

Cities at Prayer

Continuous Intercession in Your Community

(Theme Introduction)

Several years ago, my church embarked on an unusual season of prayer. One of the pastors cast a vision for 40 days of nonstop prayer, so a storage room was cleaned out and turned into a temporary prayer room to host the 24/7 intercession. People came all day and throughout the night to seek the Lord on behalf of the church and the community.

Surprisingly, the prayer marathon extended beyond the designated 40 days because people did not want to stop. They had encountered God in a deep way, and they longed for more.

I was not a part of the church until later, but I was so intrigued that I accompanied friends to a late-night prayer session there. I was touched by how the prayer room was filled with evidences of many people spending hours upon hours calling upon the Lord. Prayer journals were filled with expressions of both adoration and pleading. The walls were lined with sheets of butcher paper—prayer requests scrawled all over them. Many people sacrificed sleep night after night to take the early morning hours, and they did so with great delight!

Today we are still seeing answers to those prayers. The storage closet is now a beautiful prayer room, with comfortable furniture, a world map on the wall, and an electric fireplace for heat (necessary for Minnesota winters!).

Eventually the church called Bob Bakke, an international

prayer leader, as senior pastor. I joined the church soon afterward and was added to the staff as a part-time director of prayer ministries. As a church, we then dreamed of a next-generation prayer gathering—and this small congregation helped organize and finance the first citywide prayer and worship event at a university hockey arena. This event became the largest annual, next generation-led gathering on the National Day of Prayer. The sacrifice of a few turned into spiritual fruit touching thousands.

Since that time, we have hosted several 24-hour times of prayer in the prayer room, but we have not experienced a repeat of that continuous, 40-day, 24/7 season of prayer. It's tough for a small church to maintain that kind of extraordinary intercession.

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That's why we need the entire body of Christ to join forces in covering a city in 24/7 prayer. By incorporating the simple concept of each church committing to one day of prayer a month, an entire city can quickly be covered by intercessors seeking transformation of their community.

In this issue, Brian Alarid casts a vision for city after city being captured by this saturating prayer. He explains the strategy for America Prays, which is cropping up in cities such as Albuquerque, NM, and Bellingham, WA—and is now spreading across 14 states and eight nations. Kie Bowman and Trey Kent tell the dynamic story of the pastor-led prayer covering Austin, TX. They write about miraculous answers to prayer and ways Austin is being transformed by united, continuous prayer. Steve Hawthorne uses his years of experience in writing powerful prayer guides to show how to script biblical prayers of hope for any city.

As I write this, several churches in Minnesota's Twin Cities area have envisioned 24/7 prayer coverage, but we are still working on how to organize. We trust we will soon join this movement. Perhaps you can be a catalyst for your city. Let's dream. Let's organize. And let's pray.

—CAROL MADISON is editor of Prayer Connect and author of *Prayer That's Caught and Taught: Mentoring the Next Generation*.