



FANNING THE FLAME

A Report from Ethne 2009

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What happens when you bring 350 global mission strategists from around the world to collaborate on matters relating to reaching the world's least-reached people groups? The Holy Spirit begins to move! With such a group, you hardly need an agenda. Just get them in a room together and watch the sovereign hand of God at work, as He supernaturally networks the Body of Christ together for action.

In November 2009 such a gathering was organized by the Ethne to Ethne network in Bogota, Colombia. Ethne to Ethne is a global forum of unreached people-focused strategy groups and mission networks, which meet together every three years in different parts of the world. The last meeting was held in Indonesia in 2006, and the next meeting in 2012 will be held in India, giving each gathering a unique flavor and allowing for greater local participation from the host region.



STAN, KEITH, AND KENT PARKS

Although sponsored by an eclectic group, representing various organizations from almost every continent, two of the key leaders behind the network and tri-annual gathering are Kent and Stan Parks. The

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Parks brothers are an amazing team. Sons of the legendary director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board during the 1980s and 1990s, they have taken up the baton for unreached peoples and are running with it all over the world. Their father Keith is one of the unsung heroes of the frontier mission movement. Among many significant accomplishments, it was Keith who arranged for David Barrett's people group database to find a home at the Board's headquarters in Richmond—a move which would eventually guide Southern Baptist mission strategy for the next three decades. As a result, today Southern Baptists have taken a leading role in fulfilling the Great Commission among the vast majority of the world's least-reached mega-peoples.

Kent and Stan Parks are now following in their father's footsteps. In 1989 they watched as their father helped organize the first Global Consultation on World Evangelization held in Singapore, which led to the formal launching of the AD2000 Movement.



When the movement was disbanded as scheduled in the year 2000, many felt the need to sustain the momentum that had developed from ten years of global mobilization to see a "church for every people." From out of this shared desire and concern came the Ethne to Ethne network, which Kent and Stan Parks have served and championed from its conception to the present.

Getting Organized

What many deemed most valuable about the AD2000 Movement were the various global task forces that brought together leaders around common interests and vision. Ethne to Ethne (E2E) has replaced these with strategy groups, which have continued to develop, strengthen and multiply over the last few years in such areas as research, prayer,

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training, missionary care, and crisis response. Thus E2E has become a significant international forum for nurturing such groups into formation, and then enhancing their capacity to collaborate on a global level. Even more significantly, E2E has the ability to create synergy between various strategy groups that are in need of one another in some related area (e.g., those involved in pre-field training may need the input of researchers doing studies on missionary attrition, etc.).

The Frontier Mission Crisis Response group is perhaps the most unique and concrete development to come out of the E2E network. Due to the practical hands-on nature of crisis response, cooperating agencies have been able to work together to more effectively respond to various natural disasters in the last year and a half. Unquestionably, this is one of the most important developments in global mission strategy to emerge in the last decade.

A recent study among Muslim people groups by the Fruitful Practices research group revealed that 40% of church-planting breakthroughs among Muslim people groups followed some kind of natural disaster. Breakthroughs following the Sumatra tsunami of 2002 continue to bear fruit even today from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. The same can be said for Northern India following the Kashmir earthquake. In both of these cases, missionaries labored for years without seeing results until these disasters hit.

In another study of major crises, including earthquakes, wars and famines, it was discovered that 80% of such occurrences in the last 20 years have taken place in the 10/40 Window region, where the vast majority of the world's unreached peoples reside. Mission strategists are beginning to realize that this is no accident! God is sovereign over these

events, and they are door-openers for His kingdom. Thus, having the ability to respond quickly with aid, in partnership with church-planting agencies which make a long-term commitment to affected areas, is proving to be an effective strategy for demonstrating the love of Christ in both word and deed amidst some of the most difficult regions in the world for missionary work.

In one way or another, every strategy group in Ethne is seeking to contribute to the goal of seeing movements to Christ among all the world's least-reached peoples. At the synergistic core of this global collaboration is the Church Planting Movement (CPM) Strategy Group. Represented in this group are leaders involved in, or connected in some way to, dozens of movements among

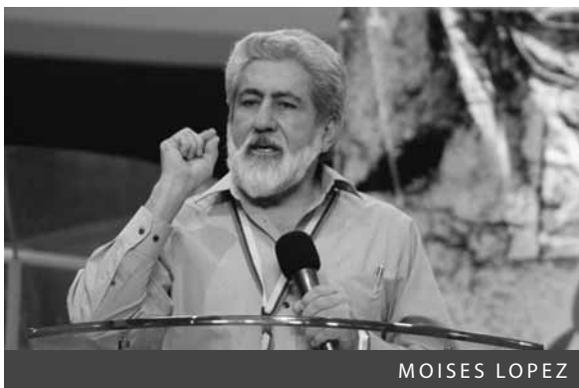
unreached peoples that are bringing millions to faith in Christ, and seeing hundreds of thousands of churches planted in a relatively short period of time. Because so many breakthroughs are taking place now among major unreached peoples, one of the dilemmas faced by this group is how to document the breakthroughs so that others can learn from

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what is happening. As a result, a special research group has been proposed to identify, validate and describe in-depth every known church-planting movement.

Interestingly, the Latin Americans at the Ethne 2009 gathering had a difficult time grasping the concept of church-planting movements as they are developing in frontier mission areas today. That's probably because church planting in Latin America has generally followed a traditional model that was based on buildings and professional clergy. But most church-planting movements today are house-church based and lay-led, which is why they are able to grow so fast. It is as if the Holy Spirit has taken the Chinese model and blown it all over the 10/40 Window region! For this reason, COMIBAM,



which is the major mission movement in Latin America (and a co-sponsor of the Ethne meeting in Bogota), is seeking to invite CPM trainers to teach Latin agencies, leaders, professors and pre-field candidates about what God is doing through these movements. Also, at the upcoming Global Mission Consultation in Tokyo (May 11-14, 2010, see pages 22-23 of this issue of *Mission Frontiers*), the CPM Strategy Group will lead a special track to dialogue with mission leaders from around the world concerning CPM principles and methodology. Special emphasis will be given to show how God uses CPMs to fulfill the Great Commission mandate of making disciples of all peoples. Indeed, what CPM strategies reveal is that you don't have to sacrifice quality for quantity. Quite the opposite, when lay people are engaged in evangelism and church-planting, they become disciplined much more effectively, and leadership is multiplied exponentially.

The role of prayer in these movements is something that continues to be highlighted through E2E. A researcher commented in Bogota that one such movement in Northern India began only after a team of intercessors came to a strategic city and prayed intensively against the ancient spiritual strongholds of that area. This is not an isolated incident. Many of the breakthroughs witnessed throughout the 10/40 Window followed prayer initiatives organized with

the express purpose of bringing down strongholds of darkness, and seeing the "strong man" bound (Mark 3:27). Another report from South Asia revealed that a church-planting movement in a particular region of a Muslim group only began when indigenous leaders gathered together to pray against the powers and principalities over those areas. For this reason the Prayer Strategy Group is seeking to raise up prayer initiatives for all of the 6,000+ least-reached peoples documented by the U.S. Center for World Mission's Joshua Project research team. Additionally, the U.S. Center's *Global Prayer Digest* has become an important "fuel source" and outlet for this prayer initiative (the *GPD* is translated into multiple languages, including Spanish, Korean and Chinese). Along with the *GPD*, the Prayer Strategy Group networks with intercessory groups around the world that bring unreached people prayer updates to over two million intercessors.

Welcome to the Family

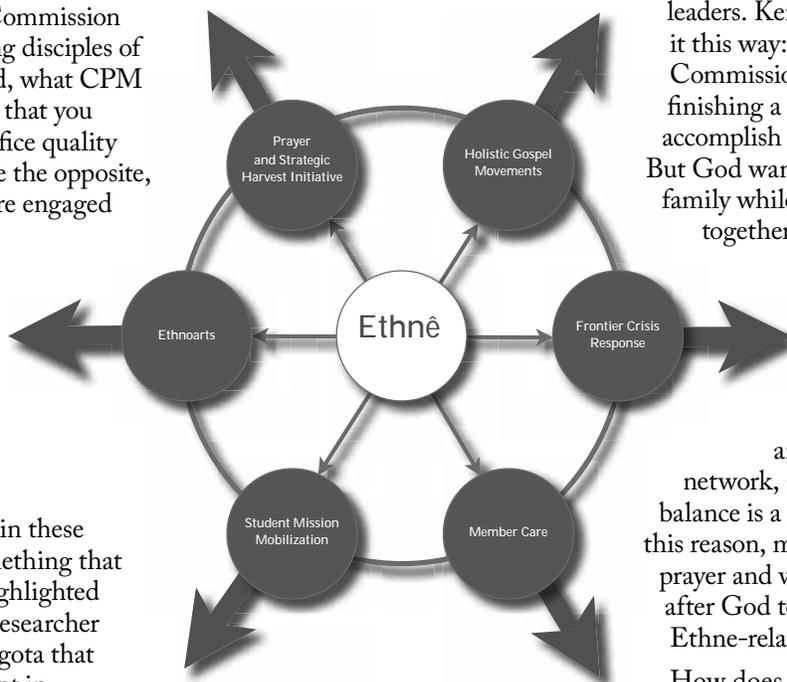
As important as all this is, there is something perhaps more important about Ethne, which may not be evident on a surface evaluation. As a global

network, Ethne seeks to build relationships of trust between leaders. Kent Parks describes it this way: "If the Great Commission was just about finishing a task, we could accomplish it readily enough. But God wants us to become a family while finishing that task together." This statement

really drives to the heart of what Ethne is all about—it's both a relational

and task-oriented network, and keeping that balance is a high priority. For this reason, much time is spent in prayer and worship, and seeking after God together at every Ethne-related gathering.

How does Ethne to Ethne coordinate with various frontier mission-related events and networks such as Tokyo 2010 and the Global Network of Mission Structures (GNMS)? E2E seeks to be a servant to all such collaborative efforts, and they are strategically positioned to do so in a major way. The GNMS and Tokyo



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2010 represent international mission agencies and mission agency associations from around the world that can benefit from the strategy groups sponsored by the E2E network. Thus at Tokyo 2010, E2E will play an important role in seeking to serve these agencies and mission associations with the various areas of expertise represented by the network.

How can E2E be enhanced? "More and better collaboration to get things done" is Kent Parks' answer. Reaching the least-reached, hand in hand, by all and every means is the driving force behind Ethne. Kent would like to see E2E participants take on small projects together, and as they see success, he believes momentum will build. The CPM group, for example, made a commitment to focus on five of the largest least-reached peoples that lack a CPM and work together to do something about this gap.

For Kent's part, as director of a mission agency called Mission to Unreached Peoples (an organization which came out of the Edinburgh 1980 meeting), he has set a goal of engaging several hundred least-reached people groups and population segments in the next ten years with CPM strategies.

Clearly, the torch has been passed, and its fire is lighting torches around the world for the glory of God! E2E is a story of how a few people can make a big difference when they work together, not caring who gets the credit. Beyond what they have accomplished as a network, they have also become a model for what global mission collaboration should look like in the twenty-first century: hearts united by the love of Christ, centered on His mission, and ignited by His passion for all the peoples of the earth. f



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