

PRAYER WATCH IN THE EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

HOW DID YOUR PRAYER WATCH START?

Over the years there have been various independent prayer groups operating under the banner of prayer in the Metropolis. It was however, after two conferences during 2001 and the establishment of the *Christian Transformation Network* five years ago, that the network emerged in its present form. The first organised effort was the mobilisation of prayer teams in certain geographical regions where a coordinator was assigned for every region. At first prayer initiatives were left in the hands of the regions and coordinators, but gradually these were more centrally coordinated. With the help of church leaders, congregational coordinators and teams were assigned and they met for a monthly breakfast during which preparation was done and initiatives discussed. The local presentation of the *Global Day of Prayer* in regions resulted in 'fraternals' (groupings of spiritual leaders) all over the metropolis where church leaders started taking responsibility for the prayer movement. This laid the foundation for the establishment of 24/7 prayer watches in which church leaders playing a vital role. Currently more than 40 churches have already committed themselves to 24/7 prayer. 24/7 Prayer was selected top priority of the transformation network's activities for 2008 and also of this year's *Global Day of Prayer*. Congregations are invited to each take one day per week or at least one day per month to pray for 24 hours.

Prayer for the *South African Police Services (SAPS)* and *Correctional Services*

On 17 August 2005, at a gathering held for the local *Transformation Network* and the SAPS, the station commander and two prayer leaders of the Sophiatown-SAPS came to share their testimonies. As a result of this, the then *Provincial Police Commissioner* requested the *Transformation Network* to establish prayer groups at all the stations within the metropolis. This goal was reached within a period of one year. At present 22 police stations are reached by prayer teams. Prayer teams are accountable to the local police chaplains as well as the coordinators of the network.

Opportunities within the *Correctional Services* also arose. Prayer teams are currently mobilised to visit a prison every week. The level of trust between the prayer network and both the SAPS and *Correctional Services* is of such a nature that the network is regularly invited to other prayer gatherings and also to give spiritual assistance to personnel.

WHAT TIPS CAN YOU GIVE OTHERS ON STARTING A PRAYER WATCH, OR THOSE WHO MIGHT BE STRUGGLING?

A basic infrastructure and dedicated staff who run a daily office is a necessity, especially in bigger centres like ours. An umbrella management with geographical coordinators works well. A network is built and maintained on the grounds of the relationship of mutual trust that develops and grows between role-players over a period of time. This means sacrifice, hours and hours spent in meetings, discussions, visits, telephone calls and correspondence. Meeting on a regular basis is essential and the frequency is determined by the initiative.

WHAT MUST ONE GUARD AGAINST?

At all costs avoid the perception that a prayer movement is the domain of individuals or a group of people. Establish the principle that churches and ordinary members hold the key to a successful geographical prayer movement. Prayer leaders are under the authority of their local leaders and the congregation coordinators must be thoroughly enlightened as to their role and function. The prayer team must at all times be in support of their spiritual leaders, submitting to them and mindful of an attitude of criticism, the wish to dominate or to manipulate them.

DO YOU SEE YOUR PRAYERS BEARING FRUIT?

We see doors opening. Schools, police stations, prisons, government departments, businesses and many more

doors are busy opening. You can walk in anywhere and ask the people if you can pray for them and there will be a positive response. Many will ask that you come back and others want you to stay. If only we had enough people for the work! Church unity has grown remarkably the past few years and cooperation is getting better by the day. On the economic front there is strong growth in tourism, both foreign and domestic tourism. More and more tourists are using Port Elizabeth as a destination and departure point for their holidays. Something we might also take note of is that we have had only one short power failure this year! There is power in prayer!

CONTACT DETAILS

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