

# Rochester Believers Praying for Great Awakening

After sharing the gospel with thousands in Budapest and the Baltic region the past two weekends, Franklin Graham is returning stateside to proclaim the Gospel in Rochester, N.Y., June 16 and 17.

And residents of this Great Lakes city pray that another “Rochester Revival” is on the horizon.

Back in 1830, one of the most prominent and influential evangelists in American history, **Charles G. Finney**, accepted an invitation to meet the wife of a prominent Rochester attorney who worried that revival, which seemed to follow Finney everywhere, would ruin the coming social season.

As he spoke with the woman, she was moved by Scripture and the Holy Spirit. When he invited her to pray, she fell to her knees, wracked with sobs and became a child of God—just one of the many from Rochester’s highest classes who came to know Christ in the period known as the **Second Great Awakening**.

From the fall of 1830 to the summer of 1831, Finney’s ministry hit its high point in Rochester. During the period, the city was a bustling commercial center near the newly completed Erie Canal. Such was the power of God on Finney’s work that the entire business district often shut down to attend his meetings. Great crowds followed Finney as he preached from church to church.

A Finney biographer, Charles Hambrick-Stowe, noted, “The nationwide revival sparked by Rochester was the greatest work of God, and the greatest revival of religion, that the world has ever seen in so short a time.”

The Rochester campaign also united Christians around two

significant social issues—temperance and the abolition of slavery.

In 1847, when Frederick Douglass settled in Rochester, the city became a national antislavery center. Douglass delivered his fiery speech “The Meaning of July Fourth to the Negro” before the Rochester Ladies Antislavery Association at Corinthian Hall, Rochester, on July 5, 1852.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, numerous locations in the Rochester area were used as safe-houses to shelter fugitive slaves before they were placed on board boats—often on the Genesee River—for transport to Canada. The route was part of the famous Underground Railroad.

Freedom for the soul—along with revival—is something that Franklin Graham and Rochester’s pastors pray breaks out this weekend.

“The Great Lakes region is home to at least 40 million people, many of whom are without hope and without God,” said Franklin Graham in talking about the need for Rock the Lakes. “It is frightening that the majority of young people in the world today know little or nothing about God and His Word and rarely, if ever, attend church.

“They don’t know that God created them, loves them and sent His Son to die for their sins. Unless God moves in a mighty way among our youth, this will be a lost generation.”

“This is a community, like most, where there is a concern about the youth,” said Festival Director Robert Tatum. “They have their issues with schools, budget cuts, low test scores. And it’s not a high-crime area, but they are seeing an increase in crime.”

Overall, churches have been declining quickly in Rochester, 6 percent in the last decade. Pastor Tony Martorona believes that this is a great time champion the cause of Christ in

Rochester. He believes that churches are too passive in accepting the political correctness of our day: "The movement to cleanse the public square of all things religious must be politely, but aggressively, addressed by the Christian church at large."

Gene Wing, a deacon at Pittsford Community Church, is looking forward to Rock the Lakes: "I'm very excited," said Wing, 59, a Kodak retiree who has joined an army of local volunteers helping to organize the event. "What a wonderful thing it will be to have the whole community there, hearing the gospel and letting people know there is hope and there is good news."

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