

Christian Group Leads Gulf Coast Prayer Walk

As up to 2.5 million gallons of oil pour daily into the Gulf of Mexico with no end in sight, Christians touring the region this week are offering the one thing they believe will make a difference: prayer.

The Rev. Mitch Hescox, president of the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), began the Gulf Spill Prayer Walk Monday in Waveland, Miss., and will journey through the Mississippi Delta before ending Saturday in Venice, La.

"I truly believe that prayer is the answer right now," Hescox said. "The only person that has the wisdom to stop this flow of oil is our Lord. And we need to open a clear channel through prayer that He will influence either directly through some supernatural way or He'll give some engineer a brilliant idea ... that only God can give."

Throughout the journey, Hescox has been stopping to talk and pray with Gulf Coast residents, many of whom are facing the loss of their livelihoods. He said a woman in Pass Christian, Miss., said she and her husband have laid off most of the employees in the business they've run for 25 years. Earlier that day, a fisherman told him: "I'm 59 years and my way of life has just disappeared. I will never be able to oyster again."

"Post-Katrina people could get in their trucks and fill their trucks full of lumber and come down and board up houses," Hescox said. "People right here now, especially the fisher-people who are being affected, there is nothing they can do. And that sense of hopelessness is just building and building and building. And I know no better way of giving people hope other than the ultimate hope in Jesus Christ. And that's going

to happen by us praying for these people.”

Hescox said the EEN is praying that BP, which owns the rig that exploded April 20 and touched off the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history, does its part to reimburse business owners for losses caused by the oil spill. They are also asking God to allow the weather to remain calm to minimize the amount of oil that hits the beaches and marshlands, where fish breed.

Churches in the region also have been rallying in prayer. After the oil leak began, Gulf Coast state prayer leaders prayed and repented during a conference call convened by the U.S. Reformation Prayer Network (USRPN), led by Mike and Cindy Jacobs.

On May 15, intercessors in Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Mississippi simultaneously blew shofars over the water and asked God to cleanse and heal the Gulf, said Mildred Bean, leader of Prepare His Way Ministries in Ocean Springs, Miss., in a report to the USRPN. Â

BP has made several attempts to stop or control the oil spill, but efforts to place domes over the leaking well or shut it down using a top kill have proved ineffective. The company has announced plans to bring in a floating production, storage and offloading vessel to capture the oil and is drilling relief wellsÂ into the original well to block the leak.

But prophetic ministry leaders such as Chuck Pierce of Glory of Zion Ministries and Bob Jones have said only God can plug up the leak.

“There is no help for this nation apart from God,” Jones wrote in a June 3 message. “We must cry out for God to plug the oil well in the Gulf for He’s the only one that can do it!Â And He’ll only do it when the church cries out.”

Hescox said the disaster has made some churchgoers open to his

group's message that Christians have a responsibility to care for creation, which they say includes reducing energy consumption. He says the crude oil that has leaked into the Gulf represents only a few hours of Americans' daily oil consumption.

"This is not a time to fight over who's at fault over the oil," Hescox said. "This is a time to say, 'Lord Jesus help us,' because quite honestly we're all guilty of [overconsumption]."

"I believe we need the Lord to transform us so we use our resources wisely and we rally around together, not looking to do our own self-interest but looking to do the work of our Lord," he added. "And the only way that can happen is through prayer and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ coming into us."