

‘Smithton Revival’ moves to Kansas City

Members of Smithton Community Church relocated in April

The revival at Smithton Community Church is no more—in Smithton, Mo., that is. The church’s entire congregation pulled up stakes earlier this year and moved to Kansas City, Mo., where they’ve been ministering in area churches in a campaign dubbed “Cover the City in Glory.”

Smithton will soon have its own new home, and may have to change its “Cornfield Revival” nickname. Beginning June 30, the church will host its Big Tent Revival meetings that are expected to continue through September on 62 acres of land purchased by the church along I-470.

The church will continue to hold services in a huge air-conditioned tent until an aluminum building is constructed. The new facility should be completed in time to beat the harsh Midwest winter.

Pastors Steve and Kathy Gray said they obeyed the Holy Spirit’s call to relocate the revival from tiny Smithton—where the town’s 532 residents had grown weary of revival crowds that outnumbered the town’s population and where recharged Christians and new believers found few ministry opportunities.

The Grays told Charisma in April that they believe God would have closed down the revival had they not been willing to leave Smithton, where revival broke out on March 24, 1996. “I asked the Lord once for a guarantee that if we went to Kansas City, revival would continue,” Steve Gray said. “His only

guarantee was that if we didn't obey, the revival at Smithton would end."

More than 225,000 visitors from the 50 U.S. states and 40 countries have made their way across country roads to Smithton. But the Grays insist that being near an international airport in Kansas City just for convenience is not a primary reason for the move.

"This revival is not about us," said Steve Gray, who is 47. "It's about us being willing vessels to be obedient. This move will open up incredible avenues of service for [church members] to unleash their zeal for Jesus. Evangelism teams have little to do there [in Smithton]."

This is in contrast with Kansas City, where the metro area's 1.7 million population offers many new channels in which the Smithton outpouring can flow—especially to the city's youth who attend a public school system that in May lost its accreditation with the Missouri Board of Education for failure to meet 11 state performance standards.

While the church's more than 60 families—about 300 people—have taken new jobs in Kansas City, more people are expected to join the revival as a result of the move. Gray said many people who felt called to move to Smithton to support the revival could not do so because they could not find work in the small town. But Kansas City's opportunities are enabling them to make the move.

Gray noted a reporter's inquiry about whether the pastor believed the move to Kansas City would be successful: "I told him we weren't moving to be successful. We were moving to be

obedient.”