

PRAYER CO-ORDINATOR

'Prayer displays the reaches of our poverty and the riches of his grace.'

defining the vision

Prayer is a massive topic, something that many people have tried to summarise succinctly over the years, from the profound to the simple. Essentially a channel of communication with God, prayer can take many different outward forms and is used in worship (Matthew 6:9), confession (Luke 11:4), thanksgiving (Philippians 1:3-6), battle (Ephesians 6:10-19), perseverance (Luke 18:1), obedience (Proverbs 15:8), healing (James 5:13-16), supplication (Philippians 4:6-7), intimacy (Mark 1:35)... and so much more!

But why is prayer so vital *in a CU setting*? Why should the prayer life of your CU be a matter of great concern? In short, because **mission and growth** are both **God's work!**

mission is **God's work...**

The Bible tells us that it is God who sends and guides us in reaching out to people, it is he who reveals himself to them and opens their hearts to respond to the gospel, he enables them to repent. We can't bring anyone to Christ on our own, so it follows that we should be seeking God's help and asking him to be at work in our efforts to share our faith... prayer is foundational in mission.

[Check out: Acts 16:9-10, 14; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:25.]

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

*And pray for us, too, that **God** may **open a door** for our message, so that we may **proclaim the mystery** of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it **clearly**, as I should.*

[Colossians 4:2-4]

growth is **God's work...**

Here are just a few of the things that are requested in the prayers referenced below: unity, knowing God better, discernment, purity, fruitfulness, strength, endurance, patience, wisdom, assurance... In other words, our prayers make a difference to our growth. These prayers also make it clear that, again, it is *God* who does the work. He is the one who reveals more of himself to us, granting us his strength and wisdom and all that we need to serve and glorify him. Add to this the fact that Jesus sets an example for us and I think you'll agree – prayer is foundational in growth.

[Check out: John 17:20-23; Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12, 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.]

*For this reason I **kneel** before the Father...*

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may **strengthen** you with **power** through his **Spirit** in your inner being, so that **Christ** may **dwell** in your **hearts** through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in **love**, may have power, together with all the saints, to **grasp** how **wide** and **long** and **high** and **deep** is the love of Christ, and to **know** this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

[Ephesians 3:14-19]

summary

Mission and growth, the two core elements of your CU's existence, are both God's work and this means that prayer is foundational in both areas. To be blunt, prayerless individuals and prayerless CUs are arrogant (our actions demonstrate that we think we can do mission and growth on our own), loveless (our prayerlessness demonstrates our lack of compassion for the lost) and mediocre (we won't be growing well).

developing a vision

In order to *lead well* and with **integrity**, it's important to **understand** and be personally **convinced** of the *role* and *importance* of prayer within the CU. You can only teach others what you already know yourself – the type of prayer life you cultivate in CU will reflect your own understanding of and vision for prayer. Hopefully, as you work on having a right and deep personal understanding of prayer this will help to convince and envision you about it, which in turn can be **infectious!** So here are some ideas on developing a vision for prayer:

- You could read about prayer; seek to develop your own prayer life
- Share stories with other prayer co-ordinators; allow yourself to be inspired by older 'prayer warriors'
- Try to develop a local as well as general vision for prayer

But as well as this *visionary* side to being a prayer co-ordinator, there's also a highly *practical* aspect – it's important to **know** what is **entailed**, and seek to *fulfil* that with **excellence**.

defining the role

The role of a prayer co-ordinator will of course look slightly different in each CU due to differing sizes, structures etc. But here's a fairly comprehensive list of what you might find yourself doing this year, or how you might want to consider seeing your role:

A CU **prayer** co-ordinator is *pivotal* in **fostering** and **facilitating** a *culture* of prayer in the CU, by...

teaching the CU about prayer – *show & tell*

- lead [show] by example (in personal and public prayer)
It's a personal conviction of the power of prayer in the Christian's life that will enable you to encourage prayer as a priority in the CU and to lead them in prayerful and expectant worship, thanksgiving and intercession. It's important to lead by example; you'll have a hard job enthusing others to pray if you haven't discovered for yourself the reality of prayer. The way you pray, what you pray for, your commitment to your personal prayer life, and your passion for prayer *will* make a difference to others as they see it.
- tell people about prayer (do this gradually and patiently, corporately and individually)
A few ideas: give short, sharp insights on prayer from the front in main CU meetings; compile a powerpoint presentation on prayer; hand out slips of paper with inspiring thoughts about prayer written on them in main meetings or through small groups; recommend and provide books and studies on prayer; suggest having teaching on prayer in main meetings or small groups etc.

On top of this, do be aware of and take opportunities you may get with individuals to drop something into the conversation that may expand their understanding of prayer, or to pray with them – showing them how.

encouraging and **motivating** the CU to pray:

- start with the Committee – goad them regularly and encourage them to spend significant time in prayer during Committee meetings, ask them to give prayer a

significant place in the area of CU life they are responsible for so influencing members of the CU involved in those areas

- goad the CU – give short, sharp insights on prayer from Scripture, recommend good books, have lots of creative ideas to get people praying e.g. bookmarks
- in a big CU you may want to recruit a team of individuals who are enthusiastic about and committed to prayer to help you in motivating the CU, organising and leading prayer meetings and events, and collecting prayer information etc.
- record what you pray for and how it is answered, then make this information available to CU to encourage them that their prayers do make a difference

Whether it's reminding people that we are commanded to pray, encouraging them with a carrot (how it benefits us), or showing them that it works (by giving feedback on answered prayer), get creative in motivating people to pray.

providing a variety of *opportunities* for CU members to pray:

- hold accessible and attractive prayer meetings (see 'tips on leading a prayer meeting')
- organise these prayer meetings and get others involved in leading, publicise times/venues well
- organise regular, creative and varied prayer slots within CU meetings
- consider setting up prayer triplets within the CU and co-ordinate this
- have prayer days/half-nights/lunches/suppers... even a whole week focussed on prayer?
- liaise with other Committee posts on how you can work together to encourage prayer and support whatever is going on in their area
- provide prayer information to CU members in a variety of ways (CU website, bookmarks, small groups, prayer letters, IFESI Irish Prayer News etc.) This will mean keeping up to date with all aspects of CU life and witness, making these topics for prayer. However, make sure that prayer is not just CU-centred – pray for other CUs (establish a link with another CU and send each other prayer points?), for world-wide CU movements, missionaries and world events.

Your role may also involve keeping external prayer partners (e.g. local churches, past CU members) up to date by sending out prayer letters/emails etc. When you produce these, use them in prayer meetings, and make them available to all CU members. If you have a prayer team, get them to help you to gather prayer requests and stories about answered prayer; encourage CU members to share their stories (they may want this to be anonymous). Do this regularly!

tips for leading a prayer meeting

- preparation is key!
Plan meetings in advance – the time must be structured. Decide on what you will pray for, and find up-to-date information. If you plan to delegate the leading and preparation, do this early.
 - give clear direction
Make sure people know how they are praying, and what for; if there are a lot of prayer points, use an overhead or have sheets available with the points on.
 - both inform and inspire prayers
Include praise for answered prayer, and updates on things you have prayed for previously – this may entail keeping a CU prayer journal to record prayer points and answers (feedback!). Include relevant and inspiring Bible readings – perhaps find
-

- people who could help by preparing this.
- keep the pace
Start on time, and don't waste time talking! Be devotional but not too slow-moving. Restrict sharing time for personal news and requests as the prayer time itself can easily get squeezed out.
- be sensitive – some people may never have prayed out loud in a group before and may initially be uncomfortable So, encourage prayers that are short, plain speaking, unselfconscious and specific – and set the example in this! Prayers of one word or a phrase can encourage everyone to be involved e.g. each person gives thanks for something, praise for different attributes of God, recalling the different names of God.
- variety is the spice of life – use different types of prayer and get creative, e.g.
 - adoration and praise (focus on who God is), confession (of sin), thanksgiving (remembering what God has done and is doing), supplication (presenting our requests to God), intercession (praying for others – use their prayer materials e.g. Tearfund, missionary prayer letters etc.)
 - use Bible passages, song/hymn lyrics, poems or other appropriate readings, liturgy, Bible prayers, other peoples' prayers. Involve times of meditation, symbolical acts/ drama, worship etc.
 - have times of planned silence for prayer and reflection, write prayers down, pray in twos and threes, pray as a group, all pray aloud together etc.

Let's shatter the myth that prayer is boring! Think of creative ways to get people praying, prepare varied and interesting prayer meetings that cause people to want to come again – make prayer attractive! Yes, ultimately it's only God who can stir people to prayer, but in our personal conviction of the power of prayer we need to do what we can to encourage and help them.

a few resources...

- * *Too busy not to pray* – Bill Hybels (IVP)
- * *People in Prayer* – John White (IVP)
- * *Listening to God* – Joyce Huggett (Hodder)
- * *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* – Don Carson (Baker Books)
- * *The Church on its Knees* – Jeremy Jennings (HTB Publications)
- * *Prayer* – O. Hallesby (IVP)
- * *IFESI IPN* – prayer points from CUs in *Ireland*; *IFES Prayer & Praise* – news from CUs world-wide
- * *www...* – for up to date information on current news stories, use the internet

Finally, one invaluable resource: your Staff and/or Relay workers will of course be more than happy to help whenever they can!