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Rick Warren, at 25-year point, launches global initiative



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Saddleback's 25th

Rick and Kay Warren join in singing "Amazing Grace" at the close of Saddleback Church's 25th anniversary celebration – and its launch of a global "P.E.A.C.E. plan" -- Sunday at Angel Stadium in California. courtesy of Purpose Driven Ministries. [Photo Terms of Use](#)

Posted on Apr 18, 2005 | by Mark Kelly

ANAHEIM, Calif. (BP)--Thousands of churches around the world will be setting out to eradicate five "giant problems" that oppress billions of people, Rick Warren told a crowd of 30,000 celebrating Saddleback Valley Community Church's 25th anniversary April 17 at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, Calif.

"Billions of people suffer each day from problems so big no government can solve them," said Warren, Saddleback's pastor. "The only thing big enough to solve the problems of spiritual emptiness, selfish leadership, poverty, disease and ignorance is the network of millions of churches all around the world."

Saddleback Church celebrated its 25th anniversary by combining the congregation's usual six weekend services into a single gathering at the stadium south of Los Angeles. It was the first time in many years members of the church family had been able to assemble at the same time. The event included greetings to the congregation from President George Bush and evangelist Billy Graham and featured music from Michael W. Smith, Salvador and Tait.

Warren used the occasion to announce his vision of a spiritual awakening that would sweep the world as Christian churches tackle the problems that Jesus Himself confronted during His ministry.

"The Scripture shows us that Jesus shared the Good News, trained leaders, helped the poor, cared for the sick and taught the children," Warren said. "Our P.E.A.C.E. plan will just do the five things Jesus did while He was here on earth."

P.E.A.C.E. is an acronym that stands for "Plant churches, Equip servant leaders, Assist the poor, Care for the sick and Educate the next generation," Warren said. The emphasis calls for church-based small groups to adopt villages where spiritual emptiness, selfish leadership, poverty, disease and ignorance keep people from experiencing the kind of life God wants them to have, he said.

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"There are thousands of villages in the world that have no school, no clinic, no business, no government -- but they have a church," Warren said. "What would happen if we could mobilize churches to address those five global giants?"

Warren's "Purpose Driven" movement will be the vehicle for launching such an effort. A combined 23 million copies of his books -- "The Purpose-Driven Church" and "The Purpose-Driven Life" -- have been sold, and more than 400,000 pastors in 162 countries have been trained in the "church health" principles that took Saddleback from seven people to more than 20,000 members in 25 years. Warren's approach organizes congregations into small groups that focus on the five biblical purposes of the church: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism.

Saddleback's network of 2,600 small groups is starting the movement as each one adopts a village where it will seek to implement the P.E.A.C.E. plan. The congregation, based in Lake Forest, Calif., has been testing the plan over the past 18 months as 4,500 church members have been involved in pilot projects.

The official rollout of P.E.A.C.E. will focus on the small country of Rwanda in eastern Africa, where a million people were killed in a 100-day genocide in 1994. A recent visit to the country convinced Warren that Rwanda had the right qualities for what he called "the first model of national cooperation" between churches and a country's leaders.

Warren said he was impressed with the spiritual depth of Rwandan church leaders who opposed the genocide and have led the people into a "spirit of hope and reconciliation." He also said he believes God wants to begin something new in a small country that the world ignores.

Warren then introduced President Paul Kagame as a "wonderful Christian leader" who has demonstrated his trustworthiness in rebuilding the country.

Kagame praised the P.E.A.C.E. plan as "a vision with a big goal ... but one that also is simple in the strategy it proposes." He announced that 16 leaders of Rwanda's key Christian groups would visit Saddleback in May to discuss the details of launching P.E.A.C.E. in the country.

"Each partner -- church, government, business, education -- has a role to play, and we are more effective when we cooperate," Kagame said. "Rwanda is emerging from a difficult time. Together, we will learn from each other and create a future of P.E.A.C.E."

Warren also introduced Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship, who announced a new partnership that will introduce Warren's Celebrate Recovery programs into prison ministries in 108 countries. The new agreement, signed April 16, also will mobilize congregations for Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree ministry to the children of prisoners and promote Colson's Worldview Studies Program, which helps believers apply Christian values to a wide range of issues in daily life.

"For years, I have been pleading with churches to get out of their comfort zones and turn the world upside down for Christ," Colson said. "Rick Warren has got a plan to do it."

"I have a burden for Christians to get out and do the Gospel," he said. "I'm thrilled to go shoulder to shoulder with Rick and make this happen."

The P.E.A.C.E. plan will be a "revolution" for global Christianity, Warren told the congregation.

"I stand before you confidently right now and say to you that God is going to use you to change the world," Warren said. "Some will say, 'That's impossible,' but I heard that line 25 years ago, and God took seven people and started Saddleback

Church. Now we have a new vision and a whole lot more people to start with.

"The great evangelist Dwight L. Moody said, 'The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him,'" Warren said. "I'm looking at a stadium full of people who are telling God they will do whatever it takes to establish God's Kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven.'

"What will happen if the followers of Jesus say to Him, 'We are yours?'" Warren asked. "What kind of spiritual awakening will occur?"

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