

# Prophetic Prayer Ministry Forced to Leave National Mall in D.C.

*Editor's note: My friends at David's Tent alerted me about this this morning. Please stand in prayer with me for this vital ministry!*

The plug may be pulled on the longest running outdoor Christian worship event in our nation's history due to a bureaucratic snafu.

David'sTentDC (DTDC) is a Jesus-centered worship and prayer vigil that has been running 24/7 continuously on the National Mall over 500 days since the kickoff on Sept. 11, 2015. Currently it is located at Constitution Gardens Plaza, 1700 Constitution Ave NW, Washington, D.C. With a theme of "Jesus is Worthy," over 500 worship teams from around the nation have participated in this worship and prayer vigil, signing up in two-hour segments.

DTDC was notified Feb. 9, 2017 by the National Park Service (NPS) that their next permit application will not be granted for Constitution Gardens Plaza due to a reconstruction project. When DTDC sought the NPS permits office for help in relocating to a different place, it was confirmed Feb. 15, that due to newly (March 2016) instituted turf protection regulations, there was no place for DTDC. This effectively put DTDC on the brink of being shuttered March 10, 2017, when their current permit ends. DTDC does not think this is religiously malicious in any way, but simply the result of over-regulation.

The conviction of DTDC is that now is the time to stoke the fires of worship and prayer, not put them out. DTDC is based on the biblical King David, who put a worship tent right

beside his palace and hired 4288 musicians and singers to minister to God 24/7 for 33 years until Solomon built the temple. It's notable that those were the golden years of Israel's history.

DTDC is currently seeking help to contact your senators and representatives in Congress to help keep this vigil alive. Possible actions could include:

- Congressional inquiries to the NPS, or higher in the Department of the Interior, to see if they'd grant a turf exemption and take the responsibility to relocate us.
- Congress has jurisdiction over the Capitol Grounds. Union Square, just east of the Capitol, would be a great location for DTDC to move, but would take congressional action to override some of regulations of the Capitol police. Upper Senate Park could also work.

### **Find and Contact Your Representatives Here:**

U.S. Senators: Get contact information for your Senators.

U.S. Representatives: Find contact information for your Representative

The other option would be for someone in the executive branch to act to override the actions of the NPS that led DTDC to a dead end. The NPS is part of the Department of the Interior. Rep. Ryan Zinke, the sole representative from Montana in the House, is the president's nominee to be secretary of the interior, part of the executive Cabinet.

"Beyond all things", David's Tent founder Jason Hershey requests, "Let's pray. God will open a door! And let's not let anything hinder our joy in the Lord and our praise of His name forever!"

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Here are the longer details of DTDC's permitting journey:

DTDC is legally permitted as a 1st Amendment activity (Prayer vigil) on the National Mall.

DTDC's first permit was granted for 40 days on the White House Ellipse in the fall of 2012. Over 150 worship teams came that fall. DTDC's second permit was the following fall of 2013 for 42 days. The third permit was the fall of 2014, for 50 days. It was then that DTDC asked two key questions of the NPS:

- What is the maximum time limit for a permitted activity on the Mall, on one permit? The answer was 120 days, four months.
- Is there any regulation against putting permit applications in one after the next? The answer was there is nothing hindering DTDC from doing that.

At that point DTDC began putting in permit applications a year in advance every 120 days, this time for the northwest quadrant of the Washington Monument grounds, preparing, a year in advance, for 14 months of constant vigil from Sept. 11, 2015 – Nov. 8, 2016 (Election Day). Permits are given for particular plots of ground for events on the Mall on a first-come, first-serve basis, but the rule is that one can't put in an application earlier than one year out from the first day of the proposed permit date.

Everything was set for DTDC's kickoff. In one of the logistics meetings with the NPS previous to kickoff, it was acknowledged by all the intent of DTDC. The representative from the Park Police inquired for understanding, "So with multiple permits in a row, we are talking about a permanent structure on the mall for over a year?" "Yes," Jason Hershey clearly replied. Everyone shook their heads and acknowledged that was understood.

It was also understood from the beginning that DTDC would be paying up to \$10,000 to the NPS for the restoration of the

grass under the footprint of the tent that would be killed while we there for such an extended time. DTDC agreed to that, with total understanding.

DTDC kicked off Sept. 11, 2015, on the Washington Monument grounds, fully with the understanding that their permit applications were valid and had no reason to be denied in the future. One permit expired, and the next one was given as planned. All was well, except for a short hiccup due to security for the Papal Parade.

Suddenly, late March of 2016, 6 months in, DTDC was summoned to a meeting with the NPS and told that their next permit starting April 12, would not be granted for the Washington Monument grounds, because they were on grass. The NPS had just changed the regulations that no event can be on the turf more than 5 days total due to protecting the grass. They offered us Constitution Gardens Plaza as the only "hardscape" solution for us.

Interestingly, they disclosed in the same meeting that they had just received three congressional phone calls complaining about DTDC. This also came just as DTDC started to put in permit applications for past November 8, 2016 proposing an unending perpetual vigil for years to come, with the explanation "Jesus is worthy, not just on election years!"

Left with no other option, on April 12, 2016, DTDC moved to Constitution Garden's Plaza, where it remains. DTDC did have to move to John Marshal Park, for May 10 – July 10, 2016 due to previously planned events by the NPS on the plaza. DTDC was billed for over \$4000 by the NPS for grass restoration at the Washington Monument grounds. As understood, DTDC paid the bill, but the grass was never restored.

In April 2016, DTDC inquired if they could be "grandfathered" and given more time at Washington Monument grounds, as they were given just two weeks' notice. The NPS response was a

clear no, citing the need for securing the grounds immediately to begin restoring the grass. As of Feb. 21, 2017, nothing has ever been done to the footprint of DTDC by the Washington Monument grounds. DTDC paid for it. NPS was very clear that restoration had to begin immediately, but no action was ever taken.

Things have worked well for DTDC at Constitution Gardens, though the location was not as central on the mall as at the Washington Monument grounds. When DTDC was informed Feb. 9, 2017, that they would not be granted their next four-month permit due to a reconstruction project, DTDC knew immediately that they had few options.

There are a couple other hardscape, gravel, non-grass, walkways on the main stretch of the mall by the Smithsonian Museum that would be suitable for DTDC, but since DTDC's applications, put in a year in advance, were for Constitution Gardens Plaza (amended from Washington Monument grounds), at a different location, DTDC would now be at the back of the line. With only four weeks to find another location, those other hardscape places have all been reserved by other groups, making it impossible for DTDC to relocate there for the next eight months at least.

On Feb. 10, 2017, the NPS acknowledged that DTDC didn't have any options. However, the NPS asked for more time for someone to get back from an extended weekend off. It was then confirmed on Feb. 15, 2017, that there were no options for DTDC on the Mall, but affirming us to go ahead and seek congressional approval for Union Square, on the Capitol Grounds or any other option.

In summary, DTDC does not think that the NPS has been malicious. But circumstances, regulations and timing has put DTDC on the brink of being shuttered on March 10, when their current permit runs out. DTDC is seeking any help in finding a place to relocate.

Why not just get a church? DTDC is based on the biblical King David, who put a tent up by his palace, hired 4288 musicians and singers to minister to God's heart 24/7 for up to 33 years, until Solomon, his son, built the temple. It was a key part of the vigil that Jesus would be given a central, significant place on federal soil, just like David made the Lord central in His governmental administration. The very location has been part of the non-articulated prayer, in essence saying, "Jesus, we want you to be central in the hearts of America." {eoa}