

Pastors Walk™ Prayer New Orleans Streets

Almost 1,000 intercessors participated in a “prayer walk” through the streets of the hurricane-ravaged city of New Orleans.



[] Nearly 1,000 intercessors spread out on foot in the Central City district of New Orleans Saturday to “prayer walk” the streets of some of the city’s most crime-ridden neighborhoods.

“It was such a powerful time,” recalled Cornelius Tilton, co-leader of strategic planning for the Greater New Orleans Pastor’s Coalition (GNOPC), which sponsored the initiative. “I feel that my prayers have been answered, to see the body of Christ in New Orleans coming together in such a powerful way.”

The two-hour prayer walk was the first of eight in a summer-long campaign aimed at spreading the gospel and stemming the tide of violent crime in a city still recovering from the ravaging effects of Hurricane Katrina.

Organizers said members from dozens of multiethnic churches assembled at New Hope Baptist Church on a balmy morning for prayer and worship before walking the perimeters of four city quadrants beset by “obvious poverty” and high murder rates. “We felt that God was calling us to go to the gates of hell, not to tiddle with it, but to go straight to the hardcore areas of our city,” said Tilton, who is also senior pastor of an inner-city congregation called the Irish Channel Christian Fellowship. The church’s 152-year-old sanctuary was damaged by Katrina, but restored earlier this year.

Tilton said Saturday’s event generated reports of salvations and spontaneous street worship; Christians also paused during the walk to pray for area residents. Tilton said one of his

favorite testimonies was from a prayer walk participant who said a stranger on the street asked him for prayer, telling him simply: "I need Jesus."

"It's a lot easier when you've had other people first plow the way with prayer," Tilton said.

Ever since New Orleans was devastated and its population scattered in the summer of 2005, Tilton said his heart has been burdened to fill the void left by Hurricane Katrina with massive prayer. "One of the things we needed to do as the body of Christ was to go into the city, while we didn't have a lot of people in there, and actually walk that territory for Jesus and claim it in His name."

GNOPC formed during the weeks after Hurricane Katrina and has since organized projects that have included prayer services, massive work days, retreats and charitable outreaches. "The storm itself gave us impetus because we saw people coming from various places around the country who came to aid people and didn't ask what their denominational affiliation was first or their race or any of those things and offered us assistance," he said.

Now that organized prayer is a reality, Tilton praised the pastors and leaders of the more than 50 churches that participated in Saturday's initiative, including the churches led by his three strategic planning co-leaders at GNOPC: Cornerstone Christian Center, Celebration Church and Bibleway Missionary Baptist Church. "We're not doing this as a publicity thing but because we believe God called us ... as the 'one church' of New Orleans," Tilton said. "That's a core value that we hold as pastors of New Orleans. We're responsible for this city and what happens to it spiritually in a real way."

Aside from being a pastor and devoting time to GNOPC, Tilton also serves as the global missions pastor at Celebration Church and is president of a Bible college.

He said through the years many pastors and leaders have

organized or participated in anti-poverty and anti-violence crusades, "but have we done the thing that we as the church have the power to do, and that is to pray—to bathe the area in prayer, Jericho-march it if you will, and take it for the Lord and expect that the strongholds will be broken."

He said the final prayer walk is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 16, and will coincide with an annual citywide revival event planned that same weekend by the Christian Ministries Union of New Orleans. Tilton also said dozens of pastors will take part later this year in pulpit exchanges to build unity and will participate in another citywide revival in late November.

Tilton is content for now with what he and hundreds of others accomplished over the weekend. He likened the experience to plowing an untilled field. "I felt God turning the ground so that we could plant the seeds," he said. "The ground was hard; now it's been softened." **—Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**