

How a God-Given Dream for a 'Modern-Day Pentecost' Became a Reality

Nick Hall wants to see a nation bow a knee to Jesus Christ this summer in the spirit of 2 Chronicles 7:14. Although many are skeptical about the manifestation of this verse's promise—"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land"—these God-given instructions have led to transforming revivals throughout history and could again.

Though it seems too long ago, the First and Second Great Awakenings, the Azusa Street Revival and Billy Graham's Explo '72 are among the fruit of this promise in America. Together 2016, a free event that invites Christians worldwide to unite July 16 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., could be one more step toward the tipping point that brings awakening to the nation. The event brings together Christian speakers and musicians, including Francis Chan, Ravi Zacharias, Hillsong United, Lecrae and Kari Jobe, with the ultimate goal of seeing a modern-day Pentecost.

"When you read Scripture, when times are hard, there's only one solution: Gather the people together and come back to your first love," says Hall, founder of Pulse Ministries and a member of leadership teams for the National Association of Evangelicals, the U.S. Lausanne Committee and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. "Gather. Seek God. Pray. I think in those kinds of abnormal moments, when it isn't business as usual, that's when it seems like extraordinary things happen in church history."

Gathering the Visionaries

Like the nation, Hall's Together 2016 wasn't birthed overnight. Hall has been thinking about it, praying for it and working on it for over 10 years. It all started during student prayer meetings at Pulse in North Dakota. Students were making intercession for revival in their generation. As Pulse grew, Hall heard similar petitions from other campus ministries and groups across the country. They all looked for a generation-defining moment: a spiritual reset for America.

"We got the sense that people were talking about a desperate need for change in our nation, but there weren't really any concrete solutions for it," says Hall. "There was no ministry big enough, no voice loud enough. We realized that we need each other and we need to come together. That's where this vision was birthed. We asked, 'What would it look like if we got all these movements and denominations to point in the same direction, to lift one voice in praise and to pray?' That's really when it started."

With a clear vision from God, Hall started reaching out to other prominent Christians to join his movement. The list of names grew quickly. R. York Moore, national evangelist for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA and a longtime friend, says he has the same heart for revival.

"What we haven't seen is the move of the Holy Spirit in such a way that it revitalizes the institutions of society," says Moore. "We haven't seen that in generations. I think something like Together 2016 has the capacity to create an altar. No one can schedule a revival—we're not claiming to do that—but I think when God's people come together and humble themselves before Him, it creates an altar. An altar is something God can consume."

Bible teacher, activist and author Christine Caine has committed to standing with Hall and others at the National

Mall this summer: “I think we live in such desperate times on the Earth today that we need to gather together. We need to pray unified and cry out to God that He would heal our land. I don’t know if there’s been a more important time in history for the church to be unified and come together before the throne of God to call out His one name.”

Reid Saunders, an international evangelist who has preached the gospel to 60 million people around the world, longs to see God move in America like He does overseas. “What is so exciting is that the Spirit of God has been putting this dream on so many hearts across our nation,” says Saunders. “People want to see Jesus reset the lives of people all across our nation and mobilize a generation that is set on loving, serving and living for Jesus wholeheartedly. We want to get back to the basics of serving Jesus and Him alone.”

Casting Mountains Into the Sea

As the team started to assemble around the project, Hall was soon overwhelmed with the scale of resetting America. He tried to pitch his “God-sized vision,” to other ministries. He spoke to the heads of Cru, Navigators and Young Life. He even visited Billy Graham at his house and asked if the renowned evangelist was interested in taking on this project.

“Even Billy Graham sat up in his chair, and his eyes lit up,” says Hall. “He was super into it. When we started to talk about gathering a movement at the Mall, you could see the fire in his eyes, like he’d seen a vision from the Lord. We kept getting green lights from mentors we respected who we considered spiritual fathers. And yet they all said, ‘This is great—you guys should do this. We believe in you.’ We needed to stop giving away (this mission) and asking others to do what God called us to do. Even though it seemed an impossible task, I had to realize nothing is impossible with Him. God truly can use anyone from anywhere to do anything.”

With that, Hall got to work and trusted God to come through. As if on cue, it seemed the proverbial mountains started falling into the sea. Together 2016 required \$10 million of fundraising—Hall had never raised more than \$1 million in his life—and the finances rolled in. The National Mall's reservation policies made it almost impossible to set an exact date more than a year in advance, yet Hall got rapid approval for the exact date he wanted. He had no connections to procure guest speakers and artists, but God brought the big names to him, including Lecrae, Samuel Rodriguez, Ravi Zacharias—and Pope Francis.

"A couple of weeks ago, we got a call from the Vatican, saying the pope is going to be recording a prayer and a little video message if we want to share it on the Mall—in the spirit of unity," says Hall. "You can see how far-reaching it has become. God has set a stage for something we think is so much bigger than any bands or people."

But the most difficult—and most surprising—challenge of the campaign has been explaining the concept of revival to youth who have never seen authentic revival in their lifetime. With authors, speakers and performers gathering at the Mall, Moore says there has been some confusion around Together 2016. Is it a concert? A conference?

"We're actually talking about national revival. Here is something that demonstrates how desperately America needs revival: I have to spend an hour just explaining what revival is," Moore says. "Young Americans haven't thought about or been exposed to ideas of revival their entire lives. That's the most disappointing thing. We don't know how desperate we are, how thirsty we are for the touch of God in our nation."

Praying for Lasting Impact

In spite of the obstacles, Together 2016 is set to be one of the largest intercessory prayer gatherings in the nation's

history—and in a critical election year. The rally follows Lou Engle's Azusa Now and United Cry in April in what international author and speaker Dutch Sheets has called a Joel 2:16 year. "For much time, I have been sensing that a huge surge of prayer is coming to America in 2016," he says. "A great work of preparation has been done, and this wave of prayer will now hit its stride this year."

Though large crowds and high-profile speakers bolster the event's credibility, Moore says the success of Together 2016 will live and die on the lasting spiritual change it brings about. For Jo Saxton, lead pastor of visions and strategy at Mission Point Church in Roseville, Minnesota, the transdenominational approach is the key to Together 2016's appeal.

"A prayer meeting that gathers people from different denominations, generations, races and economic backgrounds is a powerful opportunity for tangible steps toward unity," says Saxton. "I hope that happens, and I hope it's transformative for His church. But I also hope that Together 2016 gives us all a renewed vision for the Great Commission lived in our homes, in our communities and in our cities. I hope it mobilizes us to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our everyday ways in the world around us."

Hall can hardly believe what God is doing with Together 2016. Even now, he's quick to remind that God is the only one who can make this event a success—and how He defines success may be different than how man defines it.

"What we're asking for is something only God can do," says Hall. "So if what we're asking is only what God can do, it's not going to be on our planning charts. He may redirect our plans or change our hearts. Those are God-sized things we can't control. People say we need a radical change, but we're not willing to do anything radical. We want to get a different result, but if we keep doing the same thing, then we'll get

what we always got. This isn't business as usual.

This is an urgent hour." {eoa}

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Nick Hall talks about how to pray the way Jesus did—in intimacy with the Father—and see God's power flow as a result at .