

Tokyo 2010 Unreached Peoples Intercession Task Force: Ten Years Later

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Ten years have passed since the *Unreached Peoples Intercession Task Force* paper was released in Tokyo, outlining the state of prayer for Unreached People Groups around the world, and proposing strategies to accelerate progress in reaching, discipling and seeing transformation among these. The task force not only worked but prayed. Ten years later, it is clear that God heard and responded!

In 2010, according to *Joshua Project*, well over 6,000 people groups had too few indigenous followers of Christ with sufficient means to evangelize their own people groups without outside assistance. Less than 200 Christward movements were known. Recently, researchers cataloged over 1,000 movements to Christ, where each spanned at least

four generations, and the movements collectively represented over 785 people groups and 70 million believers! Research also indicates over 3,000 movement engagements in which a team (or teams) employs strategies seeking to multiply movements of believers. Robby Butler of *MultMove* has said, "Prayer is the first domino to fall" and in these past 10 years more focused, fervent and sustained prayer has grown within these movements and within the Church at large.

What has God done these past 10 years?

What gaps still need to be addressed?

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More partnerships have emerged in the prayer and missions movements, and these are converging. Prayers are being answered and partnering efforts are bearing fruit. Only recently have we seen networks, organizations and denominations willing to collaborate outside their own boundaries. Prayer and mission leaders actively seek ways to better integrate their efforts. However, much ground remains to see these fully connected and coordinated.

Prayer strategists and prayer strategies have emerged. More than a ‘prayer coordinator’ or ‘facilitator’, prayer strategists serve on leadership teams in networks, organizations and denominations. They focus on maximizing and synchronizing prayer efforts at every level to best effect. Prayer *is* strategy, envisioning God-sized reality straight from His heart, and co-laboring to pray it into being under His direction. Incorporating both apostolic and prophetic vision allows leadership to keep their ears open to heaven as they evaluate options in light of God’s direction.

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Advances in technology and communications offer innumerable ways to expand prayer and collaboration, even globally. Conferencing tools such as *Zoom*, social media platforms like *WhatsApp*, smartphone applications, live streaming services through internet, satellite and radio, and many other technologies have hardly been tapped into. Prayer communities are discovering that John 17 unity really can emerge as relationships deepen while praying, worshiping and connecting over the internet. It is now possible to build relationships through these new technologies, serving to expand prayer efforts exponentially.

Annual prayer initiatives now include every major megasphere. *30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World* during Ramadan was only the beginning. After 25 years, we now see previously unimaginable breakthroughs in the Muslim megasphere. The Hindu and Buddhist megaspheres have similar annual prayer initiatives. Prayer changes megaspheres!

Prayer prepares for the coming of His kingdom. During the 1990s, we saw incredible fruit through *AD2000 & Beyond Movement’s Prayer and Spiritual Warfare Task Force* and other prayer movements. Even the church-planting movements birthed in the 1990s relied on extraordinary prayer as foundational. Those approaches or prayer strategies continue to be expanded and applied.

As believers we reproduce what we model. Walking in conversational relationship with God and practicing His presence continually, followers of Jesus—both individually and corporately—are growing in intimacy with God and in *listening prayer*. Prayer and fasting have increased greatly these ten years. Journaling—individually and in teams—helps preserve both what is heard from God and His faithfulness in answering. Meetings frequently incorporate listening times followed by members sharing what they are sensing from the Word and the Spirit. As leaders model strong inner lives with Christ, this is naturally reproduced in team members.

Onsite prayer is becoming the norm for gatherings of all sizes, supported by virtual prayer teams. Prayer is more than an opening word to the Lord and a closing benediction. Prayer teams undergird significant gatherings 24/7 in onsite prayer rooms as well as being embedded in the proceedings. Prayer ministry is often offered to participants to refresh and heal. Prayer teams may also lead workshops, segments in plenary sessions and more.

Research on the state of prayer is highlighting gaps. A recent *OCI* study of the state of prayer in a particular region was commissioned by *SRG* through *visionSynergy*; its results informed strategies for closing gaps and better connecting prayer promoters, prayer requesters and intercessors. The *Extraordinary Prayer Task Force* grew from this research and offers a venue for building relationship between prayer, church, and mission leaders towards seeing a tenfold increase in the quantity and quality of prayer for the unreached. They do this through bimonthly *Zoom* calls, a shared calendar and resources, and a weekly Personal Intercessory Team (PIT) Crew call which includes listening prayer on macro issues facing the Church.

Prayer mobilization, training and partnership have accelerated and grown more sophisticated. The partnering movement has helped leaders develop their networks internally and helped prayer and missions movements to partner together. *Prayer covering* extends

beyond general prayer teams to include PIT Crews. These are small, intimate, relational groups which frequently communicate back and forth with mission leaders, directing energies together toward seeing God's kingdom come. Children and youth are joining both prayer and missions; the global *Children in Prayer Movement* is amazing and continues to accelerate. Prayer training is being adapted into forms commonly used by or Disciple Making Movements to enable reproducible, scalable training in prayer.

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24/7 Prayer Canopies are forming at local, regional, national and international levels. Even as this paper is released, discussions are underway by several global ministries collaborating on *WorldPrays*, seeking continuous intercession to close the gaps and see God's kingdom come fully in every people and place. Establishing permanent *lighthouses of continuous prayer and worship* as a beachhead for the kingdom of God—even among restricted access peoples and places—raises the waterline of God's presence and opens doors for the gospel. Many of these groups are becoming missional themselves, raising up, training and sending out missionaries.

Arts and worship—as prophetic prayer and spiritual warfare—are often part of these prayer beachheads and strategies. Our understanding of what it means to engage with God has expanded to include artistic expressions in the context of worship, prayer and the Word. This include graphic arts, dance, mime and many other ways of showing forth His praises. Procession puts these on the public stage with ministries like *March for Jesus*.

Abundant gospel sowing is foundational to movements to Christ. The Word of God is foundational. Prayer undergirds efforts to bring the Word in the heart language and expression of every people and place. *Pray for Zero*, for example, is a global collaboration of intercession and Bible translation. For oral learners, the *International Orality Network* members have been pioneering oral means of bringing the Word of God to every person; their leaders lean heavily on prayer. Prayer

is a powerful tool in direct evangelism.

Information fuels intercession. From simply identifying areas unreached by the gospel to opening our eyes to the spiritual underpinnings of current realities, research is as critical to prayer as prayer is critical to research. The new *Thirty-One Largest Frontier People Groups* is an example of a prayer strategy birthed out of research. The *Year of the Frontier* that began in 2019 and the *Year of the Upper Room* for 2020 are highlighting the latest research on the state of missions for focused intercession.

Prayer for member health touches many ways God brings restoration, transformation, healing, deliverance, conflict resolution and identificational repentance toward reconciliation. Specialized ministries collaborate in the *Global Member Care Network*. A regional strategy team leader recently said, “*the two most essential resources for our mission team are our bi-weekly prayer and worship times as a team and our monthly Hydrate call.*” In the *Hydrate* ministry a remote prayer team prophetically prays over a field team on a monthly basis for healing, refreshment and strengthening. With the world in turmoil, we are grateful for crisis debrief teams that help field workers and believers better process and be restored following crises. Integrating prayer into crisis response results in greater fruitfulness and in more effective response and resilience by the workers themselves.

Prayer is yearning for the now-but-not-yet kingdom to fully come. God's purposes for His body are to grow up into the full measure of the stature of Jesus, who is coming back for a bride equally yoked with Him. God is calling the historical Church to match the passion, obedience and zeal of fellowships emerging in movements; are we willing to pay a high cost to follow Jesus? As we see prayer and mission movements converging, God uncovers greater understanding, deepens our practice of intimacy, strengthens our fellowship with Him and one another, and increases our fruitfulness and joy. Maranatha! Come soon, Lord Jesus!

Note: A comprehensive, 32-page version of this **Tokyo 2010 Unreached Peoples Intercession Task Force** update is available at <https://www.ggc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Tokyo-2010-Intercession-Task-Force-Ten-Years-update.pdf> 