

Operation Rolling Thunder: The Whatcom Story

Operation Rolling Thunder (ORT) has been rolling in Whatcom County in Washington—the northern- and western-most county in the United States—since 2005. ORT is a city- and county-wide transformation strategy, rooted in prayer and based on Psalm 18:6–18, a portion of Scripture describing God’s “thunderous” response to David’s prayer for help.

Through this concerted prayer effort, God is moving in some extraordinary ways. A recent report revealed that in the last eight years 50-plus new churches have been planted in the county, first-time commitments to Christ have increased by 40 percent, abortions have decreased and adoptions have increased sharply, homeless numbers have dropped by more than 25 percent, crime rates have gone down by 15 percent, and unemployment rates are the lowest in the state.

The strategy, conceived by Tim Taylor and described in his book by that title, encourages regional church leaders to assemble seven strategic teams to focus attention on seven spheres—business, education, health care, government, media/arts and entertainment, family, and religion/church—and to ask God what He wants to do in each sphere.

Role of Churches

The operational goal for the “rolling thunder” prayer plan is to identify 31 or more local churches in a given city or county, each of which agrees to take one day a month to pray for the seven spheres, asking God what’s on His heart. Churches are urged to pray first for their own congregations and second for the needs in their cities/counties.

Participating ORT churches receive prayer suggestions touching each of the seven spheres. These churches organize their “prayer day” activities in a way that fits the prayer culture of their church. Some use a prayer vigil format with members taking 30- or 60-minute prayer shifts. Some facilitate prayer and worship activities for the day in their church’s prayer room. Others opt to include prayer prompts for city/county intercession in their church’s regular prayer guide, challenging their members to pray privately for the city/county on their church’s day.

Participating churches appoint prayer coordinators to organize and schedule their church’s ORT prayer ministries. These coordinators meet four times a year to share testimonies, clarify vision, and receive training.

Prayer Center Ministries

In addition to the churches, other prayer strategies are organized out of the Light of the World Prayer Center in Bellingham, WA. Director Jason Hubbard and Prayer Center personnel oversee seven transformation team leaders who, in turn, work with their own team members to discern and pray into the Father’s transformation agenda for each sphere.

Each team meets quarterly to discuss prayer items and ongoing transformation strategies. Leaders of the seven transformation teams also come together periodically for sharing, for across-the-seven-spheres vision casting, and for encouragement.

Other Whatcom County prayer-oriented ministries include:

- approximately 100 hours a week of prayer and worship at the Prayer Center.
- three groups of senior pastors who meet every month for city/county-focused prayer.
- 50 lead pastors meeting quarterly to pray together on behalf of the county.
- 30 youth pastors who meet monthly at the Prayer Center

for spiritual bonding and prayer.

- three weekly county-wide ministries for men, which involve men from 40 different local churches. One of the ministries has a membership that tops 200.
- 1,000-plus students and 70 faculty members from Western Washington University working and praying together for Kingdom advances.

Other counties in Washington are now developing ORT ministries that follow the Whatcom County model. For a video version of the Whatcom story, go to YouTube: The Whatcom Story: Waves of Glory. You can find additional information at ortprayer.org.

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