

Praying Down God's Power

A growing number of intercessors across sub-Saharan Africa believe God wants to dramatically transform their nations.

Emaciated cows dot the long road into Kenya's capital city. A drought plaguing the largely agricultural region has left farmers searching for land to graze their cattle. Nairobi, a bustling city of 1.8 million, is one of the few places where grass, though brown and brittle, can still be found.

It's the kind of thing that makes the news around here, but starving cows is one of Kenya's lesser concerns. The drought also has led to rations of the hydroelectric power supply, leaving irritated residents without electricity for hours on end. Worsening crime has made Nairobi notoriously dangerous, and 14 percent of the nation's adult population is said to be HIV-positive, with the numbers growing daily.

Only the details are different for neighboring nations. Beyond drought, famine and war, sub-Saharan Africa is rife with poverty, and an estimated 6,000 Africans die of AIDS each day. Another 11,000 are infected.

Olusegun Olanipekun knows the statistics, and his brow furrows slightly when he's reminded of them. "God is putting us in a corner where we don't have a choice but to pray," he says soberly. "There are many cases where people don't see light, don't see hope."

But the leader of Kenya House of Prayer, a grassroots movement that mobilizes and trains intercessors in spiritual warfare,

believes a new day is dawning for Africa. "We have been learning that prayer changes things," he told Charisma. "It is not the politicians. It is not the economists. We have been put here by God as an instrument of change."

Olanipekun, a Nigerian missionary to Kenya, has seen prayer work. After his group spent a week fasting and praying for the nation, Kenya President Daniel Arap Moi, a professing Christian who has been criticized for human rights abuses, suddenly called the nation to three days of prayer.

Kenya House of Prayer—a branch of Intercessors for Africa, a network of ministries dedicated to praying for the Africa—led the culminating event, which was broadcast live on three national stations and saw 5,000 attendees, including church and government officials.

Intercessors led the group in repentance for idolatry, witchcraft and government corruption. They then laid hands on the mayor of neighboring Kisumu and the deputy mayor of Nairobi. After the leaders repented, it began to rain—and continued for 45 minutes.

"Many saw the rain as a sign of God's mercy and answer to prayer," Olanipekun says. "The general feeling of the people who attended the meeting was of hope for the nation, hope in God."

Intercessors throughout the continent believe this is God's time for Africa, and prayer is the first step in accomplishing His purposes. The Rev. Mosy Madugba, leader of the Ministers Prayer Network based in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, which unites pastors in prayer and trains young leaders, believes God is

raising up the African church to play a crucial role in the end-times move of God.

“The Lord has always brought in Africa to play a crucial role at the end of every biblical event,” Madugba says. “God began creation in Africa. Abraham was protected [and enriched] in Africa. Jacob and his sons were preserved in Africa. They came as a family; they left as a nation.

“When Jesus was born, the angel said, ‘Take him to Africa.’ Africa is a preservative place. Africa will help preserve the purity of the church.”

Tearing Down Idols

But before the African church can lead abroad, it must first take the lead at home. Madugba believes God has given the African church an anointing to overtake their enemy. He says God is purging Africa of idolatry, and empowering believers to dethrone ancient deities.

In February, Madugba led a team to destroy a 520-year-old shrine called Nnemiri, which has been described as a continental deity and stood on 10 acres of land in Abia state in eastern Nigeria. “Because of that evil, there was no development in that place,” he says.

“Most people in that city and neighboring towns believe it is madness for anyone to attempt confronting the , because of the terrible, obvious, sinister effects of the continuing presence

of Nnemiri in that community, they became willing to do anything possible to have it destroyed.”

After fasting and praying for seven days, Madugba says the Lord showed him and a team of 150 intercessors step-by-step how to break every covenant that had been made with the god. For three days and nights, Madugba and his team repented for the thousands of murders committed at the shrine and prayed that God would use Christ’s blood to reconcile the land and the people to Himself.

“We submitted ourselves in prayer to God to direct us. We went into fierce prayer warfare using Scriptures against the deity and her family because we discovered she had a family,” Madugba says.

“The deity fought back with strange snakes, bees and [other] manifestations. We went ahead to kill physically all of these. We visited every altar, broke the covenant on which they were built, tore them down and closed the evil spiritual gates such altars opened.

“In their place, we dedicated those spots to God. We burned the courthouse, the main shrine and the serving shrine houses with fire.” Today a church is being constructed at that site.

Identifying the seat of authority in his city is what transformed pastor Thomas Muthee’s community. Kiambu, Kenya, about an hour outside Nairobi, was once known for its crime, poverty and alcohol abuse. Women were afraid to go out at night; churches wouldn’t grow beyond a few dozen members.

When Muthee moved there in 1989 to plant a church, he spent

the first six months praying and researching the region. Soon he discovered that a spirit of witchcraft hovered over the town, with a witch doctor named Mama Jane holding a seat of authority.

Muthee's congregation prayed nonstop 24 hours a day in what became known as "the Prayer Cave" until they sensed the power had been broken. They then began to see people coming to Christ in large numbers.

Mama Jane retaliated with her sorcery, but the church continued to pray, and within weeks she moved away. Muthee, whose story is recounted in George Otis Jr.'s Transformations video, says the atmosphere has changed since she left, crime is down, and the popu

lation has increased by more than 30 percent.

Today churches here have grown, and more than 400 intercessors from Muthee's 5,000-member Word of Faith Church pray daily for the region.

"Prayer generates a transforms," Muthee says. "If God can do it in Kiambu, He can do it anywhere."

Faith for the Future

Members of Kenya House of Prayer hope to see similar transformation in their community and throughout the continent. Through Sundoulos (which means "servants of the same Lord" in Greek) Africa Leadership Training and the Africa Business Forum, Kenya House of Prayer trains politicians and businessmen to apply biblical principles in their leadership

practices. Prayer coordinator Hudson Mukunza hopes to see Christians take a leadership role in developing their communities.

In Kenya, almost 70 percent of the population professes some form of Christianity, but Mukunza says the church hasn't known how to effect lasting change. "The church in Africa has isolated itself from the realities: dealing with AIDS, economic development is a matter people do the most with what they have."

In sub-Saharan Africa, where four out of five residents live below the poverty line, Mukunza says it is difficult to get believers to reach out to help others. The House of Prayer has collected food and clothes to distribute to neighboring Sudan and Mozambique. The group is also hoping to send prayer teams into Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan.

"What we're doing hasn't been done much by the church," Mukunza says. "A lot of Africans, when they want to do anything, to the West for funding. When you look to money, when money becomes your goal, you lose ministry."

"When God gives you an assignment, He will provide the money. The money to build the tabernacle came from Africa. When there was famine, the people were fed from Africa. We have something to contribute."

"I believe when people give from the West, they are not always giving out of their abundance; they are giving sacrificially. Africans need to know we don't have to give out of our extra. We don't have to wait for the abundance."

Africa isn't changing overnight, but an explosion of church growth in Nigeria, a declining HIV infection rate in Uganda and an increasing number of missionaries from Africa to other nations keep these intercessors hopeful.

After the national prayer meeting in Kenya, Olusegun Olanipekun was filled with anticipation. "We are expecting more from the Lord," he said. "We believe that this is a rehearsal for greater things that God will do in the nation and in the continent of Africa." *

Adrienne S. Gaines is an associate editor for Charisma and Ministries Today magazines. She traveled to Kenya in September to compile this report.