

# Prayer

## Unwrapping the Gift

**Sunningdale, January 2006**



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## 1 Introduction

These notes provide an introduction to the felt need of a number of Christians in the community of Sunningdale (and its surrounds) to raise awareness of the critical place prayer must take in our lives if we are to see God's purpose for our families and community realised.

As a member of Holy Trinity Church, I (John Hooper) communicated my preparedness to serve Christians in Sunningdale by providing systematic Biblical teaching on prayer in the context of being gathered regularly in a setting where 'togetherness in prayer' is experienced and practised.

I was therefore asked to prepare some notes explaining my thoughts on the theme of 'House of Prayer' to assist those in leadership in deciding whether they were able to embrace and facilitate this initiative.

Appendix A presents the brief 'Note' I prepared in response. It is hoped that the Christian community in Sunningdale will emerge over the coming years as a united people who have understood and embraced all that the Scriptures teach on the 'prayer imperative'. May God enable us to work together in His gracious desire to revive us, and turn our community and nation back to Him.

May we be granted the ability to recover what the disciples understood, that we should "give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:4). Yes, may God Almighty grant us repentance and recovery unto life (Acts 11:18).

The Note in Appendix A speaks forthrightly about the subject of prayer, and this directness might be off-putting to some. I hope (and pray!) that everyone who reads it will press on beyond such potential reactions that are normal for us all when we are challenged. May we objectively review where we are as a Christian community, and reach out to God for the courage and grace to change, where change is needed.

These notes are shared with the sincere conviction that unless we do negotiate the necessary change as a community, we will be overwhelmed by events and circumstances too powerful for us to withstand. Our nation is facing great peril, and as our history should teach us, prayer to God is our only resort.

## 2 Prayer – Unwrapping the Gift

When we receive gifts, it is natural for us to want to receive and use them to the full, for in so doing, we express our appreciation to the giver. Yet when it comes to the gift of prayer, there is much that seems unnatural in the contemporary Christian culture within our nation. This perspective is based on many years involvement with Christians from a number of traditions, and is a key motivator in my willingness to be seek to be a catalyst for change. I desire to encouragement Christians to embrace all our Saviour has prepared for us, in the sincere conviction that establishing a vibrant prayer life in the heart of our community is one of the keys to this.

In offering to provide some structured Bible teaching on prayer, I am by no means claiming to be a great teacher, or to have it ‘all together’ when it comes to prayer. Rather, as a member of the Body of Christ in Sunningdale, I am simply offering to provide Biblical instruction on prayer, and to share something of my past experience borne out of my being responsible for leading various prayer initiatives in the past.

We are a nation that is rich in Christian teaching resources, and the subject of Prayer is covered in depth by extremely gifted, talented and experienced men and women of God from a broad range of Christian traditions (see Appendix B for a sample listing). So there is no lack of material to use, yet it is strange that so little systematic teaching on prayer is given in many Christian circles.

The challenge when it comes to prayer is not teaching, essential as this is. Neither is it knowledge of the Bible, important as it is to know how to ‘pray the Word’. The key challenge is that Prayer is something that has to be ‘caught’. It is only as we pray, that we learn to pray. This is true for individual personal prayer (or ‘closet’ prayer as Jesus called it), as well as corporate prayer (which we might term ‘upper room’ prayer, Acts 1:13). There are no short cuts, and it is by no means an easy process. Like any other, our relationship and communion with God our Creator involves sacrifice, time and commitment.

Fallen man has a ‘strange reluctance to commune’ which, if we are not careful, can hinder us from entering into the wonder of our restored relationship with a holy Father God. When it comes to corporate prayer, the challenge can be even more significant due a number of factors, which could be expanded on in another context. We also face fervent spiritual opposition from the enemy of our souls, who is determined to prevent the quality of agreement spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 18:19: “If two of you **agree on earth** concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”

**Yet prayer is an amazing gift from God!** He has moved heaven and earth to restore us to relationship with Himself, and longs to commune with humanity:

*Now all things of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

*Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made him who knew no sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)*

## Prayer – Unwrapping the Gift

Sadly, some Christians have not yet ‘opened’ the incredible gift of prayer. Many others are simply not making the best use of it (if such an expression can be used in speaking of a relationship). Either in our individual lives or corporately, it can be all too easy to neglect the privilege, power and potential of prayer. When this happens we tend to fall back on our own natural resources, which inevitably leads to eventual discouragement and tiredness as we see so little fruit in all we seek to ‘do’ for God.

The proposed prayer course, whether it is called “**With Christ in the School of Prayer**”, “**Prayer, unwrapping the gift**”, or something else, is intended to:-

- Build confidence in both “closet” and “upper room” prayer;
- Facilitate a hands-on experience of prayer, rather than a theoretical one with a heavy emphasis on teaching;
- Be intensely practical, involving a broad range of approaches to prayer from a number of Christian traditions;
- Facilitate a authentic meeting with God about issues that are real and relevant to our personal lives, our family and community life, our national life, and to the nations of the earth;
- Strengthen and develop relationships across the Christian community, which will form the basis for friendship and ongoing corporate prayer initiatives (involving 3 or more people);
- Help build prayer momentum across the Christian community in our area (with a particular emphasis on the Sunning-dale/hill region);
- Enthuse others who attend from the wider area to encourage similar prayer movements in their locality;
- Be just one of a number of initiatives to raise the profile of prayer with an urgency that is fitting to the nation’s predicament.

The next section provides the requested ‘Taster’ for the proposed course. It is a ‘taster’ in being the type of notes that might be prepared to assist the learning process, as well as forming the main content of the brief presentation

It should be noted that at this stage, no further work has been done in working through the course content or style. Since the need for the course to be a ‘team effort’ has been emphasised (which has always been my intention – all such initiatives in my past have involved a body of people), my thoughts and ideas are still in my head and heart and are still very fluid. I look forward to talking/praying/planning with others who feel called to get involved in leading such a course, and joining in building prayer momentum in our community. There is also the possibility of inviting others to help who have particular experience in certain areas of prayer, and this could be considered.

### **3 “Taster” for Course**

#### 3.1 Introduction

I was asked to prepare a 15 minute “taster” of what a session might look and feel like, to enable the team to get a sense of my teaching style and approach. This would be followed by 15 minutes questions.

Having given this some consideration, it felt right to share some thoughts which will enable us to reflect on the corporate prayer life of our own church community. This will be done in two stages:

- Firstly, we will briefly consider eight Biblical principles that underpin corporate prayer and intercession;
- Secondly, we will complete a survey of the corporate prayer life of the church, with the intention of provoking thought, and providing a structured framework for honest reflection on what might be working well, and areas where there is room for development.

I express my gratitude to John Preston for his booklet (see Appendix B) for the possible title of the course and for the general outline for the following material.

#### 3.2 Principles For Corporate Prayer

Though there are undoubtedly many more, the following eight principles help underpin the corporate prayer life of a local church:

1. A woven cord of many strands
2. Hearing God Corporately
3. Praying at all Times
4. Praying Specifically
5. Praying as a Priority
6. Praying in the Right Places
7. Covering the Whole of (Church) Life
8. With Thanksgiving

### 3.2.1 A Woven Cord of Many Strands

*“They went up into the upper room where they were staying..(and)..continued with one accord in prayer and supplication”.* (Acts 1:13-14. There were at least 20 praying together at that time).

When Christians prayer together, Father God has a unique and personal relationship with each individual, however large the group. This has some significant implications:

1. One person’s relationship with God is not to be compared with that of others;
2. Like a rope, greater strength in corporate prayer comes from increasing the number of individual strands, rather than by increasing the thickness of the core. So it is important that everyone feels free to meet with God in a way that feels right and natural to them;
3. Spiritual one-upmanship is abhorrent to Father God, and it is a mistake to believe that more spiritual blessing awaits the most eloquently worded deeply ‘spiritual’ prayer. In Hebrew thought, it is the one who says “Amen!” (Lit. “So be it!”) who brings the agreement that God is seeking;
4. For a cord to have maximum strength, the cords must be woven in such a way and direction as to support the other strands. It is the interaction of the strands that brings the amplification of strength. This illustrates the need for agreement in prayer:



*“Therefore I desire that that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting.”* (1 Timothy 2:8)

*“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 18:19-20)

5. The word ‘agree’ is *sumphoneo* in the Greek, the origin of the word symphony. A wide range of instruments playing different parts, harmonising together to the same beat, to produce an overall effect much richer than any one instrumental voice.

### 3.2.2 Hearing God Corporately

God loves to see his people functioning as a body, and if we give Him room, His Spirit will be manifest through each member (1 Cor 12:4-27). Father God loves to use our individual gifts and relationships with Him to speak to His people.

Though there is sometimes the lone voice in the wilderness (e.g. Elijah, John the Baptist, the prophets) which we need to be willing to hear, it is often through the sharing of words, thoughts and prayers collectively that we are able to discern the Father’s will, purpose and strategy.

If, when we are gathered together, we share with others what we believe God is saying (rather than repeating what God appears to be saying to someone else), then the ‘corporate ear’ of the church will begin to function more fully. Like the threads of the cord, a more complete record of God’s voice comes. Let us

each play our part in listening as a member of the body, that we can rightly discern the good, pleasing and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2).

### 3.2.3 Praying at all Times

The Biblical record of the early church a community that joined constantly in prayer:

*“She... did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayer night and day.”* (Luke 2:36-37)

*“They...continued with one accord in prayer and supplication”.* (Acts 1:13-14).

*“They continued steadfastly in...and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

*“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer”* (Romans 12:10-12)

*“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints..”* (Ephesians 6:18)

Important as large corporate prayer gatherings are, constantly flowing prayer is unlikely to be achieved in the average central church building.

Rather the corporate prayer life should blend central events, with streams of prayer flowing to God from house to house, from group to group, and from the individual prayers of church members. In the model of ‘House of Prayer’ presented in Appendix A, prayer is the fuel that inspires and energises the life of the Christian community, in all the various expressions of work, rest, and play.

### 3.2.4 Praying Specifically

*And he said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’...I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.”* (Luk 11:5-8)

*Jesus said, “Watch and pray,..”* (Matthew 26:41)

Jesus reveals that Father God wants us to be specific in presenting our needs before Him. We should be bold, specific and persistent.

If church members are to pray specifically, they need to be informed about the specific needs of the church. To reach its full potential, two things are needed of church leadership:

1. Clarity of thought to define specifically what these needs are;
2. Clarity of communication for these needs to be understood.

This will enable church members to pray effectively about these specific needs.

Specific praying enables specific answering, which builds faith. There is much more on this whole subject of specific praying and communication which could be said, but this will do for now.

### 3.2.5 Praying as a Priority

*Therefore I exhort **first of all** that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-3)*

The apostle Paul allocates the highest priority to prayer (and the giving of thanks!).

He also highlights that the prayer ministry is not only for our own situations, but also for the society in which we live and serve. It is also national and international concerns.

Some of the great prayers of the Bible are prayers of confession for the state of the nation, asking for God's mercy and forgiveness (e.g. Nehemiah 9 & Daniel 9).

Prioritising prayer lays the right foundation for the rest of the church's ministry and mission.

See Appendix A for more discussion of the Acts 6:4 imperative.

### 3.2.6 Praying in the Right Places

The geography of prayer is important, and we often see in the Bible that prayers are offered to God at specific geographical locations.

Where we pray makes a difference and taking prayer out of our church buildings and into our communities can be a powerful way to pray for the area, bringing a freshness to prayer, as God opens our eyes to see more of what He sees.

### 3.2.7 Covering the Whole of (Church) Life

What we bring to God in prayer should cover every aspect of the church family life, its interaction with the community we serve, and the needs of the society we are a part of.

This is related to the issue of being specific and praying relevantly and intelligently. No one person knows the issues so effective communication is an important aspect to this, including feed-back the reports of answered prayer and changing situations as they are prayed for.

### 3.2.8 With Thanksgiving

*"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" Colossians 1:3*

*"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" 1 Thess 1:2*

*"I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers" Philemon 1:4*

*"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Philipians 4:6*

## Prayer – Unwrapping the Gift

*“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving”* Colossians 4:2

*“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men”* 1 Timothy 2:1

Greek word is ‘eucharisteo’ > Eucharist

Giving thanks in prayer is a powerful weapon against the spiritual powers that oppose God’s purpose for the church. Satan is described in the Bible as the “*accuser of the brethren*” (Revelation 12:10), and the giving of thanks for the people we pray for is an effective anti-dote.

It is also important to note that giving thanks for answered prayer is an important aspect of the corporate prayer life of a church community.

Sharing answered prayer is as important as sharing the needs for prayer, and helps build the capacity of that church for prayer.

### 3.3 Prayer Review

Please take a few minutes now to complete the survey of the corporate prayer life of Holy Trinity Church. As mentioned earlier, this is with the intention of provoking thought, and providing a structured framework for honest reflection on what might be working well, and areas where there is room for development.

The first survey is included in Appendix C (Part 1). Part 2 needs more time, and it would be really helpful if you could find 15minutes to complete this on another occasion. Feed-back of your findings would be invaluable as we seek to identify ways of strengthening our prayer life.

## Appendix A: Note on “House of Prayer” - Sunningdale

### Introduction

John Hooper prepared this note on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2005, as an introduction to the subject of ‘the prayer imperative’, in the context of Christian life and witness in and around the community of Sunningdale, England.

As a member of Holy Trinity, John had communicated his preparedness to serve Christians in Sunningdale by providing structured systematic teaching on prayer in the context of being gathered regularly in a setting where ‘togetherness in prayer’ is experienced and practised.

John was therefore asked to prepare some notes explaining his thoughts on the theme of ‘House of Prayer’ to assist those in leadership in deciding whether they were able to embrace and facilitate this initiative.

This note is prepared in the hope that we, as a Christian community in Sunningdale, will emerge over the coming years as a united people who have understood and embraced all that the Scriptures teach on the ‘prayer imperative’. May God enable us to work together in His gracious desire to revive us, and turn our community and nation back to Him.

May we be granted the ability to recover what the disciples understood, that we should “give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4). Yes, may God Almighty grant us repentance and recovery unto life (Acts 11:18).

The New King James Version of the Bible is used in this note.

### Prayer and the Ministry of the Word

Acts 6:1-7 describes a situation where the pressure to meet real practical needs threatened to divert God’s people from His imperative and order for blessing. The leaders responded with great wisdom, and we read that “the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.”

They understood that whatever else they did, they should not ‘leave the word of God’, and therefore resolved afresh to give themselves **continually** to two things:

- Prayer, and
- The ministry of the word.

If we are to be effective and fruitful in all our various initiatives to make the Gospel of God concerning Jesus known and understood (the ministry of the word), we need to understand and walk in this God given order. It is not prayer alone, nor is it the ministry of the word alone. It is both, and in the stated order.

## Prayer – Unwrapping the Gift

There is much that is good and commendable in all that Christians are doing in our community, yet it seems to me that so much of it inverts God's order or completely changes it. Prayer, if it 'happens' at all, is too often relegated to an afterthought, a seeking of God's blessing on our 'business for Him'. Into such restlessness Jesus speaks His timeless words:

*"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)*

Prayer is the method of God for His message, His word. Our nation is dying, and only God can turn us back from destruction. If God is going to do it, it will be by prayer. Prayer is not just a good idea – it is His divine plan. He is a relational being, and prayer, or communication with God is a fundamental aspect of relationship. If communication is absent between two parties, it is normally assumed they are not related.

Our generation, in all its 'doing for God', has yet to see prayer as a foundational ministry. To even call it a ministry is strange indeed. We are called into relationship first and foremost, God having moved heaven and earth to make it possible, through both creation and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

As dearly beloved children, we need to take God at His word on this subject. It is **while** we pray (relate) that God works, if we can but see Him – not merely before, or after prayer. Our idea is (at best), "Let us pray, and then get on with the work." But prayer is our real work. We so often think of prayer as a prefix or suffix to an otherwise busy round of activity. But God's works are wrought **as** we pray, and **while** we pray.

All that we seek to do, He could readily do without us. But God, the supremely relational being, has committed to get His work done **with** His people. This might seem obvious now that I have stated it, but the general absence of pray in what we do is cause for reflection.

*God does nothing but by prayer, and everything with it. John Wesley*

*Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure. D. L. Moody*

*To arouse one man or woman to the tremendous power of prayer for others is worth more than the combined activity of score of average Christians. What David Brainerd did others can do. God is no respecter of persons. A. J. Gordan*

Again, prayer speaks of relationship, and it is relationship that God seeks. **He is not seeking workers, but worshippers** (John 4:23). He is the One in Whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). He is the author and perfecter of our faith (Hebrew 12:2). And without faith it is impossible to please Him. He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrew 11:6). He is the God of relationship, extending His blessing to those who keep covenant (Mark 14:24; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrew 8:6, etc). Forgiveness is foundational to His covenant: forgiveness by God, **extended to all by us**.

*"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt 6:14-15)*

*"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:23)*

*“And when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25)*

Prayer that moves mountains is prayer which springs from right relationship with the Creator. Right relationship with Him is founded in right relationship with each other. To know true forgiveness is to be truly forgiving. Where there is true forgiveness and reconciliation between man and God and between man and man, the conditions are right for a glorious dwelling together in unity, a place where God has commanded the blessing! (see Psalm 133).

As we align ourselves with God’s order of priority (prayer **first, and** the ministry of the word), He will begin to address the roots of the **relational** crisis facing our nation. If we are willing and obedient, we will see God turn our nation (and us) back to Himself.

## House of Prayer

The Bible make mention of the **house of prayer** specifically in a few places, but is alluded to in many other places. These days most people assume that because their church includes a time for prayer at some point in its scope of activities, this is what Jesus was speaking of. But, as we shall see, this is not so.

The two main scriptures are presented below. I have also made some observations about the Scriptures which I encourage you to read:-

*“Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:7. See also 1 Kings 8:29,38,9:3 & 2 Chronicles 6:20,29)*

Some points of note:

- Context is God foretelling that Gentiles who are grafted in to God’s covenant people through faith in the Jewish Messiah will also have access into God’s presence;
- “I will bring” note the determined intent;
- “Make them joyful” God intends to bring joy in the place of prayer. Cp. Jesus words “Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” John 16:24
- “My house shall be” – this is prophecy to be fulfilled. While everything else that happens when we gather together as believers may have its place, if we are not engaged in prayer as the chief item on the agenda, we need to question why not.
- “For all nations” – Again, God states clearly that it is all the nations/people of the earth that is to be the focus of prayer. The house of prayer exists for the primary benefit of others: men, women and children created in God’s image, for whom Christ died.

*Then He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called **a house of prayer for all nations**’? But you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’” (Mark 11:17, my bold type; see also Matthew 21:13, and Luke 19:46)*

Some points to note:

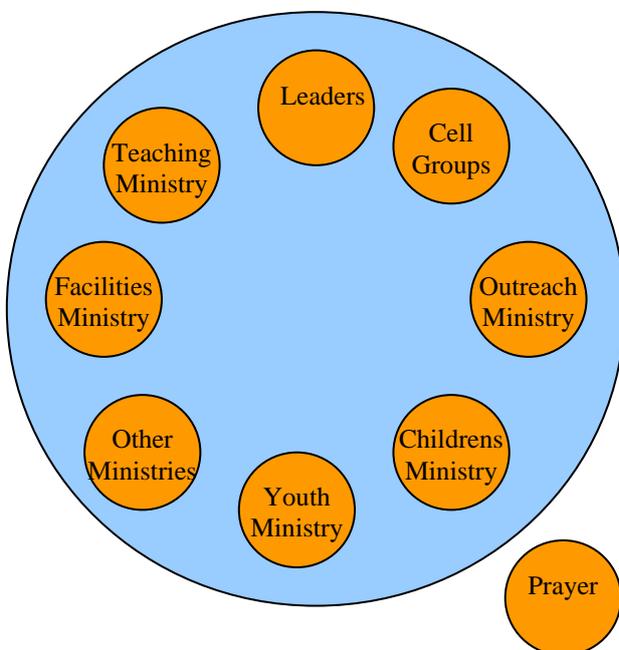
- Jesus pointed to God’s word through Isaiah as the authoritative reason for the temple’s existence, which the leaders of the day had neglected, with terrible consequences. (see Malachi 3:1-3)
- Once the right focus was ‘restored’ by Jesus, the ‘house of prayer’ became also a house of healing and a house of praise, despite the ongoing opposition (Matthew 21:14-16)
- Mark uses the word ‘ethnos’ for nations, meaning all ethnic groups;

It is very sobering to consider how little time the Christian community gives to the primary reason for their existence. It is well said that the church is the only institution that exists for the benefit of its non-members. I believe Jesus is calling us now to embrace His order for things. I believe this is imperative if we are to survive the shaking that is on the horizon and fast approaching us in this land.

If we are prepared to acknowledge that the Church is not fulfilling its primary calling, that we are not a house of prayer, that we are dysfunctional in our relationship to Him, then what should we do? What does a house of prayer look like? And how do we get there? What can we do to begin to realign ourselves with God’s revealed “Shall be..” in the above scriptures?

Let’s consider the figure below, which might be called a ‘Prayerless Church’.

#### A. ‘Prayerless’ Church

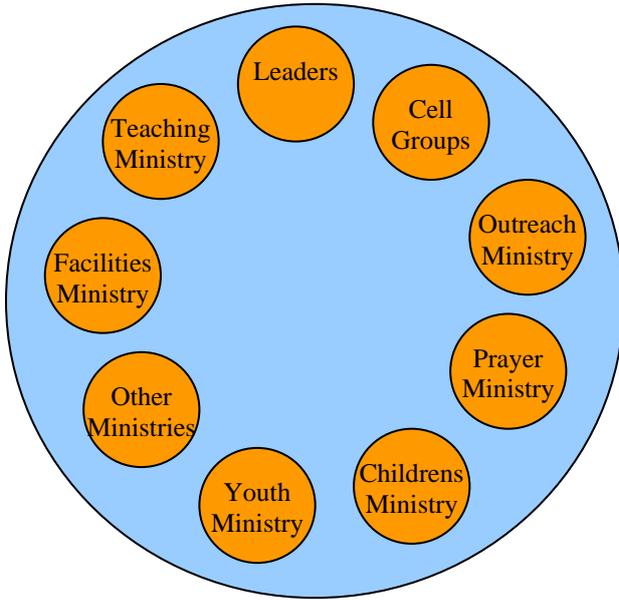


This ‘church’ **hardly recognises the importance of prayer to its ministry**. They may give lip service to it by opening meetings in prayer, having a specific time for prayer in the worship service, and may even hold special prayer meetings from time to time for important issues.

However, **prayer is largely outside of the ministry**. It is for this reason that the phrase ‘prayerless’ is used. There may well be some people praying for the church, but they are not specifically given requests and are not recognised as a ministry to the church.

Next we’ll consider the figure overleaf, which is intended to illustrate what might be called a ‘Prayer Ministry Church’.

### B. Prayer Ministry Church



This 'church' recognises that prayer is important. They want to see things prayed for and want to provide a place for those called to 'intercession' to get involved. It **therefore recognises prayer as a ministry of the church**, much like youth or music.

People who have an inner burden for prayer are involved, but not many others. This is a step in the right direction, and in practise is a realistic transitional stage to a true 'house of prayer'.

Finally, let's consider the figure below, which is intended to illustrate what might be called 'House of Prayer Church'.

### C. House of Prayer Church



This type of 'church' believes that nothing lasting will happen apart from prayer. It believes that prayer needs to permeate every ministry of the church. It believes that every ministry must be prayed for, and prayer must be a significant part of each ministry. Virtually everyone in the church is involved in prayer at several levels.

The people know their place as beloved children of God, and they have confidence to approach the throne of grace with bold requests for mercy and grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). They know that relationship with Father God is fundamental to life (John 17:3).

The people put no confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3), and take God's words in John 15:1-8 and Jeremiah 17:5-10 very seriously. They know from experience that it is true, and have decided not to even try to move independently of God any more. They have surrendered. There is much that could be said here about "Man's strange reluctance to commune", but that is perhaps for another time, and is non-essential for this introductory note.

However we see ourselves in the above three models of church, there is much hope for us, since God has committed Himself to us, and eagerly awaits our readiness to seek Him in the process of necessary change.

I believe that something exciting is beginning to happen in our nation. For those who are willing and obedient, God is restoring his order pattern (along with many other NT principles) for church life. May God grant us the courage to redress culture and tradition where they oppose and hinder what God would do with His house:

*Jesus taught them, saying, “Is it not written, ‘**My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations**’?”* (Mark 11:17 my bold type)

I believe God has His eye upon Sunningdale, a town strategically placed to take a significant stand against the powers of darkness in our land. He also has His heart set upon His people, those called by His name. He longs to commune with them. His promises in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Jeremiah 29:11-13 still stand today:

*“If My people, who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”*

*“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”*

### **How Do We Get There?**

*Blessed is the day whose morning is sanctified. Successful is the day whose first victory was won by prayer. Holy is the day whose dawn finds thee on the top of the mount! Health is established in the morning. Wealth is won in the morning. The light is brightest in the morning. “Wake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early.”* **Joseph Parker**

*We have to get rid of the plague of the religious age in which we live. In our Lord’s life there was none of the press and rush of tremendous activity that we regard so highly, and the disciple is to be as his master. The central thing about the kingdom of Jesus Christ is a personal relationship to Himself, not public usefulness to men.* **O. Chambers**

This brief introductory note is not the place to enter into the detail of how to transition from wherever we are, to where God is calling us. If we are willing and obedient, we will eat the good of the land. He will teach us the way in which we should go. There is no master-plan that can be imposed on any congregation (phew!!) because we are talking about relationship, and the ways in which that relationship is expressed will be unique to any Christian faith community.

However, there is much we can learn from others who have walked ahead, who that Father has moved upon and taught. I will therefore conclude with some characteristics that are common to churches that are, or are on en-route to becoming, **Houses of Prayer**.

1. Prayer is visible from the pulpit
2. Prayer saturates every aspect of the ministries that express the life of the church
3. All that the people do is birthed in prayer

## Prayer – Unwrapping the Gift

4. Prayer saturates the times when the people congregate
5. The leadership is committed to prayer
6. Prayer is always an agenda item
7. Prayer is part of Christian education for all ages
8. The leader and leadership team have strong prayer covering
9. Prayer is the first step, not the last resort
10. Intercession is an integral part of church life
11. The church has a recognised dedicated prayer leader
12. A dedicated and consecrated Prayer room exists
13. The word is never ministered in the absence of prayer
14. Prayer needs are communicated and feed-back provided in a structured way
15. Personal testimony of answered prayer is regularly heard
16. The church has a clear prayer strategy that relates to its vision and calling

I hope that this note helps towards the goal of communicating about what is on my heart and mind concerning House of Prayer and Sunningdale, England. No doubt there will be many questions arising and I look forward to an opportunity to do this with all who are interested.

O Instruct us how to pray!  
Pour out the supplicating grace  
And stir us up to seek Thy face.  
We cannot think a gracious thought,  
We cannot feel a good desire,  
Till thou, Who calledst a world from nought,  
The power into our hearts inspire.  
The promised Intercessor give,  
And let us now Thyself receive. **Charles Wesley**

**Appendix B: Sample of Prayer Teaching Resources**

Incomplete listing of John & Sal Hooper resources related to the subject of Prayer. Others could be added. (It might be a good idea to collate a more comprehensive listing of the prayer resources that Christians in the Sunningdale area have available, and which they would be willing to loan to others).

Item	Title	Author	Form
1	A Silence and a Shouting	Askew, Eddie	Book
2	Living Prayer	Bloom, Archbishop A	Book
3	E.M. Bounds on Prayer	Bounds, E.M.	Book
4	The Path of Prayer	Chadwick, Samuel	Book
5	2000 years of Prayer (compilation)	Counsell, Michael	Book
6	Seasons of Intercession	Damazo, Frank	Book
7	Prayer Warfare	Duncan, Homer	Book
8	Dynamic Praying - Holiday School 1993	Ellel Ministries	10 Tapes
9	Prayer - Finding the Heart's True Home	Foster, Richard	Book *
10	My House Shall Be a House of Prayer	Graf, J.L. et al	Book
11	The Saints at War	Hammond, Frank D.	Book
12	Kneeling We Triumph (Book 1)	Harvey, E.F. & L.	Book
13	Intercession & Evangelism (CfaN)	Hattingh, Suzette	6 videos
14	Our Daily Walk	Hayford, Jack	Book
15	The Most Powerful Prayer on Earth	Horrobin, Peter	Book
16	Listening to God	Hugget, Joyce	Book
17	Open to God	Hugget, Joyce	Book
18	Helps to Intercession & Spiritual Warfare	Hughes, Pat	Book
19	Possessing the Gates of the Enemy	Jacobs, Cindy	Book
20	Prayer - Focussed, Fighting & Working	Lang, George H.	Book
21	Could You Not Tarry One Hour?	Lea, Larry	7 Tapes
22	Learning the Joy of Prayer	Lea, Larry	Book
23	The Fundamentals of Spiritual Warfare	Lea, Larry	7 Tapes
24	The High Priestly Prayer	Moule, H.C.G.	Book
25	Transforming Your World	Mulinde, John	Book
26	With Christ in the School of Prayer	Murray, Rev. Andrew	Book
27	Listening Prayer	Payne, Leanne	Book *
28	Releasing Heaven on Earth	Petrie, Alistair	Book
29	Prayer - Unwrapping the Gift	Preston, John	Book
30	Spiritual Warfare	Prince, Derek	Book
31	Listening to the Holy Spirit	Sampson, Steve	Book
32	Intercessory Prayer	Sheets, Dutch	Book
33	Hooked on the Word - Bible Meditation	Smith, Ron	Book
34	Women of Prayer (anthology)	Stewart, Dorothy M	Book
35	Praying for the Peace of Jerusalem	Valentine, Penny	Book
36	Communion With God	Virkler, Mark & Patti	Book
37	Communion With God	Virkler, Mark & Patti	12 tapes
38	Territorial Spirits	Wagner, C Peter	Book
Note	* On loan from David Uffindell		
	Current suggestions for books for study during course		

**Appendix C: Prayer Review/Survey**

C1 (Part 1): Reflections on the specific content of Section 3 of this Note.

It would be really valuable if we could make time to discuss your findings with others who have done the survey, seeking first to understand different points of view. Then to consider the implications for developing the prayer life of the church community.

		1	2	3	4
<b>A</b>	<b>A woven cord of many strands</b>				
1	Our Church values different people's approaches to and experience of prayer				
2	A good proportion of church members play an active part in our corporate prayer life				
<b>B</b>	<b>Hearing God Corporately</b>				
3	Our Discernment of what God is saying to us is based on many people's perception of God's voice				
<b>C</b>	<b>Praying at all Times</b>				
4	Our corporate prayer life is spread over the week and across the community				
<b>D</b>	<b>Praying Specifically</b>				
5	Church members know the specific prayer needs the leaders propose				
<b>E</b>	<b>Praying as a Priority</b>				
6	I feel that corporate prayer is a priority in the life of our church				
<b>F</b>	<b>Praying in the Right Places</b>				
7	Prayer is woven into the framework of our church lives - in meetings and in homes as well as in worship times				
8	We regularly take prayer out into our community				
<b>G</b>	<b>Covering the Whole of Church Life</b>				
9	Our whole church life, and the lives of our members in our community are grounded in prayer				
<b>H</b>	<b>With Thanksgiving</b>				
10	We regularly included thanksgiving as we pray for situations and people				
11	Church members are informed of answered prayers				
<b>Total</b>					

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C2 (Part 2): Mapping Out Our Corporate Prayer Life

First write down all of the events that take place in the life of our church, including all the ways in which church members are serving in the community (e.g. CMI, Toddlers, HT, Charters, Lynwood). Then write down where you perceive prayer is happening for the life and mission of the church or for the community you serve.

For each occasion try to think about what is prayed for. Think about how effective this is in bringing the church needs before God.

Day	Where?	What is Prayed For?
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		