

Ministry Marks 10 Years of Nonstop Prayer and Worship

✖ A Missouri ministry known for leading 24-hour prayer and worship is marking its 10th anniversary this week by committing to match its prayer efforts with acts of service and outreach.

During its four-day anniversary celebration, which begins tonight and will be broadcast live online, the International House of Prayer (IHOP) will announce a new justice initiative that founder Mike Bickle (pictured) said will quadruple the ministry's outreach and evangelism efforts.

"At the 10-year mark, we're making a commitment by the grace of God to combine 24-hour prayers of justice with 24-hour works of justice until the Lord returns," Bickle said.

Former pastor of Metro Christian Fellowship in Kansas City, Bickle founded IHOP in 1999 to be a vehicle for 24-hour-a-day prayer and worship. Since then, houses of prayer have been planted around the world, and some 4,000 people currently raise support to work with the ministry full or part time.

Bickle said outreach has been part of IHOP's focus for the last seven years, with volunteers evangelizing five days a week throughout Kansas City, hosting healing rooms and feeding the poor. But he said the ministry is moving from an 80 percent focus on prayer and 20 percent emphasis on outreach to a 50-50 model.

In the coming months, he said IHOP plans to convert an apartment complex located near their current headquarters into a Women's Life Center. The facility will house a crisis pregnancy center, and provide a home for former prostitutes and women rescued from sex trafficking.

Several other properties being purchased in inner-city Kansas City will be used for feeding and evangelistic activities similar to those at the Los Angeles Dream Center, Bickle said. And a 100,000-square-foot shopping center recently donated to the ministry will serve as IHOP's new headquarters and house a Justice Ministry Center that will include an adoption agency, offices for the Bound4Life movement founded by Lou Engle; and Exodus Cry, a ministry that helps rescue girls in Eastern Europe from human trafficking.

Bickle says the undertaking is "huge" both financially and spiritually. He said it is often difficult for ministries to maintain both a deep prayer focus and a missions emphasis.

"We are just getting to the maturity level as a ministry where we can sustain the outreach while maintaining a prayer life because historically when a ministry gets real aggressive about outreach, and thousands have done it, more times than not they start losing their connect in their prayer life," Bickle said. "I'm nervous about this."

But he said IHOP has spent the last 10 years developing a "culture of prayer," with some 1,500 full-time committing to 12, two-hour prayer times each week. "It's part of people's job descriptions," Bickle said. "We tell them, 'You are intercessory missionaries; you're not just [employees].' Part of their task is to be in the prayer room crying out for justice."

But even with the risk, Bickle believes God is requiring the ministry to up the ante on justice ministry. "The risk is huge, and ... the reason we're taking it on is, biblically, we're on the earth for it," he said. "And the Spirit is pressing us. The Lord is saying over and over, it is now time to be far more aggressive. ... Now He's got His finger on us. He's upped the intensity of it. And our people really want to. We've talked about it for years, and we have no option but to do it."

During the anniversary services this week, Bickle plans to discuss several prophetic messages the ministry has received through the years and their implications in the present and future. He believes the church is entering a season of both intense persecution and great harvest.

"We think very strongly from the Word and the Spirit that it's great trouble and great victory-both of them are emerging at the same time," Bickle said. "It will be the greatest harvest field in America, but it will be the season of the greatest falling away from the faith, or at least from the organized church."

He said there is a fast-moving trend in the church toward secular liberalism that is happening in tandem with a movement toward radical, New Testament Christianity. And he sees persecution looming.

"It will start out with economic persecution and troubles and pressures, and it will mount to verbal restraintsâ€"you can't cross the line, you can't talk about gay marriage, you can't talk about abortion," he said. "It's going to mount up from there even in America. We believe that.

"And we believe that there's going to be an increase in crisis ...[and] things that trouble society. We think those are mounting up while the church is mounting up, both of them happening together."

To watch the anniversary services live, visit .