

200-Year-Old Mission Sees Third Great Awakening Right Around the Corner

The word “missionary” carries a strong stereotype—but if Americans want to see revival, it’s time for that to change.

When many think of missionaries, they picture Western Christians leaving their comfortable homes to minister to people in third-world countries who have never heard the gospel before.

That picture is a noble and often accurate one, but InFaith CEO Dr. Ridge Burns says if that’s someone’s only description of a missionary, there’s something seriously wrong.

“We’ve been sold a bill of goods that missions is only outside our country,” Burns says. “The crisis is that the evil one has begun to build strongholds in our urban centers and our rural communities.”

Those strongholds, Burns says, come in the form of nationwide crises involving drugs, homelessness, fatherlessness and, above all, spiritual apathy.

“The problem is that there is a lack of spiritual hunger for what God wants to do in our own country,” Burns says.

That’s where InFaith seeks to step in. Founded 200 years ago, Burns says InFaith is the oldest continuous mission in the United States, but its vision is to meet a still largely ignored need: reach local communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To do so, InFaith has 180 missionaries in 38 states and provides each mission worker a flexible structure so they can reach their local areas in diverse ways. Because of this,

Senior Director of Innovation Andrea Graver says there's no average day for an InFaith missionary. Each one is unique—as is their method for spreading Christ's love.

For example, one InFaith couple has been serving in a tough section of Washington, D.C., for the past 45 years. Burns says in their time as missionaries, this couple has noticed the kids in that urban area have a need for free expression, so they formed a kids camp called Camp Dynamite. The kids began enjoying their camp experience—and it wasn't long until the adults began to catch on.

"A bunch of older women in the community said, 'We want to go to camp,'" Burns says. "And so now [the missionary couple] runs a camp not only for young people, but also a camp full of ladies, most of whom are 70 and 80 years old, because it's all about relationship."

Burns says the camp has become so influential that D.C. police and social service workers come to this InFaith couple and ask them to help them give the community better lives.

But creating Christ-focused camps isn't the only way missionaries can reach their communities. Graver says God called one man in Colorado to reach a local group of Spanish-speaking laborers even though he only spoke English. He started by taking clothes and food and trying to share God's Word with them with whatever Spanish he could learn.

Another gentleman heard about a murder in his hometown and felt God call him to reach the men in that town's prison.

"The Lord, in His Spirit, calls us in the places that are boring to us and yet so near to us in our local communities," Graver says. "He's raised us up in who we are and we want to call that out in people."

On the Verge of a Third Great Awakening

To equip people to fulfill God's call, Graver says InFaith provides missionaries with a stable financial structure as well as opportunities to use templating, be a part of a prayer network and connect with like-minded believers.

InFaith, originally called the American Sunday School Union, was born out of a revival movement that came out of Philadelphia and swept across the country. In the early 1800s and into the 1900s, the agency served 35,000 churches.

Revival remains a part of InFaith's DNA, Burns says, and each employee and missionary is working to see revival spread like wildfire in the U.S. once again. For him and the rest of InFaith's missionaries, the question is: "What is the next wave and how can we open up the floodgates of heaven to reach our country?"

Burns believes what his missionaries are doing in their local communities is the key to seeing revival. Indeed, he says he can already see sparks in various pockets across America and believes a third awakening is right around the corner.

"Let's really take seriously the command to reach our local, to take the gospel to Jerusalem, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world," he says. "We got the uttermost parts of the world ... but let's get into those urban centers. Let's get into those rural communities and let's bring the gospel. Let's light this country on fire." {eoa}

Click [here](#) to listen to Dr. Steve Greene, Dr. Ridge Burns and Andrea Graver discuss America's desperate need for revival on "Charisma Connection." For more information about InFaith, visit [.](#)