

BELIEFS Values

Promise Keepers: a stimulating experience

As I joined the sea of men that flowed into the Pontiac Silverdome for the Promise Keepers conference last Friday night and Saturday, my senses ignited, sparked by the energy of excitement and anticipation that saturated the atmosphere. The emotional energy that can be generated by 70,000 men is something that something that must be experienced to be comprehended. There are few things that can compare with the emotion I felt as I joined my voice in harmony with that diverse crowd as we sang "Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty."

Each year, more and more men sign up and block time out of their busy schedules in order to attend. I am no exception. I have been to four events so far. What is it that compels us to return year after year, bringing our fathers and sons and friends? Not all agree on the answer to that question. There are those who believe that the success of Promise Keepers is a symptom of our entertainment-driven culture that, even in matters of faith, prefers style over substance. There are others who believe that the movement has been generated and sustained by God, working among his people. Still others chalk the whole thing up to fanaticism or politics.

For my part, I don't believe that the authenticity of the movement should be established by the events themselves, either for the attendees or for outside observers, be they cynical or sympathetic. My case in point is the biblical story of ancient Israel. After God led them out of Egypt, he took them to the base of Mount Sinai to make a covenant with them. There, they had a convention that would make Promise Keepers look sing-along. Besides, the three-million attendees, there was smoke, lightning and blaring trumpets. Everyone committed themselves to keeping the promises that they made to God. After all the fanfare, God left the camp. It was in the silence that followed that the true character of the event was tested, and the Bible says that the people were unable to keep their promises for even 40 days.

We who attended Promise Keepers also have made promises to God. We have committed ourselves to breaking down the walls of racial and denominational prejudice. We have agreed to care for our wives and raise our children responsibly. Still, 70,000 spiritually charged, sweaty, cheering men are not necessarily Promise Keepers. The men who attended the event may believe it has changed their



STAFF PHOTO BY DAN DEAN

Brotherly gathering: Jon Enright, associate pastor at a Troy church, was among the 70,000 men who joined spiritual ties by taking part in the second Promise Keepers conference held at the Pontiac Silverdome.

lives. If that is the case, the evidence is not to be found in the excitement at the Silverdome but in the silence that remains. The authenticity of the move-

ment will be proved by what happens behind closed doors after a hard day's work, or in the eyes of a child who is longing for her dad to notice her. The depth of our commitment must be judged by the way we respond to the struggles that we, our families and our society face, not by how loud we cheer at a Promise Keepers conference.

Now that the shouts and cheers have faded into silence, there is a son who has been waiting to go fishing. There is a wife who needs to be listened to. There are dishes to be washed. There is a neighbor who is hungry. There is a church class that needs a teacher. There is someone who is different than you who is looking for a friend.

Jon Enright is associate pastor of the Troy Christian Chapel.

COMMUNITY MESSENGER

willCommunity Messenger features spiritual announcements from Oakland County religious institutions. Write: Community Messenger, Beliefs & Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (810) 644-1314.

MAJOR FUND-RAISER

Susan Citrin of Birmingham and Oscar Feldman of Bloomfield Hills will serve as chairpersons of the 1997 Allied Jewish Campaign.

Citrin is president and interim executive director of the Birmingham/Bloomfield Art Association. She is a member of the Bloomfield Hills-based Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit's board of governors and its executive committee. She's vice president of the United Jewish Foundation and is active with the national United Jewish Appeal. She is a board member of the Oak Park-based Yad Ezra kosher food bank and past president of the Southfield-based Jewish Family Service.

Feldman is an attorney at Butzel Long, Birmingham. He has served in various leadership roles for the Allied Jewish Campaign, Jewish Federation and United Jewish Foundation. He is a trustee of the Detroit Medical Center and the Southfield-based Karmanos Cancer Institute, immediate past chairman of the Detroit-based Hutzel Hospital board of trustees, president and director of the Piaton-Palace Foundation, trustee of the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan School of Business Administration and member of the U. of M. President's Advisory Committee.

Feldman

tee. The Allied Jewish Campaign is the Jewish Federation's fund-raising drive that supports 60 agencies in metro Detroit, Israel and overseas.

HALL OF FAME

Rabbi Charles Rowenzweig of Southfield, a Polish Holocaust survivor who spearheaded construction of the Holocaust memorial Center in West Bloomfield, is one of the new inductees into the International Heritage Hall of Fame that's managed by the Detroit-based Friends of the International Institute.

For more than two decades, he pushed to erect the memorial, which has attracted millions of visitors since it opened in 1984. In spite of resistance to his concept of chronicling Nazi Germany's extermination of six million Jews during the World War II era, Rowenzweig had always been sure that a Holocaust memorial would help make certain that the horror is never repeated. In recognition of his humanitarian achievements, he was named Michigannian of the Year in 1995.

FIGHTING HUNGER

Since February, customers of Jax Kar Wash have raised \$1,400 in an ongoing fight against hunger. Donations help Southfield-based Forgotten Harvest rescue perishable food for soup kitchens and shelters throughout the tri-county area. Customers can make donations to Forgotten Harvest at any of the eight Jax Kar Wash locations by simply adding \$1 to their cash register total. Contributions to the nonprofit charitable organization are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. For more information on Forgotten Harvest or to find a Jax Kar Wash near you, call (810) 350-FOOD.

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See MESSENGER, A19

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