

'The Call' youth event

Up to 400,000 teen-agers are expected to participate in a meeting on the Capitol Mall to seek spiritual awakening

As many as 400,000 young people and adults are expected to gather at the Washington, D.C., Capitol Mall Sept. 2 for The Call—a solemn assembly of worship, prayer, fasting and repentance. Organizers shared the vision behind this monumental undertaking at two recent press conferences in Denver and the nation's capital.

Although The Call is being billed as a youth event for those between the ages of 14 and 24, one of the main focuses will be reconciliation between the generations. Parents, pastors and youth leaders are welcome and encouraged to attend.

"We will have a massive gathering of people from every race and denomination coming together in unity and in prayer for a spiritual awakening," announced Ché Ahn, pastor of Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, Calif., and one of the event's key organizers.

The event will feature several speakers, including Bill McCartney, president of Promise Keepers, and Darrell Scott, whose child Rachel was killed in the Columbine High School massacre, as well as several Christian music artists.

The idea of a national gathering of young people as a follow-up to the 1997 Promise Keepers Stand in the Gap rally was the vision of Lou Engle, associate pastor at Harvest Rock Church and speaker for the Rock the Nations Youth Conferences.

“This event could help bring about a violent spiritual shift in the destiny of America,” Engle said.

Speaking at the Denver press conference, Darrell Scott pointed to the erosion of the American family as a cause of the Columbine massacre. Citing Malachi 4:6—“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers” (NKJV)—Scott said that’s what The Call is all about.

Ahn, 44, personally knows the pain of generational conflict. Feeling alienated from his father, he turned to drugs at age 15. By age 17, he was selling \$2,000 in drugs per month.

He dropped out of school and ran away from home and soon landed in jail. When an acquaintance shared the gospel with him and he committed his life to Christ, Ahn immediately was led by the Holy Spirit to ask his father for forgiveness and to seek reconciliation.

Organizers of The Call believe America’s youth are facing their darkest hour. They noted that although the U.S. economy is booming, youth are in trouble, and morality is declining. They also noted statistics that show 88 percent of America’s more than 30 million teen-agers don’t go to church.

Of the 12 percent who currently attend church, 80 percent will stop attending before they graduate high school. Surveys also show that 90 percent of people who give their lives to Christ do so before the age of 30.

“Today I have four wonderful teen-agers of my own who are all

walking with the Lord," Ahn told Charisma. "My hope is to see a

spiritual awakening, a conversion among the young people, turning them from darkness to light. We expect not just spiritual transformation at The Call, but also social transformation for our nation as well."

Ahn's son, Gabe, 19, echoed his father's call for spiritual and social transformation during the Washington press conference. "Many kids are turning to violence because they are searching for something. What they really want is love, attention and acceptance," he said.

Promise Keepers' Bill McCartney said he believes the family is still the key to reaching teens. "Young people have turned and stopped listening to their parents, and it's because parents have not listened to them, not valued them, not affirmed them," McCartney said.

While The Call has the backing of major religious leaders and organizations across the nation, all the planning is being done by the youth themselves. A group of young people from different parts of the country recently convened in Colorado, where they designed the brochure and chose the speakers and musicians.

"It has to be their event," Ché Ahn says. "We're just here to support them."

The youthful planners insist this is not another spiritual pep rally or Christian concert. They are serious about encouraging kids to fast and pray for this solemn assembly. Their avant-garde brochure for The Call says it all: "The youth of America

are being summoned to appear before the Lord in prayer so that we can see the nation turned back to God.”