

Groups Equip Pastors For Global Evangelism

Two organizations are on a mission to fulfill Bill Bright's vision to reach 1 billion people with the gospel

Campus Crusade for Christ founder Bill Bright dreamed of winning 1 billion people to Christ and starting 5 million churches in the coming decade, a vision embraced by two like-minded ministries.

Before his death in 2003, Bright launched the Global Pastors Network (GPN), now led by Mark Anderson of Youth With a Mission (YWAM). James Davis, who co-founded GPN with Bright, stepped down as GPN's president a year ago in order to launch a second group, Second Billion.

Both groups, which operate independent of each other, will hold major conferences the weekend of Jan. 29-31—GPN's in Orlando, Fla., and Second Billion's in Atlanta. Each is expected to draw thousands of Christian leaders.

At the GPN North American Congress in Orlando, dubbed "Call2All," participants will hear from such speakers as Foursquare President Jack Hayford, evangelist Luis Palau and Graham Power of the Global Day of Prayer.

In Atlanta the same weekend, Second Billion's "Synergize!" conference will convene 35 leaders, including Ukraine pastor Sunday Adelaja, Church of God in Christ Presiding Bishop Charles Blake and futurist and professor Leonard Sweet.

Despite a high-profile speaker lineup, Anderson said the emphasis at GPN's conference would be small-group discussions on evangelism. "Lots of pastors were frustrated with what GPN had become, a conference with a lot of big-name speakers," said Anderson, who still directs evangelism campaigns for

YWAM. "Packing a venue doesn't translate into global change."

Nearly 200 groups are participating in GPN's Call2All, including the Assemblies of God, Foursquare, YWAM and Every Home for Christ. Anderson said GPN would use a world-mapping system YWAM is developing to help participants refine missions strategies. "If you study missions, we have incredible overlap," he said.

"Yet there are 2.7 billion people who don't have access to the gospel."

Jim Scott, Foursquare vice president and chief operating officer, said GPN fits with his denomination's historical support of cooperative global evangelism. "If presidents [of denominations] can partner together in Orlando, then why can't pastors partner in a city?" he asked.

Meanwhile, Davis of Second Billion will follow up the Atlanta conference with nine regional summits this year, hoping to brainstorm with fellow leaders about the best church-growth methods. "Missionaries, evangelists and organizational leaders all want to help complete the Great Commission," Davis said. "We cannot do this using the methods of a bygone era. We need to know what is working ... today."

Adelaja, co-chair of the Second Billion initiative, said he has been on the receiving end of materials from U.S. ministries but believes Ukraine's evangelism model that has seen 2 million conversions in the last 13 years can be useful worldwide. "Instead of a 'West to the Rest' approach, our movement has a 'Best to the Rest' approach," the Nigeria native said. "Biblical principles are transferable, so what has worked in Ukraine can work anywhere."

Relations between GPN and Second Billion have been strained since Bright's widow, Vonette, posted a letter on GPN's Web site stating Davis had no right to claim her late husband's endorsement of his new initiative. Without commenting on the

letter, Davis attributed his departure from GPN to philosophical differences. He said it became clear that the strongest church-planting movements are outside the U.S. "In January of 2007, our vehicle changed, but the global vision remained the same," Davis said.

The existence of two groups doesn't bother some participants. Douglas LeRoy, assistant world missions director of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.) said his denomination is participating in both networks. "There are 2 billion people who still haven't heard about Christ," said LeRoy, co-chair of Second Billion's unreached peoples taskforce. "Any initiative focused on reaching those groups—our churches respond to that."

Joel Hunter, senior pastor of Northland: A Church Distributed in Orlando, also hopes twin ministries will multiply results. "Maybe some of the stuff we can't get done, they can," he said. "You can't have enough soul-winning efforts."

Ken Walker