

ORGANISING AND RUNNING A CONTINUOUS PRAYER EVENT

The bible gives us a clear command to 'Pray for rulers and those in authority' (1 Timothy 2: 1-2). In a time where huge issues are resting on the shoulders of our political leaders, we probably need to take this a bit more seriously than a quick 'God please bless the Prime Minister'!

During the Week of Prayer for Parliament, we'd like you to consider taking a 'step of faith' and organising something slightly more stretching than a traditional prayer meeting (although that would be great too!) You might want to consider:

- A 'night of prayer', running say from 8pm until midnight;
- A 24-hour prayer watch, perhaps from Friday to Saturday lunchtime;
- Dedicating the whole week to 7 days of 24 hour continuous prayer.

Sounds impossible? It isn't! Since 1999, literally thousands of groups have taken up the challenge to hold a week of continuous prayer. These have taken place in a variety of locations and settings, involving groups both large and small, and God has showed up in some remarkable ways.

HOSTING A SEASON OF 24-7 PRAYER

If you are considering running a 24x7 or even a 24x1 prayer event for the first time, it can all feel a bit daunting. Do not worry; help is at hand! The team at 24-7 Prayer UK have put together a guide packed with loads of advice and ideas specifically aimed at groups who are new to running these kind of prayer events. You can download a copy from the Christians in Parliament website (www.christiansinparliament.org.uk) or contact 24-7 directly by calling 0203 167 4381.

ORGANISING A 'NIGHT OF PRAYER'

If you decide to hold a 'night of prayer' style event, you might like to consider the 'prayer concert' format which is often used for the annual Global Day of Prayer. This is a bit more like a 'conventional' church meeting (in whatever style you are accustomed to), but normally without the sermon or teaching and with a much stronger focus on collective prayer. Some elements that you may wish to include:

- Praise and worship times (we often find that worship inspires prayer and vice versa);
- Corporate prayer (everyone together);
- Prayer breaking down into smaller groups or pairs/triplets;
- Use of audio and video material;
- Testimonies from (and prayer for) individuals involved in these areas;
- Invited guests (you may be surprised that local politicians or representatives of public services are often willing to come along to Christian events, especially if the focus is clearly on thanking them, encouraging them, and praying for them);
- Room for the creative arts (dance, drama, music, poetry, visual arts, prophetic acts, film, photography, writing; the list is endless!);
- Refreshments - people will probably need them! (unless you decide to fast together, which can also be very powerful)

TOPICS FOR PRAYER

We often find that people ask 'what will I pray about for a whole hour?' In practise, once they get into the atmosphere of prayer with loads of visual and practical aids to encourage them, it rarely turns out to be a problem. But to help the prayer flow and to encourage the sense of unity that comes from having a shared focus, you may find it helpful to provide some of the following:

- The '1 hour prayer meeting plan' (pages 5-6), which can be adapted for use as a personal prayer pattern for an hour in a 24-7 prayer room, or as the subject for some of the sections of a night of prayer.
- The bible verses and prayer pointers from the 'personal prayer guide' (see page 7).
- Information resources & news items. Your local and national newspapers will be full of stories that have a political dimension and need our prayers. There are a number of Christian organisations working in this field who can provide news and topical information; you can find some of their details in the 'resources' section on page 9.
- Names and as many details as you can find about: your local MP and councillors; national and international political leaders and situations; local churches and their involvement in the community; Christian organisations who are active locally and nationally; Christians known to you who are involved in politics or public service (don't forget people like teachers, police, health workers, trade unionists - there may be more than you think!).

Feel free to be creative, and allow opportunities for everyone to contribute themes rather than assuming that it all has to come from 'the leaders'. Above all, create space and time to allow the Holy Spirit to speak in whatever way He chooses to do so. Truly effective prayer happens when we respond to God's initiatives rather than asking Him to bless ours!

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following web links will help you to get hold of the information that you need to pray effectively for your local politicians, find out about national issues, and loads more!

Your local elected representatives

- To find out the names and contact details of your local MP, Councillors, Euro-MPs, and regional assembly members, go to www.WriteToThem.com and enter your post code.
 - To find out more about your MP, including their issues of interest, speaking and voting records, www.TheyWorkForYou.com is a great place to start (again, all you need to do enter a postcode).
 - The majority of MPs (80-90% at the last count) have **their own website**. This will give you their own view of their work, often covering local issues as well as party ones. You can find it using a search engine, or there may be a link on www.TheyWorkForYou.com (above).
 - Your **local council website** should have section on councillors, usually providing a picture and basic information and sometimes a short summary that they have written about themselves.
 - Because elected politicians are public figures and often in the news, you can find out quite a lot about them by **searching the internet**. A suitable search would be their name followed by their role (eg: MP, MEP, councillor) and the name of their constituency or area. Thus a search for 'Gordon Brown MP Kirkcaldy' will give you a range of news items, official and unofficial sites, and biographies on the Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Labour Member of Parliament for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath. The same method also works for local councillors and assembly members (but remember, not everything that you read on the internet is necessarily true, accurate, or fair!)
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Christian organisations and issues

One of the first places to go to for current issues is the local and national news (newspapers, TV, radio, and internet). Many of the stories that you will find here have a political dimension and urgently need or prayers!

In addition, there are a number of Christian organisations working in the area of Christian engagement in public and political affairs. A few of these are presented here (but you may well know of others!):

- Theos (a Christian think-tank) provide a free media monitoring service (go to www.theosthinktank.co.uk and click on **media monitoring**). They also have some great 'in depth' material on Christian political engagement.
 - Tearfund are a charity who also campaign on issues which affect the poorest in society (such as international trade, development, and climate change). Visit www.tearfund.org/campaigning.
 - CARE (Christian Action Research and Education) campaign on a range of subjects including bio-ethics and family related issues. Latest news and information at www.care.org.uk.
 - The Evangelical Alliance (www.eauk.org) are active in helping Christians and Churches to positively influence the public life of our nation. Click on **public theology** or **campaigns** for more information.
 - SPEAK is a campaigning organisation which brings students and young people together in prayer and action. To see current areas of focus, visit www.speak.org.uk.
 - Premier Media (www.premier.org.uk) are a London-based radio station and media organisation who bring a Christian angle to current news stories. Click **news** to view their latest headlines.
 - The Jubilee Centre (www.jubilee-centre.org) provide a range of more in-depth articles and papers on current political, economic, and social issues.
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And finally...

There are loads of ideas to help you with prayer at www.24-7prayer.com. For free help and advice relating to the week of prayer, you can call 24-7 UK on **0203 167 4381** or email uk@24-7prayer.com.

Don't forget to check in at www.ChristiansInParliament.org.uk for more resources and the latest on the 2009 week of prayer for parliament and government.