

# Saddleback Church pledges \$71 million over three years

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ANAHEIM, Calif. (BNG)—Members of Saddleback Church have pledged to give \$71 million over the next three years in the most ambitious fundraising campaign in the Southern Baptist megachurch's 35-year history.



Rick Warren, who started the Southern California congregation after graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary while in his 20s, closed a recent 11-week sermon series on “Daring Faith,” with a prop of “light cubes” representing \$1 million each stacked on top of one another to illustrate the size the commitment.

Warren kicked off the Daring Faith campaign in March at Saddleback's 35th anniversary celebration. Saddleback held the event at Angel Stadium in Anaheim, a venue large enough to combine 10 Southern California campuses averaging 27,000 weekly worshipers and 7,500 small groups meeting in homes.

Campaign goals include increasing weekly weekend attendance to 40,000 by 2020—the church’s 40th anniversary—aiding 250,000 needy people, implementing new communications technology, leadership training for a quarter of church members and introducing the gospel to the last 3,000 unreached people groups through the congregation’s global PEACE Plan—an acronym that stands for plant churches, equip servant leaders, assist the poor, care for the sick and educate the next generation.

It is the eighth major “generosity campaign” since Saddleback held its first public service on Palm Sunday, March 30, 1980, attended by 40 people at the Laguna Hills High School theater. A week later, on Easter Sunday, 240 attended.

Developing a church-growth philosophy of knowing the community, finding a need and filling it, Warren used nontraditional strategies like direct mail to make Saddleback one of the nation’s fastest-growing churches. The congregation met in 79 rented facilities and did not build its first permanent building until it had 10,000 weekly attenders.



Rick Warren

preaches at Saddleback Church. Saddleback’s first fund-raising campaign raised \$1.2 million between 1983 and 1985 to start a savings fund to purchase property. For several years, the congregation met for worship

under a 2,300-seat plastic tent at the current Lake Forest campus, purchased in the early 1990s.

Saddleback members gave \$12 million over three years to build the first 3,500-seat worship center in 1995. The sixth campaign—which included launch of the Global PEACE plan starting with Rwanda and expansion to multiple locations—raised \$48 million. The “Decade of Destiny” campaign, 2011-2013, raised \$35 million.

“We always set goals that we can’t do on our own,” Warren said in a video message introducing the Daring Faith campaign. “You haven’t really trusted God until you’ve attempted something that can’t be done in the power of the flesh.”

“That’s what Daring Faith is all about,” Warren said. “It’s about doing something you cannot do on your own. The goals we’ve set are so big, so audacious, there’s no way we can do this unless God bails us out.”

According to a brochure, more than 42,000 people have been baptized at Saddleback. Over 9,000 small groups meet weekly in homes and businesses around the globe, and there are 500 service ministries. The church family worships each weekend at 15 campuses on four continents.



Saddleback celebrated its 35th anniversary in March at Angel Stadium in Anaheim,

Calif., a venue large enough to combine its 10 Southern California campuses averaging 27,000 weekly worshipers and 7,500 small groups meeting in homes. Warren's 2002 book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, has sold more than 32 million copies and is the second-most translated book in the world after the Bible. Thousands of church leaders around the world have been trained in the "purpose driven" church growth strategy.

"Are we going to rest on our past successes, which are many, and believe there are no more goals worthy of sacrificing our time and money for?" Warren asked in the video. "Or will we use our history of God's miracles and God's blessing and God's showing up in our lives and in our church as the foundation to do even more?"

"I'm not ready to pull back into comfortable, boring safety," he said. "You know what, knowing you, I know that you aren't either."