“We want all the barriers and traditions to come down,” march representative Steve Critchlow said. “We want to exalt Jesus today.”

More than 200 people met at the Botanic Gardens for a praise celebration and musical presentation by children that tackled issues of justice. People prayed for the Belfast government. Charismatic Catholic leader Charles Whitehead, who was among the guests at the London march, told Charisma that the global marches have united Catholics and Protestants, particularly in Northern Ireland.

Coates noted that the primary achievement of the global phenomenon of March for Jesus has been in “making Christ visible” and creating “a boldness out on the streets and a sense of unity.”

Said Coates: “Although it’s the last centrally organized one—and that’s always been in the planning—many people locally, nationally and certainly around the world will be doing their own marches.”