

# Times Square Church Keeps Growing

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**In Manhattan, David Wilkerson has given the term 'Broadway revival' a whole new meaning.**

Perhaps God had a better idea when the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar opened 25 years ago in Manhattan at the Mark Hellinger Theatre. Today the ornate Broadway landmark houses a flourishing Pentecostal ministry called Times Square Church (TSC), founded by David Wilkerson in 1987.

"We originally came here to find a holy remnant who would welcome repentance and set an example that people could live a righteous life in the midst of Babylon or Sodom," Wilkerson says.

Thousands jam three services every Sunday, raising hands in joyous praise.

"We've had a continuous revival since we opened the doors," the 64-year-old pastor told Charisma.

"I see an excitement about the things of God here that I've never seen anywhere, other than overseas. People won't go home. They

want  
to stay, sing and -worship.”

The  
church, Wilkerson says, is built on a foundation of prayer. In  
1995  
Christians gathered three nights a week for special prayer,  
entreating God for revival in New York City. They prayed the  
crime  
rate down, Wilkerson claims, along with the removal of a  
school  
chancellor who advocated a third-grade curriculum introducing  
the  
homosexual lifestyle.

The  
racially mixed church is blessed with a zealous congregation  
from  
diverse backgrounds. Welfare recipients praise the Lord next  
to  
middle-class families, single professionals and executives.  
Sixty  
nationalities are represented in the congregation. Sermons are  
simultaneously translated into Russian, Spanish, Portuguese  
and  
French. Some worshipers claim their seats two hours before the  
service begins.

“The  
love of God covers color barriers. That’s why you have so many  
different nationalities here,” says member Kimberly Long, who  
with  
her husband, Brian, has been attending and “growing” ever  
since  
they were introduced to the ministry of TSC through friends.

A  
12-person security force assists the congregation but also

stays

alert to pickpockets and occasional disturbances from drug addicts or

deranged people lunging onto the stage. People identified by the

church as demoniacs have screamed out ugly threats. "We try to be

ministers of reconciliation," says Chris Currenti, security director. "Where we are in Manhattan, we have no choice but to

have

security."

Dedicated

believers support the ministry wholeheartedly. When a crippling

blizzard hit New York on Jan. 7, more than 1,000 still showed up for

the Sunday evening service. And every weekend, Peter Moran, an elder

who lives in Lancaster, Pa., makes the six-hour round-trip drive with

his wife and five children to attend the church.

Several

thousand people make personal commitments to Christ each year, Wilkerson reports, and about 1,000 are baptized annually.

An

estimated 50 people in the congregation suffer from AIDS.

According

to Wilkerson, the church has three documented cases of healings of

AIDS, substantiated by medical reports and blood-test results.

With

a staff of 95 and an annual budget of \$18 million, the mega-ministry

is debt-free. The ministry of TSC includes drug rehabilitation

centers for women and men, a feeding program and a Bible school. TSC also gives as much as \$4 million annually to U.S. and world -missions.

A 150-bed homeless shelter and evangelistic center called Isaiah House is scheduled to open in June. The nine-story, 45,000 square-foot building is located in a former warehouse near Times Square. The project will cost about \$4.5 million. "It's going to be one of the strongest inner-city evangelism centers in the country," Wilkerson believes.

The ministry's success stories represent untold changed lives. One example is Mark, a suicidal man who joined the Timothy House men's drug rehab center in June 1995. "I was selling drugs. I was robbing. I was using crack. My life was tossing and turning, and I wanted a way out," Mark said.

He kicked his habit and is now a radiant, born-again Christian. "I feel wonderful today," he says. "It's nothing but Jesus; His love is beyond measure."

TSC recently purchased 65,000 square feet of space in a building on Broadway adjoining the former theater that will house a Bible school and Sunday school for 1,500 children. "The church is exploding, and

we didn't have room," Wilkerson explains. "It was a miraculous release of property that we had prayed about for two years."

That kind of faith and growth has characterized Wilkerson's ministry since he rose to national prominence in 1958 after his attempts to help seven young men on trial for murder in New York made front-page headlines. That incident, and Wilkerson's subsequent efforts to reach gang members with the gospel, became the basis for the book *The Cross and the Switchblade*.

The ministry he founded at that time, Teen Challenge, is considered to be one of the most successful drug rehabilitation ministries in the world. He also founded the evangelistic -ministry World Challenge.

Dismissing any thoughts of retirement, Wilkerson intends to remain as senior pastor, as well as continue ministering to hurting pastors and writing and speaking on issues that impact the church. In his own style of cutting-edge fervor, he observes, "I think there is a spiritual famine in hearing the true word of God. There is very little preaching against sin."

Unlike many other Christian leaders, he doesn't see signs of a national

revival. "There are people having great emotional experiences right now and calling it revival," he says. "But I think true revival will come through searing, heart-piercing, convicting preaching where people are driven to their knees to repent."

**Peter K. Johnson** *is a freelance writer based in New York.*