

Men to Again 'Stand in the Gap' in D.C.

Celebrating 10 years since the original event drew 1 million men to the National Mall, Stand in the Gap 2007 is one of several diverse tools ministries are using to reach men

Ten years after the history-making Promise Keepers conference that drew more than 1 million men to the nation's capitol, men are again being summoned to Washington, D.C., for Stand in the Gap 2007.

Organizers are preparing for 250,000 men to convene on the lawn of the Washington Monument for the Oct. 6 event, which is being hosted by the National Coalition of Men's Ministries, a network of more than 80 Christian men's organizations. Speakers include Joseph Garlington, David Jeremiah, Samuel Rodriguez Jr. and Erwin McManus.

"We are urging men to return, remember, renew and rebuild their commitment to God, their families, churches, neighborhoods, communities and the nation," said Marty Granger, chairman and executive director of the event.

Stand in the Gap (standinthegap2007.org) comes at a time when men's ministry events rarely pack out stadiums. Promise Keepers (PK), which is supportive of but not involved in Stand in the Gap, hosts seven national conferences each year. But recent studies show that only about 35 percent of U.S. men attend church regularly.

"The church has taken the pressure off men—in a bad way," said Brian Doyle, president of Iron Sharpens Iron (ISI), a fast-

growing men's ministry that holds conferences in 24 cities every year. "If we can get our families to church, then we think we've done our job spiritually. We give the spiritual responsibility over to 'the professionals.'"

Jim Weidmann, PK's senior vice president, said his organization is developing more community-based resources for men. In addition to enhancing its Web site, the group plans to launch PK Adventure, a 90-minute multimedia series that combines the experiences of men's conferences, moviegoing and corporate training events. Hosted in movie theaters by local men's ministries, the resource will debut in November with a football-themed program featuring Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy.

Similarly, Men's Fraternity provides a series of courses on "authentic manhood" that are held in 6,000 locations nationwide—up from 1,000 locations three years ago.

"We're seeing people spontaneously conduct the courses in boardrooms, places of business, on campuses, in the military and even in prisons," global director Rick Caldwell said.

Although the courses aren't designed to appeal to "macho values," Caldwell said the meetings are tailor-made for men. "We don't have the guys hold hands or sing 'Kumbaya,'" he said. "We dispense with a lot of church trappings."

In Daytona Beach, Fla., roughly 100 men gather for the Church for Men, which meets one Saturday evening each month in a Salvation Army gym. Founded by Mike Ellis, the outreach event discusses issues men more often grapple with, such as anger and lust, and offers a one-hour in-and-out guarantee—even

displaying a shot clock to time the message.

Ellis said rather than being a literal congregation, the Church for Men is meant to complement local ministries. "Not only are [attendees] coming into a steppingstone church experience that they feel comfortable in," he said, "but what's happening is they're meeting men and pastors from area churches, and these guys are—after 48 years, nine years, 11 years of not going to church—are finding home churches for the first time. And that is one of our goals."

Other men's ministry leaders echo that sentiment. "The men's movement isolated itself, and the dialogue needs to continue to grow," said Kenny Luck, founder of Every Man Ministries. "Instead of competing with the local church, it needs to complement it."

Originally established as an independent organization, Every Man Ministries (EMM) is now an outreach of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. And though based in a local church, EMM hosts conferences across the U.S. "We're getting flooded with calls from churches," Luck said. "I'm excited about training churches. I don't work for Every Man Ministries. I work for local pastors."

To help train and empower men's ministry leaders, Florida-based Man in the Mirror recently launched the Web site . Patrick Morley, founder of Man in the Mirror, which partners with about a dozen other men's ministries including PK, describes the site as "a single, online, neutral location for leadership resources."

Man in the Mirror President David Delk believes the site

provides an essential ingredient that has been missing from the men's movement. "Right now there's an incredible inefficiency in men's ministry," he said. "There are a lot of good-hearted men who want to help other men, but they're too busy. ... This will multiply their success exponentially."

At Stand in the Gap 2007, participants will be challenged to leave a legacy of spiritual strength to the next generation. And like the original event, which draws its name from Ezekiel 22:30, it will call men to accountability. "Men today tend to be isolated," said National Coalition of Men's Ministries President Rick Kingham. "If you can get them together to stand for God, it's a grand success."

Kingham, who will be emceeding at Stand in the Gap 2007, said he anticipates big things for the men's movement. "The next phase will be a massive mobilization of men empowered to be a credible witness of Jesus Christ to the entire world," he said.

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