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Willy Rice Launches GC '33: Southern Baptists Aim to Reach Every American by 2033

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"GC '33: 2,000 Years of Gospel Advance,"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Southern Baptist Convention president Willy Rice has launched "GC '33: 2,000 Years of Gospel Advance," a generational push to present the Gospel to every person in the United States and every unengaged people group in the world by 2033. A 12-member commission chaired by Mark Vance, pastor of Cornerstone Church in Ames, Iowa, will shape the effort and report back at the SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis next June. The date is the point: 2033 marks 2,000 years since Jesus gave the Great Commission.

Rice, senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Clearwater, Florida, was elected SBC president in Orlando in June. He told Baptist Press on 20 November that uniting Southern Baptists around the 2,000th anniversary was one of his top priorities from the start. "It was one of our top priorities to try to unite Southern Baptists around a renewed push toward Great Commission advance geared around the 2000th anniversary," he said.

The idea was not announced cold. Rice raised it in his first address to the SBC Executive Committee in September, and several state Baptist conventions highlighted the effort at their annual meetings this fall.

The commission will work "in consultation with our mission boards and convention partners at every level," according to the press release. Rice described its members as "12 gifted, evangelistic leaders representing a broad spectrum of Southern Baptist life."

The commission reads like a map of the convention itself. Alan Brumback of First Baptist Naples, Florida, Chad Campbell of Mt. Pisgah Baptist in Easley, South Carolina, and JT English of Storyline Church in Arvada, Colorado, sit alongside Dean Fulks of Lifepoint Church in Columbus, Ohio, and Andrew Hopper of Mercy Hill Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. Kirk Kirkland of Revive City Church in Cincinnati, Mark Lee of Vantagepoint Church in Eastvale, California, and Carlos Lollett of Reality Church in Miami bring the coasts and the cities into the room.

Stephen Rummage, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, Jimmy Scroggins of Family Church in West Palm Beach, and Jarrett Stephens of Champion Forest Baptist in Houston complete the twelve. Rice said he wanted leaders "who could articulate a visionary goal for all Southern Baptists and who had a strong evangelistic track record in their own ministry."

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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