

Christian Leaders Call for 40-Day Fast in Run Up to Election

✖ More than 80 prominent Christian leaders are endorsing a 40-day fast leading up to the midterm elections that kicks off Sunday with a simulcast event from Washington, D.C.

Organized by California pastor Jim Garlow and Prison Fellowship founder Chuck Colson, Pray & Act has gained support from a cross-section of Christians, including Bible teacher Kenneth Copeland, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, Generals International co-founder Cindy Jacobs, Southern Baptist Convention leader Richard Land, Atlanta pastor Creflo Dollar and Campus Crusade for Christ co-founder Vonette Bright.

Garlow said the campaign aims to address a “severe spiritual crisis” in the nation. In a reference to 2 Chronicles 7:14, participants are being asked to fast and pray from Monday at 7:14 a.m. Eastern until Oct. 30 at 7:14 a.m.

“Politics—of either party—cannot save us,” said Garlow, pastor of Skyline Church in San Diego and a leader in the successful Yes on 8 campaign that banned gay marriage in California. “We need God. And we need Him now. Positively, we believe it is not too late. At least, not yet.”

In addition to prayer, the effort calls on Christians to “act” by conforming their lives to biblical values, and transforming the culture through evangelism and compassion ministry. Supporters also are being asked to sign the Manhattan Declaration, a document released last November that affirms the sanctity of life, traditional marriage and religious liberty. More than 470,000 people have signed it so far, and Garlow hopes to bring the number to 1 million.

The Pray & Act kickoff, to be broadcast on the American Family Association (AFA) website Sunday at 8 p.m. Eastern, will feature leaders attending the AFA's Values Voters summit this weekend. The speakers—ranging from conservative politicians to pastors—will be interviewed by Garlow and will join him in calling Christians to 40 days of prayer and fasting. A final simulcast will be held on Oct. 30 from the Lincoln Memorial.

Christians have gathered for several prayer events this year—from the MayDay event in Washington May 1 to the thousands of National Day of Prayer services across the U.S. to TheCall Sacramento earlier this month. There are more to come, including Africa Prays for America Oct. 16, when African Christians will meet in Washington to pray for revival in the United States.

Lou Engle, founder of the TheCall, believes the various prayer efforts are a result of God's stirring. "The church is actually picking up on the prophetic trumpet [call]—it's urgent, there needs to be a turning back to the Lord," he said.

Conservative Christians for months have lamented the state of the nation, pointing to mounting national debt, the controversial health care overhaul and most recently a federal judge's decision to overturn California's gay marriage ban. But noting that Republican leaders did not plan to include family values in their legislative blueprint, Pray & Act supporters insist neither political party can save the day.

"We're not seeking a political party," Colson said last Sunday at a preliminary Pray & Act event in Washington. "We're not taking a partisan position. We are seeking God's intervention in the affairs of our state and to give us hope that comes only from God."

"I don't put my faith in political parties," he added. "I have one King."

However, several participating leaders say the prayer effort could have political implications if “righteous” candidates are elected to office.

“It’s not like a political deal, but I believe God wants to raise up the righteous across the nation,” Engle said. “Everybody knows we’re at a turning point, although that’s not the main focus of Pray & Act.”

He said Pray & Act is a spiritual movement. “But you can’t divorce a stand for life and marriage from a political stand,” Engle told *Charisma*. “Because you’re saying, ‘Over my dead body I will stand on the truth that marriage is between a man and a woman, and you cannot shed the innocent blood of babies.’ That will immediately affect your politics. It becomes political through and through, but it’s not a political action. It basically springs from biblical convictions.”

Leaders say there is a sense of urgency about the state of the nation among leaders and the grass roots. A month after the Pray & Act website launched, Engle said it had received nearly a million hits.

Garlow agrees that “there seems to be an awareness of how desperate we are.” He admits, though, that he’s no fan of fasting. “Fasting is hard,” he said, “but losing a nation is much harder.”