

# Prayer Trends

by

**Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.**

[www.churchgrowthnetwork.com](http://www.churchgrowthnetwork.com)

We live in one of the greatest prayer revivals of modern history. However, prayer ministry isn't always done in the same way.

**That was then . . .** *This is now . . .*

- **Mid-week prayer**
  - *Early morning prayer*
- **Prayer warriors**
  - *Prayer intercessors*
- **Cottage prayer**
  - *Small group prayer*
- **Little prayer education**
  - *Much prayer education*
- **Pastoral prayer time**
  - *Individual prayer time*
- **A strength of churches**
  - *A weakness of churches*
- **Pastors lead in prayer**
  - *Directors of prayer lead*
- **Prayer at the end of counseling**
  - *Prayer as an ingredient of counseling*
- **Obligation to pray**
  - *Burden to pray*
- **Prayer lists**
  - *Prayer journaling*
- **Praying defensively**
  - *Praying offensively*
- **Opening prayers for a service**
  - *Prayer teams during the service.*
- **Prayer partners**
  - *Prayer triads*
- **Low profile for prayer**
  - *Higher prayer visibility*

The following are twelve prayer tends that may be helpful as ideas for increasing prayer in your own ministry.

**1. Praying the Scripture.** As we read the Bible, God often puts His finger on specific areas of our lives where He wishes to change us, encourage us or teach us. Using these same Scriptures as a pattern for prayer provides a meaningful way for our lives to be reshaped according to His will.

**2. Concerts of Prayer.** A "Concert of Prayer" is the uniting of the entire local body of Christ in prayer for the things that concern God. A Concert of Prayer is the uniting of pastors, leaders and churches—cross-denominationally—in prayer for the spiritual awakening of their community, city, or nation.

**3. Praise.** Using praise as a way of worshiping God for who He is and what He does is quite common. Praise helps us focus our heart on God, removes worry and earthly concerns, increases faith, invades Satan's territory and mobilizes God's power.

**4. On-site Praying.** A unique form of on-site prayer is that of flagpole praying. This practice is most common with youth pastors and youth workers who meet quarterly at local high schools for an early time of prayer around the school's flagpole. A more traditional form of on-site prayer occurs when people meet on-site at a conference for the sole purpose of providing a 24 hour prayer covering for it, the speakers and any problems that may arise.

**5. Spiritual Warfare.** Most of us don't need to be reminded that our battle is with spiritual powers. However, we are beginning to see a concerted effort to understand and implement prayer strategies in the realm of spiritual warfare. While the subject of spiritual warfare covers a wide spectrum of views, in the 90s more people will become aware of Satan's power and the necessity for training in this crucial area.

**6. Prayer Partners.** Churches are organizing key leadership, including staff, to pray for each other on a rotational basis each quarter. This partnering of people encourages bonding and appreciation for one another. We have found "triads" seems to work best, two lay leaders for each staff in a large church, or simply three leaders in a group for medium and smaller churches. Partners pray for their personal walk with the Lord, ministry/work schedules, relationships, and even finances.

**7. Small Group Prayer.** Older members of a congregation may remember times when churches divided into "cottage" prayer groups. Cottage prayer groups often met for specific concerns such as a mission conference or evangelistic revival. The dynamic, which made this cottage prayer times exciting, is still available in small group prayer. Some churches divide into prayer groups to meet once each month in homes. Many use the first Sunday evening of each month for this special purpose.

**8. Prayer Seminars.** Prayer seminars are being used today to raise the consciousness for prayer and to teach people prayer skills. Growing churches seek to schedule a seminar on the basics of prayer at least every other year. All church leaders are encouraged to attend. A variety of prayer models and ways to pray are introduced. Prayer seminars include a lot of time in prayer and not simply instruction about prayer.

**9. Prayer Retreats.** Prayer retreats are being planned and executed with great impact in churches. With our hectic pace of life, many people find it difficult to take time to pray. The daily bombardment of media, interruptions and things to do push prayer into the background. When people get away from the everyday routine, they are freed to focus on the still, small voice of God. Prayer partners and teams often attend together and plenty of time is scheduled for prayer in small groups.

**10. Early Morning Prayer.** In the first half of this century prayer meetings developed in the middle of the week and the late evenings. This time proved to be acceptable until our rapid transition into a commuter society. With more people arriving home later in the evening, mid-week prayer meeting attendance has been declining. Today churches are finding that early morning is often a better time to meet than late evenings.

**11. Identification of intercessors.** Attempts are being made to identify individuals gifted in the area of intercession. Several qualities seemingly are apparent in their lives. First, intercessors desire to pray at least an hour per day. Accompanying this motivation is an insatiable yearning to know more, to read more and to be around people with a like focus. Inevitably, whatever their vision, they will almost always be involved in spiritual warfare.

**12. Team Prayer.** The best way to model prayer is through the pastoral staff and leadership teams. As church members see their leaders teaming together in prayer, they are encouraged to follow the same pattern. Staff set aside time each day for prayer as a regular part of their quiet time. Once each week the staff prays together for themselves, their church and requests from the congregation. Each staff member and leader recruits their own prayer team who then covers them and their ministry in prayer each day.