

# 'Pittsburgh Is Destined for Revival'

What does hope look like?

Describing it is not always the easiest thing. And Jeremy Puckett, a 33-year-old Pittsburgh police officer, can't always spot it, but he sure knows when it's missing.

All it takes is one look at a person's face. Hopelessness, in Puckett's experience, is nearly impossible to mask.

"You can see it in their eyes," he said.

Puckett was one of hundreds of counselors at this weekend's Three Rivers Festival of Hope in Pittsburgh, the city he grew up in. He entered the festival eagerly wondering how God might work in his hometown.

But he finished the weekend realizing God was working on his heart.

For three nights straight, he talked with three different men—ages 51, 47 and 18. All three had known Jesus personally at one time in their lives but had walked away. All three recommitted their lives to Christ at the event.

Phil, Aaron and Alan were three of more than 1,500 people who made decisions last weekend to follow Christ at the CONSOL Energy Center in downtown Pittsburgh.

"To see somebody else's life touched, it's just an incredible feeling," Puckett said. "It gives you a hunger to do more."

And that starts with the people in his everyday life. Those people whose faces lack life, eyes drooping at the corners. Like the guy he works with on the force.

“You can see he’s looking for something,” Puckett said. “His wife left him. He’s miserable. He tries to cover it up.”

But Puckett knows. And now he’s more inspired and courageous to do something about it. To talk to him about the hope that can be found only in Christ.

“I hope this (festival) gives us the courage to talk to people about Jesus,” Puckett said. “I hope this lights a fire in Pittsburgh.”

And that fire might not be contained to the Steel City. As more than 25,000 experienced the Festival of Hope in Pittsburgh, over 29,000 watched live online at .

On Sunday alone, viewers in more than 90 countries tuned in, including Kuwait, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Iceland, Slovakia and Papua New Guinea. Those watching on their computers or mobile devices heard the same timeless Gospel message from Franklin Graham that resonated in the CONSOL Energy Center, and hundreds indicated making online decisions for Christ.

“Don’t hesitate—you may not have another chance to do this in your life,” Franklin Graham said. “By coming tonight you’re saying, ‘I believe Jesus is the Son of God, and He took my sins to the cross.’”

Lacey Sturm gave a similar message in song with her performance of “Mercy Tree,” featured on last fall’s *My Hope with Billy Graham* short film, *The Cross*.

“The first time I heard that song, I couldn’t stop crying,” she said.

Sturm was on the verge of tears all weekend. This was more than just a festival—she’s played many Franklin Graham events dating back to her Flyleaf days.

This Three Rivers Festival was personal. Pittsburgh is home for Sturm, her husband, Josh, and two sons since moving to the

Steel City four years ago. They even prayed over it at the top of Mount Washington when the couple first moved to town. And her church, Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, has been praying for this festival—and a Pittsburgh revival—every weekday morning at 5 a.m. for over a year.

All those prayers—certainly thousands among thousands when you consider 498 Pittsburgh-area churches were involved in the Festival—came to fruition last weekend.

As Pittsburghers streamed down the aisles each night, Sturm, standing off to the side in the shadows of the stage, couldn't help but fight off the tears.

"It's pretty much the best thing you can see on Earth," she said.

The way she sees it, this is far more than just a three-day event, where things will go back to normal on Monday morning. This is the start of something bigger than anyone could imagine.

"I do believe that Pittsburgh is destined for revival," Sturm added. "God is bearing fruit to so many people who have been praying for this.

"I think the big movement of God in this world is going to happen in Pittsburgh."

The Festival of Hope heads to Toronto on Sept. 12-14. Watch live on .

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