

New York Prayer Rally Draws 85,000

In late June, intercessors from a thousand churches stormed heaven from a park in Queens

An intense 12-hour assembly of prayer that began with worship at the dawn of a hot June day in New York City drew some 85,000 intercessors and left some organizers believing the event could spark an East Coast revival.

The Call New York City attracted participants from an estimated 1,000 churches who traveled from at least 45 states and 16 countries to the June 29 marathon, held at Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens.

Clad in faded jeans and a black T-shirt, his tanned face shimmering with perspiration in 90-degree heat, director Lou Engle grabbed the crowd's attention when he declared in a hoarse voice: "Our only hope for America is under God. God is raising up a revolutionary band of youngsters for prayer."

Engle launched The Call with Ché Ahn as a stand-alone nonprofit organization. They both pastor Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, Calif., and take no salaries from The Call. The events are conducted by a loyal band of national and local volunteers.

The first event on Sept. 2, 2000, in Washington, D.C., was a blockbuster gathering that attracted 400,000. Last year 200,000 attended Call events in Boston and the Philippines.

The spiritual impact of the New York gathering was “beyond all that I could think or imagine,” Engle told Charisma. “I didn’t imagine this many people would come. It’s just outrageous.” He anticipates a spiritual awakening on the East Coast like the 1857 Fulton Street Revival of New York City sparked by Jeremiah Lamphier.

Brian Levengood and 20 members of the youth group from Free Fellowship Church in Downingtown, Pa., hit the road at 3 a.m. to travel to the assembly. “There’s been an anticipation all week in our hearts to seek the heart of God for our nation,” he said.

And seek they did. Engle summoned the audience several times to pray and fast for revival in their schools and the nation, for racial reconciliation and Christian unity, for public officials and for issues touching the believing community. Gathering in tight circles, teenagers, parents and young adults wept and agonized before God.

“God’s been breaking me all day ,” said Steven Rusinko, 18, a college student from Rochester, N.Y. “I’ve been crying all day long. I can’t control anything. I’m learning so much about the importance of prayer.”

International representatives faced the crowd, waving the flags of their countries and petitioning God in Spanish, German, Korean, Finnish, French, Hebrew, Albanian and Norwegian. Engle seeks to influence the history of nations by calling multiple generations to unite in fasting, prayer and repentance. He pleads for extreme devotion to God and consecration in youth, who would be the most likely generation to become the flashpoint of any future Jesus revolution.

Engle shared the Flushing Meadows platform with Christian leaders Pat Robertson, Dutch Sheets, Cindy Jacobs, Doug Stringer, Harry Jackson, Mike Bickle and Robert Stearns, among others. During prayers for Jewish-Gentile reconciliation and peace in the Holy Land, Stearns introduced Ambassador Alon Pinkas, the Israeli consul general in New York.

"You are the watchmen of the walls of Zion," Pinkas declared to the masses. "We are here as children of faith through Abraham."

Tom Sipling of Joshua Journey Ministries in Harrisburg, Pa., urged the crowd to join a national "kneel down day" to coincide with See You at the Pole, a prayer event at public schools on Sept. 18. He challenged students to pray for 30 seconds on their knees in school cafeterias.

Two weeks before The Call New York City, some 4,000 volunteers blanketed the city streets with evangelism, prayer and acts of kindness by mercy teams. Susan Plunske and her son Keith, 16, traveled from West Chesterfield, N.H. They helped New York City Relief distribute tracts and food in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

"It made me feel good knowing that I was doing the work of Jesus," Keith said.

Dixie Galloway coordinated prayer groups throughout the city. Her husband, Richard, piloted a group in a boat around New York harbor and the East River. She told Charisma: "We felt like God confirmed us from the start at the Verrazano Bridge. As we began to pray, fish began to jump all around the boat."

Youth With a Mission (YWAM) sponsored 14 prayer stations in lower Manhattan, where 500 Call volunteers prayed with about 2,000 people. Some returned with reports of being healed miraculously or finding jobs. An intercessor shared the gospel with a woman near Ground Zero and then knelt by her on the crowded sidewalk and prayed with her to receive Christ.

“It was probably one of the most profound weeks of ministry for prayer stations since we began the outreach after 9/11,” said Nick Savoca, The Call prayer-station coordinator and director of YWAM Metro New York.

An army of 2,500 youngsters invaded neighborhood parks picking up debris and removing graffiti. Another group shocked local officials by sprucing up Flushing Meadows-Corona Park before the massive gathering. They pulled weeds, cleared trash and painted 30 benches.

“This is just a kind of a sign and a symbol of what’s happening worldwide, of students coming together for fasting and prayer,” Engle said. “They’re radical. They’re extreme. They want the God of the Bible back. They don’t want religion. They want the real God.”

Peter K. Johnson in New York