

Pray Without Ceasing: interceding for the people you serve



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Introduction

The Bible is clear that prayer is powerful. It is not our efforts that yield meaningful change in the world, but the Holy Spirit working through us. God's desire for us is that we continually acknowledge our need for Him and look to Him for help. Prayer is the way we communicate with an all-powerful and loving God. In fact, Jesus modeled this for us throughout the gospels during his public ministry, and in Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus provided his disciples a template on how they should approach the Father through prayer. Prayer allows us to ask for help and express adoration, gratitude, and awe. Through prayer we can have communion and intimacy with God.

Outreach ministries often aim to meet practical needs —a food pantry works to provide food and alleviate hunger, a parenting class aims to improve parenting skills, a support group offers emotional support and connection, and child and youth programming promote positive youth development. And, while these are all wonderful outcomes to work towards, faith-based ministries are most transformative when they simultaneously address spiritual needs. Urban Alliance's 5-C framework offers the concept of "Christian Witness" and defines it as a program's spiritual impact as they reflect the love of Christ through programming.

While most Christians would agree that prayer is a powerful tool used by God that bears much fruit, it is often challenging to create a protocol and process within a ministry that ensures people are being prayed for. For example, it is all too common for one ministry leader to hear a prayer request, let the person know they will pray for them, but later forget. In other ministry contexts people might have prayer requests, but not know who to ask for prayer. This booklet offers a rationale for the importance of prayer in outreach ministry as well as practical suggestions for ministries that want to better incorporate prayer into their programming.

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Why Pray?

- God tells us to. The first and most important reason we pray is that God tells us to. Ephesians 6:18 says, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." And, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." God's desire for us is to be in communion with Him at all times through prayer.
- God hears our prayers. The Bible assures us that God hears our prayers. Isn't it a comfort and encouragement that, 1 John 5:14 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us?" And, Jeremiah 29:12 says, "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." God is omnipresent and omniscient, which means He is always with each person and knows what they are going to ask before they pray it. One of the greatest gifts we can give to those we serve is prayer.
- God responds to our prayers. God is omnipotent or all-powerful and is moved by our prayers.
 Not only does He hear our prayers, He answers them! Prayer moves God's heart as it did when Moses interceded for the Israelites and Habakkuk pleaded for healing.

- Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." And, Jesus tells the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8 to show the disciples that they, "should always pray and not give up." In this parable a widow kept pleading with the judge for justice against her adversaries. He eventually relents. Jesus compares God to the judge and says, "And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?" He responds to our prayers.
- Prayer transforms us and others. A continued posture of reliance on God and surrender to Him transforms hearts. Prayer is our most power tool in ministry. We have the opportunity to bring those we serve before the Lord in prayer and place them in His hands. What better way is there to serve others than to bring their needs before a loving God? Through prayer we grow closer to God and develop greater intimacy with Him. A continued reliance on God and surrender to Him purifies our hearts and makes us more like Christ or as the Psalm 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."



What is Intercessory Prayer?

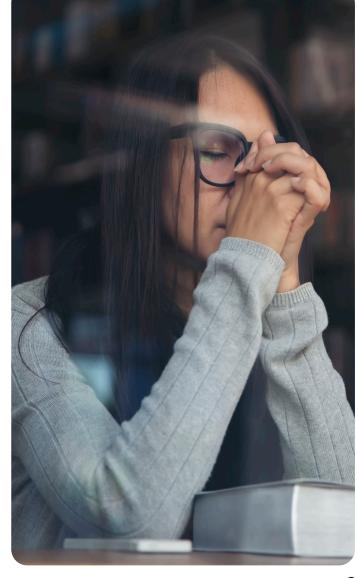
Intercession is prayer that pleads with God for one's needs or the needs of others. All believers are called to intersession. 1 Timothy 2:1 says, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" and Ephesians 6:18 says, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

The Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know what to pray for. Romans 8:26-27 says, "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God."

Intercessory prayer was a part of Christ's ministry on earth (John 17, Luke 22:32), and the Scriptures teach that He is now enthroned at the right hand of His Father interceding for us from the throne of heaven (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, I John 2:1). Romans 8:34 says, "Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." Jesus is the means by which we have direct access to God. Jesus intercedes on our behalf so that we can approach the throne of grace to get help in times of need.

"Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us."

(Romans 8:34)

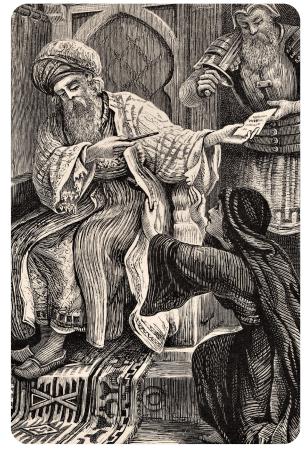


If intercessory prayer was modeled by Jesus both on earth and in heaven, it is clearly an important part of any ministry! Intercessory prayer requires that staff and volunteers assume the role of the friend at midnight (Luke 11:5-10) and the pleading widow (Luke 18:1-8).

- The Friend at Midnight (boldness): From this parable we learn about the power of boldness in prayer. In the parable a man knocks on the door of his friend at midnight looking for food for a visitor. At the end the friend relents and provides the food because of the "shameless audacity" of the man. The parable ends with Jesus saying, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."
- The Pleading Widow (persistence): We learn persistence from this parable. The widow persists to plead her cause to the judge who eventually rules in her favor. When we intercede, we must not give up or become discouraged. Rather, like the widow we continue to approach God on behalf of others. And, unlike the judge in the parable, our God is merciful, compassionate, and persuaded by the passionate prayers of his children.

Both boldness and persistence require steadfast faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." It is easy to become discouraged in prayer when we don't see our prayers answered in the way we expect. Therefore, it is important for staff and volunteers to pray that God increases their faith as they intercede for the people they serve.





5 Areas of Considerations for Ministries that Offer Prayer

There are many different approaches to prayer and considerations for the best way to incorporate prayer into ministry settings. For example, it is important for program staff and volunteers to have a process for learning about people's life situations and prayer requests. It is important to consider how prayer requests will be collected and shared. In some cases, a person shares a prayer request and wants it shared with others, so many people are praying. In other cases, a prayer request may be shared in confidence. Further, staff and volunteers need training on confidentiality and professionalism so healthy boundaries are in place and confidentiality is maintained.

Five areas of consideration:

Valued Priority

Consider the degree to which the staff and volunteers believe prayer is an integral part of ministry. This involves a heart disposition that recognizes that the power to transform lives comes from the Holy Spirit and a reliance on His help in all circumstances. Before thinking through the logistics of integrating prayer into a ministry, it is important to consider what staff and volunteers believe and feel about prayer. Is it a valued priority? Why or why not? It is important for this to be addressed as a team before creating an action plan for further prayer efforts.

Consider the
degree to which
the staff and
volunteers believe
prayer is an
integral part of
ministry. Is prayer
a valued priority?
Why or why not?

Consider the degree to which prayer is a valued priority:

Not a Priority	Low Priority	Somewhat of a Priority	High Priority
Staff and volunteers often neglect to pray as a team or for the people they serve. It is not viewed to be as important as the more practical aspects of the ministry.	While staff and volunteers all believe prayer is important, there are other priorities that often take up so much time that prayer is neglected. When an opportunity arises people receive prayer, but it is not discussed as a ministry team.	Staff and volunteers feel prayer is important and make sure to take time to coordinate prayer efforts. However, when leaders become overwhelmed with the demands of running the ministry, prayer is sometimes overlooked.	Staff and volunteers have made prayer a priority. It is seen as an integral part of effective ministry and time is consistently set aside to pray and coordinate prayer efforts.

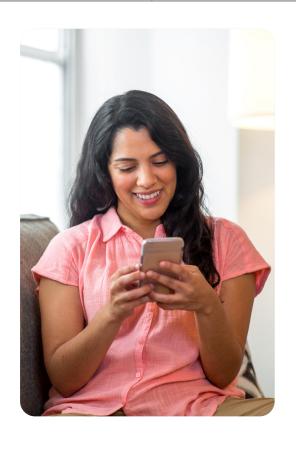
Relational

Consider the degree to which prayer is offered in a relational manner. More relational approaches involve a meaningful interaction around prayer (i.e. asking the other person how they can pray or praying in-person). Less relational approaches may involve retrieving prayer requests from a collection box or online form and praying alone. Even when a prayer request is collected without an in-person interaction, ministries can follow-up to talk, listen, or pray. This extra touch point makes prayer more relational.

Consider the degree to which prayer is offered in a relational way:

Not Relational	A Little Relational	Somewhat Relational	Very Relational
There is no interaction. For example: A person prays alone for a request submitted through an online contact form (or other non-interactional format). There is no follow-up.	There is some degree of interaction, but it is minimal. For example: a person sends an email to follow-up after retrieving a prayer request from a prayer box and lets the person know they are being prayed for.	There is person-to- person interaction while asking for or receiving prayer. For example: a person shares a prayer request during a conversation and a volunteer notes the request and lets the person know she will share it with the ministry team for prayer.	There is person-to- person interaction both in asking for prayer and receiving prayer. For example: a per- son at a food pan- try shares a prayer request with a staff member who offers prayer in-person.

Leaders can followup to talk, listen, or pray. This extra touch point makes prayer more relational.



Planned

This means that there is a purposeful or deliberate plan in place that supports prayer. When a prayer approach is planned it usually means a leader was intentional about thinking through and implementing a plan for learning about prayer requests, sharing them, and praying. Intentionality requires forethought and communication.

Consider the degree to which prayer is planned:

Not Planned	A Little Planned	Somewhat Planned	Well Planned
There is no formal plan for praying with people and it is not talked about.	In general, staff and volunteers desire to offer prayer. Leaders encourage prayer and when an opportunity arises, they respond. But, there is not a plan for sharing prayer requests or making sure people do not fall through the cracks.	There is a plan for prayer that involves collecting prayer requests, sharing them with other staff or volunteers, and offering prayer. However, sometimes it is not implemented.	There is an intentional plan for prayer that involves collecting prayer requests, sharing with other staff or volunteers, and offering prayer. It is consistently implemented and staff and volunteers oversee the process.



Clear Communication

It is important to have clear communication between staff and volunteers as well as with the people served. Once a plan is in place, leaders can share the plan with other staff and volunteers to ensure clear roles and responsibilities are in place (e.g. who will collect and share prayer requests left in a prayer box). Further, it is important for people served to know how to share prayer requests. This might include scheduling time into programming for prayer, posting clear signs, sending emails, or making announcements about how people can share prayer requests.

Consider the degree to which information about prayer is clearly communicated:

No Communication	Very Little	Some	Strong
	Communication	Communication	Communication
Staff and volunteers do not communicate about a ministry's plan for offering prayer or sharing prayer requests. People served do not know what to do to receive prayer.	Prayer is valued among staff and volunteers, but there is little communication about the process for offering prayer to people served. Staff and volunteers informally communicate about prayer to people served when it comes up. Some of the people served know the steps to take to receive prayer.	Leaders set aside time to communicate the plan for offering prayer with other staff and volunteers. Most of the time staff and volunteers know their roles and responsibilities. Most of the time people served always know how to ask for prayer and share prayer requests.	Leaders set aside time to communicate the plan for offering prayer with other staff and volunteers. Everyone knows their roles and responsibilities. Leaders ensure the plan is implemented. People served always know how to ask for prayer and share

Healthy Boundaries

There are a number of boundaries that need to be respected when praying for another person. Unless there is a situation where a person's safety is at risk, the person making the prayer request should be the one setting the boundaries. Boundaries include preference for when prayer occurs, who the request is shared with, and how they are prayed for.

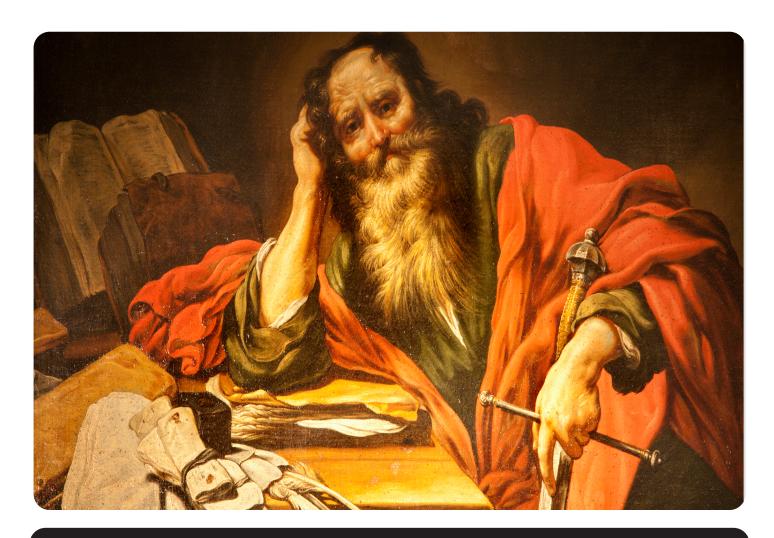
Where prayer occurs. Some people prefer to receive prayer in-person. Others are uncomfortable and prefer for a staff or volunteer to pray on their own. If the prayer request is given in-person, the staff or volunteer can ask the person's preference. If it is submitted on paper or electronically, they can reach out to let the person know their request was received and ask their preference or a person can indicate their preference directly on a request form.

Who the request is shared with. Some people want their prayer request shared with a lot of people, others share more sensitive information and want it kept in confidence. It is important for staff and volunteers to have a way to determine the degree to which the prayer request is confidential. This can simply be asked, if the prayer request is offered in-person. Prayer cards or online forms can ask who the person would like the request to be shared with. When in doubt, it is always best to err on the side of confidentiality.

How prayer occurs: Different denominations have different prayer styles. Prayer can be loud, quiet, silent, involve laying of hands or no touch at all, speaking in one's native language or speaking in tongues, involve only the prayer minister, involve verbal responses to what is prayed over a person, and be in-person, over the phone, or alone. Prayer can look a number of different ways, yet God hears and responds to them all. However, different people have more or less comfort with different practices. It is important to ask permission each step of the way and adjust according to the prayer receiver's preference. This will help them to feel safe, cared for, and more comfortable engaging in the process.

Consider the degree to which healthy boundaries are in place:

Unhealthy	Some Healthy	Very Healthy
Boundaries	Boundaries	Boundaries
There is no education about healthy boundaries in prayer. Prayer receivers are not asked how they want their requests shared. Staff and volunteers pray in the way most comfortable to them. They do not ask questions to learn what will make the prayer receiver most comfortable as they receive prayer. Prayer receivers decide when prayer will occur and do not ask prayer receivers about their preference.	Leaders educate staff and volunteers about healthy boundaries in prayer. Prayer receivers usually are asked how they want their requests shared and their request is always honored. Staff and volunteers usually pray in the way most comfortable to the prayer receiver, they ask questions to learn what will make the prayer receiver most comfortable. Staff and volunteers usually ask the prayer receivers about their preference for when prayer will occur.	Leaders educate staff and volunteers about healthy boundaries in prayer. They also make sure healthy boundaries are maintained. Prayer receivers are always asked how they want their requests shared and their request is always honored. Staff and volunteers always pray in the way most comfortable to the prayer receiver, they ask questions to learn what will make the prayer receiver most comfortable. Staff and volunteers always ask the prayer receivers about their preference for when prayer will occur.



Paul's Prayers Teach Us to Pray for Others

Often staff and volunteers do not know the details about a person's life situation. This happens for many reasons. It may be due to a person being new to the ministry and not having time to build relationship with staff and volunteers. Sometimes people withhold personal information because they are embarrassed or feel ashamed, or because the nature of the situation is such that they are not able to share.

Fortunately, we can still intercede even when we don't know the specifics of a person's situation. Paul models this for us through his New Testament letters to the churches. It would have been impossible for him to know each person at each church, yet he was able to pray for them in alignment with God's will.

First, God wants all people to believe in His Son and surrender their lives to Him. Staff and leaders can always pray for a person's salvation. Paul also modeled

this in Romans 10:1 when he prayed for the Israelites salvation: "Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved."

Additionally, Scripture makes it clear that there are things God wants all people to have such as an understanding of His love, His wisdom and discernment in making decisions, peace, hope, protection, and strength to obey his commands. We can freely pray these things over people's lives.

The following section highlights some of Paul's prayers. These prayers are transformational when we pray through them regularly for ourselves and others. Each verse is written with a fill in the blank so staff and volunteers can insert the names of the people they serve.

Examples of Paul's Prayers

"May the God of hope fill [person's name] with all joy and peace as [he/she] trusts in him, so that [he/she] may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give [person's name] the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that [he/she] may know him better. I pray that the eyes of [person's name] heart may be enlightened in order that [he/she] may know the hope to which he has called [him/her], the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe." (Ephesians 1:17-19)

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen [person's name] with power through his Spirit in [his/her] inner being, so that Christ may dwell in [his/her] heart through faith. And I pray that [person's name], being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that [person's name] may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:14-19)

"We continually ask God to fill [person's name] with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that [person's name] may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience" (Colossians 1:9-11)

"Now may the Lord of peace himself give [person's name] peace at all times in every way." (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

"But we pray to God that [person's name] may not do wrong" (2 Corinthians 13:7)

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:5-6)

Types of Prayer

There are many different types of prayer noted in Scripture. It is helpful to be aware of them and pray in different ways.

These include but are not limited to:

Agreement: Multiple believers agreeing on earth in prayer (Matthew 18:19-20)

Confession: Acknowledging your sin to God, and then celebrating the forgiveness you have received (Psalm 51:2-3)

Intercession: God leading you to pray for the needs of a person, place, or cause (Genesis 18:20-33, Exodus 32:11-13)

Listening: Sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening for Him (Psalm 46:10)

Petition: Seeing a need and praying for it (1 Timothy 2:1)

Praise: Declaring the truth about who God is, what He has done, or what He has promised to do (Psalm 150:1-6)

Praying the Bible: Praying the words of the Bible as your prayer (Joshua 1:8)

Praying in Tongues: Praying in a personal spiritual language that edifies you and your relationship with God. Some believers do not believe in this type of prayer (1 Corinthians 14:14)

Thanksgiving: Offering thanks to God (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Warfare: Confronting the kingdom of Satan with the weapons of God's kingdom and the authority believers have in Jesus (Ephesians 6:12)

Lament: Pouring out our pain to God in prayer and remembering the hope He offers (Psalm 42)

"May the God of hope fill [person's name] with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit [he/she] may abound in hope." (Romans 15:13)



Prayer Models

All too often we ourselves are praying on auto pilot. In Matthew 6, Jesus teaches His disciples to pray using the Lord's Prayer. The following prayer models hit on various points from the Lord's Prayer and help us to remember to pray in different ways. Four of the models listed are acronyms to help guide your prayer time and jog your memory, and two are five finger prayers to help outline your prayer time and can be used with children.

<u>H</u>onor God with praise
<u>E</u>xamine your life
<u>A</u>sk for help/needs
<u>R</u>equests for othert
<u>T</u>hank God

<u>A</u>doration:<u>C</u>onfession<u>T</u>hanksgiving<u>S</u>upplication

PraiseAcknowledgeSupplicationThanks

PraiseRepentAskYield



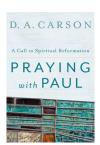


Helpful Resources on Intercession and Prayer



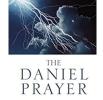
The Battle Plan for Prayer: From Basic Training to Targeted Strategies Stephen Kendrick

"Inspired by the Kendrick Brothers' new movie, *War Room*, this exciting new resource is designed to help anyone learn how to become a powerful person of prayer. *The Battle Plan for Prayer* begins with prayer's core purpose, its biblical design, and its impact throughout history. Readers will be guided scripturally through the fundamentals of how effective prayer works, inspired towards a closer, more intimate relationship with God, and shown how to develop specific prayer strategies for each area of life."



Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation D.A. Carson

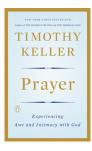
"Carson calls believers to reject superficiality and revolutionize their lives by embracing a profound, other-centered, God-guided approach to prayer."



ANNE

The Daniel Prayer: Prayer That Moves Heaven and Changes Nations Anne Graham Lotz

"The Daniel Prayer is born deep within your soul, erupts through your heart, and pours out on your lips, words created by and infused with the Spirit of God quivering with spiritual electricity. It's really not an everyday type of prayer. It's a prayer birthed under pressure. Heartache. Grief. Desperation. It can be triggered by a sudden revelation of hope. An answer to prayer, a promise freshly received, a miracle that lies just over the horizon."



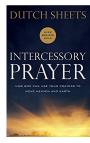
Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God Timothy Keller

"Christians are taught in their churches and schools that prayer is the most powerful way to experience God. But few receive instruction or guidance in how to make prayer genuinely meaningful. In *Prayer*, renowned pastor Timothy Keller delves into the many facets of this everyday act. Keller offers biblical guidance as well as specific prayers for certain situations, such as dealing with grief, loss, love, and forgiveness. He discusses ways to make prayers more personal and powerful, and how to establish a practice of prayer that works for each reader."



Praying the Bible Donald S. Whitney

"Ever feel "stuck" when you try to talk to the Lord? Learn to pray the Scriptures and you'll never be lost for words again! In this practical guide, the best-selling author of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* shows you how to pray through portions of God's Word, letting it shape your thoughts and petitions."



Intercessory Prayer: How God Can Use Your Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth Dutch Sheets

"Intercessory Prayer continues to be a classic work after more than 20 years. This rich, biblical teaching is full of fresh insights showing how vital our prayers are and how God has always planned to work in partnership with us through prayer. Readers will find inspiration and courage to pray for the impossible--and the persistence to see prayers to completion."

Pray Without Ceasing: Interceding for the People You Serve

The following questions can be discussed with ministry leaders to explore your program's practices around offering prayer to the people you serve.

1.	Consider the degree to which prayer is a valued priority for your ministry. What do you do to develop this value in your team? What are the priorities and values of your ministry team?
2.	How do staff and volunteers learn about people's life situation so they know how to pray? What might you do in the future to learn even more?
3.	How often is prayer offered to the people you serve? How often is it offered in a relational manner (i.e. involving person-to-person interaction)? Are there things you can do in the future that would make it more relational?
4.	Is there is an intentional plan for learning about prayer requests, sharing them, and praying? What is the plan? How is it communicated? How often is it implemented?
5.	What do you communicate to the people you serve about prayer? Do the people you serve know what to do if they would like a staff or volunteer to pray for them?
6.	Are healthy boundaries honored when prayer is offered? Do staff and volunteers receive training on topics such as confidentiality, different prayer practices, or how to communicate with a prayer receiver to learn about their prayer preferences?

Name:		Name:	
Address:		Address:	
Email:		Email:	
Phone Number:		Phone Number:	
Please share any prayer requests below.	elow.	Please share any prayer requests below.	
Please share with	Please call or email to follow-up	Please share with to follow-up	
Name:		Name:	
Address:		Address:	
Email:		Email:	
Phone Number:		Phone Number:	
Please share any prayer requests below.	elow.	Please share any prayer requests below.	
Please share with other ministry leaders	Please call or email to follow-up	Please call or email other ministry leaders to follow-up	