

Global Advance Trains 200,000th Pastor in Developing World

President David Shibley says his ministry's goal is to train 1 million indigenous pastoral leaders in non-Western nations

Global Advance recently celebrated a milestone in the West African nation of Burkina Faso. Seogo Jean, pastor of an Assemblies of God church in Kingria, was the 200,000th pastor to receive training at the Texas-based organization's Frontline Shepherds Conference, which trains local leaders in church planting and Christian discipleship.

Like other indigenous pastors Global Advance has trained, Jean risked his life to plant a church in his village. In fact, a local witch doctor offered two cows to anyone who would kill him.

"Jean was met by an angry mob who stoned him, cut him, and while he lay bleeding, he said, 'If I die, my blood will testify to you how much God loves you,'" president David Shibley said.

"Jean survived, and the townspeople were impressed by the fortitude of this pastor. Today his church attendance runs about 300 in a population of 3,000. The Lord has literally given him a tithe of the city."

Shibley believes many of the pastors he encounters worldwide are not only front-line shepherds, but hidden heroes of the body of Christ. "They are the ones who will never make the headlines in a Christian periodical, but they are the ones

literally on the front lines of the gospel's advance," he said. "They are drawing massive enemy fire spiritually, so we go to encourage them and give them the resources they need to take their nations for Christ."

Shibley, former mission pastor at Church on the Rock in Rockwall, Texas, founded Global Advance in 1990. Since then, the ministry has brought on-site training to 56 nations, including Russia, Brazil, Ukraine, Myanmar, Malaysia, Tanzania and Togo. Global Advance goes only at the invitation of pastors. "We aren't endeavoring to transport Western church ideas," Shibley said. "We're coming with biblical concepts we believe are transferable cross-culturally."

Statistics have shown that only about 5 percent of developing nations' 2 million pastors and church leaders have been formally trained for ministry. Although Global Advance can't offer them a seminary education, its staff endeavors to provide training in church growth, church planting and indigenous missionary-sending.

The multiplication principle outlined in 2 Timothy 2:2 serves as Global Advance's biblical model. According to Shibley, the quickest way to multiply the church is by adequately training and multiplying the leadership of the church. "By equipping the leaders, they are then equipped to mobilize their churches for evangelism and discipleship."

At a typical Frontline Shepherds Conference, Global Advance trains 600 or 700 pastors and church leaders. About four or five pastoral-level trainers lead the sessions. One day of training is devoted to "matters of the heart," such as character issues. The other two days are given to evangelism and discipleship.

"We always challenge them at the end for the fulfilling of the Great Commission," Shibley said. "We call them to publicly commit to planting at least one new church within the next 12 months, and we've seen thousands of pastors make that commitment."

Before leaving, the pastors receive a "Global Advance Virtual Institute" DVD package and portable DVD player, which provides 100 hours of training. The first 15 hours of the conference materials are included, along with sessions by Jack Hayford on integrity, Reinhard Bonnke on Christian evangelism and Dick Eastman on prayer.

Shibley said it is important to equip indigenous pastors, noting that the role of the U.S. church is changing. Since the mid-1990s, he said, there have been more missionaries deployed from non-Western nations than from Western nations. "The American church has become a junior partner in world missions," he said. "We must come up under these great indigenous church leaders and serve them and the vision God has given them."

In August, Global Advance held an International Summit for Church Leaders and hosted 36 leaders who have participated in a Frontline Shepherds Conference in their respective nations. "We know them, but they have never had an opportunity to meet each other," Shibley said. He added that Global Advance was "going to say little and listen much to these great leaders."

"We pray this will be an emerging paradigm for the American church," he said. "We need to listen to these tremendous apostolic leaders from around the world and hear how we can truly partner with them and serve them for the advancement of

the gospel.”

Global Advance’s goal is to train 1 million pastoral leaders, and to challenge and equip them to plant 1 million new churches.

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