

ReignDown USA today

Couple advocate power of prayer on national, local level

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Lee and Shirley Hutson are the Utah captains for ReignDown... (Leah Hogsten/The SaltLake Tribune)

SANDY - Lee and Shirley Hutson's love of the Lord is apparent upon meeting their dog.

Onesimus, a small white poodle that greets visitors, is named for a servant mentioned in the New Testament, specifically in Paul's letter to Philemon. Their home is practically wallpapered with worship - from the artwork and verses of scripture (even in the bathroom) to the reading materials, the CD rack (including hymns and gospel classics) and the DVD about Martin Luther that rests atop their television set.

No surprise, then, that when they received the call to serve as the Utah captains for ReignDown USA, a first and only-of-its-kind national simultaneous worship service happening today, they prayed on it and then couldn't refuse. The worship event, which will be simulcast from the National Mall in Washington, D.C., will play out in more than 100 venues across the nation, including Murray's Cottonwood High School.

ReignDown USA was born of a July 2005 vision of Shawn-Marie Cole, who claimed to be visited by the Lord in the middle of the night. She saw people worshipping for the nation, a ministry leader (Bjorn Pedersen of Prayer Watch International) praying over President George W. Bush, and Christian recording artist Michael W. Smith singing on the steps of the Capitol. This description, outlined on the ReignDown USA Web site, also offers details about how she shared her vision with Smith, the recording artist, and with Bush, who reportedly "got tears in his eyes and said, 'I love Jesus, and I know the Lord put me in this position for a reason. ' "

When Shirley, 58, speaks about Jesus or the power of prayer, she, too, gets teary-eyed.

"We - the church body - are the bride of Christ. Christ is wooing us," she says.

Prepping for that wedding will take a lot of prayer, say the Hutsons, who

attend Sandy Ridge Community Church and are active with Prayer Watch International, a ministry to promote prayer across the globe. ReignDown USA is just part of the national prayer movement - which includes National Day of Prayer, scheduled for May 1 - that is necessary, says Lee, 60, a Vietnam veteran.

The "freedom of worship" is one of the liberties he fought for, he says. He and his wife, whose 25-year-old daughter, Merriah, was killed in a 2001 plane crash in the Great Salt Lake, know firsthand the comfort prayer and believing can give.

"We're asking God to come back in the center of our family and personal lives, and the center of our nation," he says of today's event, which is free and open to everyone.

Salt Lake City's Calvary Chapel is supplying buses to bring in worshippers from the Salvation Army, Rescue Mission and Rescue Haven, Lee says.

On top of some physical healing, he says, "I'm expecting some changed hearts."

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Join today's concert of prayer, for the nation and for Utah

* Utahns interested in participating in ReignDown USA, a national prayer (dubbed a "concert of prayer") that will be simulcast out of Washington, D.C., are invited to attend at Cottonwood High School, 5715 S. 1300 East, Murray, today from 4 to 7 p.m. The first two hours of the free event will be part of the simultaneous worship, featuring Christian recording artist Michael W. Smith, followed by an hour of prayer specifically for Utah.

* For more information about ReignDown USA, visit **www.reigndownusa.com**.