

Ministers Issue Call to National Repentance

✖ **May 19, 2009** – A cross-section of Christian leaders on Tuesday issued a call for churchgoers to kneel in prayer on July 5 not for the nation but for the body of Christ.

“We’re asking churches as an act of humility, on behalf of the church first and the nation second, to get on our knees and cry out to God on July 5,” said Family Research Council (FRC) President Tony Perkins, who is spearheading the initiative being dubbed the Call2Fall. “On July 4 we celebrate our independence, and it’s our desire on July 5 to declare our dependence upon God as a people and as a nation.”

Perkins was joined Tuesday in his call by Larry Stockstill, senior pastor of Bethany World Prayer Center in Baton Rouge, La.; Bishop Harry Jackson, president of the High Impact Leadership Coalition; Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; and Bishop Wellington Boone of the Father’s House Church in suburban Atlanta.

Perkins hopes to see 8 million Christians in 40,000 churches nationwide kneel in prayer for three to five minutes the Sunday after Independence Day, and he is urging pastors to register their congregations at the Call2Fall Web site. Perkins noted that the prayer call is not to advance public policy, but to see spiritual renewal.

“I think the church is coming to a point where we’re coming to the end of our own devices and we’re looking to God for the prescription of what it will take to turn this nation around,” Perkins said. “And I think we can’t come to God on our terms, we have to go to Him on His terms, and He’s made it very clear [in 2 Chronicles 7:14] ... that we are to humble ourselves

before Him and seek Him and turn from our wicked ways—and that's not the nation, that's the church. So I'm very encouraged that if the church will take this challenge, take the call to fall, that God will move in this nation."

Although other movements have called Christians to prayer and repentance, the ministers said Call2Fall uses Independence Day as a touch point for addressing the church's need to seek God for national renewal.

"We feel deeply and passionately that if something is not done quickly, we really could lose our whole country," Stockstill said. "As Paul Revere woke up the nation to the invasion of the British, we're waking up the nation to the invasion of the demonic powers that are pulling us away from God."

"There really isn't a new political agenda we can pull out of the hat or any other form of medicine for America," Stockstill added. "It's only prayer and fasting."

Land noted that great revival movements typically start with fasting and prayer, and he expects Southern Baptists to be very receptive to prayer effort.

"We are similarly convinced that the only real answer for America is spiritual renewal and revival that must start with those that claim the name of Christ," Land said. "We believe that as Christians we have failed to live in a way that would be as pleasing to the Lord as we would hope, and we need to repent of that and humble ourselves, and we need to seek His face and seek His guidance and direction for ourselves, for our churches and for our country."

"I think that the Holy Spirit is leading different segments of the Lord's kingdom in a very similar direction to call for the revival that our hearts yearn for."

Boone and Stockstill said the nation is at a point of repentance or humiliation. "I know that I'd rather be

voluntarily humble than to be humbled by God," said Boone, who leads a national network of churches.

"Our nation is seeing some judgment, and the men of God have to stand up and say what's necessary to get God to turn for us instead of turn against us," Boone added.

Stockstill, who helped New Life Church address a sex and drug scandal involving its pastor, Ted Haggard, in 2006, said the call to repentance begins first with pastors, whom he said are often failing to offer moral leadership in the nation. He said churchgoers, too, have drifted into carnality, prayerlessness and compromise.

"[Christians must] decry our own failures, our own sins, our own loss of influence to the nation and ask God to restore first pastors, then churches and then our nation into revival," Stockstill said.

Although FRC and Jackson's High Impact Leadership Coalition have been actively involved in culture war issues such as gay marriage, Perkins and Jackson said the prayer call is not an attempt to denounce President Obama or his administration.

"This is not an anti-Obama or anti-administration movement," said Jackson, who has been advocating for traditional marriage in the District of Columbia, where the City Council recently passed a measure recognizing same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

"But every president needs the power and wisdom of God in order to take our rightful position in the world and appropriately administer justice and represent not only the nation but the world in God's name. ... I am just expectant that we're going to see something dramatic happen. Not through demonstration, not through political action ... but the spiritual dimension, God awakening and quickening the hearts of our people, causing them to be revived by His grace."

However, Jackson said religious liberty will be in jeopardy without a significant cultural shift. "We need to recognize that if we do not violently—in terms of spiritual violence, not physical violence—violently, aggressively seek God in these spiritual things, we are going to be the Christian community and oppressed people, discriminated against and put down by this culture," he said. "But God has ordained that we turn this around. I believe we're going to see America changed."