

Prayer Tour Seeks to 'Shift' the Nation

Leaders Dutch Sheets and Chuck Pierce hope their 50-state initiative will spark widespread revival

A movement of targeted intercession has been working its way across the United States as part of an attempt to turn the nation back toward God and prepare for a revival on par with the Methodist revival of the early 1800s and the Azusa Street Revival of the early 1900s.

Dubbed the 50-State Prayer Tour, the move has been led by pastor Dutch Sheets of Springs Harvest Fellowship in Colorado Springs, Colo., and Chuck Pierce, president of Glory of Zion International Ministries in Denton, Texas, and head of the U.S. Strategic Prayer Network (USSPN). Both have written extensively about revival and intercessory prayer.

Sheets gained prominence in 2000 when he mobilized thousands to pray for the presidential election. Last June he issued an urgent call for Christians to fast and pray that godly people would replace the retiring Supreme Court justices.

Pierce and Sheets said they were each impressed to visit the 50 states to mobilize intercessors and "shift" each region into God's purposes. Sheets said the nation was in a pivotal season and would either change for better or for worse.

"This year, more than any other in recent history, will determine the future of America and the world," Sheets wrote in a spring 2003 ministry newsletter. "We will see either great breakthroughs or great setbacks. It is much as it was

for Paul, 'a wide door for effective service has opened for me, and there are many adversaries' (1 Corinthians 16:9)."

The first meetings were held in New Mexico, Oklahoma and Arizona. Pierce said he was led to start there because the region has the greatest concentration of First Nations people in the lower 48 states. Sheets said New Mexico was called to be a reservoir of revelation for itself and the nation. "We declared that a 'Jesus of Nazareth, blood bought prophetic people' would arise in New Mexico, having greater wisdom than the supernatural forces presently operating there," Pierce reported after the event.

The two men went on to Oklahoma and Arizona, where they prayed for healing from broken land covenants, and that the states would fulfill their purpose.

Since those meetings, the tour has attracted hundreds of intercessors in each state. Equipped with historical information about each state, the pair, who some consider to be a modern-day apostle and prophet, said they seek to deliver specific messages that will help Christians in each region understand their state's calling.

Pierce believes they have a unique ability to bring spiritual breakthrough. "Our giftings have a synergistic effect that helps the body break through into a new place of revelation and faith," he told Charisma.

Delaware USSPN coordinators Dale and Miriam Mast agree, saying Pierce and Sheets helped intercessors there move into a new level of faith and authority. "They brought their mantle of authority into our state," Miriam Mast said. "There were

pockets of vision, but we did not have the ability to rally the people.”

Through the course of the tour, which had hit 31 states by December and was to end in April, leaders say they have seen dramatic answers to prayer. In January 2003, Pierce and 200 intercessors in Sacramento “decreed” that by mid-October the government of California would change. They believe it was no coincidence that on Oct. 7 voters recalled former Gov. Gray Davis and elected actor Arnold Schwarzenegger to replace him.

In February in Florida, Pierce said God showed him a network of terrorist activity in Tampa. He told attendees, “It will be found out in the week to come.” The next week a Florida professor believed to be the North American leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad was arrested with three others and charged with racketeering and conspiracy to commit murder.

In June in New Jersey, which prayer leaders say is called to be a “watchman state,” Sheets prayed for the state to receive a mantle of prayer, enabling it to guard the United States against evil. Pierce later told participants: “There are vipers working in Jersey City and Newark. Find those vipers, so the vipers do not become snipers.”

Small groups of intercessors began praying in their homes from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. By August the “night watches” had spread across the state.

Prayer leaders believe the intercession aided in the July capture of three New Jersey teens planning to murder three people and other random victims. The teens were heavily armed with rifles, handguns, machetes and ammunition. In August two

British men were caught trying to smuggle in Russian anti-aircraft missiles to shoot down commercial aircraft.

In other states, the fruit of the intercession was less tangible, leaders say. In Michigan, intercessors prayed for the state to regain its voice, which they said it had lost as a result of unholy alliances made with Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein. Their research found that Henry Ford funded Hitler in the 1940s, and in 1982, Coleman Young, then Detroit's mayor, gave the key to the city to Hussein after the Iraqi leader donated nearly a half-million dollars to a Chaldean church, run by a group of Catholics from Iraq.

Intercessors across the nation say the tour helped bring greater unity among believers in their regions. "We know that Missouri is not an island," said Regina Shank, USSPN Missouri prayer coordinator. "The plan for Missouri is connected to a bigger plan."

Since the October meeting in her state, Shank said several people have contacted her, saying they want to join her in praying for the state. Like other intercessors across the country, they want to see more than church growth. "We're looking for the kind of revival where bars shut down," central Missouri USSPN coordinator Linda Ordway said, "a true move of God that we haven't seen for a long time."

Karen Tom