Web Site Feeds Growth Of Prophetic Movement

The Elijah List has more than 127,000 subscribers and has become the largest platform for prophetic ministers

A fast-growing Web site that posts prophetic messages and prayer alerts is playing an increasingly influential role in today's Christian prophetic movement.

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the Elijah List has moved from a small-scale newsletter to a Web site with 127,000 e-mail subscribers, making it the largest platform for modern prophetic voices in the country.

Steve Shultz, founder and organizer of the Elijah List, said he didn't have big plans when he first began sending e-mails containing prophecies and prayer requests to a circle of friends in the late 1990s.

"That's the funniest thing of all this is [that] it was an accident," Shultz said. "I was just sending a few [prophetic] words to people. I thought, Well, this is getting tiring—pasting and sending."

Then 9/11 happened, and the Web site began getting 500 to 600 subscribers a day. "Whenever there is a disaster we get more subscriptions because people turn to God," Shultz said.

Based in Albany, Ore., the Elijah List sponsors conferences and sells books and teaching tapes about prophecy. Shultz described the site as an online bookstore with an edge because some of the material is "cutting edge."

“Most of what we make available is not available at your Christian bookstore because it’s a little too cutting edge for your local Christian bookstore,” Shultz said. “They’re afraid they’re going to be criticized.”

From 1991 to 1998, Shultz ran a business that reunited about 5,000 people who had lost contact with one another, attracting a national audience as he appeared on talk shows such as Geraldo.

But the rise of the Internet undermined Shultz’s people-finding business and led to his ministry, the Elijah List, which has grown from a one-man operation to employing 50 people.

Shultz said the primary purpose of the Elijah List is to dispense prophetic words as they come out “from all the different streams,” and he referred to the Web site as “a clearinghouse of many prophetic streams.” The Web site includes links to prophetic ministers listed alphabetically.

“What we’re trying to do is pick the most edifying and encouraging prophecies and once in a while a warning prophecy,” Shultz said.

But the Elijah List has stirred controversy. Jonathan Benz, resident prophet and pastor of prayer and outreach at Covenant Centre in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., encouraged intercessors he was affiliated with to unsubscribe after the Web site posted prophecies saying Hurricane Katrina was the result of God’s judgment. He said those kinds of messages took the focus off helping the victims.

Shultz said he's constantly seeking feedback from prophetic leaders he knows and from his pastor. "We don't call it a board, but there are advisory people who I trust who give me a thumbs up or down," he said. "Since 1997 when this began, there are three or four words I wish I wouldn't have sent out. I rushed them. I've learned as we went."

Among those advisers are Chuck Pierce, president of Glory of Zion Ministries; James Goll of the Encounter Network; C. Peter Wagner of Global Harvest Ministries; and Cindy Jacobs of Generals International.

Shultz also sits on the board of the Apostolic Council of Prophetic Elders, founded by several prophetic leaders including Wagner and Jacobs.

Shultz's pastor, Denny Cline of Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Albany, said he has been surprised by the way the Elijah List has grown. He believes God has used the Web site to "build up the saints."

"We are both aware of the hot buttons the prophetic can push, but Steve is prayerful and gets wise counsel from other men and women who many people would know before publishing words that reach so many people," Cline said. "I am always amazed at how many people are touched, encouraged and stirred because of the prophetic and the many impacting words that go out on the Elijah List."

The Web site also is criticized for being too commercial. But Shultz explains that like a pastor, a prophet needs to support a family by selling books and CDs, or charging for conferences.

Shultz said he accepts and expects controversy. Yet he remains committed to a spiritual gift he believes is beneficial to church growth.

He believes the best days are ahead for the prophetic movement and plans to release a monthly magazine titled Voice of the Prophetic, which will include prophetic words and teaching articles about prophetic ministry. “We are a lightning rod,” Shultz said. “But it’s worth every bit of it.”

Gail Wood