

Missions Fest, February 21 – 23, 2003
News Release

The flags of the nations waved high to start off another Missions Fest in Edmonton, Alberta Canada. *“Far from a boring weekend at Missions Fest”* was the headline in a local Edmonton paper, after the February 21-23, 2003 conference. The article, written by a young journalist in Grade 10, reflected her positive response to the weekend: *“getting information for this article, I still would have gone back all weekend. . .an awesome experience. . .”*

By using an approach similar to a trade fair, Missions Fests across Canada are drawing tens of thousands of people to an inspiring and challenging weekend to get involved in cross-cultural ministries. While similar to an Urbana experience, the focus is not just on college students. Rather, Missions Fest is geared for the whole family. No one is ever too young or too old to offer themselves to serve God in bringing in the Great Harvest and proclaiming His Glory among all nations.

What makes this mission conference stand out from others is the way churches in this region join together in unity. We all believe in the command from God to declare His glory among all nations. With over 2 billion people in the world who still need to hear the Gospel message, the sponsoring churches of Missions Fest are committed to doing their part to get the job done. The churches come from over twenty different denominations and many are situated hundreds of miles away from the conference center. Registration is not required, free will offerings are taken in our plenary sessions. Our challenge is to get everyone involved in God’s love for the peoples of the world through prayer, giving, sending, or going.

The theme *“Get a Job. . .In the Harvest”* challenged everyone in the body of Christ, to use their gifts, talents, skills and resources in whatever way possible in order to get the job of world evangelism done. The volunteer team of more than 500 people helped to facilitate the three-day weekend with activities for preschool children, Grades 1-6, Youth & Young Adults, Adults and Life Achievers; there were over 50 seminars presented by mission leaders, several plenary sessions with international speakers, youth/young adult sessions as well as a pastors/leadership luncheon.

Again this year, there were no ‘soft-sell’ messages. In the plenary sessions, each of our international speakers challenged people to reach the nations for Christ; by either praying, sending, giving or going. Challenging messages were given by Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, Association of Christian Evangelicals in Africa; Dr. Greg Livingstone, founder of Frontiers; Dr. Chris Marantika, President of the Evangelical Theological Seminaries of Indonesia and George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilization.

Here’s a new type of statistic to consider joyfully. Over the three days, thousands of people sat through 16,595 man-hours of teaching and preaching on missions. After nine years of Missions Fest influence on the churches and people of this region, the 140 exhibitors continue to be overwhelmed by the unique interest shown by all those who explore the Exhibit Hall. Mission Organizations were busy the entire weekend with keen people interested in their ministries.

On the opening night over 150 children squeezed onto the “Missions Fest Express” train and traveled to two different countries. Children’s speaker Paul Powers and his friend “Andy” had a packed room of children for a weekend of learning about God’s love for the nations. At the Friday Field Trip program for 1,060 local school students, one helper observed, “I’m always really impressed with the youth and children’s events. . .they take a lot of organization and volunteers. . .” The children explore the Exhibit Hall and travel through various ‘mission stations’ presented by mission leaders and exhibitors.

“Africa Alive” brought nine local drama groups together to present different interactive reality scenes of Africa. Sights, sounds and smells from a local market, a hospital, airport customs, a language school, a church and a prison were all included. We recognize now that the scenarios were very realistic. For one man it actually brought flashbacks of the war as he entered the prison scene where some had been hauled away because of preaching the gospel in the market! Others got actively involved in places like the market when the “pickpocket” ran through. For any of those who have actually lived in Africa, it was realistic. With comments like, “Africa Alive was very effective and realistic.”

A celebration of ethnic worship topped off the three-day weekend when eight local choirs gave God praise by way of their unique style of music and worship from their ethnic backgrounds. The final words from Dr. Adeyemo encouraged us with “not in vain” none. . . of this is in vain.” So, we press on and look forward to what the Holy Spirit will do again in February 2004.