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Chosen Women bask in spiritual sisterhood

By Shirley Armbruster

The Fresno Bee

PASADENA — Tears welled in the corners of Denise Kinabrew's eyes as she watched about 200 women move down the sloping concrete walkways of the Rose Bowl.

She dabbed at the tears with a tissue as the women — some arm in arm or hand in hand — responded to a call to come to the stadium floor if they wanted to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior.

"I think it's always amazing when people go forward" to such invitations, said Kinabrew, a Fresnan and longtime Christian.

Kinabrew was among several hundred Valley women and about 25,000 other women at the

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Showing their faith.

Participants in the Chosen Women revival wave handkerchiefs and tissues while singing "I Surrender All" Saturday at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.

Hector Amezcua
The Fresno Bee

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Chosen: Women hear call

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Chosen Women revival Friday and Saturday.

The invitation to become a Christian came from Anne Graham-Lotz, an author and speaker whose dynamic delivery showed the same evangelistic flashes of her father, the Rev. Billy Graham.

Lotz was among speakers at the Chosen Women rally, a first-time nondenominational gathering of Christian women. Founder Susan Kimes, who called the event "The Lord's biggest surprise party ever," said the purpose was to allow women to take inventory of their spiritual condition and focus on their relationship with God.

"This is geared to a heart change," Kimes said. "We're looking to the Lord to change us from the inside."

Kimes said the overall theme of the two-day event is "Surrender to the Lord, to let him teach us in every area."

Kimes spoke to the racially mixed crowd from a massive four-story stage draped in purple and white and with a huge banner in front saying "The Lord Reigns." She called to the women to help bring a revival in the nation through surrender to God.

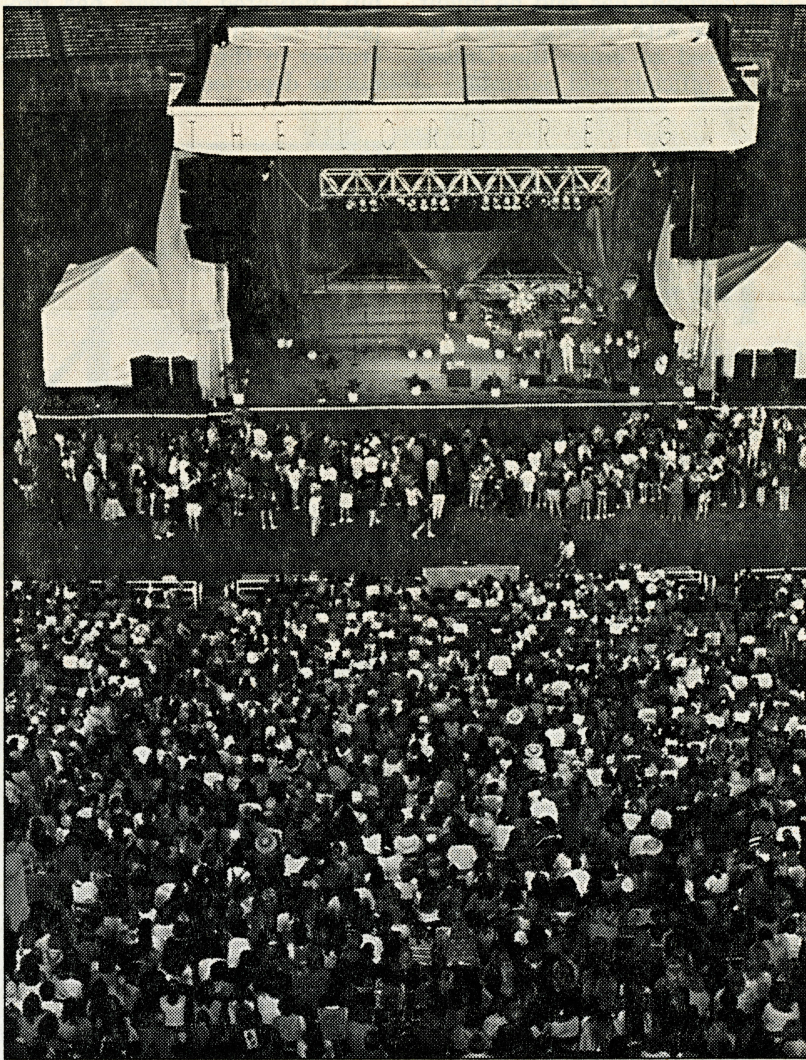
The stadium burst into a sea of white as the women waved handkerchiefs and tissues, swaying from side to side as they sang "I Surrender All." Tears flowed from the eyes of some women; others called "Hallelujah" as Kimes prayed, "Lord, would you bring revival now? Begin with us."

Patty Thompson of Clovis said the rally more than met her hopes for a weekend of renewal.

"I was really impressed by the challenges from the top-notch speakers," she said. Thompson said speaker Bunny Wilson's points on how a husband and wife can effectively discuss matters on which they disagree made a big impression on her.

"I want my son to know what a healthy discussion is when two adults have differing opinions," said Thompson.

Some Valley women took chartered buses to the event; others car pooled. Many took a day off work to get to Pasadena for the



Hector Amezcua — The Fresno Bee

The Lord's stage. Women walk to the stage Saturday at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena after Anne Graham-Lotz, daughter of Billy Graham, asked if they wanted to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior.

Friday evening start of the event.

For Nancy Wardlaw, a single mother from Fresno, there was an added challenge.

"I had to find someone to pick up the kids from home Friday and take them to school and someone who would pick them up from school and take them to their grandparents for the night.

"But it was worth every minute" of making the effort, said Wardlaw, whose children are 4, 9 and 15 years old.

The women at the stadium braved gusty winds, intermittent sprinkles, and humid weather with temperatures in the high 80s Saturday.

But they kept their humor, standing and clapping enthusiastically with praise, passing beach balls and doing the "wave."

They also shared many sessions of small-group prayer, when sisterly hugs were the order of the day for many.

Kimes said the idea for a women's gathering came to her seven years ago. "The Lord gave me a passion for women to get

together for praise and worship with unity of heart in mind," Kimes said. The concept of Chosen Women was developed five years after that, and preparations for the event have been under way for the last two years.

Chosen Women is not affiliated with Promise Keepers, the men's revival organization that will stage a rally in Fresno's Bulldog Stadium next month. But Kimes said she visited two Promise Keepers events to study their logistics.

Also speaking at the event was author and speaker Jill Briscoe, who urged women to be willing to "do windows" in their world.

"That's what's wrong with us — we don't do windows anymore in the church of Christ."

Jesus, she said, was willing to do the lowliest work of washing the feet of his disciples — even Judas, who would betray him.

"He [Jesus] is the servant of God. You and I are the servant's servant," Briscoe said. "Our real work is to be a servant."