

Intercessors Make Prayer a Focus of Patriot Day on Sept. 11 in New York

Prayers to honor God and lift up America were offered on Patriot Day in New York last week as dozens of Christians traveled to the site of the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history.

As in years past, ceremonies were held at Ground Zero and across New York City last Thursday, marking the 13th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The national anthem was sung, bells tolled, and the names of the victims were read aloud one-by-one. Many stood in silence; some were in tears.

Joining the thousands of participants and observers to the ceremony was a group of about 70 Christians from many denominations and businesses across the United States to commemorate Patriot Day in New York, to remember our history and pray for the future of America.

Patriot Day, observed as the National Day of Service and Remembrance, occurs on Sept. 11 of each year in memory of the 2,977 killed in the 2001 terrorist attacks. President George W. Bush proclaimed Friday, Sept. 14, 2001, as a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance for the victims of the attacks. A bill to make Sept. 11 a national day of mourning each year was introduced in the U.S. House on Oct. 25, 2001, and it passed both houses of Congress unanimously.

The flag of the United States is flown at half-staff at the White House and on all U.S. government buildings and establishments throughout the world; Americans also are encouraged to display the flag on individual homes. Additionally, a moment of silence is observed to correspond

with the attacks, beginning at 8:46 a.m. EDT, the time the first plane, American Airlines Flight 11, struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

Patriot Day is not a federal holiday; schools and businesses remain open in observance of the occasion, although memorial ceremonies for the victims are held in various places, including the Washington area, where one hijacked airliner crashed into the Pentagon, and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where passengers wrested control of their airliner away from the terrorists, and it crashed into a field.

Sept. 11 also was the deadliest incident for firefighters and for law enforcement officers in the history of the United States, with 343 and 72 killed respectively. Volunteer and service opportunities are coordinated by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The day began at 6 a.m. as I met the challenge of catching a taxi to join the others for the Patriot Day of Prayer in New York City. The streets were crowded with security, and everyone is remembering where they were the day that terror struck and lives were changed forever.

The first prayer session was held at the rotunda of the Federal Hall National Memorial, where George Washington was inaugurated as the nation's first president in 1789. The session was opened by Evie Pelle Tournquest Karlsson, who sang, "You are awesome in this place mighty God..." The meeting continued with historian William Federer emphasizing, "As long as they sought God, they prospered." His prayer was, "We repent, oh God. Help us to stay focused. Have mercy."

Between sessions there was a Prayer Drive through Manhattan passing many significant historical sites with the attendees offering prayers to God for New York City, the United States and the world.

A concert with the West Point Band and Glee Club was held at

historic Trinity Church on Wall Street. The event also commemorated the 200th anniversary of Francis Scott Key's composition of the lyrics of "The Star-Spangled Banner," which of course became the National Anthem.

Next, a Prayer Session was held at the Statue of Liberty with Rev. Mel Tari from Indonesia. He prayed, "Jesus, Alpha and Omega, who was, who is and who is to be. God will fulfill His promise... America will be saved and God will fulfill His plan and promise. As each one is praying and is willing to stand strong and do their part, God will be our God, and we will be His people. America will arise. Let's renew our covenant with God. The covenant made by our forefathers will be fulfilled!" Then he called for everyone to fall on their knees and renew their covenant with God.

The day ended with a Prayer Cruise around Manhattan. The Rev. Joseph Handley ended the long but most inspiring day by giving everyone hope for the future of America as he said, "The Future is as Bright as the Promises of God!"

When asking attendees how they felt about the day I heard, "I have never felt the presence of God so strong as today." Several said, "I know God has something else for me to do and He will enable me to do it." "This has been the best prayer gathering I have ever attended. Everyone felt like family with one purpose in mind."