

Millions to Pray to Reduce Extreme Poverty

A cross-section of Pentecostal and charismatic groups will be joining tens of millions of Christians worldwide Sunday in praying for the world's poor.

The Assemblies of God (AG), Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.), Hillsong Church and Alpha International are among the dozens of ministries endorsing Micah 2010. Led by Britain-based Micah Challenge International, the campaign calls on Christians to pray and take action against extreme poverty.

Participants in the prayer day Sunday will join in saying a specially written prayer asking for God to intervene on behalf of the poor. They will also remind political leaders of the need to keep their promise through the 2000 U.N. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halve extreme poverty by 2015.

Micah Challenge hopes to collect 10 million handprints symbolizing Christians' promise to remember the poor. The handprints will be given to government leaders to remind them that only five years remain to meet the MDGs.

As many as 100 million people in more than 60 nations are expected to participate. Former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rev. Rowan Williams, have endorsed the campaign.

" offers us an opportunity for robust and prophetic engagement around the promises made to the poor, as well as to offer critical evaluations of world government responses," said Joel Edwards, an ordained AG minister and international director of Micah Challenge International. "This is why our prayer, promise and action are both timely and potentially transformational." (Read Joel Edwards' op-ed, "From Social

Activism to Biblical Advocacy.”)

A prayer teleconference hosted by Intercessory Prayer Ministry International in New York will be held Thursday in the run up to Micah 2010. On Sunday, special events will be held on four continents, beginning with a worship service at Hillsong Church in Sydney.

A worship concert will follow in Chennai, India, that is being hosted by the Church of South India, World Vision, AG, Youth With a Mission and Campus Crusade for Christ. Several politicians are expected to participate in a subsequent event in Lusaka, Zambia. And in London, where Micah Challenge is based, a large-scale worship event is being held at Jesus House for All Nations, a charismatic megachurch affiliated with the Redeemed Christian Church of God.

The final event is to take place in Guayaquil, Ecuador, roughly 20 hours after the Sydney worship service. In addition to prayer, organizers plan to visit members of Ecuador’s Congress in Quito and urge them to help meet the MDGs.

“Micah 2010 is a global response to the incredible need for resource, action, commitment and accountability “as we collectively take responsibility for a world in such desperate need,” said Hillsong senior pastor Brian Houston. “We must be committed to tearing down the walls’ between the church and our communities, both locally and globally, exemplifying the hands and feet of Jesus on the earth and bringing hope to hopeless situations.”

In August, the Church of God passed a resolution calling on the governments represented by its nearly 7 million members to “honor their promise to halve extreme global poverty by 2015, holding them accountable to act with integrity and justice on behalf of the poor.” Micah Challenge is their primary partner in that effort.

“Pentecostals have long been known as belonging to churches of

and for the poor in most parts of the world, and now we have the opportunity to show our solidarity with them in this new partnership,” said Richard Waldrop, world missions liaison for the Church of God.

Among the other groups participating in Micah 2010 are the Salvation Army International, World Vision, World Relief, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Elim network of Pentecostal churches.

“Just a few days away from , we have been excited and overwhelmed by the amount of Christians in 65 different nations who are going to be part of our day of prayer, promise and action,” Edwards said in a recent video message. “If it is true that the church is the hope of the world, imagine what would happen if after , we do not go back to business as usual. Beyond Micah Challenge looks forward to promoting the need for increased political stability globally by highlighting the need for good governance.”