

SPOTLIGHT ON MISSION

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We're all in this together

MissionFest Toronto 2011 creates connecting points for people of God

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Ontario Correspondent

TORONTO, ON—To reach the world, we have to come together. That's the key message MissionFest Toronto organizers hope to keep central as they look forward to the annual celebration of Christian life and mission.

"We have a renewed sense of direction," says Sharon Ganesh, executive director. "The purpose of MissionFest is to facilitate a gathering of the churches, mission agencies, educators and general Christian community to equip, mobilize and engage God's people to do His work of mission, wherever He has positioned them."

"This conference brings the body of Christ together, for the body to operate as a healthy whole."

MissionFest will be held April 1-2 at Global Kingdom Ministries in the east end of Toronto. This year marks the first time MissionFest exhibitors will display in the church's brand new gymnasium.

"It worked really well there last year," Ganesh says. "The venue itself just creates this intimate atmosphere for people of the Kingdom of God to interconnect with each other, which is really key and important to us."

MissionFest first met in a church more than 15 years ago. But as the event grew, it moved into larger conference venues. While the extra space had its benefits, it also may have detracted some from the sense of intimacy that is key to MissionFest's core focus.

"In a larger venue," Ganesh says, "the programming became so spread out we had people all the way down a hall disconnected from people meeting somewhere else. There was a disconnect between the people who were coming and participating. I think some people began to see it as some big, huge event, and didn't realize that they themselves were an integral part of it. For some, it seemed as though the purpose may have been lost along the way."

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Marva Tyndale is management team leader of MissionFest's ENGAGE youth program, and a guest speaker of the 2011 women's program.

"Being involved with MissionFest provides a phenomenal opportunity to participate in the many expressions of God's heartbeat for His sons and daughters, for the generations and for the lost," she says. "It also keeps me connected to what's happening

in the Christian community at large. One encounter with MissionFest and a person's passion for the Kingdom is ignited and enlarged for good."

"To be able to join together as a family of God and get involved in different ways to do missions: that's what MissionFest is all about," says Colin McCartney of Urban Promise Toronto.

"We hope churches will really grab a hold of it and recognize how vital MissionFest is for the GTA, for Ontario, and beyond," adds Ganesh. "Our theme for 2011 is 'We're all in this together.'"

As a previous attendee, Gabrielle Smith says the "personal interactions, dialogues and prayers" she had with exhibitors blew her away.

"I felt on many levels this was a God-orchestrated set-up to release me into missions," she says. "There were many thought-provoking conversations about how I could get involved as an individual for local and international initiatives, to get involved in Jesus' great commission to make disciples of the nations."

"At MissionFest, there is equipping," Ganesh says, "there are words spoken that are enlightening, there are people who meet and make the right connections. This all works together to help people become more effective missionaries in Christ."

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Spots

- MissionFest is partnering with Promise Keepers in 2011 for their first ever joint men's program. Men On A Mission will focus on deepening the spiritual lives of men, while encouraging them to rise up to their call as effective leaders and missionaries. It includes special guest speakers Luis Palau and Kirk Giles, president of Promise Keepers Canada.
- MissionFest was first held in 1995. The annual event now averages 10,000 to 12,000 attendees each year.
- MissionFest features over 160 exhibitors including mission agencies, educational institutions, Christian resources, media outlets, the arts and other Christian based organizations.
- Guest speakers for MissionFest 2011 include Luis Palau, Nizar Shaheen, Ron Cline, Patrick Fung, Marva Tyndale, Melinda Estabrooks-Williams, Kirk Giles, Ron Pearce and Brett Ullman.

MissionFest TORONTO

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RON PEARCE
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