

A nonstop Kentucky prayer 'revival' is going viral on TikTok, and people are traveling thousands of miles to take part

By Jake Traylor

A Christian service at a college chapel in Kentucky has ballooned into a nonstop prayer and worship session that some are calling a "revival" — and people are traveling thousands of miles to take part in it after seeing viral videos on TikTok.

The growing event started as a routine chapel service at Asbury University, a small Christian college in Wilmore, Kentucky, according to university employees. At the tail-end of the meeting, a couple dozen lingering students assembled informally in a gathering that's been going now for seven days straight, 24 hours a day.

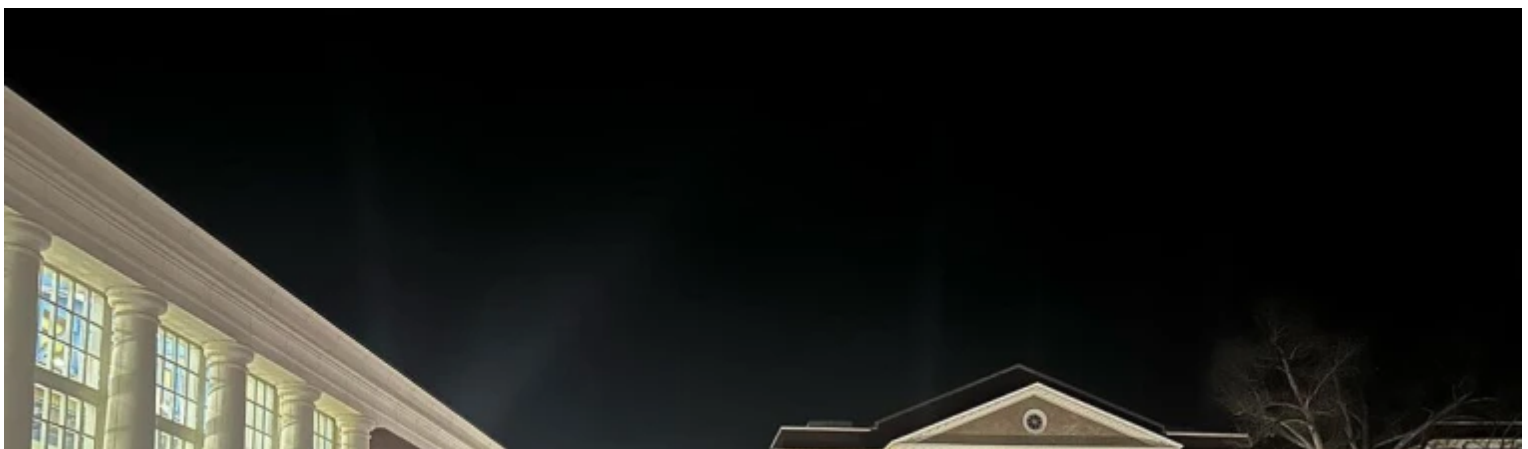
"The first day we had a very ordinary service, I would call it unremarkable," said university President Dr. Kevin Brown. Following a morning service on Feb. 8, a multicultural gospel choir sang on stage. Some students stuck around afterward, and by evening more and more had trickled into the sanctuary creating something special, said Brown.

"It has absolutely been social media that is the mechanism that people found out about this," said Mark Whitworth, Asbury University's vice president of communications.

The setup is simple. No projector screens or high-tech integrations, just wooden sanctuary chairs filled with people, and an open altar call with an invitation to prayer that still hasn't ended.

That equation has been a powerful recipe on social media.

On TikTok and Instagram, videos hashtagged "Asbury Revival" are racking up millions of views. At the time this article was published, the hashtag #asburyrevival had 24.4 million views on TikTok.





"Students are hungry for Jesus," Nick Hall writes on Instagram.[nickhallpulse](#) / Instagram

The phrase “spiritual revival” can carry different meanings; in Christianity, they generally refer to a resurgence in interest in the church from believers and nonbelievers. Many attendees of the Asbury gathering say they were drawn by a spiritual presence they felt was at the event.

In the TikTok videos of the event, some people are seen crying to worship music, with hands extended high, while others group up and place hands on those seeking prayer. The response of many TikTokers has gone beyond the typical "like" or comment on the videos, which in some cases have stirred viewers to make the trek to Asbury for themselves.

Tuesday night capped the largest crowd yet: 3,000 worshipers piled into the college chapel and four overflowed facilities throughout the college town. At least two-thirds of the attendants are from out of state, according to Brown.

Students and staff from 22 schools have visited so far, alongside groups from Hawaii to Massachusetts, university faculty said. Travelers from Singapore and Canada are expected to arrive soon, they added.

Although social media has served as a lightning rod for the event, Asbury faculty said they were cautious not to market or brand what was happening.

“The university made an intentional decision not to publicize this because we wanted to place an abundance of respect towards the experience of our students,” said Brown.

With the exception of the regular three hours of weekly livestream from the chapel, the videos seen online have all come from participants.



Asbury University's revival. Nick Hall / via Instagram

Historically, Christian revivals, like The Great Awakening, are marked by conversions and wildfire growth — a reason why — for now, at least — many are cautiously referring to Asbury as an outpouring, a gathering, or a nonstop worship meeting.

Nick Hall, an attendee who purchased a one-way plane ticket from Minneapolis when he saw a viral video on Instagram, emphasized that the gathering was notably low-key for something that people are calling a

“revival.”

“This is acoustic guitars, pianos and very noncharismatic speakers. This is as un-sensationalized as it could be,” he said.

And according to Hall, leading the charge in the sanctuary and on social media is the Gen Z generation.

“They’re the ones that started it, they’re the ones that sustained it, and they’re the ones that have been on the platform the whole time,” he said.

Many of the now thousands in attendance acted swiftly, embarking on the trip just a day or two after learning about the assembly on social media.

J.T. Reeves, a senior at Wheaton College in Illinois, said he first heard of the gathering from an Instagram video and shortly after made the 6 1/2-hour drive to Wilmore. He said he left without a plan.

“In chapel at Wheaton there was an encouragement to pay attention to a move of the Lord in Asbury,” said Reeves. Just hours later, Reeves was there in person.

As attendance swiftly rises, some students who joined the spiritual movement at Asbury over the past week have returned to their own schools, where separate worship and prayer gatherings have broken out.

Students at Lee University in Tennessee started a nonstop prayer vigil Monday morning that is still ongoing, said Brian Conn, director of communications at Lee University. Other schools with similar reports include Anderson University in Indiana, Ohio Christian University near Columbus, and a handful of others.

Asbury University is no stranger to events like this, as 50 years ago a similar prayer and worship event took place across the campus.

Never, though, had a gathering of this sort lasted as long as this one, which also benefits from the colossal propagating force of social media.

CORRECTION (Feb. 17, 1:44 p.m. ET): A previous version of this article misspelled the first name of a senior at Wheaton College in Illinois. He is J.T. Reeves, not T.J.