

National Pentecostal Leaders to Unite In Atlanta at March 2001 Gathering

Organizers expect 10,000 to attend Solemn Assembly 2001, an event to be marked by 50 hours of prayer and repentance

Thousands of people

Thousands of people from across the United States and outside the country are expected to attend Solemn Assembly 2001, a gathering of "the people of Pentecost," scheduled March 26-28 at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta.

New Birth Church, a predominantly black church, seats 10,000, and assembly organizers believe God will fill every seat. According to organizers, the conference will be a 50-hour continuous service of worship, prayer, repentance, fellowship and preaching.

Setting it apart from conferences similar to it is the fact that although prominent Pentecostal speakers will be present, their names will not be publicized in advance. The six-panel publicity handout publicizing the event lists no speakers' names. The cover of the handout mentions only one name: Jesus.

"We said from the beginning that we're not going to lift up any personality," said Robert Fisher, director of the Cleveland, Center for

Spiritual Renewal and a key organizer of the event. "We are not advertising who is going to speak, even though we already have committed a number of well-known, prominent Pentecostal leaders."

Fisher, whose grandfather Elmer Fisher was pastor of the Upper Room Mission at the Azusa Street Revival, says the church

needs to be careful not to repeat problems that arose after that great revival.

"One of the major causes of division in the early Pentecostal movement was personalities being lifted up instead of the Lord being lifted up," Fisher told Charisma.

After the Azusa revival, the Pentecostal church fragmented into denominations, Fisher said. At Solemn Assembly 2001, a broad cross section of the Pentecostal-charismatic movement will be represented—from the Roman Catholic charismatic movement to the United Pentecostal Church.

In addition, noncharismatic evangelical Christians will attend. Organizers say the goal of the conference is to transcend denominational and racial barriers.

"We feel like it's

essential for Pentecostals to demonstrate and symbolize what God is doing in bringing the body of Christ together," Fisher said. "The simple purpose of Solemn Assembly is to come before the Lord in humility and submission."

Pastor Eddie Long of New Birth and pastor Jack Hayford of The Church on the Way in Van Nuys, Calif., are among the leaders working with Fisher to "restore the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" at Solemn Assembly 2001. Trinity Chapel Church of God in Marietta, Ga., a predominantly white congregation, and New Birth are the two local sponsoring churches.

Conference leaders say that through a time of "reflection, repentance, restoration and reconciliation" they hope to see believers come together in unity of the Spirit of God, not of doctrine or culture.

"Solemn Assembly 2001 is our generation's opportunity to

say—as those did a century ago—Holy Spirit come upon us,” Hayford said.

Fisher said some people are prone to weep when they consider the concept of uniting the people of Pentecost through prayer and repentance. He noted a returned phone call he received from Mike Thomas, pastor of Pinellas Church of God in Pinellas Park, Fla.

Thomas was driving through Orlando, Fla., and called from his cell phone. As Fisher shared his vision of thousands of people gathering to repent and pray, Thomas was so overwhelmed by emotion that he had to pull over to the side of the road to cry.

“I have never, in all of my ministry, been involved in anything like this,” Fisher said.

Solemn Assembly 2001 may be the time of repentance and personal renewal needed to prepare the body of Christ for major revival, conference leaders say. “This really goes back to restoring the unity that was present at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Azusa Street in 1906,” Fisher said.

The event is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. on Monday, March 26, and run around the clock until it concludes at 9 p.m. on Wednesday. Fisher said the prominent speakers participating in the event will not necessarily speak during “prime-time” hours.

For more information about Solemn Assembly 2001, logon at .