

Revival & REFORMATION

The Official *United in Prayer* Weekly Blog and World Church Prayer Requests
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Going Beyond the Bare Minimum in Prayer

By Nathaniel Oregon

Lately I have been asking God to teach our church that prayer is the work! Why you might ask? Our church has tried many different methods of outreach with minimal success. I think most people would admit that it's easy to get discouraged when we don't see fruit from our labor, even after several years. We may feel like giving up on the idea of evangelism.

We have experienced this at our church in Tecumseh, Michigan. Ninety percent of our active members are past retirement age. And, while we've tried various evangelistic efforts in the past, we haven't had many results until recently. However, during this past month our average attendance has doubled. We've had more guests and visitors in the past two months than we have had in all my time here. Here is how God did it.

With dwindling numbers, our members were concerned that unless something drastic happened, the church would soon have to close. I shared with them that we should focus on prayer and see what God can do for us. I shared with them what I had seen in another church I used to pastor that had given a special emphasis on prayer. God doubled the weekly attendance; some weeks it more than tripled.

To start with, for a whole quarter we only prayed during prayer meeting. We pray that God would grow our church and reach our inactive members. We also actively tried to connect with former members. We planned a Week of Prayer focusing on praying specifically for our church. We have had Weeks of Prayer before at our church but it was a guest speaker giving presentations and not really much time spent praying together. But for this week of prayer, we prayed.

To encourage our members to go deeper in their own prayer lives, we gave out a book called *Daring to Ask for More: Divine Keys to Answered Prayer*. We also started praying on Sabbath afternoons immediately following the worship service together. Sometimes we did United prayer format; other times we prayer walked around the church seven times.

We prayed for God to tear down the spiritual walls that prevent people from coming to church. We prayed for our neighbors to notice us and to reach out. We prayed for our community center (which has a gym) to get noticed and for people to want to rent it to help us pay for the utilities. We prayed for families with children to come to church. We prayed in each room and in every area of the church and the community center.

The Week of Prayer started on Sunday and ended on Sabbath with prayer sessions at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. We gave members the option of coming to either one that worked with their schedule. On Sabbath we only prayed together after church.

We continued praying on Sabbath afternoons leading up to an all-night prayer vigil on Friday night. The morning after the all-night prayer vigil, one elder came to church and there were 38 people there. He said it brought tears to his eyes to see God working and bringing life into our church through prayer. God answered our prayers and is still answering our prayers. A young family with three kids came to church all for the first time together. I was able to set up studies with them.

As I was praying for this little family, another name kept coming out of my mouth and I kept having to correct myself. After doing this several times, I finally asked the Lord who this other name belonged to. He brought to my remembrance someone that used to attend. This man had only attended occasionally because of work issues. I began praying for him and after a couple of weeks, he called me, wanting to come back to church. He came to church the next Sabbath.

Another answer to prayer was on the Sabbath after our first all night prayer vigil. As I was outside after church, I saw a neighbor outside whom I had not met. He has never been outside when I have been there. I decided to go over and introduce myself, but before I could get very far, he came over to introduce himself. He proceeded to tell us that he was raised Lutheran but he no longer attends for two reasons: they don't preach from the Bible and they no longer sing from the hymnal.

He told us that he was just telling his grandson that the Jews and the Seventh-day Adventists worship on the right day, the Sabbath. He told us, "I tell everyone that! When I'm in town I tell people about it." I offered him the Great Controversy, and he asked for five more copies to give to his family members.

It's just amazing how when a church unites together to pray and goes above and beyond the bare minimum, God answers in a big way! We have had more guests and non-members attending in the past couple of months than we have over the past three years. We have more personal Bible studies going with people from the community than we have in the past and they all began during this season of prayer.

Prayer must be the driving force in all that we do in our personal and church life. Not a secondary thought but a driving force! We must go above and beyond in our prayer life.

In the preface to the book *Prayer* by Ellen G. White, we find this statement: "When God's people pray earnestly, sincerely, individually, and collectively, God will answer. Great things will happen in and among God's people. And the world will feel the impact as the Holy Spirit comes to equip and empower His people" (p. 1).

Nathaniel Oregon pastors a two-church district in the US state of Michigan. He and his wife, April, have two children.

World Church Prayer Requests

April 2 - 8, 2021

- Pray for God's blessings over the April 3rd, 24 hour Virtual Concert titled "1 Mind for Myanmar." In this prayer and musical concert, 24/7 United Prayer and MusicVerse join to pray for God's intervention in Myanmar. To be part of this special event click [here!](#)
- Pray for the 'I Will Go' strategic plan of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as each division, union, conference, and local church is seeking to inspire more people to serve in the Lord's vineyard.
- Pray for the upcoming online Global Camp meeting to take place May 19-23. To learn more, click [here!](#)
- Continue to pray for loved ones who are struggling with COVID-19 or who have lost somebody to this pandemic.