

# Midstate churches hope 'Gathering 2002' shines in New Year with sense of revival

BY RAY WADDLE  
*Region Editor*

A new year assembly designed to keep the spirit of a Billy Graham Crusade alive in Middle Tennessee is planned for Jan. 6 at Gaylord Entertainment Center in downtown Nashville.

"The Gathering 2002," with support from more than 100 area churches, hopes to create a revival atmosphere to greet the new year in a time of global uncertainty and war.

"At a time such as this, when our world is rocked by uncertainty and questions haunt, the Gathering is even more critically needed," said international evangelist Ravi Zacharias, who will be the keynote speaker.



ZACHARIAS

"It is my hope that we will hear from God in a significant way and build our hope in him," Zacharias said.

The event will be free and open to the public. It will fea-

ture performances by CeCe Winans and Michael W. Smith.

The Gathering is a renewal of a similar event that took place at the arena in January 2000, organized by a handful of local ministers. That event drew about 7,500 people. Now, as

then, it emphasizes Christian evangelism, racial reconciliation, community uplift and donations for local charities.

This time organization is being overseen by the Operation Andrew Group, a local ministry that was created after Graham's Nashville crusade in June 2000.

"There is tremendous excitement among participating churches about this second Gathering," said Jimmy Pickel, chairman of Operation Andrew. "We saw Christians come



WINANS



SMITH

together in an unprecedented way during The Gathering 2000 and believe that world conditions make this a very timely demonstration of Christian love and unity."

The Gathering will be held 5-6:30 p.m. It will feature a 1,000-voice choir, large orchestra, an all-clergy choir and an interdenominational emphasis.

An offering will be taken. Any money raised over expenses will be used to help the poor and needy of Middle Tennessee, according to a news release.

The goal is to hold such a worship assembly annually on the first Sunday of each new year.

Zacharias, born in India and based in Atlanta, is a globe-trotting speaker, author of several books, and host of a weekly radio program called *Let My People Think* and a daily radio broadcast called *A Slice of Infinity*.

Operation Andrew, 2000 Glen Echo Road, also hosts regular pastor conferences to increase ministerial relationships across racial and denominational lines. ■

# 100 Churches gather to focus on evangelism in the New Year

by Nyla Fearn

More than 100 area churches will participate in a special Middle Tennessee worship service on the first Sunday of the new year at the Gaylord Entertainment Center from 5:00 pm to 6:30pm. The Operation Andrew Group Ministry organizes the Gathering 2002. It's held annually on the first Sunday of each New Year.

The event will feature internationally known evangelists Ravi Zacharias as keynote speaker. CeCe Winans and Michael W. Smith will provide special music, with praise directed by Dallas-based Marco Barrientos. Winans is one of the most celebrated singers in contemporary music. She has been nominated 16 times for Grammy Awards, has won four, and also has received 16 Dove Awards. Smith has become one of the most influential artists in the Christian music industry, recording 15 albums that have yielded 27 Dove Awards, two Grammy Awards and an American Music Award.

Additionally, a thousand-voice choir, hundred-plus piece orchestra and special all-clergy choir will provide praise and workshop music during the



CeCe Winans

interdenominational service. "There is tremendous excitement among participating churches about this second Gathering. We saw Christians come together in an unprecedented way in Nashville during the Gathering 2000, and believe that world conditions make this a very timely demonstration of Christian love and unity," said Jimmy Pickel, chairman of The Operation Andrew Group.

Last year, more than 7,500 people gathered for prayer, worship, and inspirational preaching to celebrate the start of the 21st century. Pickel noted that while

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the Gathering 2002 service will continue to emphasize partnering among churches and ethnic groups. It will have a greater emphasis on evangelism than the first Gathering.

"At a time such as this when our world is rocked by uncertainty and questions haunt, the Gathering is even more critically needed. It is my hope that we will hear from God in a significant way and build our hope in him," said Zacharias, president of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries.

His ministry is headquartered in Atlanta, with additional offices in Canada, India and the United Kingdom. Zacharias has spoken in more than 50 countries and at numerous universities worldwide, notably Harvard, Princeton and Oxford. He has also authored several books.

Admission to the Gathering 2002 is free. An offering will be taken, and any money raised over expenses will be used to help the poor and needy of Middle Tennessee.