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PRAYING FOR OUR CITY

February 18, 2003

I belong to a prayer group of pastors who meet every morning to pray for our city. We range in number from 15 to 30 at each meeting. The interesting thing about our meeting is that we have people from all streams of our faith who come. Most of the attendees are Pentecostal, or Charismatic, but there are a few Evangelicals in the group. Denominationally we have only three Southern Baptist ministers who come, but the major denominations like United Methodists, Presbyterian USA or PCA, Lutherans and UCC or DOC are conspicuous in their absence. They have been invited a number of times, but they do not have time or do not believe in what we are doing. About 50% of our attendees are black, one is Latino and the rest are white. We have three or four women who come on a regular basis.

Our prayers are directed at the sin in our city and a government that is inept and corrupt. We pray for the police department, the fire department, the school board and the city council. We pray for revival in our city. We pray that our President and the leaders of our nation will be guided and directed by the Holy Spirit. We pray that our military will be protected in battle. We pray that the churches will come alive. We pray that we will reach out to the poor and homeless and that the gospel will be presented to all people. We also conduct spiritual warfare since Satan seems to have taken over our town. On some Tuesdays we pray for our neighboring towns and for the churches in those towns. Some of us have gone through neighborhoods praying for each house and its occupants. We have also prayed in spiritual warfare in front of the offices of Planned Parenthood. Others have walked the streets of the most criminalized part of town to take back the streets for God. Finally, we pray for each other and our personal problems. We will continue these activities.

We have seen results. Through our prayer effort we have secured permission to start a Good News Club in one local school and we are hoping to get clubs started in other schools as well. We have prayed up our attendance so that we have more and more pastors who come. This summer we plan to sponsor five tent meetings in five different parts of the city. We will also have a tent for the Latino population. The representative churches will each conduct services for the attendees in their part of town. I look forward to participating.

The importance of our pastors' prayer group has been manifest in that those of us who participate are edified, our racial barriers have come down and we are cooperating in ways that I have not seen in years. The last time I saw any ecumenical cooperation was when we had our Billy Graham crusade over 20 years ago. Even then it was primarily the Baptist churches that were active while

other mainline denominations did little if anything. Those of us from mainline churches who participated did so because of our own personal belief in His cause not with the blessing of our church.

Our last meeting (Feb. 11, 2003) was a most memorable one. When I arrived I could not have anticipated the outcome. The meeting started with prayer about the coming confrontation of the US with Iraq. There was great fervency in our petitions. We then prayed for our city and its government, then suddenly it seemed that the Holy Spirit took over and we began to praise the Lord. We continued to make our usual petitions known, but they were phrased in a different language from that which we had been using in the past. Finally we were singing hymns, praising the Lord; after we finished a song one of our members told us that he would like to tell us about a blessing he had received. He said that his son had left his wife and children four years before and announced that he was turning his back on God. The father had little contact with him during the next four years. Then last Sunday as his father was preparing to preach, his son walked in with his family and sat them down. He then walked up into the pulpit and embraced his father and told him he had been saved and he was back. This witness so moved the congregation that four young men in the congregation came forward and gave their lives to Christ. This moved our group so powerfully that they broke out in spontaneous praise and thanksgiving.

Several years ago we had Francis Frangipane in our town to speak on spiritual warfare. While he was there he urged us to organize a local pastors' prayer group, but we did not do it. Then three years ago Mac Bare and some others organized the present group. I did not go for two years since I did not seem to have time. When my own pastor asked me to go, I decided I really had no excuse since one can always find time to do anything that they really want to do. I really wanted to go this time. As my experience has evolved I am increasingly convinced that every town and village in America needs a pastors' prayer group. If you can organize or encourage the organization of one, you will be blessed. Remember that everything happens with prayer and nothing without it.