

## **Church Planting Battle Cry Stirs GNYC** *100 New Churches by 2020*

More than 500 people packed the First Thessalonian Baptist Church in the South Bronx Saturday to learn more about the vision of planting 100 churches in GNYC by 2020, following the Friday evening opening at the Grand Concourse SDA. The Vision is the conception of the Personal Ministries and Sabbath School Director, Dr. Manuel Rosario,

March 10-12, 2016 will forever be etched in the spiritual annals of the Greater New York Conference as the landmark *Mighty Movement*, “every disciple making a disciple and every church planting a church,” was declared. Pastors met on Thursday for a special two hour session with Tom Evans while representatives from GNYC congregations convened on Friday and Saturday. The commitment of the administration in planting 100 new churches by 2020 was backed by the investment of US\$40,000 to fund the project. Present were various members of the executive leadership team offering prayers, praise, words of encouragement, and exhortation.

The Bronx, the third most densely populated county in the United States (according to a 2010 report from the New York Department of Labor) played host to sounding of the Loud Cry to New York as of Revelation 18:1. The borough’s flag representing “the hope of the New World while not forgetting the Old” was a perfect foil for the concept of planting new churches without forgetting the mother church of its genesis.

How do you ignite the embers of a dormant movement of planting Adventist churches in New York City and its regions of the Greater New York Conference – you gather eager souls representing a cross section of the population and immerse them in lectures, testimonies and music as they interact with questions and join in rousing the ‘Battle Cry.’ The event was live-streamed on the GNYC Battle Cry YouTube Channel, tweeted, and texted to reach Millennials, and Postmodernists who were not present.

### *GO LIGHT YOUR WORLD!*

In the Sabbath message “Go Light your World”, Conference President Dr. G. Earl Knight reminded the audience that as the Moon is a reflector of the Sun, so too are we not the source, but a reflection of the light of Jesus Christ. “The commission is not an option for the believer, it’s a command” said Dr. Knight. Reminiscing of a childhood in Jamaica he recalled the bottles filled with kerosene and stuffed with old rags as torches that were used to light the way in rural towns—as we are called to light a darkened world. Reciting a statement of E. G. White that, “Trees that are planted too thickly do not flourish,” a call to return to small groups and house meetings. “We have not mingled with the people of the city enough,” said Dr. Knight, in dispersing the message as in the first church “Jesus is calling for our resources, our giftedness, everything about us.”

Presenter Kevin Graham of RCH charged the gathering “to graduate from stupor” a reference to the Laodicean state mentioned in Revelation 3. Of note is the statement by Graham that, “churches that begin out of conflict will never work.” He opined that “church is built on a need and not a preference.” Presenter Ester Knott in a seminar on small groups offers that this a way to connect, serve, grow and to go out with the commission. In her presentation titled, “*What Do Small Groups and Google Have in Common*” she points out that it is a seeking of information on the individuals to better know and serve them. She cited as her reference Evangelism page 115, “The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err.”

### *HISTORIC SETTING FOR HISTORIC MOVEMENT*

The fading beauty of the Grand Concourse SDA church in the South Bronx with its inlaid stained glass and accented with gold throughout the sanctuary, seem a fitting choice for a call to return to the grand message of the great commission. Overhead, evenly spaced octagonal recesses of Cerulean blue trimmed with gold cornices and

dotted with ornate golden flower motifs in each center, washed the room with its brilliant colors illuminated by the cartwheel ironwork chandelier. The architecture is reminiscent of the Art Deco style with classical overtones of the heyday of the Grand Concourse Boulevard, a reflection of the Champs-Élysées in Paris, for which the church is named.

#### *WORLD LEADERS SHARE*

Tom Evans of NADEI presented a global overview of successful church planting in his “Church Planting Hotspots.” Evans cautioned the audience that, “as a movement we need to have momentum” Drawing on his experience since the first Seed Conference at Andrews University in 1996, he states, “God can use anybody who wants to be used,” and further to “go work for souls perishing in the darkness.” He outlined various methods used by creative church planters to start small groups, “Be creative in our methods,” as in an example of giving free hugs to passersby. He suggests engaging in “spiritual conversations with secular people.”

“In order to catch fish, you must go fishing,” is the mantra of Kevin Mitchell in a presentation on “Launching a Growing Church Plant.” What is needed is the most attractive of bait — love. Added to that he says should be patience. Some of the concerns addressed were the complaints of difficulty in filling the existing churches, a misconception of anticipated division, and that the church is not large enough to give up people. Paul Graham refuted this saying that new churches are for new people and that new churches grow faster than established churches because you can chart the course of the new church to match the needs of the targeted group.

If there is one big takeaway from all the presenters is that of offering a sense of belonging to the targeted audience or group. “Make a call and people will respond,” said Mitchell. Specially written for the Battle Cry journey were two songs, one by composer Misael Rosario and another by Frank Valdez telling of the soon coming of Christ and the need to win souls for His kingdom. LeRoy Kim stirred up the English group with a clip from the movie Titanic, drawing parallels to the drowning and rescue scene. Walter Castro of the Florida Conference presented to the Spanish group.

#### *PARADE OF FIRST FRUITS*

A trumpet blast by Dionisio Sosa herald the first fruits parade of fifteen churches that were planted from the 2013 Church Planting and Discipleship Rally. Groups in the process of organizing into companies were also acknowledged, giving a start to the twenty plants expected for 2016. One hundred and eight responses were received in an immediate call to action. The music of Frank Valdez, Hope Montana and Kay Fray ranged from the melodic tones of Ms. Montana’s soprano accompanied by her guitar to the guttural sound of Ms. Hay’s Contralto contrasted by Mr. Valdez’s stirring tenor.

#### *THE PEOPLE’S PASSION*

In exit interviews Precious Onwuasoanyo of First Igbo SDA thought, “It’s nothing new, but it’s good it’s happening here as a renewal. But what I need them to talk about is funding and managing the existing ones to make them healthy.” The answer to that was in her materials bag for the US\$40.00 registration fee: the strategic plan for church planting outlining funds available and resources; Creating Healthy Adventist Churches through Natural Church Development by Russell Burrill and Tom L. Evans; a note book; Keys to Small Group Ministry by the GC; Steps to Church Planting by Tom Evans and Church Growth Made Easier for Pastors and Laymen by G. Earl Knight. An offering of \$1,460.00 was collected to help defray the cost of a church plant.

Twenty-five-year-old Quevio D. Valerio of University SDA said, “It’s very interesting and is helping us to grow and give us some good and new experiences for planting churches.” Pastor Billy Wayne Jamal of Morris Park SDA thought, “It’s a great opportunity for GNYC, I think the work will explode here and truly I can see the hundred churches happening very easily over the next few years. Absolutely! I’d like to be a part of it.”

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