

A 40-day Prayer Guide

By: Pastor Andrew Beunk



A 40-day prayer guide to use as we begin our “season of prayerful discernment”—calling upon the Lord to lead us forward together in His will.

New West CRC
Jan. 25 – Mar. 5, 2010

Introduction

This 40-day prayer guide has been written by Pastor Andrew Beunk specifically for the “season of prayerful discernment” that the New West congregation is participating in from January thru June 2010. In the fall of 2009, the Council decided to embark on a “Ministry Planning Process” for the purpose of communally discerning how the Lord might be leading us as a congregation in our next chapter of ministry together.

The guide is intended to be used as part of your individual and/or family devotions beginning Jan.25, 2010 for a period of 40 days. It is my prayer that as we use this guide, God will join our individual and family prayers together to prepare our hearts for this season of discernment.

As we read through Scripture we find that “forty” is often connected to a period of new development in the history of God’s plan of salvation for his people. It’s a time of preparation, consecration, sometimes a season of judgment; a time of dedication that God uses to further His work with and for His people. Examples abound: the downpour of rain during the Flood (Gn. 7:17); the dispatch of the raven (Gn. 8:6); Moses’ fasts on the mount (Ex. 24:18; 34:28; Dt. 9:9); the spies’ exploration of the land of Canaan (Nu. 13:25); Moses’ prayer for Israel (Dt. 9:25); Goliath’s defiance (1 Sa. 17:16); Elijah’s journey to Horeb (1 Ki. 19:8); Ezekiel’s lying on his right side (Ezk. 4:6); Jonah’s warning to Nineveh (Jon. 3:4); Christ’s stay in the wilderness prior to his temptation (Mt. 4:2), his appearances after his resurrection (Acts 1:3). On each occasion, a person, a family, or a community experiences a season through which a new development in God’s purpose for them is ushered in.

May we with hopefulness and expectancy, anticipate this 40-day season being used by God to consecrate our hearts and prepare our congregation for our next season of ministry together.

God loves His people and through Christ He has redeemed them to Himself, to be a witness and a foretaste to the Kingdom of God that Jesus has ushered in. His call and plans for New West have been

experienced during our past 58 years together, and now, giving thanks for His faithfulness to us in the past, we look forward to how He will lead us in the future. What plans does He have for us as we seek to faithfully live out the Gospel in our Burnaby / New West community? How is the Spirit equipping us and preparing us to participate with Him in what He is already doing in our congregation and in our community? We give all thanks to God, for the grace He has poured into our hearts through Christ, and we are encouraged by the ongoing work of God's Spirit in our midst. God's Spirit is on the move at New West!

Many seeds have been planted in my heart, and in this prayer-guide by the 40-day prayer guides that are published annually by *Waymakers* ministry (www.waymakers.org) called "Seek God for the City". I'm thankful for the way in which these prayer guides invite us to join in "kingdom" praying—confessing sin, and with boldness and expectancy, praying that "God's Kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven." I have borrowed numerous ideas and concepts from these excellent prayer guides and I note them when quoted.

May our season of prayer increasingly make our lives a place of fertile soil. The kind of soil that eagerly receives the Word of God planted in our hearts by the Spirit, so that together we can bear fruit, much fruit, abundant fruit, fruit that lasts.

Day 1 – Monday January 25

Catching the Wind of God's Spirit (Read Acts 15: 1-35)

"Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3: 6,8)



"It seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 15:28)

The Spirit is compared to a "wind" that blows wherever *it* pleases. As the Spirit moves wherever *He* pleases, the people of God seek to "catch" the wind of the Spirit so that in His power and with His guidance they can faithfully exalt Christ and continue His ministry in the world. A sailing image would fit here, I think. The Jerusalem believers in Acts 15 sought to "catch the wind" regarding issues facing Gentiles who had come to faith in Christ. These words from v. 28 are excerpted from a letter that the "council" at Jerusalem—a kind of first "synod" assembly—sent to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. What requirements would be made on Gentile believers as they came to faith in Christ? Following extended prayerful deliberation the Jerusalem council sensed agreement between each other and God's Spirit on what to require.

As we begin this season of prayer, may we together find agreement with each other and with God's Spirit on how He is calling us to continue our Spirit-led witness and Spirit-filled life together.

- Thank God for the channel of prayer that He gives us to continue pouring the new life of Christ into our hearts.
- Pray that the Spirit will continue to "blow" through our hearts and our community.
- Pray that a burden for prayer would rest on our congregation.
- Pray for God to fill us with His Spirit so that as we wait upon the Lord we will move forward in ways that "seem good to us and the Holy Spirit."

Day 2 – Tuesday January 26

A Call to Sincere Repentance (Read Ezekiel 36: 16-37)

“Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions.” (Ezekiel 36:17)

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord." (Isaiah 55:6-8)

Ezek. 36:21 calls our attention to the holy name of God. God has chosen to lay His name upon His people. For this reason, sin has no place in the people upon whom God rests his name. In Nehemiah 9 we read how the Israelites confessed their sin to God so that once again he might complete a work of renewal and new beginning for them. Through the prophet Ezekiel God extends a call to repentance for He wishes to cleanse His people from all unrighteousness. He seeks to begin a new work among them for the sake of His holy name.

- Pray that God will stir among us so that we will confess our sins and repent.
- Ask the Spirit to search your heart and reveal any areas of unconfessed sin. Acknowledge these to the Lord and thank Him for His forgiveness.
- Ask the Spirit to search the heart of our congregation and reveal any areas of communal, unconfessed sin so that together we can acknowledge these to the Lord.
- Pray for God to give us a burden to magnify the holy name of the Lord in how we live out our daily lives.

Day 3 – Wednesday January 27

Seeking God's forgiveness and joy to bring renewal

(Read Ezek. 36: 25-27 and Psalm 85: 1-7)

"I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you." (Ezek. 36:26)

"You forgave the iniquity of your people; You covered all their sin. Restore us, O God of our salvation... Will you not yourself revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?" (Psalm 85:2,4,6)

It is from God alone, through Christ's shed blood on the cross and the outpouring of His Spirit, that we receive and experience true forgiveness and joy. As God gathers us to Himself He longs to cleanse us and forgive. He longs to heal our brokenness and set us free from guilt and shame. He gives us a new heart, a new devotion to do His will, and a new Spirit-enabled strength to resist temptation and sin. God restores to us the joy of salvation. Through many epochs in the history of God's people they lost hold of this gift. They fell into disobedience and turned to idols. But God never gave up on them. Again and again he called them into union with Him so that He could revive (give life) them and fill them with His joy. "Come upon us, O God, revealing Your love and the joy You find in our eagerness to love You in return. Sustain us with increasing love for You, that we may live in joy!"

Comment [AEB1]: SGFTC07,p.9

- Pray for God to impart within you a deep sense of being forgiven and cleansed.
- Pray that increasingly His people at New West will be set free from guilt and shame.
- Pray that the joy of the Lord will be our strength (Neh. 8:10)
- Pray that as people who have been forgiven, we will experience and express the joy of the Lord. May our worship together be characterized by *joy!*
- Pray for revival, in our lives, in our families, in our church, and in our neighbourhood. Pray that God will pour out new life in our midst so that the Name of Jesus Christ may be held high.

Day 4 – Thursday January 28

Seeking God for the revelation of God's love (Read Psalm

85, John 14: 15-21)

"Show us your lovingkindness, O Lord, and grant us your salvation. I will hear what God the Lord will say; for He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones; but let them not turn back to folly." (Psalm 85:7-8)

"Because I live, you also will live. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:19,21)

Steve Hawthorne has written this prayer, "Free us from the folly of allowing ourselves to be only lightly inspired by sermons and rumours of Your reviving power. We have found ourselves again and again turning back to stubborn habits of heart. We have proved the folly of merely deciding to be different. Only you can change us. Reveal the love of Christ and the power of his salvation with magnificent intensity. We are listening for your life changing Word."²

The psalmist prays, "Show us your lovingkindness!" Jesus says that as we keep his commands and obey them, we show our love...and he promises us this glorious gift: "I will love him and *show myself* to him." Finally, it is only when we have been so deeply captivated by the unconditional love of God for us that we are free to love Him and then share that same love with others.

- Pray for a greater revelation of God's love in your life.
- Pray that God will send in our midst a deep assurance that we are loved by him.
- Think of loved ones and friends who need to be touched by Christ's love and pray that Jesus will show Himself to them.
- Pray that our lives together will be a fragrant offering of love. May God's love be sensed and experienced as we live our lives and as we worship and fellowship together.

Comment [AEB2]: SGFTC07p.10

Comment [AEB3]: SGFTC07p.10

Day 5 – Friday January 29

A planting unto the Lord (Read Ezek. 36: 33-36)

“They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.” (Isaiah 61:3)

“Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the Lord have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.” (Ezek 36:36)

Pastor Goheen has written that “the Old Testament people of God were called to be a light to the nations by living a distinctive life in the midst of the nations. They failed but the prophets promised that one day God would act again to gather Israel together again and restore them to their calling.”⁸ Isaiah declares that when we live out our calling to be a light to the nations we “display the splendour” of the Lord. Years ago Kim and I visited “Cathedral Grove” on Vancouver Island and we were awestruck by the majestic towering cedars. Isaiah says we are God’s “planting”. God takes people whose lives have been infected and bruised by sin—what Ezekiel says was “destroyed” and “desolate”—and he rebuilds them so that they will be a majestic planting of the Lord.

Comment [AEB4]: Sermon series: Understanding and Living Our identity

- Thank the Lord for calling us to be a light to the nations.
- Pray that our lives will together be a display of the righteousness of God.
- Pray that the people around us, in our families, in our neighbourhoods and in our broader community will know that it is the LORD who has rebuilt what was broken by sin. May our obedience to God’s will be a strong witness for the Kingdom of Christ.
- Pray for the Beehive Christian Preschool. Thank the Lord for the witness of this ministry to our neighbourhood. Pray that families in our community, especially ones that do not yet follow Christ, will be captivated by the love of Christ for their children and receive that same love in their own hearts.

Day 6 – Saturday January 30

Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Our

Congregation (Read 2 Cor. 5:1-10)

"We live by faith, not by sight.... we make it our goal to please him..." (2 Co 5:7,9)

In a recent book, George Bullard invites congregations to pursue their "full Kingdom potential". He asserts that this means more than congregations being "healthy" or "faithful" or "successful". He writes, "I am interested in your congregation being reimaged in the image of God. All too often we find congregations being reimaged in the image of the latest church growth, health, faithfulness, success, or transformation process of humankind. I am interested in helping your congregation understand the context in which you find yourself and then to fully, sacrificially, lovingly, and unconditionally minister among the people in that context."⁴

Comment [AEB5]: Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential p.10

Paul invites us to "live by faith and not by sight" and make it our goal to "please God."

During this season of prayerful discernment we are seeking to communally "live by faith." For me as a leader that means it's ok to be unsure of the plans that God has in store for New West. As we humbly, prayerfully, and sincerely, seek His face together, God will reveal them to us. God knows us—our passions, gifts, talents and resources—God knows our community—our neighbourhood, their longings, needs, and struggles—and as we communally take up the posture of listening and obeying, He will surely move us forward in pursuing our "full Kingdom potential" for the glory of Jesus Christ. Bullard writes that this focus comes when we make it our priority to follow the *leadership of God*. "Kingdom potentials *pull* congregations forward rather than *pushing* them forward."⁵

Today let's pray that we will respond to the pull of the Holy Spirit!

Day 8 – Monday February 1

Seeking the Protection of God as we pursue His full “Kingdom Potential” (Read Ephesians 6: 10-20)

"Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (Eph 6:11)

Paul encourages us to put on the full armour of God. Why? Because the life of the Kingdom is lived on a battlefield. That may sound exaggerated, but it's true! As God's people earnestly seek the face of the Lord desiring to be led by Him, the enemy will not take it in stride. We can be certain he will fight back. And like a preying lion, he will take whatever opportunity he can to pounce in order to discourage, or distract, or derail, or divide. As we earnestly pray for and live out the reign of God in our families, neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces, the enemy knows his "territory" is being threatened and he will fight back. I share this not to raise fear, but awareness. I remember a man's wise counsel in my life when I felt particularly low and beaten down, and he said, "Andrew, Paul says we must consider it pure joy when we suffer! God is using you!...and the enemy has taken notice." Let us pray for God's protection over us as we prayerfully discern God's ministry direction for our church.

- Put on the armour of God: "Belt" – pray that we will be grounded in the Word. "Breastplate" – pray that God will guard our heart so we can live with integrity and righteousness. "Shoes" – pray for willingness to share God's hope and healing in our daily lives. "Shield" – trust God in adversity, exercise Christ's authority to stop the devil's attacks of doubt, fear, cynicism, etc. "Helmet" – pray that our thoughts may be protected and that mind may be renewed by the Living Christ. "Sword" – pray that we will know the Word, love it, study it, speak it, and live it.
- In Rev. 12:11 we read that the saints overcame the adversary "because of the blood of the Lamb." Pray for the *power* and *protection* of Christ's blood over our congregation.

Day 9 – Tuesday February 2

Seeking the Kingdom of God (Read Mark 1: 14-20)

“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mk 1:15)

It has frequently been observed that “as we come to Him—seeking His face, He comes to us—bringing the Kingdom.”⁶ Through the living Christ the Kingdom has been ushered in and His people receive the reality of that Kingdom as they offer themselves to Christ and take up the posture of prayerful obedience. Although there are many events and circumstances in our world that suggest God’s gracious rule is absent, with the eyes of faith we can see how God continues to bring the blessings of the Kingdom into the lives of His people and the events of our world.

Comment [AEB6]: SGFTCO8 cover

Notice the response of Simon, Andrew, James and John to Jesus’ invitation to “Come!” “At once they left their nets,” and “without delay he called them, and they left...” *At once. Without delay.*

Each one left behind what they knew, what was secure, their livelihood, their family, and followed the One announcing that a new Kingdom was at hand. Does Jesus still call people to follow Him that way? If so, how is this call experienced in our own lives? How might he be calling us as a congregation to “come, follow me?”

- Pray that we will hear Jesus’ invitation in our own lives.
- Pray for God’s Spirit to give us an undivided heart. May we too respond “at once” and “without delay.”
- As we seek to follow Jesus, pray that God will use us to be His channels of Kingdom blessing for others.
- Pray that increasingly the Light of Christ will shine through our congregation.
- Pray that the neighbours of our church will see something of the Kingdom displayed in our communal life together.

Day 10 – Wednesday February 3

Praying that the Light of the Gospel will shine (Read

Isaiah 42:1-9)

"I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness." (Isaiah 42:6-7)

Steve Hawthorne has written, "The beginning of the hope of Christ's kingdom is the message of the kingdom of God. He is bringing the entire world under Christ's Lordship. He is thwarting evil, liberating people and establishing outposts of heaven's life." This is how the Light shines and brings hope. With the arrival of the Kingdom comes a call to live as Christ's servants, a power to overcome evil, and a glorious hope that believes so strongly in a future, all-encompassing shalom (well-being and wholeness) that people are compelled to pull that future into the present.

Let us pray that Christ's Light will shine in various aspects of our community.

- Pray that teachers and mentors will impart godly wisdom to form character in their students. Pray for the staff at John Knox Christian School, Carver Christian High, and Fraser Valley Christian High.
- Pray for those who home-school their children.
- Pray for educators in the public system that they may be given zeal for truth and virtue.
- Pray for people who serve in broadcast and print media. Pray for a growing emphasis in their work on that which carries virtue and conveys kingdom values.
- Pray that labourers will experience their work as doing unto Christ. May they experience safety, joy, friendship, and moral uprightness.
- Pray for those who face unemployment or find little satisfaction in their work.

Day 11 – Thursday February 4

Seeking the life of the Kingdom in marriages and families (Read Ephesians 5:22 – 6:4)

"Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure" (Hebrews 13:4a)

Increasingly in our culture, marriage and family are under attack. Not an intentional, explicit assault, but a subtle and subversive onslaught. Marital infidelity in the media is rampant. Sexual promiscuity is the norm. Young people are taught, mostly by example, to follow their hormones. Marriages increasingly are portrayed as arrangements of convenience rather than life-long commitments. In a culture guided largely by individual autonomy, personal choice, and a pleasure driven lifestyle, young people and parents face increasing pressure against remaining sexually pure and martially strong. The Scriptures recognize that marriage and family are essential in passing along the faith to the next generation and providing a place where selfless love can be modeled and experienced.

- Thank God for solid marriages that reflect His faithfulness and beauty.
- Pray for marriages that are strained to a breaking point.
- Pray for those couples who's marriages are failing. Pray that God will bring them both hope and help.
- Pray that he will heal broken hearts and restore intimacy.
- Pray that marriages and families will be refreshed by God and centred in Christ.⁷
- Pray that those dabbling with or addicted to pornography will repent and be set free.
- Pray that young people will abstain from intimate sexual expression outside of marriage.
- Pray that the marriage bed in families will be kept pure.

Comment [AEB7]: SGFTC08p.25

Day 12 – Friday February 5

Seeking the Kingdom for the poor (Read Psalm 113)

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." (Luke 6:20)

Luke's Gospel begins with a good news announcement to the poor (Luke 4:18), it pronounces blessing to the poor, and when one man comes to faith in Christ and promises to give half of his possessions to the poor, Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house!" (Luke 19:9). Commentators have noted a special privilege given for the poor in Luke. The poor are close to the heart of God.

Our cities are filled with people who are poor. In a city with abundant wealth, more than we care to admit live on the street and find themselves trapped in a lifestyle they cannot seem to find freedom from. It's easy for us to assign blame and impose our sense of priority and work ethic on them without fully understanding their circumstances and limitations.

Jesus modeled compassion for those who are poor and so must we.

- Pray for God to give us His eyes to see poor people of our cities with compassion.
- Pray that God will free us from what one person has called "runaway materialism."
- Pray for justice in our cities that those unjustly impoverished may be cared for.⁸
- Pray for the ministry of Nightshift in Surrey. Thank the Lord for the nightly ministry they provide to the poor.
- Pray for any shelters, street ministries, or food-banks that come to mind and pray that our hearts will be open to serving them.

Comment [AEB8]: SGFTC09p.33

Day 13 – Saturday February 6

Seeking God to grant repentance from our violent ways

"Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." (Jonah 3:8-9)

God is grieved by the violent ways of people. Media screens are filled with vengeance sold as entertainment. Children are exposed to violence in sport, video games, and toys. Gang violence streams through our streets. At times it feels as though there is an underlying rage that pervades our culture.

We must look into our own lives and homes and find where anger and violence are accepted or celebrated and repent. We must pray that our homes, our streets, and our cities will be places that are liberated from escalating cycles of rage and revenge.

When in the garden, Peter lashed out with violence and cut off the soldier's ear at Jesus' arrest. Jesus cried out, "No more of this!" At times even Christians lash out to others with words that are weapons.

- Pray that we will not become desensitized to the violence that we see around us.
- Discuss with your family where violence has made inroads in the home (TV, films, games).
- Pray that gangs in our city will be brought to justice.
- Pray that we will always strive to speak the truth in love to one another (Eph. 4:15).
- Pray that as far as it depends on us we will strive for peace in our relationships with others (Rom. 12:18)

Day 15 – Monday February 8

Shining good deeds for the praise of our Father (Read

Matthew 5: 13-16)

"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Mathew 5:16)

As Jesus gathers a community of followers to Himself, He renews them so that they can carry out their calling to be a light to the nations. We are formed by Christ to be a distinctive community that lives in contrast to its culture. Jesus pictures for us the character of this contrast community in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). There we learn the habits of this distinctive community; things like: how we must relate to fellow believers, our adversaries, and our enemies. We see that adultery is not simply a physical act, but an attitude of the heart. Generosity must not be motivated by human accolades or even by the personal satisfaction that we may feel, but by the sincere desire to please God and extend His compassion.

Pastor Goheen has written that "in this community, one might see the beginnings of the sort of world that God had originally intended in creation, and which he still intended to bring about through his saving world at the end of history... The words and actions, the very *lives* and communal life of Jesus' followers, are to say: 'We are the preview of a new day, a new world. Because one day the world really *will* live as one. Won't you come and join us?'"⁹

Comment [AEB9]: For the Sake of the World, 9.

- Pray that our lives may lead others to consider the question, "won't you come and join us?"
- Pray that increasingly our congregation will become a "display case" of God's grace, mercy, peace, truth, justice, and love.
- Take a few moments to consider ways that you individually or that we as a church community are living as a "distinct community". Thank the Lord for this.
- Think about one way in which you can grow in reflecting this contrast community in your own life and pray for God's Spirit to give you His enabling strength.

Day 16 – Tuesday February 9

Seeking to pass on the ways of the “contrast community” to the next generation (Read Deuteronomy 4:5-14)

"Teach them to your children and to their children after them." (Deut. 4:9)

We have already prayed for God’s protection and blessing on marriages and families. Indeed, families within the Christian community are the primary transmitters of habits and practices that ensure the next generation is raised up in the ways of the Kingdom. As the people of Israel were poised to enter the land of promise, Moses urges the people to once again commit themselves to a missional calling that takes seriously the task of instructing the next generation.

This means we must make choices so that the rhythms of our homes include time for passing the faith along. Family devotions, family worship, sharing faith stories with one another, are practices that teach the faith to the next generation. This can require difficult choices because these times will inevitably compete with other activities like sports, music, ballet, movies, and video games.

Let us remember the promises we made at the baptismal font for our children or for the children of our congregation!

- Pray for strength and encouragement for young parents who are finding the demands and pressures of raising young children burdensome.
- Praise God for the young families’ small group that Mike and Marnie Goheen are leading on Saturday mornings. Pray that this will be a rich setting for mutual encouragement and spiritual growth that will bring multiplied blessing to the next generation.
- Pray that time will set aside for family worship and devotion.
- Praise God for ministries in our church that seek to pass along the ways of the Kingdom to the next generation—Sunday school, Beehive, GEMS, Cadets, SD. And praise God for Christian schools!

Day 17 – Wednesday February 10

Seeking God to build us into a “house of prayer” (Read Isaiah 62:1-7)

““It is written,” [Jesus] said to them, “My house will be a house of prayer”” (Luke 19:46)

The picture of watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem is a picture not simply of those who scan the countryside for approaching enemies. Isaiah says these watchmen are not silent; they call on the Lord and take no rest in their task. They are watchmen that call forth God’s purposes for His holy city. Until! Until the Lord establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth! We have seen the coming of God’s Glory in Christ, but we eagerly wait for The Day when Christ is all in all!

In the New Testament, Paul urges us to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). Jesus describes the dwelling place of God, His Temple, which we find in 1 Cor. 3 is the community of God’s people; Jesus says that this temple is a “house of prayer.”

Let us increasingly pray with Kingdom vision, being strengthened to pray in alignment with the Father’s will so that we might see God do “greater things”. Jesus has promised that “I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” (John 14: 13-14)

- God help us to pray beyond our personal problems to lay hold of your promises for many others.
- Father give us strength and steady vision to stick to our post as a watching people. Let our prayers call forth your coming Glory!
- Thank the Lord for the prayer team, and the young adults who meet each Wed. evening to pray.
- Pray that God will continue to teach us to pray with zeal, steadfast determination, and to pray in patient pursuit of His promises.
- Pray for God to inspire new movements of prayer in our cities, congregations, and families.
- May we pray at all times and not lose heart. (Luke 18:1)¹⁰

Comment [AEB10]: SGFTC06 p. 14

Day 18 – Thursday February 11

Seeking God to renew our passion for worship (Read

Romans 11: 33-36)

"But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, "Let God be exalted!" (Psalm 70:4)

""Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments." (Revelation 19:1-2)

Steve Hawthorne writes this prayer: "We love Your salvation. You have saved our souls from destruction. You are saving our families from dissolution. You are lifting our minds from depression. You are preserving our society for a day of even greater salvation. We love the way You relentlessly save us. You deserve more than an occasional "Thank You" from a few. Fill our city with lasting gratitude toward You. We want You to be greatly known, undeniably revealed, vastly followed and lavishly honoured. And so we cry, "Let God be exalted in our lives! May Jesus Christ be exalted as the Saviour of the world!"¹¹

Comment [AEB11]: SGFTC06, p.16

Increasingly Lord make us passionate worshipers who desire that all would lift up Your Name, for You are worthy of all praise!

- Pray that God's Spirit will fill us in the same way that Jesus was filled with joy through the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:21).
- Pray that despair and depression will be overcome with a renewed joy that filled Jesus.
- Pray that God will be acknowledged and honoured by government and marketplace leaders.¹²
- Praise God for the many musical talents and gifts that He has given to our congregation. Praise God for the worship planners who strive to plan services that enable us to join our gifts and voices in praise to God.
- Pray that matters of worship styles and form will not become points of division for us.
- As God brings to us greater ethnic diversity in our community, pray that our worship will faithfully reflect and be nourished by this diversity.

Comment [AEB12]: SGFTC06, P.16

Day 19 – Friday February 12

Seeking God to display His mercy (Read Psalm 103: 1-13)

"The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." (Ps 103:8)

"Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people... "(Matthew 15:32)

The Olympics have begun in Vancouver! The nations have arrived today at our doorstep! What a wonderful opportunity to reveal to our guests the heart of the Father.

When He walked among us on the earth, Jesus revealed to us the heart of His Father. We could say many things about the Father's heart, but if we had to choose one quality, one characteristic that we saw most strikingly in the life of Jesus, I think it would be *compassion*. Compassion that flowed from the loyal-love and faithfulness that God showed in the covenant relationship He established with us. As Christ walked with widows, tax-collectors, prostitutes, the impoverished, and the outcast, God's boundless compassion and tender mercy flowed through Him. In His earthly ministry we saw the Father's heart.

The contrast community that Jesus has gathered to Himself is called to display the Father's heart to the world. Having received such boundless mercy ourselves, may we show His mercy in our world, and let us pray that God's mercy will touch more hearts.

- As the Olympics officially begin, pray that the Church will rise up to show the mercy and love of God. Pray for "More Than Gold"
- Lord, your boundless compassion is still unknown by so many in our communities, and our world. Use me, use us, this day, this week, this Olympic season, to share Your mercy.
- Pray that we will be an exhibit of God's kindness.

Day 20 – Saturday February 13

Moving out with the authority of Christ to overcome darkness (Read Psalm 110: 1-3 and Luke 10: 1, 17-21)

"He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you." (Luke 10:18-19)

The church as contrast community is engaged in a battle. It's a battle that has been won!...but a battle that is still ongoing. Towards the end of the second world war, a battle took place on the coast of Normandy, France. The day of that battle came to be known as "D-Day." A decisive victory was won by the Allies that day, a victory that indicated the war had already been won. However, the battle was still begin waged and did not finish until "VE-Day" (Victory in Europe Day, May 8, 1945). In the timeline of the Kingdom, we live between "D-Day" and "VE-Day"; Christ has won the victory over evil on the cross, but until He returns we still wage war until that victory is all in all. Let us pray this prayer together:

"Mighty Messiah, Your subjugation of evil began long ago. You died to break its grip and ascended to liberate its captives. You are crowned with power over every enemy. Now extend the sceptre of Your authority over our community. Break demonic powers which keep people trapped in their sin. Kick down the doors of spiritual strongholds. Restrain Your enemies so that prisoners of war will hear Your Word and rise to follow You. Release them to become a generation of newly-redeemed worshipers. We want to see them rising suddenly, glistening in fresh holiness, like dew in the light of dawn."¹³

Comment [AEB13]: SGFTC 06, p26

- Pray for Christ to free people who are oppressed by demonic powers in our city.
- Pray that as Christ's followers we will find greater victory and freedom in Christ in our own lives.
- Pray for God's Name to be glorified through the defeat of demonic powers at work in our neighbourhoods and our city.

Day 21 – Sunday February 14

You are God and there is no other!

You, the Lord, alone have declared
What is to come from the distant past.
There is no God apart from You,
A righteous God and a Saviour;
There is none besides You.
You are God, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:21–22)

You are my hope, O Lord God;
You are my trust from my youth.
As for me, I will always have hope;
I will praise You more and more. (Psalm 71:5, 14)

Let us worship the Lord this day! Let the redeemed of the Lord be glad!
Jesus is on the Throne. We belong to Him!

As you continue to go through this prayer guide, are there repeated thoughts, pictures, verses, songs, stories, questions that come to mind? Is there a hopefulness being raised in you, or peace, joy! Is the Lord impressing something on your heart? Journal them here or in some other place.

Day 22 – Monday February 15

Called to be a Gathering Community (Read John 4: 34-42)

"Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." (John 4:35)

"He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Lk 10:2)

I didn't grow up on a farm. In fact I was probably one of those children who up until late in my childhood did not know that the chicken on my plate came from chickens on the farm. But if you're a farmer, or have ever lived on one, you know that when harvest time comes, all the routines of the day are put on hold. When the harvest needs to be brought in there's no time for non-essentials. It's long days, singleness of purpose, and of course, rejoicing that the harvest has come!

Jesus calls us to look at the fields! They are ripe for the harvest. With singleness of purpose we sense that our priorities must be submitted to the priority of the harvest. Jesus calls us to gather in! Gather in the people whose hearts God has touched and whose lives he wishes to transform for His Kingdom Glory.

Pastor Goheen has written that, Jesus invites His community "to be part of his eschatological (last days) gathering that is to be done through intentional acts of words and deeds backed by prayer."¹⁴ It's harvest time!

Comment [AEB14]: Preaching Series outline

- Pray that the Lord of the harvest will raise up workers to work in His fields that are ripe.
- Pray that increasingly our priorities will submit to the priority of harvest time.
- Pray that with joy we will see more come to Christ, more lives transformed, more hearts turned from darkness to Light!

Day 23 – Tuesday February 16

Lord, Let Your Light Shine upon the Nations (Read Isaiah 49: 1-6)

"I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."" (Is 49:6)

Many people from nations around the world are walking through our city. Many of course have come to our cosmopolitan city to make their home, but particularly at this unique time in our city's history, we have the nations of the world here to watch or participate in the Olympics. The movement of the nations to a place of single-minded purpose that the Olympics represent, is a movement that we also find in the Bible. "In the last days," writes Isaiah, "the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and *all nations* will stream to it." (Isaiah 2:2). A day has come and is coming when the Temple of the Lord, that is the Living Christ and all whom he has gathered to Himself, will be established as a place where all the nations of the world can stream to and find healing and hope. May we experience the "streaming" of the nations to Christ more intensely in our day!

- Pray that believers' eyes would be open to the harvest around them.
- Pray that the Father of all people will call his diverse family together under one Head, Christ our Living Lord!
- Thank the Lord for the increasing ethnic diversity present in our own congregation and pray that together we will more and more reflect the ethnic diversity of our community.
- Pray for churches and training programs that prepare people for effective ministry.
- Pray for God to launch labourers into harvest fields of business, neighbourhoods, academic institutions, healthcare, politics, sports, and other nations.

Day 24 – Wednesday February 17

May the Name of the Lord be Honoured among all peoples

"My name will be great among the nations, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to my name, because my name will be great among the nations," says the Lord Almighty." (Malachi 1:11)

"“This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,” (Mt 6:9)

The words we just read from Malachi come in the middle of a strong admonition to the people of God. God chastises them for “lighting useless fires” on His altar. He refuses to accept empty sacrifices—sacrifices that come from divided hearts and disobedient lives. Remarkably in the middle of these strong words of admonition to an idolatrous people, God declares that His name will be great among the nations. God’s glory and renowned will not be contained by a wayward or disobedient people.

What was true for wayward Israel is also true for the wayward in our day, whether in Canada, or U.S.A., or Netherlands, or Korea, or China. Sinfulness and idolatry will not have the last word. God will cause His name to be great among the nations.

- Praise the Lord for the remarkable growth of the church in what was once predominately pagan African (In 1900, 9 million Christians, in 2000, 380 million!)¹⁵. Indeed the Name of the Lord is being exalted in our day.
- Pray that believers would be full of desire for God’s name to be known and honoured.
- Pray that stale stereotypes and misconceptions about God would be shattered.
- Pray that the story of what God has done and is doing will establish His reputation in our community.

Comment [AEB15]: 2006 Pew Forum on Religion and Public life study

Day 25 – Thursday February 18

Seeking God to be revealed by answered prayer (Read

Psalm 65:1-8)

"O you who hear prayer, to you all men will come." (Psalm 65:2)

"When he came near ... the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:" (Luke 19:37)

The psalmist reminds us that God alone is the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. And this same God *hears* prayer. He hears prayer not because he is required to or because we deserve to be heard. No, even though we were overwhelmed by sin, He forgave our transgressions. Out of His gracious desire to see His temple filled with the ones He made and loves, our God of hope *hears* prayer. And when communities see the miracles that God does as he responds to the prayers of His people they will joyfully praise God with a loud voice!

- Pray that answered prayers would become the talk of our congregation, and our community; a talk that would build faith and give glory to God.
- Pray that God will encourage those who doubt with tangible signs of His goodness through prayer.
- Pray that we might bear witness to miracles so abundantly that many would be moved to praise God with overflowing joy.
- May we believe so strongly in the power and ability of God that we will pray even with faith the size of a mustard seed believing that God can move mountains.
- Pray that our "Fresh Encounters" prayer services will encourage us to seek the Lord together simply because He is worthy to be sought.
- Pray that God will initiate a men's prayer group in our congregation.
- Pray that God will bring Christian leaders and congregations from various traditions and denominations together to pray.

Day 26 – Friday February 19

Seeking the Blessing of the Lord Upon Leaders (Read

Psalm 138:1-5; Romans 13: 1, 6-7)

Lord we pray, "Reveal Yourself to kings, rulers and governors of the earth. Disclose Your supremacy and mastery in all things. Grant our leaders opportunity to hear Your word clearly, as if it were decreed directly from Your mouth. Instruct them in the wisdom of Your ways. Move them to honour You with public praise and to allow Your people to celebrate you with song."¹⁶

Comment [AEB16]: SGFTC 06p40

During my ministry in Hamilton, ON, I came to know a pastor in my city who later moved to begin a ministry with the National House of Prayer in Ottawa. NHOP (www.nhop.ca), began in 2004 and is a ministry committed to prayer and especially to teaching and mobilizing the church in Canada to pray for our federal government. When the house is in session, intercessors, and visitors from NHOP are always praying in the gallery. I once heard someone share that in the year 2000 there were about 30 MPs of all parties who would have clearly identified themselves as "committed Christians." Today that has tripled! This person said there are now at least 90, perhaps 100 who call themselves "committed Christians." Moreover, the National Prayer breakfast last May had 900 in attendance, the largest ever, and is now considered a "can't miss" event on the Hill. Both Michael Ignatieff and Jack Layton read from Scripture. I believe prayers are being answered! The desire at the NHOP is to mobilize informed, focused, and sustained prayer for Canada and its leaders.

Let us remember to pray for those who lead in government.

- Pray for the mayor of your town or city. Pray for local politicians.
- Pray for Gordon Campbell and the MPP of your region.
- Pray for Stephen Harper, your local MP and others involved in governing our country. Pray for wisdom in areas of economic recovery, environmental issues, social justice, and foreign affairs.

Day 27 – Saturday February 20

May our cities be stirred by the Living God (Read Zechariah 8:20-23)

"When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"" (Mt 21:10)

The prophet Zechariah saw a day when the city of Jerusalem would attract many people from many nations for there was to be a celebrative joy that would burst forth from that city. And at various times in its history Zechariah's vision came to pass, even if only in an incomplete, partial way. With the advent of Christ, it is no longer the physical city of Jerusalem that is "the Holy City" that place where the Most High dwells. In Christ the dwelling place of God is with Christ and His redeemed humanity. And as they are sent forth from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth, their presence in the world serves to declare that the whole earth belongs to the Lord. The "holy city" of God is a renewed and redeemed earth. The picture of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven in Rev. 21, serves as the climatic event that indeed the whole earth is the Lord's.

Until that day we pray that increasingly those in our cities, as in Zechariah's vision, would come together to pray to the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty.

- Pray that our city will be stirred with curiosity about Jesus.
- Pray for movements of people coming together to seek Christ would grow in our city.
- Pray for those you know who are sceptical, doubting, or who seem far from God, pray that their hearts will turn to Him.

Day 28 – Sunday February 21

Let us rejoice and praise the Lord together this day!

Praise the Lord!
Praise God in His sanctuary;
Praise Him in His mighty heavens.
Praise Him for His mighty acts;
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness.
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet;
Praise Him with the harp and lyre.
Praise Him with the timbrel and dancing;
Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes.
Praise Him on the sounding cymbals;
Praise Him on the resounding cymbals.
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord! (Psalm 150:1–6)

The Lord shall reign for ever and ever. (Exodus 15:18)

The day of the Lord is a time for worship, for celebration, for fellowship, and for rest. Find time to rest today. Go for a walk, find a quiet place and ask the Lord to impress on your heart a deeper sense of His presence and leadership in your life. As you continue through this prayer guide what thoughts or impressions are being stirred? Journal them here or in some other place.

Day 29 – Monday February 22

A Praying Community (Read Luke 11: 1-13)

In the Gospel of Luke we see that the Kingdom of God comes as the Holy Spirit works in response to prayer. The opening scene of the book tells of a man, Zechariah, together with those who were assembled at the temple, and, as was their custom, they had come to pray (burning incense is “enacted” prayer). And as the people prayed, the Spirit moved and gave a vision to Zechariah concerning the birth of a son, John, to barren Elizabeth. The closing scene of the book takes us back to the temple, with followers of Jesus gathered together in great joy, worshipping, praying, staying continuously at the temple, seeking the Lord. The book of Acts continues the story and we know that into these days at the temple, days of prayerful expectancy, the Holy Spirit came in power upon the church at Pentecost. With these books ends Luke draws our attention to a theme that runs right through his Gospel, the Kingdom of God comes as the Spirit works through prayer.¹⁷

Alvin VanderGriend has written that “God has sovereignly determined to move in response to our prayers. God rules the world through the prayers of his people.”¹⁸ Furthermore, Andrew Murray, a well known South African Reformed theologian of the late 19th century wrote, “that Christ actually meant prayer to be the great power by which his church should do its work, and that the neglect of prayer is the great reason the church has not greater power over the masses in Christian and heathen countries.”¹⁹ Christ repeatedly took time to pray. The will of the Father that Christ gave his whole life to carrying out, was made possible through His communion with the Spirit in prayer.

Comment [AEB17]: Sourcebook p. 16

Comment [AEB18]: Murray, The Ministry of Intercession.

- Pray that God will continue cultivating in the hearts of our congregation, and the churches in our city, a burden for prayer.
- One person has written, “Persistent prayer leads to creative ways to care, which open ways to share God’s love.”²⁰ May God build into our congregation a posture of “persistent prayer.”

Comment [AEB19]: SGFTC07p.56

Day 30 – Tuesday February 23

Prayer Mission with God (Acts 4:13-31)

"When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God." (Acts 4:24)

When Peter and John were confronted by the Sanhedrin and told not to speak or teach at all in the name Jesus, when they received further threats and news of potential punishment, notice how the church responded.

They didn't lobby their local government, they didn't wave placards on the street corners on account of their rights being denied, they didn't write letters to the editor, or contact the local news channel, nor did they retreat in fear; they went to a prayer meeting and "raised their voices in prayer to God."

And they prayed, "Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness." Their prayers focussed upon God's Mission and their heart cry was for God to continue to empower them for His work. In the face of growing and intense opposition to the Gospel, in the face of very real threats, perhaps on themselves or their families or their businesses, they prayed for an even greater boldness and power in carrying out God's Mission. And of course the Lord answered their prayer. Luke writes that the Lord filled them with His Spirit and gave them great boldness. Luke adds, "and the place where they were meeting was shaken." A curious detail? Not likely. Read Exod. 19:18, Psalm 114:7, and Isaiah 6:4. Luke intends to have us know that in this particular prayer meeting the very Presence of Almighty God—once at Sinai, and later in redemptive history at the Temple—is in the midst of this small group of praying believers.

- Pray that the Lord will fill us a great boldness for accomplishing His Mission.
- Ask God to convict us to pray beyond the boundaries of our homes and lives, and pray our way into the lives of people, and institutions, and communities He is working to redeem. When we pray this way we begin to see how God uses prayer to invite us to join Him as He does His work.

Day 31 – Wednesday February 24

“...only to those who pray continuously...”

One of the confessions in the Reformed tradition, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, contains a section that explains the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer. It begins that section by asking this important question:

Why do Christians need to pray?

And the answer it gives, quite simply and profoundly, is this:

*Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly, asking God for these gifts and thanking him for them.*²¹

Comment [AEB20]: Lord’s Day 45

Only to those. Only? Yes, only. Does the confession say it too strongly? Is that really the Biblical teaching? Yes it is. Even Jesus knew this to be true. Each of the Gospel writers show us that Jesus himself depended completely upon the encouraging grace of His Father and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit to carry out his calling. And the primary channel that provided this encouragement and empowerment was prayer. Jesus prayed. And prayed. Before he chose the twelve, he spent the night in prayer. Before traveling throughout the surrounding village of Galilee to preach and heal, he prayed. Before his baptism he prayed. Jesus frequently rose early in the morning and found a solitary place to pray. If Jesus had to pray....surely must we.

- Pray that increasingly we will take time alone with our Father to pray.
- If a regular time for personal devotions is not part of your regular routine ask the Lord to help you begin tomorrow. You can start with 10 min. a day.
- As we ask God for His gifts of grace and the Holy Spirit, thank Him for graciously providing them to us. He promises that he will! Believe His promises!

Day 32 – Thursday February 25

Digging Up By Prayer (Read Psalm 116: 12-19)

In John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he writes, "we see that to us nothing is promised to be expected from the Lord, which we are not also bidden to ask of him in prayers. So true is it that we dig up by prayer the treasures that were pointed out by the Lord's gospel, and which our faith has gazed upon." He goes on to write, "words fail to explain how necessary prayer is."²²

Comment [AEB21]: Institutes of the Christian Religion. Bk.III,XX,ii

It is as though the treasures of the Kingdom are waiting to be opened up for God's people and the world, but God chooses to unearth those treasures with prayer. Pastor Goheen notes that in this sense prayer is like a *shovel*. "All of the facets and benefits of Christ's salvation are given to us—individually and communally—by the work of the Spirit as we dig them up in response to prayer."²³

Comment [AEB22]: For the Sake of the World p. 238

In the Psalm we read that four times the psalmist says he "will call upon the Name of the Lord". The psalmist acknowledges that from God alone comes mercy, salvation, rest, life itself, and each of these "treasures" are opened up as he "calls upon the Lord."

Consider these treasures: marital fidelity, the lifting of depression, companionship, children who follow the Lord, freedom from addiction, meaningful employment, unbelievers turning to Christ in faith, Christians "on-fire" with the Holy Spirit, a community where the Gospel is faithfully proclaimed AND lived, of course the list is endless. We must take hold of our shovels! Make no mistake. This is not a take hold of God's blessings in a "health and wealth", "prosperity gospel" kind of way, absolutely not. This is simply digging up the treasures of Christ's own words to His people: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

- Pray that God will sharpen our shovels and fill our hands with tough calluses because we use them so often!

Day 33 – Friday February 26

The Behind-the-Scenes Weapon (Read Exodus 17:8-16)

In his forthcoming book, Pastor Goheen, identifies a second image (recall the “shovel” image of yesterday) to help us grasp the importance of prayer. It’s the image of *strategic position* and he borrows it from Andrew Murray. Without question, an important motif in the Bible that describes the context in which God’s purposes in our world are carried out, is the motif of *battlefield*. Even the creation account of Gen. 1 alludes to the good order of God overcoming—doing battle against—the chaotic order of darkness.

Prayer is a channel through which God pours out strength and power so that His people can secure a “strategic position” in the ongoing battle of Light over darkness.

In today’s reading God’s people are attacked by an enemy nation, the Amalekites. Some are dispatched to engage the battle with physical weapons. But the narrator draws our attention to a “behind the scenes” weapon. It’s clear that victory on the ground does not depend solely on the skill and strength of the soldiers in combat. Hands raised in prayer are an essential part of the battle. Victory on the ground is contingent on the power of God that hands lifted in prayer secures.

In the large church building in London that Charles Spurgeon preached in, was located, what he called, a “boiler room”. This wasn’t a room with a physical boiler that we might expect. Located under the large sanctuary, it was a basement room that would be filled each Sunday morning with upwards of a 100 people in prayer; fervently calling upon the Lord during the morning worship service while Spurgeon was preaching to thousands upstairs. As the power of the Gospel was being announced—as the sword of the Spirit (Eph.6:17) was wielded in battle—the upraised hands of the boiler-room “pray-ers” called on the Host of Heaven to secure victory.

This is the life of prayer in the Kingdom.

- Pray for a white-hot boiler room!

Day 34 – Saturday February 27

“Boiler Room” praying (Read Acts 12: 1-9)

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him." (Acts 12:5)

One of Jesus' closest disciples, a key leader this growing movement of Christ-followers, was in prison. Luke would have us imagine that in this battle the forces of darkness had seemingly secured a great victory over Peter—the Rock—now in prison, helplessly chained and surrounded with guards and sentries. James had just been put to death with the sword, and it seemed Peter was next. With the ring-leader snuffed out, the movement would surely die.

Except for one thing. One weapon that no earthly power can extinguish. The boiler-room was in full flame; Luke's words, "the church was earnestly praying to God." Chains were broken, guards deluded, prison doors flung open, the Spirit was on the move. Dumbfounded, Rhoda thought she was seeing ghosts! No, she was seeing the Holy Ghost moving in response to the prayers of a church on fire!

In his excellent book, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala tells about the beginnings of his congregation. Humanly speaking the light in that small gathering of believers had almost gone out. But the Lord ignited the heart of their new pastor, Jim Cymbala, with a word of the Lord he received during a season of ministry despair. This is the announcement that he shared with the small group of believers one day in the heart of Brooklyn, NY. "It's not fancy or profound or spectacular. But I want to say to you today with all the seriousness I can muster: *From this day on, the prayer meeting will be the barometer of our church. What happens on Tuesday night will be the gauge by which we will judge success or failure because that will be the measure by which God blesses us.*" Later in the same book he puts it this way, "no matter what I preach or what we claim to believe in our heads, the future will depend upon our times of prayer. This is the engine that will drive the church."

Pray God will fire up all the burners of His people.

Day 35 – Sunday February 28

All nations, tribes, peoples and languages before the Throne

A great multitude, which no one could number, from all nations and tribes and peoples and languages will stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes with palm branches in their hands, and will cry out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Revelation 7:9–10)

Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! (Luke 19:38)

Today, many of us will watch the Olympic closing ceremony. Perhaps it will be with wonder and amazement. No doubt music, performers, fireworks will try to capture the attention of the world to celebrate the spirit of sport. And of course, the nations of the earth will be in attendance.

John draws our attention to another all nations gathering. If the closing ceremony were a grain of sand, this gathering would be a beach! Multitudes. That is the Church of Jesus Christ! No one could number.

The nations are not simply at our doorstep for two weeks, we live amongst the nations. Our neighbours are Asian, Indo-Asian, African, Native Canadian, and East European. And we are being blessed by God to see that diversity in our own church family.

- Pray that increasingly our church will become a foretaste of that great vision of John; tribes, peoples and languages from all nations, gathered before the Living Christ declaring, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!”
- Pray for wisdom for our ministry staff and leadership as we seek to discern how God may be moving us towards greater ethnic diversity in our congregation.
- Pray that we will be a people of hospitality and embrace.

Day 36 – Monday March 1

New Creation Community (Read Romans 6:1-13)

Pastor Goheen has written, “The death of Jesus brings an ‘end’ to the old age and the resurrection of Jesus inaugurates the age to come, the new creation, the kingdom. As the people of God participate in Jesus’ death and resurrection through faith and baptism they begin to enjoy the powers of the coming age. They are dead to the old age and its sin, and alive to the age to come in Christ.”

This is the reality that we find ourselves in as believers. A new age opens up, a new creation expands, and the Kingdom comes.

In this age the power of God for salvation has been made known. Jesus came to set the captives free, he came to heal, to deliver, to renew, to strengthen, to raise up. There is real hope and power for the drug addict, for the alcoholic, for the broken heart, for the wounded spirit, for the fracturing marriage, for the depressed, the impoverished, the oppressed, the demonized, the despairing. Real hope. Real power. It’s the power of the resurrected Christ given to all who have been made alive to God.

The psalmist writes, “When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.” (Psalm 126:1-3)

The new creation hope and power of God is not a dream. It is the reality that we find ourselves in as believers.

- Pray that together with one heart and one voice we will declare among the nations “The Lord has done great things for them! For us! And we are filled with joy!”
- May the joy of the Lord be our strength!

Day 37 – Tuesday March 2

Prayers for the Renewing Effects of God to be experienced in our lives

For the next few days we are invited to pray the very words of Scripture.²⁴ Words of renewal, of commitment, of refreshing. The Bible is our very best prayer-book.

If I abide in You, and Your words abide in me, I can ask whatever I wish, and it will be done for me. As I ask in Your name, I will receive, that my joy may be full. (John 15:7, 16:24)

As I walk in the Spirit, I will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh; for they oppose each other, so that I may not do the things that I wish. But if I am led by the Spirit, I am not under the law. (Galatians 5:16–18)

May I not be conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of my mind, that I may prove that the will of God is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

May the God of my Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give me a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the full knowledge of Him, and may the eyes of my heart be enlightened, in order that I may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the incomparable greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17–19)

Like Job, may I be blameless and upright, fearing God and shunning evil. (Job 1:1)

May I be careful to lead a blameless life. May I walk in the integrity of my heart in the midst of my house. May I set no wicked thing before my eyes. I hate the work of those who fall away; May it not cling to me. (Psalm 101:2–3)

Day 38 – Wednesday March 3

Prayers for the Renewing Effects of God to be experienced in our lives

Again today, we are invited to pray the very words of Scripture. Words of renewal, of commitment, of refreshing. The Bible is our very best prayer-book.

I am the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its flavour, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. I am the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. In the same way, I must let my light shine before men, that they may see my good deeds and praise my Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13–16)

I want to walk in a way that is worthy of the calling with which I was called, with all humility and meekness and patience. (Ephesians 4:1–2)

May I fear God and keep His commandments, for this applies to every person. (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

Give me understanding, and I will keep Your law and observe it with all my heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commands, for there I find delight. Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things, and revive me in Your way. (Psalm 119:34–37)

I will not let sin reign in my mortal body that I should obey its lusts. Nor will I present the members of my body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but I will present myself to God as one who is alive from the dead and my members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Romans 6:12–13)

Day 39 – Thursday March 4

Prayers for the Renewing Effects of God to be experienced in our lives

Again today, we are invited to pray the very words of Scripture. Words of renewal, of commitment, of refreshing. The Bible is our very best prayer-book.

Examine me, O Lord, and try me;
Purify my mind and my heart;
For Your lovingkindness is ever before me,
And I have walked in Your truth. (Psalm 26:2–3)

May I sow righteousness,
Reap the fruit of unfailing love,
And break up my fallow ground;
For it is time to seek the Lord,
Until He comes and rains righteousness on me. (Hosea 10:12)

With regard to my former way of life, may I put off my old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of my mind; and may I put on the new self, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness. (Ephesians 4:22–24)

May I be diligent to add to my faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are mine in increasing measure, they will keep me from being barren and unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5–8)

Day 40 – Friday March 5

Riding the Wave (Read Ezekiel 47:1-12)

Forty days ago we began with a sailing image, we conclude with a surfing one.

Ezekiel pictures for us the life-giving power of God as a flow of water that begins with a trickle and grows into a mighty river. Surfers need to have an eye for waves that start with gentle rolls but climax in pounding curls. I know I'm stretching things a bit to get a surfing image from Ezek. 47, but stick with me.

Surfers need to develop a carefully trained eye, and finely honed skills for balancing and manoeuvring, but none of these skills amount to anything without a wave. The wave makes it all happen.

But the surfer of course, must ride the wave. There's some risk involved. The wave can curl unexpectedly. You might lose your balance, even if just for a second. And surely getting back up on the board can be a little intimidating.

Surfing is a careful dance between the surfer and the wave.

The life giving Spirit of God, says Jesus (John 7:38), wells up within us and overflows. Indeed Ezekiel's river runs right through the hearts and lives of God's people and into the world.

May it be our sincere prayer and desire to live as a community of Christ that daily depends on the wave of the Holy Spirit. May this "season of prayerful discernment" become an unending habit for us as a congregation. A habit that strives to move in the power of the Spirit so that together in our time and place we may be about God's Mission to declare with word and deed that our world belongs to God. To Jesus Christ be all glory, honour, and praise!

Surf's up!



Endnotes

¹ *Seek God for the City (hereafter SGFTC) 2007.* p.7.

² SGFTC 2007. p.10.

³ Goheen, Michael, Sermon series outline for a preaching series at New West CRC: “Understanding and Living Our identity” *unpublished*.

⁴ Bullard, George Jr. *Pursuing the Full Kingdom Potential of Your Congregation* (Lake Hickory Resources, 2005) 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ SGFTC 2008 caption on cover.

⁷ These five prayer points come from SGFTC 2008 p.25.

⁸ These three prayer points come from SGFTC 2009 p.33

⁹ Goheen, Michael, *For the Sake of the World*, forthcoming book. p. 9.

¹⁰ These six prayer points come from SGFTC 2006 p. 14

¹¹ SGFTC 2006 p. 14

¹² These three prayer points come from SGFTC 2006. p.16

¹³ SGFTC 2006. p26

¹⁴ Goheen, Michael, Sermon series outline for a preaching series at New West CRC: “Understanding and Living Our identity” *unpublished*.

¹⁵ 2006 Pew Forum on Religion and Public life study

¹⁶ SGFTC 2006 p.40

¹⁷ Goheen, Michael, Sermon series outline for a preaching series at New West CRC: “Understanding and Living Our identity” *unpublished*.

¹⁸ Vandergrriend, Alvin. *The Praying Church Sourcebook* (CRC Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 1997) 16.

¹⁹ Murray, Andrew. *The Ministry of Intercession*. Cf. *The Praying Church Sourcebook*. p.17

²⁰ SGFTC 2007 p.56

²¹ Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 45

²² Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Bk.III,XX,ii

²³ Goheen, Michael, *For the Sake of the World*, forthcoming book. p. 238

²⁴ These verses adapted for prayer come from an excellent book to help you pray through Scripture, by Ken Boa (1997, c1993). *Handbook to prayer : Praying scripture back to God*. Atlanta: Trinity House.