

Millions to Gather Across Africa for Day of Prayer and Repentance

The Africa Day of Prayer is expected to draw 15 million to 30 million participants from all 58 African nations and islands

On May 2 Africa was to witness what may be the greatest act of united prayer by Christians in the history of the continent.

An estimated 15 million to 30 million Africans from all 53 countries in Africa and five islands were expected to gather for united prayer in hundreds of stadiums throughout the continent.

For years churches across the continent had been praying that God would break the cycles of poverty and oppression that marked many African nations. But in 1998, the story of what God had done in Cali, Columbia, documented in the Transformations video produced by George Otis Jr. of The Sentinel Group, spread like wildfire among churches in Cape Town, South Africa. Church leaders across denominations began to gather for prayer.

Then in July 2000, Graham Power, a successful businessman in Cape Town, was awakened one day at 4 a.m. He said God gave him a vision in three stages. First, he was instructed to rent the 45,000-seat Newlands rugby stadium in Cape Town for a day of repentance and prayer for that city. In the second part of the vision, he saw the prayer movement spreading to the rest of South Africa for a national day of prayer, and in the final part of the vision he saw the effort cover the rest of the continent.

On March 21, 2001, the first step came to pass. A capacity crowd gathered in Newlands stadium for prayer and repentance. Soon after that a notorious gangster in the city was saved.

News of the first gathering spread quickly, and in 2002 eight cities in South Africa hosted the day of prayer. Leading up to the event young people from all over the country took part in a "Walk of Hope" from Bloemfontein to the eight stadiums where prayer meetings were to be held that year, visiting schools and community centers along the way. The events also were broadcast on television.

Power said he received another vision in February 2002, in which he saw the prayer event in 2003 spreading as far as the widest point in Africa, covering sub-Saharan Africa. The Day of Prayer for Africa last year did exactly that. Not only did 77 cities and towns in South Africa host interdenominational prayer events, but 60 other cities and towns in 27 countries in sub-Saharan Africa also took part. The event was broadcast by satellite television all over the continent.

Power said in the vision he had in 2003 he also saw that in 2004 prayer would cover the entire continent. "This past Saturday we had confirmation that the last two outstanding countries in Africa would come on board," Power told Charisma in March. "We now have 58 of 58 African countries and islands participating in this year's event. [Harvest Evangelism head] Ed Silvoso said to me this past weekend, 'You know Graham, this may be the biggest prayer movement the world has ever seen.'"

Transformation Africa, one of several teams that coordinates the prayer day, has collected numerous testimonies of how the prayer days have changed lives and communities. In the rural

conservative town of Piet Retief in South Africa, a community once deeply divided along racial lines has come together.

Anneke Rabe, an intercessor in the town, said that on the lead up to the 2003 prayer day, church leaders from the white community decided it was time to repent and ask for forgiveness for apartheid.

As they marched toward the black township Ethanda Kukhanya they found another crowd marching toward them led by several black church leaders. They met at the railway line that divided the two communities, and together the black and white believers marched to the stadium.

There the white church leaders knelt down and asked for forgiveness. The chairman of the black ministers' fellowship Baba Dlamini said that day, "I did not think I would live to see this day."

Africa is being changed one community at a time, Power said. "It has been amazing seeing these events unfold," he told Charisma. "I've got to the point where I am really starting to believe that God is going to do what He says He will do.

"There have been three or four occasions over the last few years that God has had to pull me short when I have been worrying about whether plans are going to come together. God has said to me: 'Hey, this is not your vision; it's Mine. You just do the little things I've called you to do, and I will take care of the rest.'"

David Larsen in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa