

Thousands Expected at Historic Promise Keepers Event



A ministry known for empowering men is seeking to shatter divisions this weekend by including women for the first time ever in one of its large-scale stadium events.

Several thousand people are expected to convene tonight at Folsom Stadium in Boulder, Colo., for Promise Keepers' only stadium event this year. Dubbed "A Time to Honor," the event runs through Saturday and will emphasize honoring women, serving the poor and recognizing the Jewish roots of Christianity.

"Boulder is going to be the epicenter of an extraordinary move of God," said Bill McCartney, co-founder of the 20-year-old men's ministry and former head football coach at the University of Colorado. "It's going to go around the world. This is the very heart of God, to bring the church together for the difficult days ahead."

In addition to McCartney and Promise Keepers President Raleigh Washington, conference speakers will include Dallas pastor Tony Evans, Messianic rabbi Jonathan Bernis, Dream Center co-founder Tommy Barnett and Jane Hansen Hoyt, president of Aglow International, who will deliver the keynote. Lou Engle, founder of TheCall prayer ministry, will speak at the "Called Out" youth event on Saturday.

"I believe that this Promise Keepers event could well usher in a great move of God," Hansen Hoyt told *Charisma*. "God has put

something on Coach McCartney's heart for this that I believe *is* the heart of God: honoring the fathers of the faith, blessing the poor, and bringing men and women together.

"Because men and women are the foundation of the plan God set in place, we must also be the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17: men and women walking in unity as God desired, a visible sign of the strength God purposed for the church."

The lone event this year marks a change in direction for Promise Keepers, which traditionally has hosted multiple events during the summer that focus solely on men's issues. Since its peak in the 1990s, when the ministry drew nearly 1 million men to Washington, D.C., for its landmark Stand in the Gap event, the organization has struggled with declining attendance.

Last year Promise Keepers scheduled eight events, but canceled one and shifted several others to smaller venues due to a lack of ticket sales. At press time, 5,500 people had preregistered for A Time to Honor, though organizers expect many attendees to register at the door.

"The ministry has been on a downward spiral. Our staff and our resources are really limited," said McCartney, who returned as chairman and CEO of Promise Keepers last September, five years after resigning to care for his ill wife. "We felt like we wanted to have all hands on deck for the Boulder event, and we feel like it will relaunch the ministry."

McCartney, 68, believes the Holy Spirit will show up in a powerful way this weekend because of the ministry's efforts to restore divisions in the body of Christ by reaching out to women, the poor and believing Jews.

"It's not about changing Promise Keepers," McCartney said. "We're just calling men to rally around the righteous as the days get more difficult."

McCartney, who founded a ministry for Jewish believers called Road to Jerusalem during his time away from Promise Keepers, believes the display of unity between gentile and Jewish believers will be particularly powerful.

In a letter sent in late April, he detailed this vision through an analysis of John 17:20-22, where Jesus prays for unity among believers during the Last Supper. McCartney writes that, "In effect, Jesus is saying that when these two people [Jews and gentiles], who have had an historic enmity heal the divide and become one, the world will then experience its final harvest of souls."

Throughout the event, Promise Keepers also will be collecting food to benefit the Denver Rescue Mission.

A Time to Honor will be webcast live. A special conference magazine also is available online.