

INTERCEDE

A Prayer Plan for Your Church

“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”

~Alfred Lord Tennyson

Introduction

The FINISH Commitment is the heartbeat of the Church of God and is dependent upon prayer. Using the acronym of the letters in FINISH, the second letter is ‘I’ and represents the word, *intercede*.

Prayer is the prelude to all effective evangelism. It is a supernatural entity governed by its own set of principles—an invisible reality. Like the wind, we are unable to see it, but we can see the effects of it. It is interesting to note that the disciples personally witnessed every miracle performed by Jesus, but they didn’t ask Him how to do miracles because they already knew how the miracles were wrought. In Luke 11:1, they said to Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray.” The disciples knew miracles begin with prayer! Without prayer it is impossible for human beings to transcend the natural realm and impact the supernatural realm, where the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness operate.

We want and need a supernatural impact! Our goal is to encourage believers to seek the Holy Spirit for an ongoing prayer ministry effort in the local church that can be customized to the specific needs of the congregation.

The information in this document describes how to set up an ongoing prayer program in the local church. The objective is to develop a master plan for prayer that will equip, enable, and encourage church members to pray continually and effectively while making prayer a part of everything they do. The plan is *ongoing* because this is a long-term process and because prayer is broader than “typical” ministry. God is calling His people to prayer and revival as He has done before each spiritual awakening.

The purpose of **all** prayer ministries should be to:

- Help the church become a “house of prayer” as instructed by Jesus.
- Help each person to develop and deepen their prayer life.

- Have a Kingdom focus for both inside the church (congregation) and outside the church (community), especially for evangelism.
- Educate people on the mandate of prayer.

Great prayer ministry in a church does not happen by accident. It happens because of much prayer, careful planning, and hard work by dedicated volunteers. In this study, we discuss the essential elements of a prayer ministry that are vital and must receive careful attention. These consist of the prayer coordinator, “upfront” prayer questions, and the plan itself with details and examples of activities.

“Constants” and “Truths” About Organizing a Local Church Prayer Plan

When you begin to develop a new or renewed prayer plan for the local church, it will be easy to spot some “constants” and “truths” involved that seem to be evident.

Here are some that are easily recognized:

- A consistent prayer strategy is the place to begin any church evangelism effort. Prayer is the foundation of everything in the life as well as the ministry of every church and every believer.
- Success is more assured if the right leader and leadership team is chosen at the beginning.
- There is no one plan that will work in every church. Each church must develop a plan that works for them. There are many methods that will work.
- Launching or relaunching a successful prayer plan will take an investment of work and time.
- Everybody agrees that prayer is necessary, and they are motivated to begin, but teaching and education on prayer is very scarce in the church world.
- The two biggest enemies of a local church prayer plan are boredom and monotony.
- Prayer must remain a priority, or it immediately gets moved to the sidelines.
- If what we do does not originate from God, it will not be blessed by God.
- Our responsibility is to find out what God is doing and go with him in doing it
- Satan is constantly working to undermine biblical, fervent, and specific Spirit-led prayer.

The Bible Is the Origin and Resource For All Prayer

Prayer has rewards—James 5:16 and Hebrews 10:35

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

“Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.”

God hears our prayers—1 John 5:14:

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

Pray about everything—Philippians 4:6-7

“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 understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Mountain moving prayer—Mark 11:22–25

So, Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”

Agreeing in prayer—Matthew 18:19-20

“Again, I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

The Holy Spirit prays for us—Romans 8:26-27

Likewise, the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be

uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

The Lord's Prayer—Matthew 6:9-13

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Selection of the Prayer Coordinator

The following guidelines are offered as suggestions. We recommend that the pastor, church action team, and the prospective prayer coordinator determine what his or her exact responsibilities should be. We suggest the prayer coordinator be selected prayerfully and carefully and that an appropriate public commissioning prayer mandate be given to this person when they are being installed. This is not a paid church position, but instead is taken up by a person feeling led to do so. The most qualified candidate has to have a gifting for this special task. We call it the “right spiritual DNA.”

The purpose of the prayer coordinator is to organize, encourage, facilitate, and enhance powerful and effective prayer.

Here is a suggested list of responsibilities:

- Organize, schedule, and provide general leadership to help integrate prayer activities into the total life of the church.
- Keep the vision of prayer in the front of the people.
- Help individuals renew a personal passion to pray unceasingly for the lost.
- Create a comprehensive, consistent, and ongoing prayer ministry in the local church.
- Establish or reestablish the congregation as a house of prayer with a passion for evangelism and witnessing.
- Plan, program, and manage times of prayer.
- Schedule intercessory prayer events.
- Allow for ongoing prayer for the outreach and ministry of the church.
- Provide training opportunities to help the congregation accomplish the above goals.

Special note: A great resource is available for the coordinator. It is titled *Establishing a Prayer Ministry—A Manual for the Prayer Coordinator*, and is available [here](#) at no cost.

Form a Prayer Leadership Team

The prayer coordinator should select a few men, women, and youth that are praying people and ask them to become the core of a prayer leadership team. This team will be the main source for the many and varied prayer events, teaching seminars, and other prayer opportunities for the local church. The prayer coordinator must put the team together by first sharing the overall vision and mission of the prayer plan. He or she must let prospective team members know that serving on this leadership team is a privilege that requires high commitment.

The prayer team should arrange brainstorming sessions that will produce actions to strengthen prayer in every aspect of church life as well as working closely with staff to implement these new ideas and activities. They will help organize and run ministries such as prayer intercessors, prayer partners, or prayer events, eventually becoming prayer advisors and partners to the church leaders and staff. A powerful prayer leadership team can become the “igniters” who will light a fire of prayer in the church.

Researching Prayer

The famous scientist, Wernher von Braun, once said, “Research is what I’m doing when I don’t know what I’m doing.” As the prayer program is planned, the prayer coordinator and his or her leadership team should begin by refreshing themselves with some great reading on prayer. All of the books recommended here are available online.

Here are some suggestions that will provide fresh input for the group:

- *The New Apostolic Epoch: God’s Determination to Have a Praying and Missional People*, by P. Douglas Small
- *Intercession: The Highest Calling of Prayer is Communion with God, but Its Nobelist Use Is Intercession for the Lost*, by P. Douglas Small
- *How to Start a Prayer Ministry: A Step-by-Step Guide to Starting a Prayer Ministry*, by Nicole Haye

- *Prayer Ministry Volunteer Handbook—Equipping You to Serve*, by David and Kim Butts
- *Fresh Encounters*, by Daniel Henderson
- *The Beginner's Guide to Intercessory Prayer*, by Dutch Sheets
- *Intercessor*, by Norman Grubb
- *Prayer Saturated Church*, by Cheryl Sacks
- *Partners in Prayer*, by John Maxwell
- *Prayer* by Timothy J Keller.

Here are some other research ideas:

- *Talk to people of prayer.* Ask those around you that you know are praying people—your pastor, staff members, friends—what their favorite prayer books or resources are.
- *Browse through the internet.* Search how to start or renew a local church prayer ministry. There is an abundance of free material and helps on prayer
- *Find other prayer leaders.* Meet with others from local churches and talk to them about what they are doing.
- *Educate yourself on current events.* With all that is happening in this day and time, prayer is a desperate need.
- *Start a journey to rekindle your personal passion for prayer.* When you get excited, you will do a better job.

“Upfront” Prayer Questions

How do the members of the local church feel about the value of and need for prayer?

The ultimate goal is to create a culture of prayer in the church. It may be necessary to provide some initial instruction or training about prayer to help the members of the congregation better understand the main idea of the prayer effort. Some avenues that can be used to spread the word about the prayer plan would include Sunday school classes and small groups. Some other ways to build excitement and anticipation are to use testimonies of how God answers prayer, place small articles in the church bulletin or newsletter, and use the church webpage, Facebook page, or other forms of social media. Building 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.

Who in the congregation can you really count on to join the prayer effort faithfully and stay with it?

Begin with a simple list of members and friends of the congregation that really have a burden for prayer and who pray consistently. Recruit in a “one-on-one” method. Go to each person individually and share in a friendly way about the plan to revamp the prayer ministry and enlist their support. The group may be small at the beginning but it will grow.

What details need to be in place before the actual launch or relaunch of the prayer ministry?

Try to think of the challenges that will arise as the prayer effort begins. What is the best time for the organizational meeting? What are some of the time obstacles people will experience? What about childcare? Should we start an online prayer ministry as well as an in-person ministry? How will the team deal with a possible lack of cooperation from the membership? The more these potential obstacles are thought through, the better prepared the coordinator and team will be able to meet any challenges that arise.

How will meetings be structured?

Each coordinator should try to find a meeting method that works for their own congregation. How do people in the church react to something new? Are there feelings and traditions that will hinder progress? Who are the “power people” in the church that could help with the introduction of a new prayer plan? The goal is to make the structure worth the time and effort of the people to show up. Stress that the real focus is on meeting with God which is a special event and not “just another meeting.”

Prayer Action Approach

Develop a clear purpose. This is the right first step for long-term prayer ministry planning. At this time, it would be a good idea to meet with the lead pastor and get a clear understanding of his or her vision for the prayer ministry and their expectations of the prayer coordinator’s job. Next, the prayer coordinator should take time to define a personal vision for the prayer ministry. This vision is a picture of how the prayer plan will look, act, and minister at some point in the future. This vision must be clear and brief so it can be communicated easily. Also, we recommend writing out the mission statement.

Here is a sample:

Our goal is to help connect people to Christ through prayer. The [name of church] Prayer Ministry aims to teach and lead the church in both individual and corporate prayer. We will humbly come before God with a repentant heart seeking His will. We commit to regular prayer for our own spiritual growth, as well as that of the congregation, community and world.

At the outset, we want to make sure we are going in the right direction. If we don't know where we are going, we cannot devise a plan and strategy for getting there. It is better to be slow and careful in the right direction than to be fast and careless on the wrong path. Be sure that you are on the right path before you begin to take your steps!

Preach a sermon series on prayer. This will bring the prayer plan into the mainstream focus of the church leadership and congregational members. Make sure to include instructions on “prayer evangelism” because it is a form of evangelism and a tool for winning the lost.

Place scheduled prayer events on the church calendar. Start early and be wise about planning the timing for the different prayer efforts. If the event date is established from the beginning, it makes it easier to lock it in early on the church calendar.

Find a place to pray. Designating a specific area for prayer will have a tremendous effect on the life of the church. Take time to choose an accessible location in the church which can house the prayer ministry. Consider subdividing one classroom into two to three prayer stations with one larger area where a small group might meet to pray. As members recognize the value placed on prayer by the ministry team, they will be inspired to make prayer a priority in their own lives. Make a decision at the beginning of this ministry who will have access to the room and when. Decide what hours it will be open and how to access it. Also, determine who will be responsible for the prayer room's upkeep, including maintaining records and updating prayer requests.

Rethink the traditional prayer meeting. It will soon become clear that the reason many people do not attend a prayer meeting is because they think it will be boring. Make it exciting! Many people feel the traditional prayer meeting is monotonous. Keep the prayer meeting creative! Use short clips on transformations that have happened as a result of prayer. Many people simply do not know how to pray. Teach people to pray. So many times, people only pray for their personal needs. Show them how to pray for others. Lead them in corporate prayer.

Many great teaching and inspirational videos can be found on YouTube. In addition, use PowerPoint® slides and appropriate pictures to show prayer requests. Visuals are so important Lamentations 3:51 says, “Mine eye affecteth mine heart.”

Here are some pointers on how to plan a great prayer meeting event:

- *Be honest about the time.* Start and end on time. The meeting should be scheduled for about one hour.
- *Allow for praise and worship.* The meeting itself should be view as an encounter with God, not just an event. Praise and worship needs to be strong and a part of every meeting. Praise can be inserted in several places in a meeting.
- *Allow for spiritual growth.* The meeting is a great opportunity for God’s people to grow in their faith and knowledge of God. It is an ideal setting in which to teach the congregation how to pray.

Here are some sample topics for discussion:

- Communication in Prayer: Part One. God created prayer so that He could communicate with us.
- Communication in Prayer: Part Two. God also created prayer so that we could communicate with Him.
- How God Answers Prayer. God promises to always answer prayer according to His perfect will.
- How to Pray for the Lost. Biblical prayer does not necessitate special words or a special location. God encourages us to approach His throne boldly (Hebrews 4:16).
- Elements of Powerful Prayer. Prayer includes confession, adoration, intercession (supplication and petition), and thanksgiving.

Prepare a prayer list for each meeting. The prayer coordinator should prepare and distribute detailed prayer lists for showing key issues the church is involved in, special prayer needs of the church and surrounding community, and individual needs of the members and friends of the church. With new technologies available in ministry today, making a list of prayer needs available to people within the congregation is becoming easier. If the church has a computer and printer, a prayer list can be conveniently maintained and duplicated.

Create a prayer list:

- *Publish a digital printed list.* In order to make a list of prayer needs available to the congregation, consider creating a digital weekly prayer list that could be texted or emailed to the members. The prayer needs list would come from requests mentioned during the weekly corporate prayer time, Sunday school classes, or through a prayer requests box placed strategically within the church.
- *Publish an electronic list on the church website.* The church can make prayer requests available through the Internet. A church website with a link to a church prayer page or Facebook prayer list are excellent ways to put the church in touch with the prayer needs of others. This list will be accessible to the entire congregation all day, every day, at work, at home, on business trips, or even vacation. If the church does not presently have a website, have church members submit their e-mail addresses if they would like to receive a weekly prayer update from the church. Computer communication programs like e-mail, instant message and Twitter offer incredibly efficient ways to let the entire congregation know about prayer requests.

Pray more, talk less. One of the most common challenges in producing a compelling and interesting prayer meeting is figuring out how to avoid attendees spending more time talking about prayer requests than the spend in actual prayer for the critical needs before them. The best practice is to graciously allow for requests and comments but, at the same time, make sure to schedule most of the time for actual prayer.

Allow for intercessory prayer. A separate prayer meeting may be scheduled providing an opportunity for serious and committed intercessors to pray. These precious people usually don't need much supervision—they just need an opportunity. This type of event is usually greater in intensity and length and fewer people attend.

Keep the staff and congregation well informed. The prayer coordinator and his or her leadership team must become the primary public relations people for the prayer ministry. They must find creative ways through personal meetings, announcements and written reports to keep prayer in front of the church congregation. They should ask for an opportunity to share praise reports and some of the exciting prayer events with the congregation. In the sales world, this is

called, “sell the sizzle.” The more the prayer meeting can be mentioned in the church service, the more likely people will want to get involved.

Here are some ideas that have worked well in other churches:

- *Pastoral prayer partners.* Enlist a group of church members who will commit to continuously praying for the lead pastor. This group should be on call for the pastor day or night to pray for any need or situation that arises.
- *Congregational prayer partners.* Begin a prayer program where connections can be made with prayer partners in the congregation and with other church members. Participants should be paired with individuals who are the same age and gender. Each group could be asked to spend 10 minutes a week together in prayer as well as being available around the clock for prayer support.
- *Congregational prayer chain.* Ask all members of the congregation who would be willing to be a part of a prayer chain to submit their name and telephone number to make a prayer chain phone list. Whenever a prayer need arises, participants can then use their list to make contact with other prayer chain members.
- *Lay minister of intercession.* By church vote or staff approval, appoint a lay member in the church to be the church’s minister of intercession. This individual would be responsible for leading and coordinating the prayer efforts of the church body. When a leader is selected, make sure to choose wisely. Seek a spiritually mature person with a vibrant prayer life who will lead the church to be more committed to prayer.
- *Intercessory prayer retreats.* On a biannual basis, plan prayer retreats for the church. During the retreat, spend time teaching people how to pray more effectively and spend time in prayer. Use these times to pray for major issues concerning the church.
- *Church prayer walks.* Plan these special prayer events to pray for and over special areas or locations. If the church is considering purchasing property, if it is involved in a campus ministry program, or if it is concentrating on ministry to a certain area of the community, invite church members to go on a prayer walk around and through the area of focus. This prayer method is an excellent way for church members to connect with the area of concern and also to see exactly what they are praying for and know how to pray.

- *Conduct “Concerts of Prayer.”* An event like this makes it possible to weave worship and prayer together into a one-to-two-hour event so moving that people will look forward to the next one. Include time for corporate prayer, group prayer, personal prayer, spontaneous prayer, and planned prayer. Pray around specific topics.
- *Prayer teams.* Organize individuals in the church who have special burdens for specific ministries (such as evangelism, world missions, or worship services) and have them meet on a regular basis to pray together.
- *Prayer wall.* Design a prayer wall in a very conspicuous location in the church for people to post both prayer requests and testimonies of answered prayer. On the left side of the wall, make sticky notes available for people to write prayer requests. As these prayer requests are answered, move them to the right side of the wall. This is a great visual testimony of the power of answered prayer!

Some more great prayer ideas:

- Create a resource library on prayer.
- Sponsor a community prayer event every three to four months.
- Offer a free meal on the night of the prayer meeting.
- Assist Sunday school teachers and small group leaders by providing training, materials, and resources for prayer curriculums.
- Train, equip, and mentor prayer leaders who can establish and lead small group prayer.
- Serve as a liaison between the local church and other churches in the community to create and encourage cooperative prayer efforts.
- Hold a prayer conference in your church.
- Provide two or three prayer retreats each year.
- Host a prayer banquet.
- Encourage the pastor to preach on prayer, and once a year, preach a series on prayer.
- Offer a small-group Bible study or Sunday school class on prayer.
- Establish men’s and women’s prayer breakfast groups that will meet for prayer every month.

- Every two or three weeks, during the corporate worship hour, schedule testimonies about prayer.
- Schedule a special time for prayer and fasting.
- Consider a prayer event for the children and youth of the church.
- Establish an emergency prayer chain using a phone tree or media for critical, immediate requests.
- Hold a prayer event for the church's evangelistic efforts and for the lost and unchurched.

Conclusion

Dick Loizeaux, President of RGL Leadership Services in his excellent article titled, "Ten Steps to Ignite a Powerful Prayer Ministry," says, "Stop thinking 'prayer meeting' and instead think 'prayer saturation.' Build prayer into everything you and your staff do so people can learn by example. Prayer should be a part of every church meeting, ministry, and small group."

We have seen that the significance of prayer is to communicate with God and allow Him to communicate with us. The responsibility of the church and the ministry of the church is to pray! The will of God in heaven needs to be brought to the earth, and prayer ministry of the church is where we stand on God's side, wanting what God wants and praying out God's will.

Our prayer is for Churches of God everywhere to rise up and pray! And pray so that the Church can bring in the will of heaven to earth, so that God's name may be sanctified, and His will be done on earth.