

How to do a prayer vigil



Preparation for Prayer Vigil:

- **Commitment**
 - It is important that church leadership commit to dedicated prayer through the vigil. Take time to consider the role of prayer in the Bible (sola scriptura).
 - Let God call you to this, not the Northwest District.
 - Keep in mind the privilege of conversation with God in prayer and Christ's example in prayer.
 - Commit yourself to this time with God regardless of any tangible benefits.
- **Prayer**
 - Ironically, the most important preparation is prayer. Pray for this season for your church or ministry. Pray for God to move hearts to respond to His call for prayer. Continue faithfully in praying for God to fill the prayer time slots and for God to meet each individual as they come to pray.
 - One Lutheran church started with a week of 24 hour prayer. They simply asked, without any arm twisting. But they “devoted themselves in prayer” for God to fill those hours. In the end they only had to ask people to fill three out of 168 hours.
- **Invite**
 - As you pray and study the Bible, invite others to share in this commitment.
 - Find a team that can support the work. Not only will they share the work load, they will communicate with more people, and they will add to your prayers.
- **Plan**
 - Develop a plan as a team to share the District's Year of Prayer, “Walking Together in Prayer” along with the vision for your congregation's part.
 - You might wish to schedule some Bible studies on prayer.
 - Perhaps devote a sermon or two to the subject or theme of unity as a denomination, as a church, as marriages, in families, etc.

How long should the prayer vigil be?

Go ahead and start with one day if you've never done it before. You can always sign up for more days later in the year. If you have a strong prayer group then you can aim higher. If you are investing a lot in the set up of the prayer room you may want to aim for a few days to get more benefit from the set up. *Stretch beyond what you think is reasonable. This gives God space to step in.*

When should we plan it?

Look at your calendar for a time that is free of other large commitments. Could you plan it before an evangelistic focus or a mission trip? Can you plan it before a certain season of the church year or a sermon?

How will we ever fill 24/48/72/96/... 168 hours?

You won't, but God will.

These suggestions from those who have done vigils may help:

- Look to your leaders to sign up first.
 - Sign up for the toughest hours. One church had the elders take the entire first night of prayer.
 - Put the sign up sheet in a public place so that others can see your example.
- You can look to many groups to fill in the spots next.
 - Small groups or Bible studies might pray together for an hour.
 - A ministry team might skip their normal business meeting for a month, choosing instead to spend an hour praying for outreach or for Sunday school.
 - A choir might meet to worship in prayer for an hour.
 - The youth might take some hours. A junior high at one church scheduled three hours with 20 minutes for each teenager. They ended up spending five hours and wanted more – but the senior high wanted in by then.
 - Just about any group could together commit to take one hour. As you add up potential groups you may find you need to tack on another day of prayer to allow everyone to have an opportunity to participate.
- After you have approached the group in your congregation you might reach out and invite individual members, couples, and others to sign up.

Prayer Room Preparation

Why do we need a prayer room?

Certainly we can each pray on our own in our own spaces, however, there are three good reasons to use a central room:

- **Community**
 - A shared location provides a strong sense of being part of a community, carrying each others burdens and celebrating together. This prayer space helps to connect us to each other as well as to Christ.
- **Accountability**

- People have to show up. You are more likely to come since you know that you will be missed. You also have the joy of then passing the prayer on to the next person.
- **Resources**
 - By preparing a Prayer Room you are taking the time to make it special, including artwork, crosses, music, candles, journals, prayer requests, and other items. This cannot be duplicated in each individual home.

Where should the room be?

- The location should be easily accessible, ideally within the church.
- The room should be large enough for a small group to pray together and for various resources.
- Restrooms should be accessible.

What about security of the room? This is an important issue.

- Make sure you pray for safety.
- The room should be lockable from the inside. Make sure people don't get locked out though – provide a key if necessary.
- The room should contain a phone. A cordless phone will work if no jack is available in the room.
- The entrance should be well lit.
- Post a list of those scheduled to pray along with their phone numbers.
- Provide surveillance. You might have a couple or group (not just one man) spend the night on site, or set up a video camera to tape the entrance. You may come up with other creative ideas.
- Exterior doors should be locked after office hours. There should be a window in the door or nearby so individual finishing prayer can then see the next person and open the door for them.
- Provide an “on-call” team of those willing to step in for an extra hour if anyone forgets, sleeps in, or has a change of plan.

NOTE: Security will be different if your vigil is taking place during the daytime hours. The choice of WHEN or for HOW LONG the vigil lasts is up to your congregation/group.

What should the prayer room look like?

People approach the throne of grace in a variety of ways. Try to provide a varied set up to appeal to all pray-ers. You may pick and choose from the following ideas or use them as a springboard to even better ideas of your own.

- **Welcome**
 - wall/table/sign – displaying the basic information about the hour, the list of those signed up, and a general overview of the resources available in the room.
 - You might also provide prayer guides for those who want to follow a set path in their prayer time.

- **Worship** - central to prayer.
 - Provide a CD player with a mix of instrumental, hymns, contemporary songs and invite people to bring their own.
 - Set up a processional cross and kneeler.
 - Hang butcher paper from a wall, along with markers to facilitate people writing their own worship thoughts, favorite verses, or phrases from songs or hymns. This can be a rich gift for future prayers to read the thoughts and worship of those who have prayed before.
 - Place pictures on the worship wall of nature, Biblical scenes, church life, etc which might inspire worship and thankfulness. Invite people to add their own pictures.
 - Provide paper to write a confession and a shredder to shred them as a symbol of God's forgiveness.

- **Intercession** - God's gift to us in prayer. Ask. Seek. Knock.
 - Provide a space on the wall or 3 x 5 cards, where people can write their requests. Encourage people to write as many as personal and congregational needs as possible before their prayer time begins.

- **Missions**
 - Include a space on the wall to write the names of unchurched family and friends along with some tips for how to pray for them.
 - Provide a map of your city.
 - Invite people to write prayers on it for schools, leaders, police, social service agencies, churches, etc
 - Provide an area phone book for people to use to lift the names up in prayer – for whatever the Holy Spirit leads them to pray for these 'unknown' people in your immediate mission field.
 - Include a map of the world with high-lights of mission ventures your church supports, along with location of some of LCMS missionaries around the world. Listing all LCMS missionaries might be a little overwhelming. Consider listing just a few from each continent.

- **Write and read**
 - Include a table with Bibles of various translations, prayer books, hymnals, prayer guides for missionaries Along with other helpful resources.
 - A 'shared' journal for people to write their thoughts, experiences or answers to prayer may be a valuable tool.

- **Involve all the senses**
 - Provide candles, put a rug on the floor with big pillows, a blanket for those who may be cold, tapestries or drapes.
 - Create the setting that would be desirable for this important prayer ministry.

Hopefully, you can see that with a little work, a room can be created with enough helpful resources to keep anyone praying for an hour.

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