

Mobilising churches as houses of prayer

We have a biblical command in Isa.56:7 and Matt.21:13 that God wants the church to be a house of prayer for all nations. This chapter deals with basic principles and ways to help you change your local church into a house of prayer.

Basic Principles for Mobilising Your Church to be a House of Prayer

In this paragraph we deal with 20 of the most basic guidelines and principles for laying a foundation for the local church as a house of prayer.

1. The Church must have a vision.
2. The leaders and leadership must believe in the power and necessity of prayer - the importance of the role of leadership - prayer must be demonstrated by the leadership.
3. Start with what already exist, upgrade prayer activities or systems that are already in place
4. Begin changes where they are most natural and where you expect the greatest receptivity
5. Develop one idea or practical strategy at a time
6. Work with other church committees to help integrate more prayer into their areas of responsibility
7. Begin with simple strategies, then move into more difficult and complex ways of involving people in prayer.
8. Understand the demographics of your congregation before you begin to develop a blueprint for the church's prayer ministry.
9. The importance of "agreement" and unity - do not move forward on implementing different prayer initiatives, unless there is unity and agreement between the leaders about it.
10. Understand the pressure of modern society - modern society forces us to do prayer in new ways. Many of the old prayer formats, are no longer suitable for today.
11. Make times, ways and places for people to pray together
12. Stress the importance of personal devotions and family devotions
13. Be creative - the Spirit of God is a creative Spirit - He will help you to creatively develop a prayer strategy for your congregation.
14. The importance of information: clear communication of prayer needs and answers is vital
15. Prayer should be linked to ministry. Prayer is not a "stand alone." Prayer is just one aspect of the Christian life. Prayer in the local congregation, must be linked and supportive of the different ministries of the congregation.
16. Function as a house of prayer: a) where people can come for prayer and, b) where intercession is made for the people and people groups
17. The importance of teaching principles on prayer - Jesus taught his disciples to pray. The average church member need teaching on prayer - regular teaching.
18. To be a house of prayer is not a challenge - it is a command.

19. The entire congregation needs to be mobilised to be involved in prayer and to take responsibility in prayer.
20. It is helpful to have specific people (and normally not the pastor) to take responsibility to coordinate the prayer ministry in the local church. There is a huge difference between intercessors and prayer leaders/coordinators.

Present Prayer Trends

The following is a list of global prayer trends over the last 20 years: Intercession (intercessory-worship)

1. Worship (worship intercession)
2. Warfare prayer
3. Prayer and fasting (especially extended periods of prayer and fasting)
4. Identification Repentance
5. Diagnostic research of spiritual mapping
6. Praying congregations (in addition to individuals and prayer groups)
7. Regional, national and international prayer networks (NUPSA, World Prayer Centre)
8. Restoration of churches as houses of prayer
9. Prayerwalking
10. Jesus Marches
11. Prayer Expeditions
12. Prayer Journeys / Prayer Teams
13. Prayer focus: a) Revival, b) Restoration/Reconciliation, c) Unreached/Harvest
14. Prayer Rooms
15. 24 Hour Prayer Chains or 24 Hour Prayer Watches
16. Ministry Prayer Support Groups
17. Pastors Prayer Support Teams
18. Regional/Citywide Concerts of Prayer

To be a House of Prayer

A local church is a house of prayer when:

1. The church makes prayer part of the solution offered for personal struggles, trials, problems and the challenges of life.
2. Prayer saturates every aspect of the work and life of the church.
3. All leadership, staff and key lay-leaders devote significant periods of time both personally and unitedly/corporately to pray for the congregation, the work of the congregation and the advance of the kingdom.
4. Prayer forms a significant part of all and every meeting (Sunday school, women's meetings, youth meetings, leadership meetings) of the congregation. When difficulties and challenges arise, meetings will be stopped to seek the Lord in prayer.
5. Prayer is part of the education of the church - teaching on prayer is a definite focus in church services, seminars (marriage, counselling, etc.), Sunday School, etc.
6. Prayer is the first step, not "quick fix" or a last resort.
7. Prayer is a central part of church services. During services people should be prayed for, and intercession should be a significant part of church services.

8. Various types of prayer meetings are scheduled for people to attend: early morning, Friday nights, pre-service prayer meetings, lunch hour prayer meetings, youth prayer meetings, prayer meetings for men or women, etc.
9. The church has one or more people designated to coordinate prayer in the congregation.
10. The majority of the congregation understands the importance of their responsibility in intercession (over and above worship and petitions for their own needs) for the needs of others and the nations.
11. The prayer focus of the church is wider than their own needs and also include their city/town, country, the lost, the unreached globally.
12. The church stops to function on the same level of fruitfulness and power when the level of prayer is lowered.
13. When people can come for a) prayer, and b) when intercession is made for the people and people groups.

Prayer Focus of a Congregation

The following are 15 issues that local churches can focus on in their prayer times:

1. Pray for the lost - evangelism
2. Pray for the unreached - world evangelism/missions - funds, open doors, more labourers, breaking of demonic strongholds
3. Pray for Israel
4. Pray for the poor and needy
5. Pray for all the work of the congregation
6. Pray for the sick
7. Pray for the pastor(s) and missionaries
8. Pray for the leadership of the church
9. Pray for unity in the Body of Christ in the City/Town
10. Pray for the felt need of people
11. Pray for the community: schools, local government and judicial systems, medical community, business sector, sport and recreation, media, prisons and criminal element, occult, pornography and immorality
12. Pray for other churches and para-church organisations
13. Pray for the relevant issues that people struggle with daily: divorce, crime, violence, drugs, political elections, etc.
14. Pray for revival
15. Pray for the government, president, cabinet and all in authority

Different types of Prayer for Congregations

14 Different biblical types of prayer that can and should be part of the local church's prayer life:

1. Praise and Worship
2. Petitions
3. Confession
4. Thanksgiving

5. Intercession
6. Warfare Prayer
7. Wait on God and listening
8. Prayer and Fasting
9. Prayerwalking
10. Travail and Prevailing Prayer
11. Identificational Repentance
12. Restitution
13. Supplication and wrestling with God
14. Prophetic intercession and declarations

Prayer Information Systems

Adequate prayer information systems to keep the local church properly informed about prayer needs, are of utmost importance if you want to keep prayer alive in the local church.

The following are different ways to inform the intercessors:

1. A weekly prayer bulletin
2. Prayer information in a prayer room
3. Read newspapers, watch TV and listen to the radio
4. Prayer letters from missionaries/mission organisations
5. Link to regional and/or national prayer networks
6. Specific prayer focuses like prisons/marriages/economy/missions, etc.
7. Information on six levels
8. Personal
9. Family
10. Congregation
11. Town/City
12. Country
13. World

The Format of Corporate Prayer Meetings

The following are some practical ways to bring variety in prayer meetings:

1. Triplets - pray together in threes
2. Huddles - pray together in small groups of 5-6 people
3. Led by one - one person lead the whole meeting in prayer
4. Singing - singing together
5. Declarations - making declarations in prayer
6. Reading promises from Scripture
7. Korean style of African style - the whole assembly pray out loud simultaneously
8. Conversational prayer - one person start and after he/she prayed a few sentences, the next person continue, followed by others. The secret is short prayer (a few sentences), others pick up where the previous person stopped - pray as a conversation.
9. Traditional Style - People pray one after the other, leading the whole group.

10. Pray for a specific subject with the help of guidelines
11. Listen as a group - give feedback - pray it through

Different Types of Prayer Meetings and Prayer Initiatives

The following are a few suggestions for prayer meetings in local churches:

1. Corporate prayer meetings
2. Prayer during church services
3. Special prayer meetings for specific events
4. Prayer during and before church services
5. Early morning prayer meetings
6. Lunch hour prayer meetings
7. Half nights of prayer
8. 21/30/40 Days of prayer and fasting
9. Prayer chains (ex. Telephone chains)
10. Emergency prayer chains
11. Specialised prayer groups (sick people, marriages, prisons, missions, etc.)
12. Prayer through the small/cell groups
13. Prayer teams for each pastor
14. Triplets or prayer partners
15. Prayer retreats / Prayer weekends / Prayer summits
16. Prayer conferences
17. Prayer rooms
18. Prayer rallies/Prayer storm
19. Prayerwalking
20. Jesus Marches
21. Prayer expeditions
22. Prayer journeys
23. Pray through telephone book
24. Felt-need prayer outreach

Demographic Information about Congregation

Before you start with a prayer strategy for your local church, we encourage you to fill out the following questionnaire to help you understand your congregation better. The answers to the questions will to a large extent determine your strategy.

- Number of adult members_____
- Number of children between 4-14 years_____
- Number of young people between 15-18 years_____
- What groups are functioning in the congregation? (Write down all of them)

Type of groups	Quantity	Prayer Level	Need Training	Need Info
Cell Groups				
Bible Study				
Missions Supp.				
Youth Groups				
Singles				
Children				
Women				
Men				
Supp Ministries				
Evangelism				
Prayer Groups				

- Percentage elderly people in the congregation _____
- How many old age homes? _____

- What type of work are people doing? (Ex. Professional, Farming, Mining, etc.)

a. _____ b. _____

c. _____ d. _____

e. _____ f. _____

- Where are people living? (City Suburb; Farms, etc.)

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

- Do you have prayer leaders and coordinators in place? How many?

- Is an emergency prayer chain in place? Yes___No___

- List the different prayer opportunities available for people who want to pray

- Do you have a prayer team available to pray during church services?

Yes___No___

- Do you have a specific prayer room available?

Yes___No___

- What are, in order of priority, the five most important things that your congregation is prayer for?

a. _____ b. _____

c. _____ d. _____

e. _____

- What systems are in place to pray for the pastor(s) and leaders of the congregation?

- What training opportunities are available to equip people to pray?

- Do you have a prayer team available to pray during church services?

Yes___No___