

1,000 Pentecostal Pastors Gather as 'Fayetteville Miracle' Manifests

The gathering together of almost 1,000 Pentecostal pastors and denominational leaders in Fayetteville, North Carolina on Jan. 5-7, 2015 for ENCOUNTER 2015 has been likened denominationally to what took place in Memphis, Tennessee, on Oct. 18, 1994.

On that date, the previously almost all-white PFNA (Pentecostal Fellowship of North America) was dissolved, and a new, inclusive organization, PCCNA (Pentecostal Charismatic Churches of North America) emerged in its place—consisting of membership from multiple races. As Pentecostal leaders from various races and denominations washed one another's feet, that historic meeting was dubbed, "The Memphis Miracle."

The "Fayetteville Miracle" was the first ever self-initiated gathering of Pentecostal pastors and denominational leaders (at least nine Pentecostal groups were represented) for the one express purpose of prayer. Hosted by Northwood Temple (an International Pentecostal Holiness Church), and led by the prayer coordinators of the Church of God (Doug Small), the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (Lou Shirley), and the Assemblies of God (John Maempa), the sessions began with a limited amount of musical praise and worship and flowed directly into focused prayer led by predetermined representatives from the attending fellowships.

There were no offerings received, no sermons preached, and no business sessions conducted. The multidenominational emphasis was prayer alone, aided only by brief devotionals and guides, and with delegates assembled each night around the Lord's Table for Holy Communion. A highlight of the meeting was when the top leaders of each fellowship were paired together for

the laying on of hands and prayer for one another.

Delegates from each group were asked to stand in prayer with their leaders during this process. Executive leaders, support staff members, pastors, teachers, and evangelists—men, women, and minorities—all led prayer sessions focusing on “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

In addition to directed prayer, there were also seasons of open prayer, where delegates knelt at their seats, around the altar, or in some cases, walked the sanctuary, in prayer. Registration was free, and represented delegates from the Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland), Church of God of Prophecy, Congregational Holiness Church, Full Gospel Fellowship International, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, Open Bible Church, Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church and United Holy Church of America.

The Church of God leadership delegate was Secretary General M. Thomas Propes, representing General Overseer Mark Williams, who was unable to attend because of a death in his family. A large delegation of pastors and state administrative bishops also attended. Other headquarters delegates included Dr. James E. Cossey, Executive Administrator of USA Missions, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Moore, Ministry to the Military, and Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Hill, Multicultural Ministries. Propes, Cossey, and Dr. and Mrs. Hill each led a specific prayer emphasis.

There are no immediate plans for a repeat of this historic gathering. However, the coordinators do envision the possibility of similar prayer meetings on a state or regional level. An overriding consensus kept emerging in the Fayetteville meeting: These are turbulent times. Wars, violence, terrorism and secular ideologies are at odds with our mission.

The Pentecostal movement has been raised up to be a powerful force for God and good. There is so much we can do together

that we cannot do apart from each other. And the missional mandate of Scripture rang loudly: “if My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chr. 7:14).