

Thousands of students attend prayer event at U of M

Initiative was part of National Day of Prayer

By Scott Noble

MINNEAPOLIS — When the door to Mariucci Arena opened at 6:35 p.m. on Thursday, May 5, loud cheers erupted from the students as they made their way—some even ran—to their seats. By the time the student-led prayer event began at 7:00 p.m., more than 2,500 students—along with some parents and other adults—prepared themselves for an evening of worship, prayer and the preaching of the Word.

Unite Twin Cities was part of the National Day of Prayer (NDoP) initiative that took many forms all across the country. Organizers believe that Unite Twin Cities was the

largest student-led NDoP event in the country. Dozens of churches and organizations, such as Bethel University, 95.3 Praise FM, Prayer First and Moms In Touch participated in the event.

Bob Bakke, senior teaching pastor at Bloomington Baptist Church, and executive director of the Global Day of Prayer North America, decided last year that he wanted to focus the Global Day of Prayer efforts on college and university students. Combining the Unite event with NDoP was an easy decision, since Bakke said the students would still be in school and the event would occur right before finals, giving the student a much-needed respite from studying.

But more importantly, Bakke believes there is something going on with young people today.

"There are reports all over Amer-

ica with regard to [students'] devotion to prayer," he said. "Five years ago if you called a prayer meeting, you couldn't tempt them there with pizza and anything. But today they are doing 24/7 [prayer events]. Bethel University did 40 days of fasting and prayer and put up a prayer tent. And now there are 60 prayer groups on campus."

David McIver, executive director of 95.3 Praise FM, hopes this younger generation will take the Gospel to places the older generations haven't.

"I feel like so many of us, we represent at times individuals or even a generation that has said 'we don't want to go into the Promised Land,'" he said. "We resist somehow the pulse of what God has for us. My heart, my prayer is that this



Students raise their hands in praise during Unite Twin Cities on the National Day of Prayer in May.

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PHOTO BY WENDY NOBLE

Worship leaders from several area churches combined their efforts to serve as the worship and praise band during the event.

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generation will just go in and face the giants. They will go in and take the Gospel, and they will go in and usher in literally the return of the King."

In the Twin Cities alone, there are more than 50 college and university campuses, representing some 200,000 students. The University of Minnesota alone, with its more than 50,000 students, is one of the largest universities in the country.

Nick Hall, who is the founder of Pulse, a student-led evangelistic ministry, said the Unite effort included "every campus ministry we know of. It's really a unique initiative, something that we don't know has ever happened before."

The evening began with students worshipping along with a combined Twin Cities band that represented six churches. Students sang, raised their hands in praise and even jumped and danced. Hip hop artists Marcus Montana and Nick Foulks joined Christian rock band Leeland on stage for solo and combined performances.

Perhaps the most moving time during the evening was when students gathered in groups to pray during designated times. Some prayed with one or two others,

while other students gathered in groups of six or eight—huddled together, arms around each other's shoulders. Several students lay face down on the concrete, deep in prayer and worship.

In addition to the more than 2,500 students who attended Unite, more than 300 indicated commitments to Christ and 1,400 students completed response cards desiring additional involvement. Also, more than 1,500 people watched the live webcast online.

Several times during the evening, Bakke, McIver, Hall or Moms In Touch Founder Fern Nichols spoke to the students and offered them encouragement and prayer topics.

Nichols told the students that they are loved and that people are praying for them to be dynamic witnesses for Jesus Christ.

When Hall spoke to the students in what could be considered the main message of the event, he told them: "It is time for us as a generation and as a church to stop being a plain church and start being a praying church. We need to start getting serious."

That theme carried through much of his message: getting serious.

He urged them: "If you want to get up and you want to be powerful with God, you need to get down low on your knees. When it comes to being powerful before God, we are



PHOTO BY WENDY NOBLE

Nick Hall addressed the more than 2,500 people gathered at Mariucci Arena at Unite Twin Cities.

either prayerful or we are prideful. We believe that God is calling forth the greatest movement of prayer that the Twin Cities has ever seen."

In the end, the Unite Twin Cities event is what organizers hope is just the beginning.

"Our belief is that tonight is a kickoff for a move of God in the Twin Cities on the campuses," Hall said. "Every one of them needs Jesus, so we got our work cut out for us but God is big enough to do it."

ACTION POINT

For more information on Unite Twin Cities, visit www.unitetwincities.com. For more information on Pulse, visit www.pulsemovement.com.