



## Prayer Ministry<sup>1</sup>

Jesus instructed the disciples to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit before doing anything else. Prayer is our most powerful tool in the Great Controversy.

**Priority of prayer.** Most dynamic, growing churches emphasize the ministry of prayer. Praying with members struggling to keep their faith can help them maintain a close relationship with God. People with needs in the local community often respond well to offers of prayer. “A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work . . . A revival need be expected only in answer to prayer” (*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, 121).

Intercessory prayer was central to Jesus’ ministry. It was His custom to spend many hours asking His Father’s help for those to whom He ministered (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). Scripture records His prayers on behalf of others as models for us (Matt. 6:9-12; John 17:6-26). The apostle Paul also exercised a ministry of intercessory prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; Col. 1:3). To the apostles, prayer was as important as preaching. They sought to choose deacons who were willing to give themselves “continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

In private and in people’s homes, elders must pray on behalf of the church and its members for God’s blessing, strength, healing, forgiveness, wisdom, and enlightenment. There is power in the church that is praying together. When members join in prayer for others and see their prayers answered, new strength and vitality will be experienced in the church family.

The book of Acts indicates that when the believers united together in prayer, the Word of God spread and the church grew (Acts 1:14, 15; 2:42,47; 4:18-33; 8:15-25; 10:9-48; 12:1-25). Church leaders need to guide their members into spending time together seeking the Lord—praying for one another, planning, and nurturing the fruit He gives. “The promise is made (Matt. 18:19,20) on condition that the united prayers of the church are offered, and in answer to these prayers there may be expected a power greater than that which comes in answer to private prayer. The power given will be proportionate to the unity of the members and their love of God and for one another.” (*Letter 32*, 1903).

We often pray to open or close a meeting, but fail to spend time praying for wisdom and changed hearts so that our ministries can be most effective. Help members develop prayer partnerships and establish times for group prayer beyond the weekly prayer meeting. Some of these partnerships can be accomplished online or by

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from *Seventh-day Adventist Elder’s Handbook*, 2016, pages 118-123.



telephone. Satan knows the power of God's people praying together and "at the sound of fervent prayer, His whole host trembles" (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 346).

Valuable resources to help members enjoy an effective prayer life and ministry can be found online at <https://ministerial.adventist.org/> and <https://www.revivalandreformation.org/>

## Prayer Meeting

Prayer meetings are a focal point for praise and fellowship in the church. "Those who are really seeking for communion with God will be seen in the prayer meeting" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 98). There are many ways to strengthen prayer meetings, but the central emphasis should be prayer. The meeting should be scheduled at convenient times and places, occur in small groups or corporately, and focus on a prayer list or prayer box. However, regardless of time, venue or structure, prayer meetings are for praying. The program may vary from week to week for interest, but four basic ingredients are essential to its success:

**Plan.** "Wisdom should be sought of God, and plans should be laid to conduct the meetings so that they will be interesting and attractive. The people hunger for the bread of life. If they find it at the prayer meeting they will go there to receive it" (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 70).

It is the responsibility of the pastor and elders to prepare and coordinate the prayer meeting. This can be an excellent opportunity for an elder with the appropriate spiritual gifts to lead out in place of the pastor. Choose an appropriate room. A small group in a large room reduces intimacy, dampens fellowship, and infers defeat. Start at the scheduled time; do not wait for everyone to arrive.

Consider having a church night during the week where different programs are conducted at the same time or one after the other. This format works well for programs such as prayer meeting, Pathfinders, committee meetings, and choir practice. Begin a fellowship hour early in the evening by sharing a light meal together.

Rather than gathering at the church for the prayer meeting, some may prefer meeting in homes as small groups. There are some advantages to meeting this way since a small group provides a more personal atmosphere than the church building. This can assist in bonding the group into a close-knit community. Members of the group are able to participate more freely in the informal surroundings of the home prayer group.



## NEWPORT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Ministry description for local church leaders — 2022

**Study.** Prayer meeting normally includes time for Bible study. This meeting is more for teaching than preaching, and presentations should usually be 20 minutes or less. Examples are studies on Seventh-day Adventist beliefs; a chapter, or a book from the Bible; or a biblical character.

**Share.** Prayer meeting generally includes time for personal testimonies, reflections, and sharing. It is important to give people the opportunity to share how God has been answering their prayers. This evidence of God's leading and power strengthens faith and brings encouragement to the group.

Such opportunities are of value to the congregation, but must be carefully guarded. "Long, prosy talks and prayers are out of place anywhere, and especially in the social meeting. Those who are forward and ever ready to speak are allowed to crowd out the testimony of the timid and retiring. Those who are most superficial generally have the most to say" (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 70, 71).

Testimonies are to be short and current. Ask questions such as: *What has the Lord done for you? What prayer has been answered? What soul-winning experience have you had?* Testimony topics may be assigned in advance (favourite Bible text, how you became a Christian, etc.). Sometimes it is wise to ask one or two members beforehand to speak about a recent answer to prayer.

**Pray.** Prayer meeting is for prayer and not for those who dominate the time with long and tiresome recitations. "Their prayers are long and mechanical. They weary the angels and the people who listen to them. Our prayers should be short and right to the point. Let the long, tiresome petitions be left for the closet, if any have such to offer. Let the Spirit of God into your hearts, and it will sweep away all dry formality" (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 71).

When it is time for prayer, direct the group to focus on specific requests mingled with praise and the claiming of promises. Encourage members to pray for others rather than focusing on personal requests. Tactfully suggest that the prayers be brief and not be used to preach a sermon or present personal grievances. Building a prayer list that includes people or projects becomes a reminder of what God is doing for His people.

Methods used in praying can vary from meeting to meeting.

- The entire group could pray together as one or divide into smaller groups.
- Attendees could pray around a circle, or be left free to pray as they feel ready to.



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- Conversational prayer may be opened by an appointed leader, followed by brief additions of a sentence or two by various participants. As the Spirit leads, participants may wish to pray more than once when the topic of prayer shifts to other issues. This allows for prayer requests, ministry to one another other as needed, and an enjoyable, interactive type of prayer that keeps minds alert for a longer period of time. After an appropriate time the prayer is brought to a close by the leader.
- Prayers could follow a theme such as praise, thankfulness, forgiveness, etc. or be based on a portion of scripture.

There is no set pattern for prayer. The more open and natural the prayers, the more meaningful they may become. “As we seek to win others to Christ, bearing the burden of souls in our prayers, our own hearts will throb with the quickening influence of God’s grace; our own affections will grow with more divine fervour; our whole Christian life will be more of a reality, more earnest, more prayerful” (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 354). For additional information on how to conduct group prayer sessions, see the handbook on prayer at <https://www.revivalandreformation.org/>