

21 Emerging Leaders of Tomorrow's Church

Meet the new generation of Spirit-empowered leaders out to change the world.

Jaeson Ma

Church Planter, Filmmaker, Music Artist

Once a hip-hop rapper, 29-year-old Jaeson Ma ran with an Asian gang as a teen before accepting Christ. His conversion led to a career as a pastor, church planter and author before he returned to music. Ma had a hit single, "Love," last fall and this year will release a new album, *Glory*. He recently launched into filmmaking with *1040*, a documentary meant to educate and inspire the world about what God is doing in China. The film tells stories of faith, hope and love from across the most populous nation of the world. "Most Westerners do not know that the greatest move of God is happening in Asia right now ... with over 37,000 coming to faith daily. In Asia, *1040* highlights how faith is not so much what we believe but how we behave."

Clay Hearn

Medical Missionary

Soon after he graduated from Emmanuel College in Franklin Springs, Georgia, Clay Hearn left for southern Sudan, where he has worked the last 15 months with the missions arm of International Pentecostal Holiness Church. He helped with the ministry center's daily operations and worked with short-term missions teams but is scheduled to return home soon to enroll

in medical school. "I believe the Lord is sending me into medicine to give me a tool to reach out to otherwise unreachable people. There are so many places in the world that are closed to the gospel and missionaries but not to doctors." His time in Africa changed his view of the U.S. church, which he says is yielding crucial ground. So many Christians try to avoid offending others that they avoid doing anything for God, Hearn says.

Alex Novik

Entrepreneur

Alex Novik immigrated with his family in the early 2000s from Belarus to Philadelphia, where his father began pastoring a small Slavic church, Word of Life. After earning a degree in graphic design, Novik opened Novik Design three years ago. He says visual messages are the most powerful tool to influence people's decisions. "If we put 20 billboards in the city [saying] 'Real men don't smoke' or 'Real men don't hurt women,' in a few years we are going to see a significant change in people's mindset about who a real man should be. God needs His people in the media sphere of influence to get the right message across."

Judah Smith

Megachurch Pastor

Formerly pastor to teens and college students at The City Church in Seattle, 31-year-old Judah Smith replaced his father, Wendell, as the senior pastor last September. The transition has enlarged his heart for people in all seasons of life. Many of the young people he pastored in The City's Generation Church are now 25 to 35 years old and are the

backbone of the church—generous in giving, serving and leading, Smith says. “One of my main goals when I was the youth pastor was not just to see young people serve God passionately while they were young, but to serve God in every season of their life. My measure of a successful youth pastor is if the young people he or she pastors are still in church—loving God and raising godly families—as they get older.” In addition to the thousands who hear Smith preach each weekend at one of The City Church’s multiple campuses, more than 35,000 people download his sermons from the church’s Web site.

Fred Price Jr.

Megachurch Pastor

In March, the youngest son of pastor Frederick K.C. Price marked his first anniversary as senior pastor of Crenshaw (California) Christian Center after accepting his father’s mantle on his 30th birthday. Reflecting the younger Price’s age, the church has received an influx of 18- to 35-year-olds, including new converts and believers who didn’t attend regularly before. Price says their numbers include members who have taken commitment to the next level by assisting with the helps ministry and pastoral duties. “In these trying and perilous times, I want to see the church get in line with the will of God so we can see movements of God as great as the ones seen in the book of Acts. I’d also love to see God move through willing vessels to fulfill His plan and purpose in their lives.”

Benjamin Nolot

Anti-slavery Activist

Three years ago, Benjamin Nolot founded Exodus Cry, a ministry countering modern slavery, after his address at a conference on human trafficking was interrupted by numerous attendees falling to the floor weeping. Soon after, a donor gave him \$10,000 to start the organization that today is part of the 24/7 Justice Initiative at International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri, where Nolot has been a member since 2003. His ministry today receives 90 percent of its financial support and involvement from people under age 30. Nolot, 33, is co-author of a book titled *Babylon* about the spiritual underpinnings of modern slavery and currently is filming a documentary about the global sex trade, scheduled for release in December. He says that “entering the fight against slavery became more than joining a cause. It became an issue of entering into friendship with Jesus.”

Justin Dorroh

Church Planter

Justin Dorroh left the business world last year to pastor The Door Community of Faith in Portland, Oregon—one of more than 40 churches globally that have been planted by Antioch Ministries International of Waco, Texas. He led the congregation during its relocation into a theater setting and capped off the move with a relaunch of the church last September. The church’s emphasis is on cell groups that meet in various areas, including one near Portland State University. Members do everything from passing out free coffee to giving away gift certificates to establish relationships with nonbelievers. “People have put the church in a box [here], and we’re trying to get out of the box. People think God wants to condemn them. As we share the gospel, people are saying, ‘I’ve never heard that before.’ We’re starting to see breakthroughs.”

Cameron Strang

Entrepreneur

In 2000, Cameron Strang launched Relevant Media Group, a multimedia company targeting the college-to-early 30s audience, and is the publisher of its flagship print and online magazine, *Relevant*. This year the company released a digital version of the magazine for e-readers and added an online radio station to the magazine's website. In May, Strang expects to publish the first print edition of *Reject Apathy*, currently an online site that promotes Christian cultural engagement. He foresees a future melding of the church's "vertical" emphasis on the cross with a "horizontal" focus on social justice. "God is doing a new thing in my generation, and I feel like I'm charged with navigating those waters in the media—not only reporting on what God is doing, but also being a voice of leadership."

Benjamin Stephens III

Pastor and Author

Benjamin Stephens III leads four Bible study classes at West Angeles Church of God in Christ (COGIC) as pastor to collegiate and young adults. Two groups meet on college campuses, and a weekly one at the church attracts 125 young adults. The 36-year-old also serves as national president of the COGIC young men's ministry. A book he co-authored, *From Jay-Z to Jesus*, has stirred interest outside Christian circles with its call for the church to build bridges with urban youth and mentor future leaders. "I pray that God will bring revival to young adults. Even though the dress code might be different, or someone might have a tattoo or a piercing, I hope that will not disqualify them in their worship. Don't

judge a book by its cover. God is still doing some amazing things in the lives of young people.”

Randy Olsson

Teen Mania leader

Last November Randy Olsson became the director for global expansion with Honor Academy of Teen Mania, a youth ministry based in Garden Valley, Texas, where he has been affiliated since 2001. The one-year academy grounds recent high school graduates in the faith and is accredited through partnerships with Oral Roberts University and Sterling University. Olsson is optimistic about youth, saying the young generation has three distinguishing marks: a desire for authenticity, an active faith and an emphasis on community. “The young generation is so hungry to be relevant. They want to meet felt needs of the world.” Olsson also wants to see every believer strengthened for the future. “The culture is swallowing people up, intellectually and spiritually. The reason Honor Academy exists is ... to get people rooted in their faith and able to withstand the onslaught.”

Damon Thompson

Revivalist

When he was 9, Damon Thompson saw himself in a vision tossing Bibles into wheat fields and watching balls of fire ignite. He surrendered to the call to preach 13 years ago and has since traveled the globe to deliver a message of renewed hunger for God. “I want to see signs, wonders and miracles following not just ministers but believers. Jesus said that we would perform the signs He did and greater. It’s my passion that the church not settle for a lesser power.” As a member of the leadership

team at Ramp youth and conference center in Hamilton, Alabama, Thompson has a large following among young adults. He says today's younger generation is tired of fake religion and doesn't want to come to church and see a show. "They want to have a power encounter that will change everything about their lives."

Rob Hoskins

Media Evangelist

"I have a great burden to see the church join together in unity to accomplish the Great Commission," says Rob Hoskins, president of Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based OneHope (formerly called Book of Hope). The worldwide ministry, founded by his father in 1987, teaches children biblical basics. More than 640 million copies of its Bible summary have been distributed, and 20 million-plus children have seen its animated movie about Christ's life, *The GodMan*. Under Hoskins, OneHope has expanded to include film, text messaging, trading cards and music. "After 20 years of extensive ministry work on behalf of OneHope that has taken me to more than 70 countries, I have seen firsthand the need for a more unified approach to world missions between the church, missionaries and mission-minded organizations."

Rebecca Grant

Anti-slavery Activist

A 28-year-old graduate of Evangel University, Rebecca Grant spends most of the year in India assisting Project Rescue, an outreach to female sex-trafficking victims that originated with members of Mumbai Teen Challenge. Though based in New Delhi, Grant travels to various cities with her Rescue Arts,

which uses creative arts to minister. "I have seen broken women and girls learn to express and create through the arts and discover their value in Christ," Grant says. "Each time a young woman creates something beautiful out of what was broken and hopeless, I see a light of hope and understanding in her eyes. That change is what keeps me going." After spending much of 2009 in New Delhi at a Project Rescue site, she planned in March to help open a Home of Hope in the city. Grant says trafficking in India will change only as believers come together across cultures and ideologies.

Dave Sumrall

Church Planter

Last year Dave Sumrall launched ONE, a ministry for people in their late teens and 20s that brought more than 400 people to Christ as it spread to three campuses of Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama, where he served for two years. Sumrall, 32, and his wife, Kate, were scheduled to move to Indianapolis in March to plant I-town Church, a congregation that will focus on young adults and families and emphasize children's programs and nurseries. "I am very passionate about the local church. I truly believe it is the hope of the world. The generation I am privileged to pastor is one of the most genuine and hungry generations to ever live. They want a true relationship with Jesus that results in New Testament power that can be displayed in normal, everyday life."

Jennifer Toledo

Activist

Jennifer Toledo directs with her husband, Jonatan, the Africa-

based aid organization Global Children's Movement, which they started six years ago to raise awareness of child poverty. Their efforts include a center for women rescued from the sex trade in Kenya, a relief center in Congo and an anti-violence campaign in Uganda. Their organization also trains American pastors and leaders to work with children. Toledo says the church needs to realign its priorities so it will be ready for what she believes will be the greatest revival in history for children and youth. "Everywhere we travel around the world, we meet pockets of children who are having radical God encounters, interceding for revival, [receiving] visitations and being called to the harvest field. There is something brewing [and] stirring in the hearts of this generation. There is a compelling hunger for a gospel that transforms lives."

Eric Reeder

Youth Revivalist

Along with overseeing youth ministry at The Oasis in Middletown, Ohio, Eric Reeder travels extensively, exhorting the church to influence society. He has a heart for seeing the church arise, particularly in multigenerational settings. That happened last November in the first of a series of worship and prayer conferences held under the name Surge. The event attracted more than 300, and the crowd was split evenly between people over and under age 35. "I was thrilled about that. I'm talking gray-hairs down to teenagers," he says. Reeder, 33, is also excited about the promise of today's youth. "The younger generation is bursting to do more than go to a Sunday church service. Their hearts are beating to make significant impact and change on a broad scale."

Jonathan Shibley

Marketplace Minister

Jonathan Shibley has taken his college background as a business major at Baylor University into the world. He is founder of the Marketplace Missions initiative of Dallas-based Global Advance, which last year sponsored 20 marketplace conferences in 14 developing nations, attended by some 3,000 business leaders. Shibley says evangelism, job creation and environmental stewardship all occur in this arena. He organized the marketplace emphasis to impart a gospel vision to entrepreneurs and professionals. Pilot projects in 2004 met with success and revealed that little attention had been given to Christian businesspersons in developing countries. "I think millions of believers in the marketplace are awakening to the fact that they are a strategic, vital piece in God's plan. People need to see the power of God manifest, and the marketplace is where the rubber meets the road."

Kim Walker-Smith

Musician

Kim Walker-Smith has recorded four albums with Jesus Culture, a worship movement that emerged from teaching conferences held by Bethel Church in Redding, California. Formerly worship pastor at the church, she stepped down in January 2009 to attend school in San Francisco and to marry Skyler Smith, a childhood friend who plays guitar for her at some of her concerts. Despite the move, she is still involved with Jesus Culture and will release her second solo effort this fall. She says youth are growing up with more divorce, abuse and violence than previous generations but are emerging stronger. "I see God capturing the hearts of the younger generation. They are hungry for the supernatural and for something that goes beyond their full understanding. Faith isn't really difficult for them."

John Wheeler

Minister

John Wheeler made national news a year ago when he helped organize an event to foster racial unity among Pentecostal churches in Springfield, Missouri. Today the 27-year-old is still calling for racial reconciliation. "If racial division is not the biggest stronghold of the devil, it's one of them," says Wheeler, great-grandson of Church of God in Christ (COGIC) founder Charles H. Mason. Wheeler moved to San Diego in December to be part of St. Stephen's Cathedral COGIC and work with its youth ministry. His recent relocation puts him closer to Azusa Street in Los Angeles, scene of the historic 1900s-era revival led by African-American preacher William Seymour. "They were all of the same motive and the same heart—they were all one body. A lot of people following [Seymour] weren't even the same ethnicity. That's powerful."

Faytene Kryskow

Revivalist

Canadian speaker Faytene Kryskow has spearheaded movements to train intercessors and influence her nation's political system. In 2008, she led the largest-ever pro-life gathering in Canada at Parliament, and she oversees TheCRY, an interdenominational prayer and fasting movement. She says current world events are so intense that believers can't be going about business as usual: "We have to be sensitive to the times and what the Lord wants us to do." Author of a best-selling book, *Stand on Guard*, Kryskow also launched MY Canada to give young adults a voice in Parliament and has used it to organize more than 500 meetings with political leaders. "God has rolled out the red carpet for us to speak."

Darren Wilson

Independent Filmmaker

Darren Wilson became an underground success after his first film, *Finger of God*—which looked at miracles occurring in the global charismatic movement—sold more than 60,000 copies. The artist-in-residence and assistant professor at Judson University and head of Wanderlust Productions debuted his second film, *Furious Love*, on Feb. 14. Wilson, 33, hopes the new movie will start a revolution of love in the Western church, which he says has a tendency to focus on its problems instead of reaching those outside of God's grace. "My passion is for today's church to actually rise up and be the church God has been calling her to be for the last 2,000 years. We are called to show the love of Jesus, and that love is a radical thing. ... There is power in the exertion of love toward our fellow man."

HEAR THEM SPEAK

Visit to watch powerful videos from some of the passionate young leaders featured in this article.