



How to Build a Praying Church

CHURCH PATHWAYS

How to Build a Praying Church

The scriptures are brimming with prayer, and church history is both saturated with and shaped by it. Still, many pastors and leaders find it challenging to know where to begin building and sustaining a culture of prayer. We've witnessed God's mighty hand moving powerfully among churches across the United States as they begin to slowly and intentionally build toward nonstop prayer. At 24-7 Prayer, our desire is to offer onramps for churches at every stage and in every context to take the next step in their journey.

Across denominations and cultures, we've found the following steps fruitful in the slow, steady work of prayer, mission, and justice. Below, you'll find a few suggestions, steps, resources, and inspiration for every stage of engagement with 24-7 Prayer.

Whether you consider prayer a central part of your current ministry, or aspire to integrate it more fully into the life of your church, 24-7 Prayer USA is honored to walk with you on the journey.

Revival is an unshakable invitation to wake up again to the beauty of Jesus. We can't force it, but we can ache for it, pray for it, and believe for it to sweep across our universities and colleges so that students taste the nearness of God in a way that changes them forever. And when they do, they carry that fire into their generation, telling the story of Jesus with both words and lives set ablaze.

Inspiration + Relationship

The 24-7 Prayer movement is founded on the belief that we move best at the speed of relationship, first and foremost our relationship with God. A praying church is ultimately *led by the Spirit* into a communal life of prayer. The prayer life of an individual, group, and church community starts and ends in *friendship with God*. Prayer as simply a means to an end will not transform us, but prayer born out of *intimacy with Jesus* will bear much fruit within our churches and in our communities.

“If we were really convinced that prayer changes the way God acts, and that God does bring about remarkable changes in the world in response to prayer ... then we would pray much more than we do. If we pray little it is probably because we do not really believe that prayer accomplishes much at all.”

— Wayne Grudem

We’ve found the best place to begin is inspiration. Are there churches in your community or beyond who are praying like you hope your church someday will? Reach out and engage with their leaders. If you’re not sure where to start or don’t know any churches like this, connect with other churches in the 24-7 Prayer movement or ask your regional leadership team to introduce you. We also recommend studying churches and people from history and scripture who have led communities of prayer you want to model your church after.

Resources we recommend:

[*Praying like Monks, Living like Fools*](#) by Tyler Staton

[*Red Moon Rising*](#) by Pete Greig

[*Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*](#) by Jim Cymbala

Conviction + Leadership

Clarifying the role of prayer within the life and culture of your church—both as it is right now and as you envision it will become—is essential. As you begin the journey toward building a praying church, the temptation can be to add prayer as another program, ministry, or team within the existing structure of your church. However, cultures of prayer thrive in churches where prayer is not merely “one of the things we do,” but is instead an essential element of everything we do. Conviction in your identity as “a house of prayer for all nations” will ensure this growing prayer culture isn’t a momentary fixation, but a lasting and sustainable attribute your church embodies.

You may have heard the expression, as the leaders go, so goes the church —this wisdom holds true for the pastor trying to lead a praying church. The cultivation of a vibrant personal prayer life is critical as you invite others to lean into prayer! Once your own prayer life is established and healthy, start with your closest circle of influence, such as your staff or small group, to begin to lead others to do the same.

As you begin to explore your own prayer life and how it relates to your church’s prayer culture, here are some helpful questions for reflection and journaling. We recommend answering them on your own and then reflecting and sharing your thoughts with a mentor or spiritual director:

What is God inviting me to do as a leader?

What is one thing God is asking me to stop doing as a leader?

What is one prayer or practice God is prompting me to explore?

If everyone at my church prayed like I do, would we be a praying church?

If yes, how can I empower others to do the same?

If not, what could I start to incorporate into my own prayer life to move in that direction?

Conviction + Leadership

What would my church look like if we were “a house of prayer for all nations?”

What would stay the same?

What would change?

Some practices we’ve found helpful for church leaders:

Regular intercession for staff and leadership

Daily practices of silence, solitude, and listening prayer

True dependence on God alongside a conviction to be a house of prayer are the essential building blocks for leadership in a praying church. The best news for church leaders and pastors is that you won’t need to lead this effort yourself, or figure it out alone. While some pastors are called to spearhead prayer initiatives, it’s far more likely that God will (or already has!) place passionate prayer leaders in your church community. It will be important to identify and empower others with gifting and passion to lead alongside you in this effort.

Resources we recommend:

[Lectio365](#) - an app that invites us to the ancient church rhythms of morning, midday, and evening prayer

[Practicing the Way](#) - an organization offering free spiritual formation resources

Spiritual Direction - a trained spiritual director can help you discern the voice and move of God in your life

Evaluation + Planning

Start where you are and build slowly. Churches that embody a culture of prayer are built with intention over a long period of time. This is a marathon, not a sprint. Whether your church already has a contingent of praying people who regularly meet, or you're just beginning to birth the idea of a culture of prayer in your church, it's important to involve lots of voices in the evaluation process. Begin praying that God would lead you to the right people. Sometimes the "right" people aren't who you'd expect! It's important to consider both the known people of prayer and the busy stay-at-home mom, the quiet elderly, the untrained youth, and even marginalized within your community. Talk to staff, leaders, and church members to gauge where you are right now. You may be surprised at how much prayer is already happening! You may also find a need for confession, repentance, and/or correction. Do not miss this opportunity!

"Don't despise your small prayer gatherings... Every major revival has its origins with a small band of intercessors faithfully crying out!

Small gatherings precede big breakthroughs! When we gather to worship and pray, regardless of size, we convene the very court of heaven on earth. Our prayer gatherings are the most important and powerful gatherings in our city."

— David Fritch, author of *Enthroned*

Once you've had conversations with a few different groups of people, prayerfully select a few who will commit to praying with you, and praying for those who will build the scaffolding of your church's culture of prayer. Before you plan anything, spend lots of time praying together. Then, using spiritual discernment, form a vision for where you're headed, firmly rooted in where you are now. Carefully examine how prayer can be prioritized not just in meetings for a specialized few, but in every aspect of the life of your church. Finally, set guidelines, write training documents, set goals, and put them on the calendar. It may be helpful to [contact your regional director](#) to connect with a church that has some shareable resources.

Evaluation + Planning

Resources we recommend:

[*Pursuing God's Will Together*](#) by Ruth Haley Barton

[*Life Together in Christ*](#) by Ruth Haley Barton

[*The Way of Discernment*](#) by Elizabeth Liebert

Learning + Resourcing

As you continue the journey of building a praying church, utilize the library of free resources from 24-7 Prayer that best serve your context and church community. Churches are usually familiar with prayers of intercession and petition, and 24-7 Prayer can help expand your church's prayer vocabulary by introducing approachable models for prayers of Gratitude, Adoration, Confession, Healing, and more.

These are just a few of the [resources we offer](#) that may support your church on the journey to building a prayer culture:

[P.R.A.Y. model](#)

[Daily prayer rhythm](#)

[Prayer Courses](#)

[Prayer Rooms](#)

[Prayer walking \(Holy Here app\)](#)

Experiment with a few to see what your church community enjoys most, and invite them to regular prayer rhythms.

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful." Colossians 4:2 NIV

Learning + Resourcing

While prayer is absolutely free, it can be helpful to consider how much of your budget will be designated to support the ongoing work of prayer in your church. Would your church benefit from additional staff dedicated to support prayer in the church? Do you need to offer recommended reading or resources to your staff or put them in your church library? Could you add budgetary line items to support an annual week of unbroken prayer or even save up to open a public prayer space for your city? Our regional directors can give insight and wisdom to both role descriptions and budgetary needs for all of these considerations.

We also invite you to consider supporting 24-7 Prayer USA financially as a [Movement Partner](#) to support the work of prayer, mission, and justice in our nation.

Resources we recommend:

[*Praying in Color Podcast & Companion Guide*](#)

[*How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People*](#) by Pete Grieg

[*How to Run a Prayer Room*](#)

Catalyze + Mobilize

Now it's time to put your prayers into action. Here are a few ways we've seen churches live out their culture of prayer:

Inspire staff and leaders to pray by implementing weekly staff prayer rhythms or even altering meeting structures to incorporate prayer in a robust way, empowering others to lead

Form a prayer team that serves throughout the week and on Sundays

Offer prayer during or after Sunday gatherings

Run a [24-7 Prayer course](#)

Invite your church to a week of unbroken prayer

Open a prayer room for your community

Instill rhythms of prayer for the life of your church

Train community group leaders to pray and teach others

Prayer walk your city

Put prayer in action through mission and justice initiatives

"As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you." 1 Samuel 12:23–24 NIV

Catalyze + Mobilize

Catalyzing and mobilizing prayer in your church will lead to a natural overflow into your community. You may find other churches are inspired to pray like yours!

We encourage you to serve as a resource to others as they reach out. Partnering with others in the work of prayer, mission, and justice is one of the most powerful and lasting Kingdom-building efforts a church can explore. We encourage you to be a model church to those around you, continually propelled by the Spirit and fully dependent on his empowerment to sustain you.

We are honored to partner with you in the work of building your praying church. If you'd like more resources to help you take your next step, [get in touch](#) with your regional team leadership for more information and connections!