

RIDGECREST BAPTIST CHURCH PRAYER MINISTRY
8/9/22

Introduction

Parts of the following discussion build on the material presented by The Ministry Resource Center (MRC). This is a non-denominational ministry. Their about page can be found at <https://mintools.com/about-ministry-tools.htm> and their doctrinal beliefs can be found at <https://mintools.com/belief.htm>. Another resource is from Lifeway (LWR) at <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/war-room-how-to-launch-a-church-prayer-ministry>. See appendices 1 and 2 for discussion from each of these ministries. This document will present the rationale for a Ridgecrest Baptist Church prayer ministry, a discussion of the nature of prayer, and a plan to organize and implement a prayer ministry. Prayer should be intentional, consistent, and effective.

Rationale for the prayer ministry

Why should we have a formal organized prayer ministry? Prayer is an essential element for the health and effectiveness of any local body of believers. First and foremost Jesus demonstrated that prayer was critical for himself and his disciples. Luke 18:1 records that Jesus “was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.”¹ Luke continues with the parable of the unjust judge who finally gives in to the widow and grants her request. In this time that we find ourselves with uncertainty of contagion and politics we need prayer in order to not lose heart in God’s plan for us, our church, and our country. We must trust God to “bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night” (Luke 1:7). In our prayer we demonstrate our faith in God who is uniquely empowered to bring justice out of our circumstances.

Jesus addressed the importance of faith in prayer in John 16:23-24 as he stated “truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.” Of course this promise is made to those who ask in the name of Jesus which means that we must ask in accordance with the will and character of Jesus. These times are filled with circumstances that can work to rob us of our joy. We must always remember that our joy and security rests in the promises of Jesus. In our prayer we can acknowledge who God is and what he has promised us. He has given us the promise of eternal life and righteousness before him.

Paul expressed the peace that can come from a fruitful prayer life. In Phil. 4:6 he wrote “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” This peace will be a guard for us as we face those circumstances in our personal lives and the life of our church that can distract us from knowing the grace of God.

¹Scripture quotations are from the NASB.

Prayer must be an ongoing endeavor. Luke 6:12 records that “it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.” Jesus found it necessary to go off by himself and devote a considerable time engaged in prayer with the Father. We too, as a church, must have a ongoing prayer ministry that is not merely found at the beginning and end of corporate worship time. The prayers of our church should be intentionally conducted at various times during the week and throughout the day. This will require the participation of a core of committed church members dedicated to ongoing prayers for the needs of the church and this country.

Jesus, at the end of his time on earth, warned his disciples that a time of temptation was to come. Luke 22:40 records that he told them to “pray that you may not enter into temptation.” As individual church members and as the corporate body of Christ we are subject to various temptations that can direct our attention and activity contrary to the will of God. We must recognize these temptations and actively pray to God to give us the strength and wisdom to avoid and defeat them. Our leaders are especially subject to this as the enemy works to undercut the work of the church in world. We must be in prayer for the leaders both in the church and in the political arena.

The leaders of the early church also recognized the value of prayer. Luke tells us in Acts 1:14 that the leaders were of “one mind” and “were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” The leaders must be the first to be active in prayer for the church and for all of the people of the congregation. The health and effectiveness of church is significantly dependent of the prayers of those responsible for the direction and content of decisions made in order to be the church God desires us to be. Asking for and acknowledging God’s will comes out of a fervent and ongoing prayer life.

Paul, in Eph. 6:18-19, emphasized the ongoing nature of prayer and the importance of prayer for those who spread the good of the gospel. He requests that “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” An important aspect of prayer is expressed in that we should pray in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is essential to an effective prayer ministry. Our prayer should be that we be bold in our faith and that we are confident when we find ourselves presented with the opportunity to witness to the grace and mercy of God as he offers the salvation that leads to eternal life and righteousness. We also see the importance of praying for those whose ministry is preaching the gospel.

Our witness to the world is made effective in our prayer life. Paul, in Col. 1:9-12 states “for this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in

Light.” Paul states that the reason he prayed thus for the church at Colossae is that he had “heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints” (Col. 1:3). Their faith and love was resulting in increasing fruit ever since they heard the gospel. Even in a church that seemed to be doing well in growing in faith and love and presenting the gospel, Paul saw the need for continued prayer for them. No matter how well we are doing, we need to continue in fervent prayer that the Holy Spirit strengthen us in knowledge, power, and steadfastness in the will of God.

Our prayer should not only be offered up in intercession and petition but also include thanks to God for his work in and through us. Paul, in 1 Thess. 5:16, wrote that we must “rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” A benefit of a robust prayer ministry is seeing how God blesses the church as a result of prayer. God desires a strong and effective church as he works within and through those who express their desire to be about his work. When we see God answering prayer we must respond with thanksgiving.

Our prayer must also reach out beyond the church in prayer for our political leaders that they may govern in a wise and just way. Paul, writing in 1 Tim. 2:1-8, stated that “first of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time. For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying) as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.” As we find those in authority governing contrary to the will of God we must ask God for a government that results in peace and tranquility. We must also pray for those who govern justly that God may work through them. This can only come about through the supernatural work of God since we live in a fallen world. Paul knew that God wants all people to be saved and to know the truth. As he preached the good news of salvation, he desired and needed the church to be praying. As he needed prayer in his day we need prayer for those in authority in our day.

In Phm. 1:6 Paul let his readers know that the fellowship of the church is the content of his prayer for them. He wrote “I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ’s sake.” A fellowship can only get stronger as believers come together in prayer for each other and for those who need to hear the gospel.

Finally, as we near the end times we must be prepared by prayer as Peter stated in 1 Pet. 4:7 that “the end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.” Our prayer is essential so that we might be effective and ready for the coming of Jesus as he returns to set the world right.

What is prayer?

First and foremost, prayer is communication with God. This communication is founded on a personal relationship with God.² We pray to God for various purposes. Prayer should include praise that involves the recognition of who God is and what he does. It is “‘giving God the glory,’ not in the sense of adding to his glory, which would be impossible, but of willingly (and where appropriate, publicly) recognizing God as God.”³ Prayer of praise as seen in Psalms 148 and 150. Prayer also consists of confession that “recognizes the holiness of God and his supreme moral authority, together with the personal responsibility of the one making the confession. Confession thus involves the vindicating or justifying of God, and an explicit and unreserved recognition of sin, both as it takes its rise in sinful motives and dispositions, and as it finds outward expression.”⁴ This kind of prayer is seen in Psalm 51 as David confesses his sin with Bathsheba. Thanksgiving is prayer that recognizes that “God’s goodness is in respect of what he has done for the one who prays, or for others.”⁵ Intercessory prayer is perhaps the most common form of prayer as we pray for the needs of others. Petition is a form of prayer when one prays for the needs of self. We see these types of prayer modeled in the Lord’s prayer given by Jesus to his disciples as recorded in Matt. 6:9-13. The following acrostic ACTS summarizes these kinds of prayer:

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

Another view of prayer is suggested by MRC. This is based on the acrostic PRAYER.⁶

Pleading—expresses our trust in God who is our Helper who works for our good (Ps. 121:3; Rom. 8:28).

Relating—expresses communing with God as our Savior and Friend who reconciled us to Himself (Ps. 66:20; Jn. 15:13-15; Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20).

Aligning—expresses cooperating with God as our Standard who is holy and all-wise (Prov. 3:5-6).

Yearning—expresses seeking after God as Our Sufficiency who satisfies as nothing or no one else (Ps. 42:1-2).

Exalting—expresses worshiping God as Our Lord God of whom there is none greater worthy of our praise (Ps. 34:1-4; 46:10; 57:11).

Revering—expresses honoring God as Our Sovereignty to whom we defer even when we don’t understand (Ps. 33:6-11, 16-20; 50:15; 111:10; Prov. 3:7-10).

²Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “Prayer,” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1747.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶<https://mintools.com/blog/prayer.htm>

Another form of prayer is based on Eph. 6:10-20. Paul begins with the admonition to “finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (10-13).

The spiritual aspect of evil in the world is addressed in spiritual warfare conducted in the spiritual realm through prayer. This type of prayer should not be undertaken in a casual way. Paul continues with the command to “take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (14-17). This armor is essential to be able to conduct spiritual warfare and may not be effectively conducted by those who are not strong in their faith and desire to be on the front lines. This image of armor speaks to the need to be absolutely certain of our salvation and our righteousness in the presence of God. We need to fervently seek out and know the truth of God, ourselves, and the world and recognize the lies of the enemy. We need to understand the peace between people and God that the gospel brings. The shield of faith expresses our absolute faith in God as we trust in him and his promises to us. Finally our offensive weapon is the word of God so that we “will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Tit. 1:9). We know that “the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:12). As we wield this offensive weapon we trust that word of God which “goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it” (Is. 55:11).

Paul also thought that this kind of prayer was essential to his ministry as he implored the church of his day to be able to help him “with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (18-20). These words of Paul reinforces the thought that spiritual warfare through prayer is not a casual endeavor. Paul writes of the need to be alert and to persevere in prayer. We need prayer in order to be bold in presenting the gospel.

Who should pray?

As can be seen in the discussion above each member of the church should be involved in prayer. As with any endeavor each member will bring differing levels of maturity and commitment to the prayer ministry. Prayer is communication with God based on a personal

relationship. Each member from the newest believer to the most mature Christian has this personal relationship. Each can then be effective in the prayer ministry and should be encouraged to participate.

Some may feel inadequate to pray effectively. Training in prayer should be offered for those who desire to strengthen and mature their prayer life. This training should be Bible based, effective, and purposeful. Given the critical nature of prayer discussed above, prayer training should be given the same emphasis that we give training in evangelism.

Some members may desire to commit to certain types of prayer. We should encourage each member to plug into a particular mode of prayer as one in which they can do well. This aspect is addressed later in this document.

In the formation of the prayer ministry we should not lose sight of those members who desire to pray for the needs of the church but for various reasons are unwilling or unable to commit to a particular team. We will, of course, disseminate prayer requests on a regular basis so that all members of the church are aware of the needs communicated by the staff and congregation. Their prayers will be raised up to God in parallel to those of the prayer teams.

Structure and Operation

Rather than overwhelming people with a long list of prayers that encompass all the needs of the church as discussed above, we should divide the prayer ministry into particular prayer teams that can not only focus on certain aspects of prayer but can be rotated in and out in order to avoid prayer fatigue. We don't want our prayer ministry to become rote and "same old, same old." Another aspect is that some people will already be involved in certain type of prayers and will plug into the appropriate prayer team. Others may want to become involved in particular types of prayers. The following teams are suggested as a starting position for the prayer ministry. These teams are organized around ministry positions and to address the needs of church members and those outside the church. The suggested team sizes are preliminary and will be increased as more people commit to be a regular part of the prayer ministry.

Teams should be formed that will commit to consistently and intentionally pray for each of the ministers of the church. These are the senior pastor, the youth pastor, the music & worship pastor, and the children's director. An additional team will pray for the church administration including the office manager, the administrative assistant, nursery, sunday school, and discipleship training directors, trustees, and deacons. These teams will consist of six persons each, one of whom is the team lead. Each person will commit to pray one day a week Monday-Saturday and the team will meet before each worship service as able. The latter three teams would seem best to be initially drawn from adults involved in each of these ministries, i.e., parents of youth or children and members of the worship team and choir. The rationale for this is that they not only have a vested interest in the success of these ministries but also have a heightened knowledge of the special needs of these ministries. This is not to imply that other church members do not desire the success of these ministries and certainly will not be precluded from participating on these teams. The above discussion should not be seen to imply that various

team members would be precluded from daily prayer but instead is set up to ensure that ongoing daily prayer is offered on a regular basis. Unless the prayer commitment is made for certain days we may find that gaps exist in regular prayer being offered.

Teams will also be formed in order to pray for the needs of the church members. These will consist of six teams of three persons each. Each team will be dedicated to a day of the week. The church needs team lead will communicate prayer requests for each daily team and provide followup on prayer requests. This followup procedure is critical. It offers two benefits. The first is that the members will see the results of their prayers as feedback is received. The second is that prayer lists do not get longer and longer as new prayers are added to prayer requests that are no longer relevant.

Teams will also be formed in order to pray for those outside the church. These prayer requests will be offered for those such as political leaders, first responders, front line workers, and others as appropriate. They will also pray for the country and the church across the country. The church leaders, prayer ministry leaders, and interested church members will be involved in suggesting prayers for this team through the team lead. Of course prayer team members can offer prayers as led by the Holy Spirit. These will consist of seven teams of three persons each. Each team will be dedicated to a day of the week.

A prayer team will be recruited on an ad hoc basis to provide intercessory prayer for special events. These events could be youth trips, special evangelistic events, county wide events, etc.

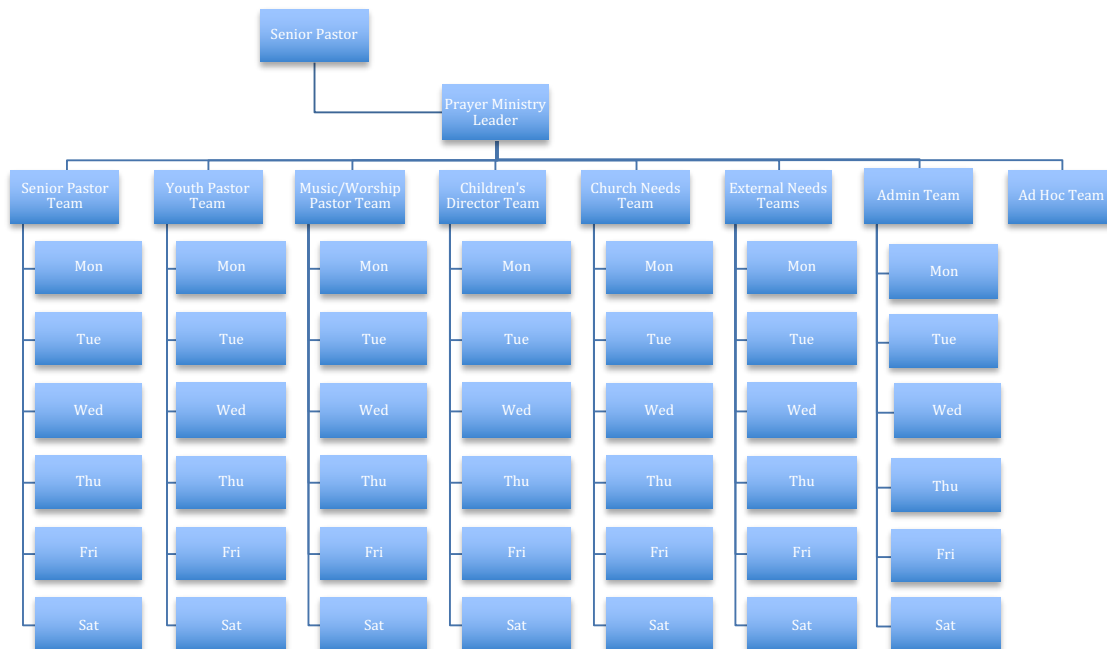


Table One
Organizational Structure

To summarize, having prayer teams offers four advantages to an effective prayer ministry. The first is that people can commit to pray for particular needs that meet their interests and maturity level. The second is that persons will be more intentional in their prayer as it fits into a schedule. To reiterate a point above, we would certainly not discourage people from prayer at other times. The third is that small teams offer a more effective communication chain. A fourth is that prayers for differing emphasis in the church can be broken into a size that will seem more doable to the team rather than an extensive list of needs.

Implementation

Given the importance of the prayer ministry it will first need to be emphasized from the pulpit. Life group teachers should also make it a part of the meeting to promote the prayer ministry. Church leaders and other people should also promote it in their groups of influence. We should promote the ministry through written documents that describe the purpose and operation of the prayer ministry. We should begin early to identify and recruit those church members who either are active in prayer or express an interest in becoming members of prayer teams. Some of these will commit to leadership positions while others will be willing to be part of a team. These members will be useful to spread the word and recruit others.

A training program will be desirable in order to provide a basis for necessary components of effective prayer. Also training can provide a resource for those who desire to be part of the prayer ministry but feel inadequate. Training for the prayer ministry will find many parallels with evangelism training. In order to have prayer training we will need to determine the optimum day, time, and place for meeting. This training will be for a determined time that will meet the educational needs of the program. This will probably have to be settled by input from the participants. Another possible time for training is a weekend retreat. A retreat can be especially effective in training the ministry leaders. They in turn can pass on what they have learned to their team members. A weekend retreat can also reinforce the importance of the prayer ministry.

One aspect to be determined is developing an effective method for people to bring prayer requests to the various teams. For those teams who are praying for particular ministers each minister can communicate with their respective team lead who will be responsible to passing prayer needs to the team. For team praying for those outside the church, the prayer ministry director can work in conjunction with the pastor and other leaders to suggest particular prayer emphases during the year. The intercessory prayer for those inside the church is currently accomplished around life groups and the Wednesday night prayer meeting. Prayer requests are communicated in these meetings and through the church office. In communicating prayer requests we should be careful to respect the privacy rights of those requesting prayers.

Conclusion

We conclude with Paul's words to the church in Ephesus as he writes in Eph. 3:14-19, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be

strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”

APPENDIX 1

Questions to Get You Started on a Prayer Ministry Tailored to Your Church⁷

Where do people stand in terms of the value and need for prayer?

You may need to provide some initial instruction or training about prayer to lay the groundwork if people don't have that sense. Use Sunday School classes, small groups, and sermons to teach about prayer. Don't forget about the more informal training that comes from providing an example, testimonies of how God answers prayers, little blurbs in bulletins, newsletter, social media feeds, etc. You might suggest [helpful resources about praying](#) like books or articles. — To build a [culture of prayer](#) in a church takes a consistent, regular emphasis on prayer as well as actually turning to God in prayer at every turn.

If your church already seems to have a culture of prayer, then it may just be a matter of putting a structure in place that works for them. Questions that follow will help you think through a plan tailored to your church.

How many people are truly interested in being a part of a prayer team?

While you probably desire a big turnout, you may need to start with 2-3 people, while laying the groundwork in others. Rather than let that get you discouraged, remember God's promise that where two or three are gathered in His name, He is there (Matt. 18:20). The excitement of meeting with God in those who come could be a contagion for others to join.

What are the logistics you need to put in place before you begin such a ministry?

While it is often good to connect meeting to pray to a time people are already at church, like before or at the end of a service, rather than making them come out special, it does present some challenges. You need to think that through in order to remove obstacles people might have in attending. For example, depending on the time your worship service ends, you may run into the lunch hour. Depending on the people who stay, you may have childcare issues. The more you think through and plan for these obstacles, the better you will be able to meet with people's excuses. If you don't work through these issues ahead of time and people come but get discouraged, you may find it harder to get them out in the future.

How will you structure the meeting?

In some churches a rigid, formal approach may not work. In other churches a more spontaneous approach may not work. Think of the traditions of your church. While you do want to stretch people, taking them beyond where they are in their prayer life, you don't want to frustrate them or scare them away. Begin where people are and slowly take them beyond. Regardless of the structure, make it worth their while to be there. Make the real focus on meeting with God.

⁷<https://mintools.com/blog/guidelines-for-prayer-ministry.htm>

What will you pray about? How will you determine what to pray about?

Perhaps there are specifics you sense this meeting should focus on, growing out of the needs at your church. If you are going to have a pre-planned agenda, be clear with people about the purpose of the prayer time. If people come thinking you are going to pray for their personal needs and you never get around to it, they may soon stop attending. If you are going to open it for personal requests, guard against spending the majority of time taking requests with little time left for praying.

APPENDIX 2

How to Launch a Church Prayer Ministry⁸

If you look at the history of the church, the history of revivals, of great awakenings, it always was connected to people unifying and praying for the Lord to work in that situation. And that's what we want to happen in our generation.

Just before this experience in Acts 2:42 comes the powerful experience of Acts 2:41. This miraculous verse is too big for most in ministry to wrap their thoughts and minds around fully. It's where you discover that the result of Peter's inaugural sermon was the salvation of 3,000 souls. Knowing the biblical narrative's tendency to count only men, it is possible that those 3,000 new believers were males representing households now under the authority of Christ where women and children would subsequently follow suit. Getting so excited about the invitation for people to come to Christ in verse 41, it's easy to gloss over what happened as a result chronicled in verse 42. Because of their salvation, these new believers in this newly formed church did revolutionary and important things.

They devoted themselves to prayers. Plural. This may have included prayers in private. Prayers in public. Specific prayer seasons and even strategies to align the hearts of people with the true heart of God.

Developing a prayer strategy for your church starts with developing a devotion to prayer among the people in your church.

Phase 1: Developing Your Strategy

The goal of a prayer ministry is not to do all the praying for the church, but to equip, enable, and encourage church members to pray continually and effectively while making prayer a part of everything they do. The first and possibly the most important component in developing a church-wide prayer ministry is leadership that is committed to prayer. If that leadership component is missing, no other piece of this strategy or any strategy can replace it. As you ask God to continue cultivating in you a deepening prayer life, consider what components should be part of your strategy to translate that desire for prayer into a reality within your church.

The following three ideas may be helpful to consider as you develop the prayer strategy for your church.

- **Recruit and launch a Prayer Ministry Leadership Team.** The goal of this team is to support your pastor and help to equip and keep your church members praying faithfully and effectively on an ongoing basis. They will help to carry out and implement the pastor's goals for the prayer

⁸<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/war-room-how-to-launch-a-church-prayer-ministry>

structure and efforts of your church. Look for faithful members who are influential and already committed to prayer. Work with your pastor to recruit them and establish regular meetings.

- **Consider your overall vision.** It should clearly revolve around the idea of regularly calling people to pray. The call to prayer is so much more than a liturgical moment at the top of a worship service. It's the daily responsibility of every believer. The prayer life of your church will grow exponentially in proportion to how the prayer life of each individual member grows. Having hundreds of church-wide opportunities for prayer will not have the effect you hope if your church members and attendees are not cultivating a deeper prayer life in their own homes.
- **Develop a strategy for training and implementing prayer.** Your strategy should fit onto one page and be easy enough to engage in conversation without having the page in front of you. When in doubt, strive for simplicity.

Phase 2: Determine Your Components

Your church-wide prayer initiative will be guided by your strategy, but known by its individual components. The parts and pieces of your prayer ministry will be what people talk about. They may not tell their neighbor over coffee the nature of your church's prayerful passion, but they will talk about their church's prayer room, prayer cards, or their prayer meetings. The components you choose should be consistent with the vision your pastor and leadership team desire to execute.

- **Church-Based War Room** Is there space in your church already dedicated to prayer? Some churches have a place with 24-hour access that allows people to schedule a time to come and enjoy a quiet escape with available requests, cards, and resources related to prayer. Some churches also provide a place for groups to pray near their worship center during their services. Simply assigning the value of prayer to physical space goes a long way to illustrate the emphasis you have on prayer as a church.

Secondly, if you have such a space, do people know it's there? Do they know how to access it? Are there times when it is open and times when it is not? Can it be reserved for special prayer meetings? Can the community access it? Determine the weekly scope of how the space can be used and make it known.

Finally, how is your room set up? Are there passages of Scripture displayed? Is there a space for people to write and post specific requests? Are there resources, guides, and prayer strategies available? It's important for the prayer room to be both personal and corporate. You may choose to have a prayer wall with categories for prayer and prayer requests moving from your church to your city to your world. Categories like pastors, ministries, missions, missionaries, local officials, federal government, friends in need, and global needs are all possible headers for your corporate prayer wall. Make your church prayer room attractive, accessible, and practical.

- **Church-Wide Times of Prayer** For churches to become truly devoted to prayer, then it must penetrate through the leadership into every meeting, activity, and ministry in the church. There must be intentional scheduled times when the corporate body, individual ministries, and small groups will stop and pray specifically and strategically for one another and the issues at hand. There must also be times when those ministries can meet for the purpose of prayer alone and not to do other things.

Make sure you are praying more than you are talking about prayer and be sure to prioritize spiritual needs and ministry opportunities over physical needs. Schedule focused times to pray for those in authority, missionaries and ministry leaders, local needs, and coming ministry events and opportunities. Designate times to surround and pray over church leaders, students, children, parents, and those who are sick, in need of a job, or in a family crisis. Consider how that time is used to better train and equip people for deepening prayer lives.

Consider turning some weekly services into corporate prayer times. One church just added a 30-45 minute prayer time every week before their evening service. Since people were coming anyway, many came a few minutes early and prayed over corporate requests and needs. Perhaps designate a church-wide day or month for prayer and fasting.

Other times and seasons of gathered prayer could include:

- Weekly or daily staff prayer time;
- Weekly men's or women's prayer meeting;
- Scheduled prayer teams praying during weekend services to pray for God's movement through worship and teaching;
- Elder or deacon body prayer gatherings.

Phase 3: Develop Your Prayer Tools

There are numerous tools that could easily become part of your overall prayer strategy. This list is not exhaustive, so as you develop your strategy, you may discover the need for others. Here are a few simple ones to get you started.

- **Tools to Gather Requests** In order to pray effectively for people in your church and needs within your community, you need a way to gather requests. This purpose is likely best accomplished with a combination of tools designed to give people options for how they share needs.
- **Prayer Request Cards:** Use these in times of corporate worship or small group Bible study for people to log requests. After the services, early in the week, the requests should be compiled by a staff member or prayer team member.
- **Prayer Request Email:** Consider offering an email address and a prayer section on your church's website. It could be as simple as an online form with instructions for viewers to submit a request to a designated staff person or prayer team member.
- **Prayer Request Hot Line:** Perhaps you can host a designated prayer line that rings to a specific staff or prayer team member or a voice mail box where callers can leave a detailed prayer request. Remember to handle these requests with utmost confidentiality and care.

Distributing Requests

In order to effectively pray for requests while elevating the value of a deepening prayer life, you must be able to efficiently distribute the requests. Consider the following options. Again, the best way to distribute requests in your church might be a combination of several options.

- **Weekly Prayer Sheet:** Keep an ongoing list of special requests printed and available throughout your church. To ensure balance, make sure that one side shares physical needs and the other shares spiritual needs and ministry opportunities. It could be picked up at weekend services, at midweek gatherings, in small groups, or online. Each Sunday school class or small group should also consider developing their own prayer sheet specifically for their members.
- **Prayer Wall:** Some churches have a private prayer wall on their website that is accessed through a login code. Members can share the latest prayer requests and answers. You may choose to create a physical prayer wall in your church where members can post prayer needs and answered prayers.
- **Daily Prayer Posts:** As you develop the social media strategy for your church, you may choose to post requests on a blog or easily updated portion of your website or church-based online communication tool. When you do so, be sure to link back to your prayer post via social media. Someone may check Twitter on their phone and be prompted to click through to pray for requests.
- **Follow-Up** Follow-up is critically important when managing both requests and distribution. Reach out to and connect with each person who shares a request. God is the One who will answer the request, but there is encouragement in simply knowing that someone is praying for you. Also, remember to share how prayers are answered.
- **Personal Prayer Notes/Cards:** Both the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John wrote letters telling people how they were praying for them. Consider printing or purchasing postcards that church members can send and share, including Scriptures and ways they are praying for others. This is a unifying and effective practice. It's also an evangelistic tool that many churches are now using. The prayer notes can be collected, compiled, and inexpensively mailed in one envelope to those for whom you prayed.
- **On-Call Leaders:** Many churches already have a pastor designated as the on-call pastor for the day or week. Consider having an on-call team of prayer warriors to serve on-call or at designated hours. Task them to follow up with all requests made during their rotation. Your church's prayer strategy will likely mirror your overall vision to reach the community for Christ and grow believers into mature followers of Christ. Prayer, however, cannot simply be one small component of a successful Christian walk. It is a devotional mark that governs every area of life. The way you elevate Christ in your church will be tantamount to how you value prayer in your church. As you strategize the best way to cultivate a thriving prayer ministry in your church, know that it is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to call believers deeper into fellowship with Him. As people grow in faith, their lives of prayer deepen. As their prayer lives deepen, every part of your strategy multiplies and God receives glory.