

Thousands Gather to Pray for National Healing at America for Jesus

Exactly 40 days before the national election, nearly 25,000 individuals gathered over two days on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, Sept. 28-29, for America for Jesus 2012 (AFJ). The purpose of this solemn assembly that gathered Christians representing all races, parties and denominations from across the United States, was to **pray** for the healing of our nation and call America back to God.

"Today we have come to a historic place to make spiritual history in America," said the Rev. Billy Wilson, co-chair for **America for Jesus** 2012, acknowledging our nation's founding documents declaring we are 'one nation under God,' that were drafted and signed in nearby Independence Hall. "Today we have come back to this place because we believe America is in a spiritual drift that must be turned around.

"This is not a political rally; we have come today as the people of God," Wilson continued. "The destiny of our nation does not rest in Washington, D.C.; it does not rest in the White House, the congressional house or in the court house. We believe that the destiny of America rests in the church house and in your house and in my house."

State Sen. Stewart Greenleaf noted that America was founded by God-inspired individuals like William Penn, telling the crowd, "Today has been designated by the Pennsylvania State Senate as William Penn Day, and we pray that our nation will continue to be a beacon to the world."

Deputy Philadelphia Mayor Richard Negrin brought greetings from City Hall, saying, "You are standing on holy ground. In that building behind you, there are three words, 'We the

people.' We have a right to worship ... to exercise our religion, our free speech and all our rights in the Bill of Rights. Today you stand here with faith in your heart and a burning desire to worship just like William Penn did all those years ago."

The two-day event began with a youth rally on Friday evening. Bishop Anne Gimenez, pastor of The Rock Church International in Virginia Beach, Va., and co-chair of AFJ, told several thousand teens gathered, "America for Jesus will be a shout heard around the world. This is a beginning of a push for righteousness in America. We're here to declare the Word of the Lord."

The program incorporated a diverse array of influential Christian leaders, including Bishop Harry Jackson, Vonette Bright, Rev. Jim Garlow, the Rev. Cindy Jacobs and author Jonathan Cahn.

On Saturday, Tom Phillips, director of the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte, read a letter of greeting and solidarity from the 93-year-old evangelist, whom he said was burdened for America and plans to preach one more time on his 95th birthday next year.

"Nothing could be more urgent than for God's people to come together and pray for our nation and our world," Graham wrote. "Our only hope is to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith and to seek to obey Him in every area of our lives, as individuals and also as a nation. ... As you gather in this historic place, which gave birth to our nation's Declaration of Independence, may your presence give birth to a new declaration for our nation, a declaration of dependence upon almighty God."

According to Samuel Rodriguez, the next great movement in America will not be the Tea Party nor the Occupy Wall Street movement, but a Christ-centered, Bible-based righteousness and

justice movement. "I am convinced that America is not done with God and God is not done with America," he said.

"We are not here for an event, but to seek the heart of God, as there is a battle for the soul of our nation," said Doug Stringer. "God's blessing on this nation can become a path for America to bless the world; but it depends on a posture of humility in the Church. While men reach for thrones to build their own Kingdoms, Jesus came with a towel to wash his disciples' feet."

Television broadcaster Pat Robertson noted that in 1607, the first English settlers knelt in prayer around the cross, dedicating this new nation to the Lord. "I don't care what the ACLU says or any atheist says, this nation belongs to Jesus," he declared. "We will never change America through politics. We will only change America through a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit."

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, expressed gratitude to God that this nation was founded on righteousness and divine justice. "Our founders ... did not build an altar to government; rather they launched a country that would honor you," he said. "Today we look for government to be all that we need. Government can never be all we need. We need you."

Throughout the day, other Christian leaders offered prayers for America and its people, including Bishop David Huskins: "You are not only the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, You are the God of George Washington, the God of Thomas Jefferson, the God of Patrick Henry and you are our God, the God of the United States of America. We are here to worship and acknowledge You and give praise to Your holy and righteous name."

Pastor Phil Cappuccio reminded the audience that, 236 years ago, the sound of the Liberty Bell was heard throughout this

square. "Today, we lift up our voices—not in protest, but in repentance—that God will heal our land. Let there be a new sound, a sound of awakening."

Dallas Pastor Robert Jeffress called upon God: "I pray that as your people we will get up off our blessed assurances on Nov. 6, that we would go out and not vote for a party or a candidate but that we would cast a vote for righteousness. Our mandate is not to save America, but to save Americans from your coming judgment."

Early in the nine-hour rally, Wilson called for a time of repentance for the seven deadly sins—pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and anger, and slothfulness—that are the root causes of the problems in our nation. Various Christian leaders led prayers for forgiveness for specific and related social issues, such as poverty, unemployment, crime, sex trafficking and government stewardship.

"We have come to do surgery in the name of Jesus, going after the root to see our nation changed," Wilson said, before prayers were offered in each category during several hours of the program. "We believe God is going to heal the headwaters of America and see deliverance from these capital sins so that righteousness can again exalt our nation."

As a practical demonstration of Founding Father William Penn's sentiment, "Let us try what love will do," AFJ's Love Philadelphia reached out to the poor and needy of the city with a hand of compassion and a message of hope. On Sept. 15, more than 1,500 volunteers gathered at eight care sites, serving 15,000 people with 150,000 pounds of groceries in the name of Jesus.

America for Jesus 2012 was organized by One Nation Under God, a coalition of ministries that sponsored the watershed Washington for Jesus events in the '80s and '90s, which focused on prayer, repentance and **revival**, based on God's

promises found in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

To date, the five national and numerous regional rallies attended by several hundred thousand people have made significant impact affecting millions across the country and the national movement continues to call for a return to biblical values rather than endorsing any particular party or candidate.

“Forty days before the election, we will be bringing the salt of the nation to the headwaters of America to pray for an awakening and for the spiritual needs of the country,” said Wilson, executive director of the International Center for Spiritual Renewal.

The Rev. Herb Lusk commended the inclusive nature of the day’s events, saying he was impressed by the leaders’ reaching out to the African-American community and keeping the event from becoming politicized. “The committee came to me early and asked me for advice, and I told them it needed to be clear that this was about America, that it wasn’t political, or the African-American community would not be involved,” he said. “They listened, and it worked. Not only is God going to bless white America, he’s going to bless black America.”

Program participants and organizers alike expressed hope and excitement about the outcome of the rally. “I’m so encouraged the body of Christ has come together in Philadelphia,” said Vonette Bright. “I believe this will be the beginning of renewal and a spiritual awakening that will bring us back to the principles on which this nation was founded.”

AFJ 2012 National Coordinator John Blanchard echoed her sentiments: “This is the most powerful solemn assembly I’ve ever personally attended. I believe a window of grace is open for the nation to launch renewal for transformation in America.”