

**PRAYER: AN ESSENTIAL IN CHURCH PLANTING**  
**Part Five: A Prayer Ministry in Your New Church**  
*By Glenn Smith*

In the final article of this series on prayer I want to offer some thoughts on developing a prayer ministry in your new church. One of my favorite examples of church plants that had a strong prayer foundation is Faithbridge United Methodist Church in Houston, TX. When Ken Werlein came to town to start a Methodist church, he did not know anyone. He simply began to pray and talk to people. As he prayed, God connected him with the right folks. Before long he began a Bible study in his apartment. They prayed for God's intervention and experienced it. They prayed for conversions and saw them. They prayed for healings and witnessed miracles. They prayed for land and God exceeded their expectations. They continue to pray and God continues to do amazing things.

Ken's close friend, Jim Leggett, began Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church about the same time in a nearby community, also with a strong foundation of prayer. Together Ken and Jim have identified 47 prayer ideas that they incorporated in the planting of their churches. You can check out their churches on the web at [www.faithbridge.org](http://www.faithbridge.org) and [www.whatisgrace.org](http://www.whatisgrace.org). For a complete list of their ideas contact them.

Ken shares two of my favorite quotes from UMC leader Terry Tekyl. Terry said "Any attempts to solve the issues of the United Methodist Church short of a major movement of prayer is like rearranging the chairs on the deck of the Titanic." He also said "This year's level of church growth cannot be sustained on last year's level of prayer." Ken and Jim have taken these and other quotes like them to heart.

Two scripture passages that have shaped their practice are Psalm 127:1-2, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builder labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late..." and John 15:5, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing...I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name."

Here are a few of my favorite prayer ideas from Ken and Jim's list. First, make every leadership team meeting a prayer meeting. Whenever you have a core group or leadership meeting, always make a major portion of the meeting a prayer meeting. Be creative, but keep prayer as the focus of the meeting.

Second, have a designated place for prayer such as a prayer room or prayer center. Even if you rent space, have an accessible place that is designated just for prayer.

Third, take an annual prayer retreat or conference, or have a major prayer emphasis each year. This can and should become a highlight that everyone anticipates and looks forward to every year!

Finally, have a prayer coordination position on your staff along with a prayer ministry budget line item. Elevate the role and importance of prayer through personnel and finances. This makes a strong statement and instills a crucial value! Contact Ken or Jim for the other 43 ideas!

One of the mistakes that frequently derail a prayer ministry is when the focus becomes simply physical healings/issues. We want to pray for physical needs but do not let that become the primary focus of your requests and prayer times. Here is what I would suggest:

1. Worship – make part of your corporate prayer time a time of adoration and thanksgiving which leads to worship.
2. Harvest Field – pray for your specific community and needs within your community; pray for the world (maybe use a world prayer guide like Operation World or the Every Home For Christ World Prayer Map.
3. Harvest Force – pray for your church (e.g. spiritual health, spiritual formation, relational vitality, unity, existing programs & ministries, new initiatives & programs); pray for other churches, especially in your community or city; pray for para-church ministries in your area.
4. Physical, Emotional, & Relational Healings
5. Spiritual Leaders – pray for lay and vocational leaders; pray for purity and protection for themselves and their families, for power & effectiveness in their ministries, for spiritual vitality, for health (physical & emotional)

For more ideas I recommend David Bryant's book *Concerts of Prayer*.

There are at least seven different elements that can be incorporated into a prayer ministry. Consider these seven. Brainstorm with your leaders and creatively think of variations of each that you might use in your new church:

1. Private Prayers
2. Family Prayers
3. Partner Prayers
4. Prayer-Walking
5. Small Group Prayers
6. Corporate Prayers
7. City-wide Prayers (with other pastors & churches)

Before you start your new church, build an Intercession Team. You should have a "short-list" of personal intercessors and a "long-list" of everyone who is willing to faithfully pray for your new work! Remember that prayer is not preparation for the battle, but it IS the battle. I believe that every church planter should be committed to aggressively growing in personal prayer during their church planting venture. I believe that every church planter should be committed to developing a prayer ministry in the church that positions prayer as a very high priority. I also believe that every church

planter should be committed to the formation of an intercession team PRIOR to the launch of the new church. (However, if you're already into it, start now!)

Take some time and think through all the miracles from God that you are going to have to experience between now and the time the church is healthy, thriving, and reproducing. Help your intercessors see the bigger vision! Make prayer central to everything you do!