Fire Ministry School To Leave Pensacola Next Year

In a move that could ultimately foster reconciliation with Brownsville Assembly of God, revivalist Michael Brown announced plans in May to relocate his FIRE School of Ministry from Pensacola, Fla., to another location in the Southeast by fall 2003.

Brown, who is president of FIRE (Fellowship of International Revival and Evangelism), also announced plans to open a school of ministry in New York City this year during the week of Sept. 11. It will be named The Call School of Ministry, New York, and will operate in partnership with Harvest Ministries International of Pasadena, Calif., led by pastor Ché Ahn.

The decision to move came after Brown and fellow FIRE ministers had just returned from participating in a conference in Tel Aviv, Israel, in early April. They were meeting in Dallas on April 12 with Ahn, Atlanta pastor Larry Tomczak, and Mike Bickle, director of International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Mo., when a prayer meeting with all the men produced what Brown said was “a clear vision from God” to move FIRE from Pensacola and to open the New York campus on the heels of The Call prayer event, scheduled for June 29 in New York City.

Charlotte, N.C., is a first choice for the FIRE-school relocation being researched by FIRE leadership, but no firm location had been chosen by press time.

While reconciliation with Brown's former associates at Brownsville Assembly is a potential fruit of the school's relocating, Brown stated that he is simply obeying the Lord's call to move the school to a location that's more strategic for a missions training-and-sending organization such as FIRE.

Airport access to Pensacola is limited, Brown noted as an example of one problem confronting the school. Operating in the same town as a rival ministry school, the Brownsville Revival School of Ministry (BRSM), also presents obstacles.

Brown and most of the BRSM faculty left the Brownsville school to start the FIRE school across town in January 2001. Brown was fired in December 2000 as president of BRSM. Brownsville's leaders say their unresolved differences with Brown over the direction of BRSM were the reason for their decision to replace him.

The split ended old friendships and divided families at Brownsville Assembly, and many BRSM students were forced to choose which school they would attend. As many as half left BRSM to help Brown start FIRE. By May 4 of this year, the students who left BRSM to attend FIRE had graduated, giving Brown's staff a feeling that their mission had been completed in Pensacola.

"God didn't even let us entertain relocating until we graduated this last class with former Brownsville students," Brown said. "We honored our commitment to not abandon them and to be true spiritual fathers to them."
–Billy Bruce