

Suburban Atlanta Youth Revival Almost Didn't Happen

God gave pastors 'another chance,' and hundreds of teen-agers are now coming to

Christ at a church in Norcross

A youth revival at an Atlanta-area warehouse, where the walls are painted black and kids shoot pool while listening to ear-splitting music, has resulted in at least 600 new commitments to Christ since August and shows no signs of letting up.

On a recent Saturday night in suburban Norcross, Ga., teens and 20- and 30-somethings poured into Victory World Outreach Church's building, which has been renovated to accommodate the newfound crowds. Inside, it may look like a party spot, but attendees said the celebration is the sort that is rocking the city with the Spirit of God.

Victory World Outreach youth pastor Billy Humphrey said his youth-group teens are becoming "witnessing machines." One of his eighth-graders has led 30-40 kids to faith in Jesus so far. "She has no fear—she'll approach anyone," Humphrey said.

Another teen invited three boys at a Taco Bell one night to the church's "party." It wasn't the kind of party the boys were expecting, and one left, but the other two made first-time commitments to Christ. A girl who was not particularly committed to her faith before the revival started, now drives a van-load of kids to every service she can.

The spiritual eruption at Victory World Outreach is

reminiscent of the one that swept Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla., in the late 1990s—but Humphrey said the church in Norcross almost missed their chance for revival.

In August, Humphrey had invited a missionary friend of his—Kevin Cooley, from India—to speak at the church. While Cooley ministered at a Sunday night youth service, he and Humphrey both knew God was doing something special.

“There was an intensity that gripped that meeting,” Humphrey said. Humphrey said he felt prompted by the Holy Spirit to hold another meeting the next night, but he said he wasn’t bold enough to announce it.

“We felt like we missed it by not having a Monday night service,” he said.

On Tuesday morning, Humphrey drove Cooley to the Atlanta airport for his flight back to India. On the way, both men were quiet, Humphrey said. They knew they should have gone ahead with the Monday night service. They even repented for disobeying God.

They prayed together some more in the airport parking lot. Instead of hustling Cooley into the international concourse, they began to consider a risky idea: let Cooley miss his flight so he could stay for extended meetings.

The men knew if the meetings turned out to be anticlimactic, then they hardly would have been worth Cooley’s missing his flight. But they both felt persuaded that “something was up,” as Humphrey put it.

"We prayed this prayer: 'God, give us another chance,'" Humphrey said. It was "like a door opened in the Spirit" after they decided Cooley would stay, he added.

While the minutes ticked away to check into the airport, both men sat in the car, hunched over their cell phones, calling their respective pastors to seek permission to have extended meetings. Permission granted, the meetings began, and God showed up.

"The first couple of weekends were just explosive," Humphrey said, noting that attendance doubled from about 140 to close to 300.

Instead of the normal Sunday night-Wednesday night routine, revival services are now Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, with a regular youth meeting each Wednesday night. Youth groups from various churches and unsaved teens from all around the city are coming.

Humphrey has led the services with young adults pastor Nathan Camp and J.C. Alzamora, who is on staff with a nearby church. Michael Brown, formerly on staff at Brownsville Assembly of God and currently president of Pensacola-based FIRE (Fellowship for International Revival and Evangelism), led a series of meetings in December that drew large crowds and resulted in many decisions for Christ.

At a recent service, Camp spoke about how holiness is connected to revival. When the altar call was issued, virtually every one of the people assembled got on their knees in repentance.

“The goal of these meetings is not just to get touched. God wants us to prepare for His coming,” Camp told the youth at that meeting. “And when He comes, He’s coming like a refiner’s fire.”

Humphrey said Victory World Outreach’s senior pastor, Dennis Rouse, as well as the entire church, has been supportive of the revival.

“Right now, I don’t sense an end to it,” Humphrey said. “Every weekend, there are new visitors and new people getting saved.”

Richard Daigle in Atlanta