

Christians Surround Gay Pride Event With Prayer, Evangelism

✖ In what is being called the largest outreach of its kind in Charlotte, N.C., more than 1,000 Christians are expected to pray and evangelize at the city's annual gay pride event Saturday to proclaim that "God has a better way."

"Our statement is that God has a better way," said organizer Michael L. Brown, a former Brownsville Revival leader and president of the FIRE School of Ministry, which relocated to the Charlotte area in 2004.

"We won't be yelling at people through loudspeakers," added Brown, who leads the citywide Coalition of Conscience that is behind Saturday's outreach. "We'll be praying, worshiping, believing that the presence of God will touch hearts and will make a difference in the city."

Organizers are calling the God Has a Better Way rally a "Spirit-birthing" response to Charlotte's annual gay pride event. "Nothing like this has ever been done in conjunction with a gay pride event in any city before, and those who join together on this day will be part of history in the making," said a statement on the Coalition of Conscience Web site.

TheCall founder Lou Engle is joining the coalition on Saturday and plans to spend the time praying for a national prayer movement to emerge that challenges homosexuality.

"I'm going there to pray ... that out of Charlotte something would come forth that would release a prayer explosion around the nation," said Engle, who with area churchgoers and intercessors nationwide has been fasting in preparation for the rally.

"God spoke to me in 2001 after TheCall in D.C. that no one is

targeting false ideologies with massive fasting and prayer," he added, "cause our fight's not against flesh and blood, it's against forces of darkness, it's thought systems that are raised up against the knowledge of God."

Engle is in talks with Brown to base a prayer ministry in Charlotte that targets homosexuality much like the Justice Houses of Prayer he founded has targeted abortion. He believes prayer efforts against abortion led to recent polls showing 51 percent of Americans identifying themselves as pro-life.

"I felt like the Lord said, 'Lou, go join with Mike Brown and raise up a prayer movement to contend with this ideology and pray for a spiritual awakening among homosexuals,'" Engle said. "I think Mike is probably one of the clearest voices [addressing homosexuality] and has a history of God using him with revival, which is what we need."

Brown has been opposing gay activism in Charlotte since he moved to the area five years ago. FIRE students evangelized and prayed during the 2005 Charlotte Pride event, and churches united in opposition to it, challenging city officials for allowing an event on public property at which participants engaged in sometimes lewd behavior.

The following year Charlotte Pride was cancelled, Brown said, and Christians instead hosted an event called Not Ashamed Charlotte in the same city park where the gay pride event had been held. During that event, Brown discussed why the Bible does not support homosexuality but also apologized to gays and lesbians for the church's failure to understand their struggles.

While homosexuals are not Christians' enemies, gay activism "is a true threat to religious liberty and moral family foundations," Brown said. "Therefore we must put up a clear wall of compassionate resistance."

He said a FIRE student who worked at Charlotte pre-school was

told to address the children as “friends” rather than “boys” and “girls” because that would be a gender distinction. The student also had been asked to read books such as *Heather Has Two Mommies* to the 3- and 4-year-olds but refused.

Brown said subsequent Charlotte Pride events have been held on private property and have been more tame. But he has remained visible in his community, publishing editorials in local newspapers and hosting lectures about homosexuality, including a high-profile debate with Harry Knox, a leader with the gay activist group Human Rights Council and a member of President Obama’s faith advisory council.

Brown believes the Coalition for Conscience could help show the nation how to reach out to homosexual men and women with compassion but resist homosexual activism with courage. “We’ve ... felt like God wanted to make Charlotte a template, a model for the nation that we could help turn back the tide of homosexual activism on a national level,” he said.

Gay activists have condemned Saturday’s rally on blogs and gay Web sites, calling Engle and Brown bigoted and hateful. But both men say they can’t back down.

“Most people are backing away from these things,” Brown said. “They’re afraid to touch them; they don’t want to seem bigoted. We’re determined to stand up for Jesus in a way that is honoring to Him, without compromising truth, without compromising love.”