

[CT'S WEEK OF GIVING](#)

[Let's seek the kingdom together »](#)

 [Christianity Today](#)
[Logo](#)

[SUBSCRIBE](#)



Search



[News](#)

[Wire Story](#)

Promise Keepers' Comeback Event Goes Virtual

[Adelle Banks – Religion News Service](#)

Tony Evans and Michael W. Smith on the lineup for the first major program of the men's movement in nearly a decade.

 Christian counselor Steve Arterburn presents a session during the Promise Keepers 2020 virtual event.
Christian counselor Steve Arterburn presents a session during the Promise Keepers 2020 virtual event.

Christianity Today July 31, 2020

Share

Share

- [Facebook](#)
- [X](#)
- [WhatsApp](#)
- [Telegram](#)
- [Email](#)
- [Copy Link](#)
- [Gift Article](#)

Courtesy of Promise Keepers / RNS

Thirty years ago, a Christian men's movement began as a meeting of dozens of men with a prominent former football coach. Its biggest moment was a gathering of hundreds of thousands on the National Mall in 1997.

Now, Promise Keepers is attempting to make a comeback, but not in the way it had planned.

Starting Friday, the organization will hold a free two-day virtual event, bringing together men from more than 65 countries to hear from former sports figures, Christian musicians, and famous pastors and authors. Organizers originally hoped to draw 80,000 men to a stadium outside Dallas for their first major arena-based event in close to a decade.

Sign up for The Daily Briefing

Get the most recent headlines and stories from Christianity Today delivered to your inbox daily.

Email*

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.

Thanks for signing up.

Please click [here](#) to see all our newsletters.

Sorry, something went wrong. Please try again.

“We’re showing this to a huge conglomeration of churches in India—it’s going to be translated into Hindi—and all over South America, translated into Spanish, and it’s also being translated into Polish,” said Ken Harrison, the organization’s unpaid CEO for the last two and a half years. “What seemed like a huge disappointment ended up being a huge blessing.”

He said about 500 churches in the US are planning to host public simulcasts of the virtual event, with others choosing to keep their plans private in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

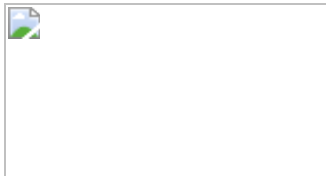
The virtual event—prerecorded mostly in Nashville, Tennessee—will feature messages from Dallas megachurch pastor Tony Evans and Indiana-based Christian counselor Steve Arterburn and the music of contemporary Christian artist Michael W. Smith and American Idol finalist Danny Gokey.

Harrison said he expects some women who are “curious” will watch and be able to see for themselves what Promise Keepers is about. But the official response to registrants—estimated at more than 1 million—discourages men from initially watching with the women in their lives.

“We encourage men to participate in the event in a mens-only setting initially,” it said, citing the merits of women-centered events. “There is a different dynamic when men hear these messages together versus in a setting with women/wives/daughters/friends. We encourage men to invite their wives and other ladies to watch in a second session after the men have been able to watch together.”

Asked if the Promise Keepers’ longtime emphasis on men’s leadership might be seen by some as a threat to women’s rights, Harrison said his organization is telling men, not women, how to behave.

“We’re really calling men to be humble, proactive leaders in their homes,” he said. “I don’t feel like it’s my role to tell women how they should be. That is for their pastor and other people.”



Jury Awards \$4.8 Million in Deprogramming Case

Joe Maxwell

Harrison said Promise Keepers continues to focus on reconciliation across races and denominations as one of its “seven promises,” though he said he prefers to use the term “racial unity.”

Brenda Salter McNeil, associate professor of reconciliation studies at Seattle Pacific University, said the focus on racial diversity could have harmed the men’s organization in the past because some were not attracted to that cause.

“In the evangelical world there seems to be a big dichotomy between what people think is spiritual and what people perceive as being social or political and when people cross that line,” she said. “Eventually I thought Promise Keepers died because they tried to push that issue.”

The organization, founded by former University of Colorado coach Bill McCartney—now diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and unable to participate in the virtual event—once had a national staff of 345 and now has 28. Its budget, not including events, is \$2 million, compared to about \$30 million 20 years ago. Its postponed in-person ticketed event in Texas, now planned for next year, will cost \$6 million, but Harrison said they still need to raise \$500,000 to pay for it.

Harrison said there are many reasons for his organization's disappearance from the public eye.

"I've gotten some complaints from some people that they felt like we got too distracted," he said, "down too many roads, and one of those roads was that we were too much about racial reconciliation. I don't agree with that."

The schedule for the event includes a moment from My Faith Votes, a group whose honorary co-chairmen include US Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson and former Republican Gov. Mike Huckabee.

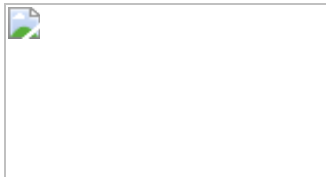
Asked if Promise Keepers' leaders will be encouraging supporters to vote Republican at the virtual event or beyond it, Harrison said they will not.

"We are not going to take on politics in any way, shape or form," he insisted. "But some of the things we do, talking about justice, standing up for justice, people will come to their own political conclusion."

Harrison cited abortion as an example, saying his organization will encourage a man who "sins" by fathering a child while having sex outside of a heterosexual marriage to support the mother and not abandon their child.

Promise Keepers also plans to turn its attention to global issues of poverty and sex trafficking by featuring speakers from World Vision and International Justice Mission.

"You cannot be a man of God and not stand up for justice—they just go together—and so we really want to call men out to be active, standing up for what's right," he said. "I don't think most men, American evangelical men, have any idea of the wickedness going on across the world in sex trafficking, the absolute horrors that are going on to women and children across the globe."



Mending Men's Ministry

Bob Smietana

- [More from Adelle Banks – Religion News Service](#)

- [Gift This Article](#)

• Share

[Share](#)

- [Facebook](#)
- [X](#)
- [WhatsApp](#)
- [Telegram](#)

- [Email](#)
- [Copy Link](#)
- [Gift Article](#)

- [Coronavirus](#)
- [Men's Ministry](#)
- [Promise Keepers](#)

Our Latest

[View All](#)

 [A group of Hispanic people worshipping.](#)

Latino Churches' Vibrant Testimony

[Nicole Massie Martin](#)

Hispanic American congregations tend to be young, vibrant, and intergenerational. The wider church has much to learn with and from them.

 [A painting of God on a smartphone with a cracked screen.](#)

[Review](#)

Modern 'Technoculture' Makes the World Feel Unnaturally Godless

[Blake Adams](#)

By changing our experience of reality, it tempts those who don't perceive God to conclude that he doesn't exist.



The Bulletin

A Brief Word from Our Sponsor

The Bulletin recaps the 2024 vice presidential debate, discusses global religious persecution, and explores the dynamics of celebrity Christianity.



An empty hospital bed in a dark room

News

Evangelicals Struggle to Preach Life in the Top Country for Assisted Death

Meagan Gillmore in Ontario

Canadian pastors are lagging behind a national push to expand MAID to those with disabilities and mental health conditions.



Three photos of people writing over a red background with yellow stars like the Chinese flag and a photo of Yan Yangchu on a pinkish tan background

Excerpt

The Chinese Christian Who Helped Overcome Illiteracy in Asia

Stacey Bieler

Yan Yangchu taught thousands of peasants to read and write in the early 20th century.

 [Kendrick Lamar and Lecrae on a colorful background.](#)

What Would Lecrae Do?

[Christina Gonzalez Ho](#)

Why Kendrick Lamar's question matters.



No More Sundays on the Couch

[Erica Bryand Ramirez](#)

COVID got us used to staying home. But it's the work of God's people to lift up the name of Christ and receive God's Word—together.

 [Construction worker holding his hard hat at this side](#)
Review

Safety Shouldn't Come First

[Bonnie Kristian](#)

A theologian questions our habit of elevating this goal above all others.

[Back to Top](#)

You can help Christianity Today uplift what is good, overcome what is evil, and heal what is broken by sharing the stories and ideas of the kingdom of God.

Topics

- [News](#)
- [Ideas](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Theology](#)
- [Church Life](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Pastors](#)
- [History](#)

The Ministry

- [About](#)
- [Masthead](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Donate](#)

Help & Info

- [Terms](#)
- [Privacy & Cookies](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [My Account](#)
- [Log In](#)
- [Log Out](#)

More

- [Advertise](#)
- [Media Room](#)
- [CT Translations](#)
- [Store](#)
- [CT Creative Studio](#)
- [Preaching Today](#)
-  [Icon for Twitter](#)
-  [Icon for Facebook](#)
-  [Icon for Instagram](#)
-  [Icon for RSS](#)
-  [Icon for Telegram](#)
-  [Icon for YouTube](#)

© 2024 Christianity Today - a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

“Christianity Today” and “CT” are the registered trademarks of Christianity Today International. All rights reserved.

Seek the Kingdom.

