

## 3.5 INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

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# Ideas for Prayer Together in Community

God wants us to communicate with him individually *and* together in community. For those involved in the life of a church, it seems that every time two or three people are together, we pray. The church community prays during worship, small group meetings and classes, board and committee meetings, and often organizes groups to gather expressly for the purpose of prayer. This emphasis on prayer acknowledges God's presence and invites God's forgiveness, wisdom, guidance, or blessing.

The prayer activities on this list are especially suited to praying together in community. In addition, many of the prayer resources listed in the ID article – *Ideas for Personal Prayer*, are also suitable for group use.

**Concert of Prayer** – This model invites congregations to join together, praying in pairs, small groups, and a large group for a variety of concerns and issues. Although the structure can vary, it can include a combination of reading scripture, praying, and singing worship songs. Sample formats include the following:

<http://www.youthspecialties.com/articles/crisis-concert-of-prayer/>

<http://cws.yfc.net/Brix?pageID=22999>

**Conversational prayer** – This prayer takes the form of a conversation with a friend using words and phrases that are part of your regular vocabulary.

**Fasting in community** – This is a time to listen to God as a body, build group cohesion as everyone sacrifices and fasts together, and build your witness to others as they become curious as to why you are fasting. Following the fast, gather together to “break the fast,” and talk about what God was saying to you. From the Church Planters' Training book – Chapter 2

[http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Chapter\\_2\\_-\\_Prayer\\_and\\_Brokeness/](http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Chapter_2_-_Prayer_and_Brokeness/)

**Fixed-Hour prayer (Daily Office)** – Encourage the congregation to stop and pray at regular intervals throughout the day. The Decorah Covenant Church, Decorah, IA, makes these daily prayers available on its web site. The prayers are designed to shape the rhythm of life around which other activities can take their proper place. To view their Guide to Prayer brochure, go to:

<http://www.decorahcovenant.org/resources/>.

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**Healing Prayer** – This prayer invites those with physical ailments and emotional wounds to enter the safe and healing presence of Jesus. In this safe place, those seeking wholeness and freedom open themselves to listen to Jesus and his word to them. God is the Healer, but he may not heal in our time frame. The Holy Spirit sets the pace, and healing may happen in a moment or over time. Wilson Herrera, director for Hispanic ministries in the Department of Christian Formation, has developed a seminar for our Hispanic churches on inner healing. In addition, The Covenant Book of Worship includes three healing services.

**Lectio divina** - group (praying the Scripture) – Praying Scripture is a conversational, devotional approach to God's Word that can be done alone or in groups. When approaching Scripture in this way we do not merely read the words to grasp the content, but we allow God's Word to guide a prayerful conversation. Lectio divina often includes four parts: Reading God's Word, Reflecting on God's Word, Responding to God's Word and Resting in God's Word. The following resource provides a more complete guide to Lectio divina (Praying Scripture): <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/05/2-Praying-Scripture.pdf>.

**Litany Prayers** – Litany-type prayers are characterized by a ritual "give-and-take" between leader and people and consist of a brief petition, followed by a ritual verse-and-response between leader and people. The leader provides a "cue-line" for the people's response. For example, the leader may say at the end of each petition, "Lord, in your mercy," and the people may respond, "Hear our prayer."

**Prayer experience/retreat** – Many congregations provide an opportunity to experience prayer in solitude and in community on a retreat. The retreat can be scheduled for a retreat center or it can take place during a morning at the church. The Department of Christian Formation has developed two prayer experiences available for churches:

- Moment to Moment: An Invitation to Prayer
- Streams and Pathways: An Exploration of Spiritual Practices

For further information, contact the Department at <http://www.covchurch.org/adults/prayer/retreats/>.

**Prayer meetings** – Groups gather spontaneously or for a planned meeting to pray for the needs of the church, the world, specific missions, social concerns, or individual needs. This is an opportunity for individuals to experience the solidarity that comes as people join together in prayer.

**Prayer of Examen (Reviewing Your Day)** – This practice helps us become more aware of God's presence in and throughout our days. The prayer is an individual practice, but congregations may encourage it as a practice for all to consider. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that helps us see God's hand at work in our whole experience. This practice invites us to reflect on the events of the day and become more aware of God's presence in and throughout it. With this prayer, we choose a segment of time to consider and review the events as if watching a movie. During this time, we invite the Holy Spirit to give insight and the courage to look honestly at our lives. In prayer, we identify those moments when God seemed especially close, and times when God seemed distant. The following Growing Deeper Tool, *Reviewing your Day*, gives more detail for beginning to practice the Prayer of Examen, <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/05/5-Reviewing-Your-Day.pdf>.

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**Prayer Partners** – Commit to one other person that you will partner in prayer with him/her. Check-in regularly (in person or by phone) to pray together—in praise, thanksgiving, petition, and silence as you listen to God.

**Prayer requests** – Letting people know the prayer needs in the congregation begins to build the priority of prayer into the DNA of the church. People learn that the first response to a crisis should be a call to prayer. Prayers of intercession for the needs of others are a fundamental part of the Body of Christ.

*NOTE: Those who participate are asked to respect the confidentiality of the caller and the message content. You must also have the permission of the person or persons for whom prayer is sought before adding to the list of prayer requests.*

- Prayer chains via phone and/or e-mail
- List in the bulletin or project on the screen during worship
- Technology supported (e.g., Twitter or Facebook)
- Prayer cards - Evangelical Covenant Church of Alaska <http://www.eccak.org/prayer-cards.html>
- Prayer wall – provide cards and invite people to write their requests on a card and post them on the wall
- Prayer Room
- Share requests and answers to prayer during worship
- Share requests on a password-accessible part of the church website
- Prayer teams
- Prayer boxes for collecting prayer requests

**Prayer team** – God is able to touch the hearts of people through worship. Having a prayer team to pray with individuals following the service can be a valuable part of spiritual formation. Often these teams will gather to pray for the needs of the church during the week.

**Prayer Trail** – Living Hope Covenant Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, established a Prayer Trail. Neighbors and friends are invited to walk on the prayer trail. The church provides devotional materials that are frequently updated. The trail is connected to the Cottonwood Creek Trail and is free and open to the public, <http://www.livinghopecov.com/#/ministries>.

**Prayer Walk** - Choose from one to three friends to share this adventure with you. You may also do this alone, but there seems to be greater effectiveness in sharing the experience with at least one other person. Invite God to show you where he wants you to go and be willing to visit those places as God reveals them to you. Allow for some flexibility in your walking or driving route, but plan to stop in several, predetermined areas to target your prayers. You may want to consider the following locations: individual homes or streets, schools, churches, hospitals, businesses, shopping centers, beaches, parks, strategic viewpoints, <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/05/6-Walking-with-God-pdf>.

**Prayer Wall** - Share your joys and concerns with your church community. Post them (anonymously or with your name) on a designated wall in the church building so that others can join with you in prayers of

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thanksgiving, praise, confession, petition, and intercession. Before you leave, spend a minute praying for someone else's need.

**PRAYS (acronyms)** – This suggestion encourages churches to organize their whole congregational life around prayer. It is from *Church Planters' Training Book* – Chapter 2:

[http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Chapter\\_2\\_-\\_Prayer\\_and\\_Brokeness/](http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Chapter_2_-_Prayer_and_Brokeness/)].

**P**rioritize prayer in your life, in the team, and in the life of the church.

**R**ecruit a prayer team

**A**ll – Get everyone involved in prayer

**Y**es - 2 Corinthians 1:20, *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.* New International Version (NIV)

**S**ystems – Develop good systems for prayer (personally and in community)

**SOAP (acronyms)** – The following is an easy devotional strategy for small groups from *Church Planters' Training Book* – Chapter 2 [http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Chapter\\_2\\_-\\_Prayer\\_and\\_Brokeness/](http://www.churchplantingwiki.com/index.php/wiki/Chapter_2_-_Prayer_and_Brokeness/)

**S**cripture – read for 20 minutes

**O**bservation – journal about it for 20 minutes

**A**pplication – talk about it for 20 minutes with your group

**P**ray – pray about how God will shape your lives according to his Word.

**Special seasons of prayer** – Times of transition or discernment in a church provide opportunities to call the church to prayer. For example, for a 24-hour prayer vigil, the church creates a sign-up sheet that divides the 24 hours into segments. Individuals sign up to come to the church to pray through specific issues of the church and seek direction from God:

10 Days of Global Prayer (Hillcrest Covenant Church, Prairie Village, KS) -

<http://www.covchurch.org/idea-exchange/10-days-of-global-prayer/>.

**Week of Prayer** - Every year Covenant churches are encouraged to set aside a specific week to emphasize prayer and to pray about matters of common concern. Many congregations do this in January, but it can be done anytime during the year. A new prayer and devotional guide is developed each year to be used individually or in small groups: <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/?s=Week+of+Prayer>.