



Prairie Lane Press May—June 2009

How Can We Put More Focus on Prayer?

In last year's congregational surveys, we asked: "What are the most important parts of our church's identity?" We used the responses to create our church's core values. In the order of what received the most responses, our church's core values are: community, Biblically based worship, outreach, a CRC identity, and prayer. Prayer was included on only 7 surveys, but I was very glad that it did make the list of top 5.

I can't think of anything that is more important to the healthy functioning of a church than prayer. We all know how important it is, and yet, this is something that many Christians struggle with, and we continue to struggle with it here. I know that I personally struggle with prayer, and even though I've often told myself I'd like to start each day of work with some time in the prayer room, I've remained in the same habit of just one weekday morning there (plus on Sundays before church). I will admit, this is an area that I'm not always very good at leading by example.

You may know, we recently had two important prayer events at church, and I was a bit discouraged with the attendance and participation at both. First, was the prayer vigil on April 4 before Palm Sunday; and then more recently the National Day of Prayer service on May 7. I know many people had very good reasons why they could not come, and I know don't need a special prayer event to pray, but still, the percentage of our church that participated in these events was surprisingly low.

I am also glad that we have included a prayer room in our church. The prayer team has come up with some creative ways to promote prayer in the congregation. Do you remember receiving a "prayer partner" of a child or young person back in the fall? Did you know the elders have agreed to staff the prayer room after church for those who need prayer? Did you know that you are welcome to join the prayer team at 9:30-9:45 before church starts on Sundays? Just walk right in, you don't even have to pray out loud if you don't want to. The prayer room is being used, but there is much more we can do there as well.

I was excited to see that the spring issue of Calvin Seminary's magazine, *FORUM*, was on the topic of prayer (there is an extra copy in the prayer room, an extra copy by the mailboxes, and also one in the church library). For me, the most interesting article was a discussion with international students called "Praying Around the World". One student was from Egypt, one from Hong Kong, one from Mexico, one from Nigeria and one from South Korea. What was so fascinating to me was the huge emphasis on prayer in these other places, compared to a typical American church. Several of them have well-attended weekly or even daily prayer meetings. For example, the Korean student says that most of the churches there have early morning services at 5am or 6am, based on Mark 1:35 "*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus left the house, and went off to a solitary place where he prayed.*" And, the Mexican student says her church had weekly Friday evening prayer services, and mostly young people and teenagers would attend. I can hardly imagine this kind of focused attention on prayer at a church. I tend to think that we are making prayer a priority when we have 15 minutes of prayer before church, and a few other special events in a year. Obviously, there is a lot of room for growth!

I hope we will continue to find ways to grow in prayer here at Prairie Lane Church. If you have some ideas, feel free to share them. And, we could always use some new people on the prayer team. And, I also hope you will find ways to add more prayer into your life. Perhaps this summer, when schedules slow down a bit, you can find some time to spend in the prayer room here. Find some time to read the *FORUM* magazine on prayer. There are just a few articles. Let's continue to work toward making prayer a priority at Prairie Lane!



Council News

MAY COUNCIL MEETING

Special meeting on Friday May 8.

*Retiring and new council members attend, and the ministry team leaders are invited to attend.
Roger Horstman lead us in devotions and we had a time of group prayer*

Goals: We looked over congregational survey results regarding new ideas for the next year and also what changes have not worked well. We spent some time sharing our own ideas and commenting on some of the others. Pastor Dan presented some of his goals for the next year. With this information, council will create a list of goals, and the various ministries will also keep the feedback in mind as they plan activities and programs for the coming year.

Preaching: Pastor Dan asked those present to give him some suggestions on sermon topics for the coming year.

Church Handbook: Currently, Prairie Lane does not have an up-to-date policy handbook. One was created in 1994, but has not been kept current. Pastor Dan gathered various materials from previous council decisions and existing church policies and put them together as a first draft of a new church handbook. Council and ministry team will go through the material, suggest changes, and then we will find ways to communicate relevant information to the congregation.

5-Year Vision: Healthy churches should have long-term goals and a vision for which they are working toward. At Prairie Lane, for the last several years our main goal was to complete our building project and transition into this new space. Now, this project is complete and the pledge drive finishes up later this year, so it's a good time for us to consider what are our next steps and big goals as a church.

- We looked at congregational surveys, had a time of discussion, and Pastor Dan presented a draft of a 5-year plan. This needs to be prayed about, updated as necessary, approved by council, and then presented to the congregation.

Council then met separately to do an orientation with Doug and Cheryl.

New officers of council were chosen: Rick Kreulen-President, Roger Horstman-Vice-President, Wayne VanderTuin-clerk, and Brian Kramer-Chair of deacons

Council voted to put our name to classis as a possible calling church for a new church plant in Kansas City. Pathway Church in Olathe, KS handles most of the hands-on responsibilities for the new church, but they also needed an organized CRC church to be the official calling church.

Nobody's Fool

Matt Bell | 04/01/2009 – Managing Money by the Book (reprinted with permission)

"Of what use is money in the hand of a fool, since he has no desire to get wisdom?" - Proverbs 17:16

No one wants to be thought of as a fool - not on April first, not at any time.

The Bible uses that strong term only a handful of times in regard to the use of money--once to describe a person who saves too little and once to describe a person who saves too much.

Proverbs 21:20 says it's foolish not to save: *"In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has."* And Luke 12 says it's foolish to put too much emphasis on saving, telling the story of a farmer whose bumper crop leaves him focusing on how to store up his riches and take life easy: *"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God"* (Luke 12:20-21).

The recession has revealed the folly of taking either approach. If we haven't saved enough, the ramifications are obvious. Without an emergency fund, the loss of a job can easily lead to the rapid build up of debt. As for the other extreme of hoarding, most of us have not been hoarding in the sense of saving more than we really need, but I wonder if our reactions to losses in our IRAs or 401(k) plans reveals something of a hoarder's heart. I wonder if perhaps one question God wants us to consider in light of our losses is whether we had been putting our hope in our wealth (See 1 Timothy 6:17-19). As bad as the recession has been, I believe as strongly as ever in the promise that *"in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

It's natural to want to get through our tough times as quickly as possible. But it would be nothing less than foolish to just grit our teeth and try to gut it out until things get better. We risk missing God's purpose. What is he saying to you about your savings habits or attitudes? Have you been saving too little? Have you been trusting in your savings too much?

For more information on Matt Bell or to sign up for one of his free eNewsletters, Check out www.MoneyPurposeJoy.com

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