

Franklin Graham Festival of Hope Reaches Into Thin Air

Perched high in a South American mountain range – twice as high as Denver – live more than 2 million people in the metro area of La Paz, Bolivia.

The city is serviced by El Alto International Airport, the world's highest International airport at 13,325 feet above sea level.

Water boils here at 190 degrees Fahrenheit.

But even the high La Paz altitude can't quite match the expectations for the upcoming Festival of Hope with Franklin Graham March 8-10.

"The leaders are quite excited about what God is ready to do in that country," said Viktor Hamm, Vice President of Crusades for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. "There's over 700 churches involved and there's a lot of prayer going on in the La Paz area."

The excitement was evident at the launch event 14 months ago as 942 church and local leaders attended.

To date, 777 churches are involved in preparations for the Festival of Hope, which will feature Dennis Agajanian and The Gutierrez Brothers, The Tommy Coomes Band, along with acclaimed artists Daniel Calveti, Tercer Cielo and Alex Campos.

"We have lined up a tremendous group of international musicians," Hamm said.

Ministry has already been in full motion in both La Paz and its neighbor city El Alto. Each city hosted a children's festival in October where a combined total of more than 14,000

attended and over 3,000 decisions were made for Christ.

"Hundreds of buses are booked already," Hamm said, "with close to 30,000 people ready to come to the Festival."

This marks the second time Franklin Graham has come to Bolivia to hold a Festival—with Santa Cruz hosting one in 1999. It's also the 14th Festival in South America with Belo Horizonte, Brazil, the most recent host of an evangelistic outreach in May of 2010.

The BGEA has also invested ministry in Bolivia through *My Hope*, a nationwide relationship evangelism outreach, which culminated in October 2004.

"La Paz is a city that has been prayed for by a good number of people who have a burden for the destiny of this city," Hamm said. "It's a pretty modern city with all the social and spiritual challenges you would face in North America or other parts of the world."

A growing city, La Paz attracts many people from nearby mountain towns with vistas of Illimani, a triple-peak snow-capped mountain range.

"Communities were established outside the core city of La Paz, closer to the airport (in El Alto)," Hamm said. "That's where the new churches were established and that's where a lot of the buses will be coming from."

Thus far, more than 10,000 Operation Andrew cards have been filled out, representing approximately 70,000 people who are being prayed for and invited to the Festival. Nearly 9,000 have been trained through Christian Life and Witness classes with more than 3,000 counselors signed up for the three-night event.

"There's been a lot of preparation, a lot of expectations about what will happen in La Paz," Hamm said. "They are really

looking forward to hearing from Franklin Graham.”

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