

# International Women's Day of Prayer

March 7, 2015

## *"It Is Well"* *(The Woman, the Prophet, and the Prayer)*

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*Prepared by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist*  
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Dear Women's Ministries Leader,

The *International Women's Day of Prayer* is a wonderful time when women can collectively seek God, realizing that intercessory prayer does make a difference.

Carolyn Sutton, the author of our resource materials for 2015, "It Is Well: The Woman, The Prophet and The Prayer," highlights the importance of intercessory prayer as part of God's plan for us.

Throughout the Bible, God has given some very specific promises regarding intercessory prayer. James 5:16 says, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (NIV). Furthermore, Ellen G. White shares that, "It is *part of God's plan* to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask." (italics supplied)

This packet of materials for the International Women's Day of Prayer contains two parts. The first is the resource packet for the day: "It Is Well: The Woman, The Prophet and The Prayer." The second part contains two program ideas for Sabbath afternoon, "In Celebration of Prayer!" and "Turning Need into a Prayer Ministry." If you choose not to use these program ideas with your Day of Prayer program, they may serve nicely for another Women's Ministries Program later in the year.

If you want to change or modify these materials, feel free to do so in order to best serve the worship style of your group.

The entities we will remember with our special prayer emphasis during the International Women's Day of Prayer in 2015 are the South Pacific, Trans-European and West-Central Africa Divisions, especially women who are living in areas of conflict.

I believe in the value of women praying for other women. Women understand one another; the compassion we offer each other is a catalyst for healing and restoration through prayer.

May God bless you in your ministry as you support and encourage other women to grow spiritually.

Grace and peace,

Heather-Dawn Small  
Director

## About the Author

Carolyn Rathbun Sutton recently became editor of the annual women's devotional books produced by the General Conference Women's Ministries. After teaching in the Seventh-day Adventist educational system for years (mostly in the western United States and central Africa), Carolyn edited *Guide*, her church's publication for junior-age young people.

Marrying Jim Sutton almost 20 years ago made Carolyn one half of a lay ministry team. Active in their local community and home church in Alabama, they have also been involved in prison ministry and short-term mission trips. Since 2006 the Suttons have served as volunteer field representatives for Adventist World Radio. For five of her retirement years, Carolyn produced and co-hosted a weekly television program for Better Live Television in Grants Pass, Oregon.

A cancer survivor, Carolyn knows that prayer is the lifeline that directly connects one's heart with Jesus. Her favorite Bible passages are Psalm 91 and John 14-17 which are all related to prayer. Her interests include herb and flower gardening and acoustic stringed instruments. Jim and Carolyn's blended family includes two adult sons, two daughters-in-law, and three grandchildren.

**World-wide prayer concern:** Mission to the Cities, unreached Territories and Victims of Abuse.

**Emphasis for this year:**

In an effort to make our prayers more specific, we have designated certain divisions and prayer needs for each year. We hope that you will work these into your program. If you have women in your congregation, or who can visit your church, from these designated divisions, it will add to the enjoyment and education of your day.

**Divisions to be remembered in prayer:**

**South Pacific Division (SPD)**

*Territory: Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Islands of the Pacific lying south of the Equator (including Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and others) between Longitude 140 East and Longitude 120 West, and Kiribati north of the Equator; comprising the Australian, and New Zealand Pacific Union Conferences; and the Papua New Guinea, and Trans Pacific Union Missions.*

**Requests:**

1. Pray for our women and girls who are victims of domestic violence. In some of our territories, two out of every three women are victims of domestic violence and up to 50% are raped.
2. Pray that the women discover the purpose for their lives and the importance of a close relationship with God on a daily basis.
3. Pray for our women to realize their importance to their local church and to see that serving God in whatever way He has gifted them is important to the mission of the church as we await Jesus' return.
4. Pray for our ministry to our teenage girls and women under the age of 35.

## **Trans-European Division (TED)**

**Territory:** *Aland Islands, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Faeroe Islands, Finland, Greece, Greenland, Guernsey, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom, and the southern portion of Cyprus; comprising the Adriatic, Baltic, British, Finland, Hungarian, Netherlands, Norwegian, Polish, and South-East European Union Conferences; the Danish, and Swedish Union of Churches Conferences; and the Cyprus Section, Greek Mission, and Iceland Conference.*

### **Requests:**

1. Prayer for Women's Ministries in our Division will be much appreciated. We are only now starting to catch up with many parts of the world. It has taken a while for many of our Unions to catch the vision of what Women's Ministries can achieve.
2. Although Poland is a country which is predominately run by men, I feel that Women's Ministries has a big part to play. Pray that ways may be opened for women to be more involved in the leadership of the church.
3. Our sisters in Greece are having a very hard time because of economic problems. Usually the women bear the biggest burden. Please remember them in prayer.

## **West-Central Africa Division (WAD)**

**Territory:** *Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo; comprising the Eastern Nigeria, Northern Nigeria, Southern Ghana, and Western Nigeria Union Conferences; and the Cameroon, Central African, Eastern Sahel, Northern Ghana, West African, and Western Sahel Union Missions.*

### **Requests:**

1. Please pray about the problem of Ebola in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea and the West-Central Africa Division, Women's Ministries department's response to the outbreak
2. Pray for the problem of oppression in some parts of our territory
3. Pray for our new sisters in Mali who are studying the Bible with us after the Women's Ministries evangelism in that territory.
4. Pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit for all women.

## Introduction to Program Materials

We all have individuals and situations of concern about which we pray. However, over time—when we don't experience the exact answers for which we've been hoping—we may become weary in intercessory prayer. We may even be tempted (1) to pray with less urgency and regularity than before, or (2) to abandon those particular prayers altogether. After all, "If that person was going to change for the better, he certainly would have done so by now, right?" Or, "God is obviously not making a difference in my situation of concern, so maybe what I'm praying is not within His will. Perhaps I should stop my intercessory prayers."

Yet as the story of the Old Testament Shunammite woman reminds us, we cannot see behind the heavenly veil where Christ, even now, is interceding on our behalf and on behalf of our prayerful pleas. We cannot see Him—so close to us . . . so close to the Father—continually laying hold of Heaven's wisdom, promises, and mercy on our behalf. Though we cannot personally witness His divine passion and perseverance, Jesus is there as He promised He would be (John 14:12-18). The Shunammite's story teaches us that no matter what trial we are suffering, no matter what loss we are grieving, Jesus has not left us to struggle on alone. And He never will.

Most assuredly, as the story of the Shunammite reveals, our prayers repeatedly draw Him into the details of our lives when we intercede both for others and for ourselves. In the words of an old hymn, "Jesus is near to comfort and cheer." He is faithful. He is good. And He is ours—both now and forevermore. Hallelujah!

## General Ideas for the Program

The suggestions in the Prayer Activities Section of this packet all center around the theme of intercessory prayer.

The primary objective of intercession, of course, is to reconcile sinners with their heavenly Father, bringing souls into the kingdom of God. We are ambassadors, the Apostle Paul says, helping the redeemed become one with their Creator.

Another very important objective of intercessory prayer, however, is to facilitate a spirit of unity within our own families and within the church family. Therefore, this packet provides activity ideas not only for personal and family intercession ministry but also for corporate intercession ministry. When brothers and sisters pray and then work together for the salvation of souls, they draw closer to one another in heart and spirit. They are actually answering the prayer Christ prayed for them in the Garden of Gethsemane when He said, “. . . I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you . . .” (John 17:20, 21, NIV).

Church decoration ideas supporting the theme of intercession could include artfully-draped see-through fabrics representing the veil that separated the Holy from the Most Holy place in the temple, an incense burner, the faint fragrance of incense or some other appropriate fragrance. The scents represent “the merits and intercession of Christ, His perfect righteousness, which through faith is imputed to His people, and which can alone make the worship of sinful beings acceptable to God” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 353).

A Children’s Story handout could be one of the suggested drawings at the end of this packet. Another children’s resource would be to google “free Bible coloring pages” online where one can find other artsy prayer resources. The coloring pages under “The Lord’s Prayer” on [ministry-to-children.com/time-to-pray-coloring-page-for-children](http://ministry-to-children.com/time-to-pray-coloring-page-for-children) are more ethnically diverse in depiction of children than drawings on some of the other sites.

## Acknowledgements

This Day of Prayer Emphasis packet has resulted, in part, from the prayers and special contributions of several women. In this packet’s Afternoon Prayer Activities and Resources, the prayer-related testimonies in Program Idea #1, “In Celebration of Intercessory Prayer,” are excerpted from the “Living His Prayers” section of the upcoming 2016 General Conference Women’s Ministries devotional book.

I am most appreciative of three busy women, Dr. Deborah Harris, and Chaplains Patty Hyland and Cordell Liebrandt, who graciously took the time to share in writing how God led them to use a personal need or challenging life situation as the foundation on which to build their respective intercessory prayer ministries. The contributions of these ladies are included in the script/readings for Program Idea #2 of the Afternoon Prayer Activities and Resources section. That program is entitled “Turning Need into a Prayer Ministry.”



## BULLETIN IDEAS

### Prayer Request Slip:

To coordinate with the theme, plan to dedicate some space in the bulletin for people to write in their prayer needs—especially their prayers of intercession, both for themselves and for others. You can put this “prayer space” at the bottom of a bulletin page so it can be detached easily.

Perhaps the Women’s Ministries leader could stand up in front before the congregational prayer and invite the petitioners to come forward and put their prayer requests in her open Bible. She could assure the congregation that the church’s Women’s Ministries (and Prayer Ministries, if applicable) will daily lift up each request for the next month.

### Prayer Quotes for the Bulletin:

- “My Father is interested in all that concerns me. He wants to help whatever my need may be, and no matter how major or minor the problem. I *shall keep asking*” (Alyce Pickett).
- “We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties” (Oswald Chambers).
- "The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:15, NKJV).
- "Have you seen the amazing healing power of prayer? As faithful Christians lift a sufferer up to God, He works in the body, but also in the heart and soul. Know someone who is ill? Pray for physical health to return. But don't forget to include spiritual needs, for the Great Physician treats the whole person. Some spiritual issue may be the real problem that requires healing" ( *Everyday Encouragement Journal—Spiritual Refreshment for Women*, p. 153).

## **Suggested Order of Worship Service**

### **Women's Ministries Day of Prayer March 7, 2015**

*Prelude*

*Platform participants enter*

*Doxology*

*Invocation*

*Offertory*

*Offering Response*

*Offertory Prayer*

*Hymn: "Standing on the Promises" [#518]*

*Scripture Readings: Isaiah 3:10 and 2 Kings 4:25, 26*

"Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds" (Isaiah 3:10, NIV).

"And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel. So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, 'Look, the Shunammite woman! <sup>26</sup> Please run now to meet her, and say to her, "*Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?*"' And she answered, '*It is well*'" (2 Kings 4:25, 26, NKJV).

*Intercessory Prayer*

***Children's Story: "Late Night Rescue"***

*Special Music*

***SERMON: "It Is Well (the Woman, the Prophet, and the Prayer)"***

*Congregational Hymn: "It Is Well with My Soul" [#530]*

*Benediction*

*Postlude*

## CHILDREN'S STORY

### Late Night Rescue\*

**[Note to storyteller:** feel free to substitute a girl's name that would be more appropriate for the local culture and to which the children could more easily relate.]

Nine-year-old Gail and little brother and sister were at their aunt's house. Auntie was babysitting them while their parents attended an evening party. Now it was bedtime but the children's parents had not yet returned from the party. Auntie bundled them into their coats and tucked them into one of her beds before going downstairs to wait for their parents to arrive.

Little brother and sister fell asleep quickly, but Gail couldn't go to sleep. She tried lying on her back, thinking it would be the best way to fit them all comfortably onto that one bed.

Suddenly Gail's tongue slipped into her throat. It blocked her breathing, and she couldn't take in any air. Gail felt completely paralyzed as she lay there, unable to breathe. She was aware of her siblings sleeping peacefully beside her and of Auntie downstairs waiting for her parents. Yet, unable to breathe, Gail could not even call for help. In fact, she couldn't move a finger!

All at once Gail remembered what Mother and Dad had taught her from the Bible. She remembered how God had saved the Children of Israel at the Red Sea when they prayed for help. She remembered how God had empowered David with courage as he prayed while looking up into the cruel face of Goliath, the giant.

No one else was there to pray for Gail. So from inside her heart, Gail silently cried out to God. It was one of the shortest prayers of her life: "Lord, if You don't have anything for me to do in this life, then let me die. But if You have a purpose for me, please let me live."

As soon as Gail ended her prayer, she felt something. It felt like strong hands gently pushing on her back. She found herself being turned over onto her side. Then her tongue fell out of her throat. She was able to fill her lungs with a big gulp of air.

Now fully awake, Gail looked around the room to see who had rescued her from suffocating to death. She saw no one else in the room besides little brother and sister, still asleep beside her in bed. Her aunt had not come back upstairs to check on them. No, no one else was in the room that she could see.

Children, let me ask you a question. Do you think someone else was in the room? [allow a moment for children to respond]

Is there anyone here who thinks that when God heard Gail's prayer, He just might have sent an angel to help her? That's what Gail believes happened that late night. She will never forget that answer to her prayer as long as she lives. Gail, who eventually grew up, says that remembering how God rescued her as a child still helps her trust Him today for help. She knows that God hears and answers her prayers. He will do the same for us.

You know, children, it doesn't matter if we can see God's answer to our prayers or not. What matters is that we can always trust Him to hear and answer our prayers one way or another, sooner or later.

Aren't you glad that we can talk to Jesus about anything? We can talk to Him for ourselves, and we can talk to Him for others. This is known as intercessory prayer.

Let's talk to Jesus right now. Would one of you boys or girls like to pray for all of us as we finish this story time together? [If no child volunteers, say a special blessing over the children in prayer and dismiss them to return to their seats.]

\*Story is adapted from Gail Frampton's devotional entitled "Miracle at Nine." It is scheduled for publication in the 2016 General Conference Women's Ministries devotional book.

## SERMON

### It Is Well

#### (The Woman, the Prophet, and the Prayer)

By Carolyn Rathbun Sutton

Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds” (Isaiah 3:10, NIV).

“And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel. So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, ‘Look, the Shunammite woman!

<sup>26</sup> Please run now to meet her, and say to her, “*Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?*”” And she answered, ‘*It is well*’” (2 Kings 4:25, 26, NKJV).

Good morning. I trust that you are already experiencing the blessings of this special day, God’s beautiful and holy Sabbath day.

It was 3:00 o’clock in the morning. Claudette could not sleep.\* And there was that voice again. “Pray for your dad,” it said clearly and distinctly. Claudette slipped out of bed as quietly as possible. She had a sense of urgency and prayed earnestly for about an hour.

“Lord, whatever is going on with my dad,” she prayed, “please intervene and deliver him.” The following morning Claudette and her husband continued the prayer for her father. Not long after, the news came. Claudette tells the story in her own words.

“My dad, an experienced seaman, had gone out on one of his regular fishing trips late one evening with my youngest brother. My dad could accurately predict the weather. However, this time unexpected fierce winds whipped up towering waves. The boat took on water faster than my father and brother could bail it out. To lighten the little ship, they first threw overboard the evening catch of fish. Next, the outboard motor. Despite their best efforts, however, the boat sank. Dad and my brother clung to two buoys [objects that float on water in a lake, bay, or river] for dear life.

“When my father and brother failed to return home the next morning, police, family members, and friends set out to sea in search of the missing pair. Many people were praying. When night fell, searchers came ashore, admitting they feared the worst. One of my brothers, however, refused to listen to these prophets of doom. Even after dark he and a friend continued the search, praying fervently. At 3:00 o’clock that morning—as God was calling me to intercessory prayer for my father—the beam of my brother’s flashlight was illuminating two persons floating

on the waves. My dad and my younger brother, barely alive after more than twelve hours of battering by the rough seas.” What an amazing story this is!

So let me ask you this: do you believe that the intercessory prayers of Claudette and others resulted in her father and brother being saved?

Throughout the Bible, God has given us some very specific promises regarding intercessory prayer. For example, James 5:16 says, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (NIV). Furthermore, Ellen G. White shares that, “It is *part of God’s plan* to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask” (1, italics supplied). What an astounding statement!

Claudette’s intercessory prayer for her father brings to mind another story, which unfolds in the Old Testament. The story is about another woman whose prayers made a difference. As we review together this short, but gripping, story we will also discover three prayer principles that make intercessory prayer so effective.

We are about to embark on a stormy voyage which will take us through the depths of trial, loss, and emotional pain. Yet when we invite God to become involved in the details of any life storm, He will prove Himself faithful, as we shall see in today’s story. God’s wise responses to our prayers in the past will give us not only courage for the present but also hope for the future. Our prayerful wrestling bouts with God will also become part of our personal testimonies that will woo others toward their own personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Because of Who God is, we will always be able—no matter our lot—to confidently and consistently proclaim, “It *shall* be well, and it *is* well—even now—with my soul.”

Let’s begin our story of the woman, the prophet, and the prayer.

### **The woman and the prophet**

She was a young, influential woman married to a wealthy, older man (2 Kings 4:8, 14). The couple worshipped with a faith community on holy days (*vs* 23), enjoying the respect of fellow townspeople. Though they lived in an era of political schemings, corrupt national leaders, and military threats from surrounding nations, the husband and wife lived comfortably in Shunem located on the southern border of Issachar (Joshua 19:18). The city overlooked a critical pass down into the Valley of Jezreel. (2)

The story of the Shunammite, as the Bible identifies this woman, first unfolds in 2 Kings, chapter 4, beginning in verse 8. “One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat.

<sup>9</sup> She said to her husband, 'I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God.' <sup>10</sup> Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us.' <sup>11</sup> One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. <sup>12</sup> He said to his servant Gehazi, 'Call the Shunammite.' So he called her, and she stood before him." Because the woman had gone to all that trouble for Elisha and his servant, she was asked, "Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?" (vs 13, NIV).

The woman replied, "I have a home among my own people." In other words, she was content with what she had. She expected no remuneration for the little guestroom which the prophet could access by a staircase on the outside wall for rest and privacy in his comings and goings. However, in Elisha's gratitude for her merciful kindness, he was now willing to intercede with people in high places on her behalf, as she had interceded with her husband for the prophet's needs.

Elisha's servant Gehazi discreetly observed to the prophet that the woman was childless and that her husband was older. So Elisha told the woman that in one year's time she would be the mother of a son (vs 16). In her joy and near disbelief she asked for assurance that he was telling the truth. A year later the Shunammite gave birth to a baby boy just as God, through the prophet, had promised. Now the Shunammite becomes identified by this new relationship, "the mother of the child" (vs 30).

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promised, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matt. 5:7, NIV). What an encouragement for us to be kind to others, even when doing so is not convenient. The Shunammite's act of merciful kindness to the prophet set off a series of divine events that would carry spiritual benefits far beyond herself.

### **Tragedy in Shunem**

One day when the Shunammite's son was old enough to be out helping with his father's workers in the fields, he felt a violent pain in his head. His concerned father ordered a servant, "Carry the child to his mother." The Shunammite did everything she could for her child, cradling him in her arms until noon. Then he died (vs 20). The shocked mother carried her little one upstairs and gently laid him on the guestroom bed.

Few there are among us who have not sat beside a dying loved one or family friend, silently pleading for a miracle of healing. Few there are among us who, when the miracle does not happen, haven't asked "Why?" Perhaps the mother's placing the boy's lifeless form on the prophet's upstairs bed (vs 21), instead of her own, was a way of asking God, Why?

From a human perspective, all looked hopeless. In this deepest personal crisis, the Shunammite made God her first refuge. Somehow she knew the truth of what Jesus would say centuries later: “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23, KJV). And oh, how she wanted to believe!

A desperate plan quickly formed in her mind, a plan she would not share even with her husband. She requested a household servant to bring her a donkey so she could ride as quickly as possible to the dwelling of “the man of God.” When the Shunammite’s husband asked the reason for her unexpected trip, the woman assured him, “It shall be well” (vs 23).

### **Intercessory Prayer Principle #1: Pray with faith in God’s promises.**

What an astounding statement from a mother who had just lost her only child! It is a statement of faith in God’s promise. The prophet Elisha had told her she would be the mother of a son. Though she didn’t understand this sudden, tragic turn of events, she somehow still believed. Ellen White writes that “Faith is the essential element of prevailing prayer. ‘He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.’” (3) The Bible explains that “faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see” (Heb. 11:1).

In any life crisis, we too can “draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings” (Heb. 10:22). Why? Because “he who promised is faithful” (v 23). We are also admonished—even in the midst of life’s relentless storms—to manifest “an unwavering, humble faith in His power and His willingness to save. When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name.” (4)

Perhaps you, as with the Shunammite, have experienced such depth of loss that your only solace and hope is in God’s promises. One night, at the midnight hour, Lucile was hovering between life and death in a hospital’s intensive care cancer unit. As with Gail in our children’s story today, Lucile had no one present to intercede on her behalf. Feebly she interceded for herself though her over-riding desire at that moment was to sleep the sleep of death, not only to find relief from the intense physical pain but also to find relief from her emotional pain. You see, her mother had died just a few days earlier. Yet because of her cancer hospitalization, Lucile had not been able to be with her mother at the moment of her death nor attend the subsequent service held to memorialize her life.

“Oh, God,” the sick woman pleaded, “Your Word says that thousands of angels do Your bidding (Rev. 5:11). It’s a promise! You also *promised* that angels are ‘ministering spirits’ tending the needs of ‘heirs of salvation’ (Heb. 1:14). Though I no longer wish to live, I am still one of Your heirs. So, Lord, please send me an extra angel right now to comfort me, to sustain me—



whether I pass through the doors of death tonight or whether I wake up to this pain again tomorrow morning.”

At that instant, a long-ago, previously-memorized Bible promise pushed into Lucile’s medication-clouded memory. She heard the words in her head: “This I recall to mind, therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed. Because His compassions fail not, They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness” (Lam. 3:21-23, NKJV). Despite her chills, nausea, physical pain, and emotional anguish, Lucile drifted off to sleep.

Early the next morning a woman from the hospital chaplaincy department entered the room. She greeted Lucile but said no more as she silently paced about the hospital room before pausing to bow her head. Finally she stepped over to Lucile’s bed and took her hand. Looking into the pale face of that Adventist woman, the chaplain said with wonder in her voice, “I don’t know who you are but I must tell you that I feel the presence of God in this room. And I sense hope. Please tell me . . . to what denomination you belong?”

The chaplain’s words affirmed God’s answer to Lucile’s promise-based midnight prayer. Despite her weak condition, Lucile, believing that the “extra angel” was still present, was able to witness about her faith to the hospital chaplain.

Pastor Mark Finley describes faith as “the assurance that ultimately God will fulfill all our dreams.” (5) How true! And God will often fulfill them in ways we never imagined. Though the Shunammite didn’t know how God would respond to her on-going petition for her now-deceased son, she somehow knew He would stand behind His promise. That is why she could say to her husband, “It shall be well” even as she watched the servant hastily saddle the donkey. The woman and the servant hurried off, beginning a rigorous 16-mile (25.6-kilometer) ride to Mt. Carmel. It was really a pursuit of God—through the person of His prophet Elisha.

How the world needs this kind of faith today! “. . . faith that will lay hold on the promises of God’s word and refuse to let go until Heaven hears,” writes Ellen White. “Faith such as this connects us closely with Heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness.” (6)

### **Intercessory Prayer Principle #2: Pray with perseverance.**

The Shunammite’s long, determined ride to Mt. Carmel demonstrates a second principle of intercessory prayer—the principle of perseverance. When we intercede, we must pray with perseverance.

Perseverance is also defined as persistence, patience, or endurance. The apostle James demonstrates the relationship between these two great prayer principles, faith and

perseverance. James writes that “. . . the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:3, 4, HCSB).

The author of Hebrews counsels, “And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross . . .” (Heb. 12:1-3, NIV). To the Romans Paul suggests that “we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.” (Rom. 5:3, 4, KJV).

The longer the Shunammite exercised *faith*, the more she was able to *persevere* in her prayer quest. Surprised to see the woman riding toward his residence, Elisha dispatched his servant Gehazi to inquire about her family’s welfare. All she would answer in response to any of his questions was, “It is well.” “It is well.” (2 Kings 4:26). Up the hill she pushed until she could fall at the prophet’s feet and, in desperation, grasp his ankles.

Shocked at her erratic behavior, Gehazi tried to thrust her aside. Elisha stopped him. Seeing the woman’s anguish as she alluded to God’s earlier promise regarding her son, Elisha suddenly understood. He immediately ordered Gehazi to Shunem to “Lay my staff on the boy’s face.”

At this point the woman could have followed the prophet’s servant to her home. But now her prayerful faith and perseverance lead her to demonstrate a third great principle found in intercessory prayer.

Boldness.

### **Intercession Prayer Principle #3: Pray with boldness.**

“As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you,” the woman declared to the prophet (2 Kings 4:30, NIV). [Note: the speaker may—or may not—wish to reference that these words perhaps bring to Elisha’s memory a time when he boldly proclaimed the exact affirmation to his mentor and prophetic intercessor, Elijah, just before his heavenly ascent in a chariot of fire (see 2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6).]

God honors holy boldness. In fact, Jesus encourages it!

Jesus Christ, our great Example, is also our heavenly Intercessor (Heb. 4:14). It is He who admonishes us to “hold fast.” From personal experience, He understands our pain. He “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15, 16, NIV).

Jesus will complete the good work in our lives that He began and has promised to finish (Phil. 1:6).

Moreover, Jesus will finish the “good work” He began in the lives of our children and of anyone else for whom we are interceding. He has promised to work with anyone who chooses to believe in Him, and He died for “whosoever” (John 3:16).

Our intercessions—in faith, perseverance, and boldness—will, in time, wrest from the enemy’s grasp many who appear to be slipping away from eternal life.

### **Triumph in Shunem**

Back in Shunem with Elisha, the woman waits as the prophet prays and works upstairs over the lifeless form of her son. Her prayer for the boy has now become Elisha’s prayer to the God of miracles (2 Kings 4:33). Between attempts to warm the child’s cold body, the prophet paces and prays. Downstairs the mother waits and prays.

In heaven’s time and heaven’s way, the sovereign God puts new, living breath back into the lungs of the child. The boy revives and sneezes seven times. The “holy man of God” carries the resurrected son downstairs to place in his mother’s arms. The Shunammite falls at the prophet’s feet, scarcely comprehending what God has just done for an exhausted woman and a travel-weary prophet—through their united prayer of intercession.

“So was the faith of the woman rewarded. Christ, the great life-giver, restored her son to her. In like manner will His faithful ones be rewarded when, at His coming, death loses its sting and the grave is robbed of the victory it has claimed. Then will He restore to His servants the children that have been taken from them by death.” (7)

What a beautiful illustration of what our previous Savior does for us every time we pray to Him! As the focused prayer of the Shunammite became the focused prayer of the prophet . . . so our prayers of intercession become the very prayers of Jesus before His Father’s throne! Does this living reality not thrill your soul and bring courage to your heart? Especially during these turbulent times in this world’s history?

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25, NKJV). What an unspeakable and undeserved privilege!

We have an Intercessor—“holy, harmless [innocent], undefiled”— who makes our prayers as His while interceding on our behalf! Furthermore, Christ not only improves and expands on our prayers (Rom. 8:26), He gives us the strength and grace we need as we wait upon God’s often-delayed answers. Hope and courage, writes Ellen White, are the fruit of faith. “Despondency is

sinful and unreasonable. God is able and willing 'more abundantly' (Heb. 6:17) to bestow upon His servants the strength they need for test and trial . . . . And this He does in His own time and way . . . ." (8) What a Lord! What an Intercessor! What a Savior!

### **Christ is interceding right now**

Let's not be tempted to doubt God's ability to respond to intercessory prayers today as He did in Bible times. "Were not miracles wrought by Christ and His apostles?" asks God's servant. "The same compassionate Saviour lives today, and He is as willing to listen to the prayer of faith as when He walked visibly among men." (9) And He *does* answer.

Mere Narabe taught in an Adventist school in Fiji. One Sabbath she visited a neighboring village where no Adventists live. She invited the children to come sing songs about Jesus and listen to stories. Thus a children's Bible hour was born in that village. The little group of children grew so large that the headmaster's house, where they met, could no longer hold them all. So he arranged to let Mere meet with the children in a room under the village's only church.

One little girl, Susi, often attended the children's Bible hour. When her grandmother learned she was attending the meetings, she told Susi not to go anymore. But Susi was determined not to miss the children's meeting, so she would sneak away from her work and stand outside the meeting room and listen through the window.

Mere knew that Susi's grandmother forbade her to attend the meetings, but she did not know that Susi was hiding outside and listening. Apparently Susi did this for several months.

After only three months of doing her best, Mere's heavy commitments in her own village forced her to stop holding the Bible hour meetings. She often wondered whether the children's meetings had made any difference in the lives of those who attended. Yet Mere knew of no one in the other village who would nurture the seeds of Bible truth that she had planted so carefully for just a few short weeks.

All Mere could do was pray. And pray she did for those distant children. In *faith* she interceded for them. With *perseverance*, she continued her prayers over the next few years. With holy *boldness*, Mere pleaded that God would touch at least one soul through her short-lived story hour ministry.

Many years later Mere returned to that village on a Sabbath day. Imagine her surprise and delight to see an Adventist church there! She slipped into what was evidently testimony time in the morning's services. Mere saw a young woman stand to her feet. The young woman testified about how she had first learned about the Adventist truth.

“When I was a little girl,” she began, “a woman came to our village to hold story hour for children. I could not come in, because my grandmother prohibited me, but I stood outside and listened. I remembered what this woman had taught us. So when Adventists came later to hold meetings in our village, I knew that they were sharing the truth. I attended their meetings. I joined that church. Today my husband and children are all Adventists.”

Mere recognized the young woman as “little” Susi from so many years earlier. After the worship hour, Susi found Mere and told her that most of the other children from that children’s Bible hour had become Seventh-day Adventists as well. Mere’s heart sang as she realized that her little children’s story hour, which ran for only three months, had planted so many seeds that grew to a beautiful harvest for God. She had done her best and then continued to intercede on behalf of the children and their village. God did the rest. Amen! (10)

### **From test to testimony**

Since the lateness of the hour does not permit us to share all the details of today’s Bible story, take some time this afternoon to read the rest of the Shunammite’s story which appears in 2 Kings 8:1-6. The woman’s test—losing her son—became her testimony. And, years later, God chose the perfect moment for this very woman to enter the court of the king and share her testimony with national leaders—the story of what an all-powerful God did in response to intercessory prayer. Once again (this time recorded in 2 Kings 8), God rewarded the Shunammite for her faith—this time, providing for her temporal needs during a time of famine and social upheaval.

### **God calls us to intercession**

Our world today is also experiencing troubled times. Yet let’s never forget that the Shunammite’s God is our God too. The same God who heard that mother’s prayer—and the pleas of the prophet who joined her in prayer—hears our prayers as well. In fact, He calls us to prayer. “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17, KJV). Just as surely as God called Claudette to pray for her father who was lost at sea, He calls you and me to intercede for those around us who are drowning in the sin-caused storms of life.

Perhaps even you, yourself, are struggling to survive a life storm. Maybe the angry waves sweeping over you are waves of grief or financial loss or persecution or loneliness or hunger or disease or children making hurtful choices.

Whatever storm is buffeting you, remember that Jesus is bigger than that storm. Jesus is bigger than *any* storm. And He longs for each of us to invite Him into the very details of our lives—through prayer. Never forget these promises that we read earlier from the Bible and the Spirit

of Prophecy. Let me repeat just a few of them.

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” Amen!

And, “It is part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.” Why do we pray so little when “God’s heart of infinite love yearns toward [us], ready to give [us] more than [we] can ask or think”? (11)

Understanding this, how can we *not* renew our commitment today to intercede for others? And how can we not renew our commitment today to intercede for ourselves, knowing we are supported—in prayer—by Jesus Himself?

What hope! What peace!

With full assurance in our heavenly Intercessor we can proclaim, along with the Shunammite, “It *shall* be well.” And as she found comfort in the intercession of the prophet praying her own prayer, we too can rest in the heavenly work of Jesus Christ who makes our prayers His own before the throne of the Father.

Even in troubled times, let us proclaim, along with the Shunammite, “It shall be well.” Because of both earthly *and* Heavenly intercession, we can also affirm that “It *is* well. It is *well* with my soul!”

## Sermon Footnotes

\*Adapted from Claudette Garbutt-Harding's devotional, scheduled for publication in the 2016 General Conference Women's Ministries annual devotional book.

1. Ellen G. White. *The Great Controversy*, p. 525.
2. "Shunem." *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985, p. 948.
3. Ellen G. White. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 157.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
5. Mark Finley. "Experiencing the Power of Faith." *Adventist Review*, September 24, 2014, p. 6.
6. White. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 157.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
9. White. *The Great Controversy*, p. 525.
10. Adapted from Charlotte Ishkanian's "Children's Bible Hour Reaps Harvest." *Mission*, 2004 (used by permission).
11. Ellen G. White. *Steps to Christ*, p. 94.

## AFTERNOON PROGRAM IDEAS AND RESOURCES

### Program Idea #1:

#### In Celebration of Prayer

[A prayer testimony service based on readings from the forthcoming 2016 General Conference Women’s Ministries annual devotional book, the proceeds of which go to educate college-age woman around the world]

#### *Song Service*

#### *Welcome and Opening Prayer*

#### *Scripture Reading*

And they overcame him [the great dragon . . . that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan (Rev. 12: 9)] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony . . . (Rev. 12:11, KJV).

#### *Program Introduction*

**Program facilitator:** Good afternoon. During this Day of Prayer emphasis service we are going to listen to several brief—but very encouraging—contemporary testimonies about prayer.

Do you remember what Jesus said about our own prayer testimonies at this point in Earth’s history? In Revelation 12:11, He—through John the Revelator—said that the saints would overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and “by the word of their testimony”!

Ellen White wrote that “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history” (*Life Sketches*, p. 196). Sharing our testimonies about God’s involvement in our lives is a powerful way to help us remember His leading and teaching in our past.

As you listen to these testimonies for the next few minutes from women around the world, I’d also like you to be thinking about a prayer-related experience in your own life that you could share. After we hear these testimonies, I will open the floor for an old-fashioned testimony service. I invite you to be ready with at least a snippet of your testimony, at least, enough of your prayer-related testimony to encourage us to renew our prayer efforts—both for others and for ourselves.

**[Note to facilitator:** the following testimonies are scheduled for inclusion in the 2016 General Conference Women’s Ministries devotional book from the month of July which will focus



particularly on prayer]. Sit back now and be blessed as you listen. Adjust the number of testimonies you read to the time parameters of your program. For the sake of variety, you may wish to ask a number of individuals to take part in the following readings.]

**Story #1: “The Recumbent Bike”** by Jill Rhynard

(Jill is retired in Vernon, British Columbia, Canada. Due to a disability, life has some challenges, but she enjoys traveling. She has two married sons who live in the United States.)

**Text:** You can be sure that God will take care of everything you need, his generosity exceeding even yours in the glory that pours from Jesus. Phil. 4:19, MSG.

Going to the gym was no longer safe as I have a neurological condition. My neurologist suggested that I buy a recumbent bike so I could continue to exercise in safety. Checking various on-line classifieds proved unfruitful, and as summer rolled around I forgot my quest.

Fast forward to September. A friend and I were shopping at a Costco discount store when I noticed the store had recumbent bikes (a type of bicycle ridden in a recumbent position) for sale. Although they were quite expensive, I realized I still needed one. The following Monday I decided to check the on-line classifieds once again. Nothing. Then it dawned on me that God is interested even in the small details of our lives, so I prayed about it.

When I was running an errand later that morning I noticed a sporting goods consignment store that I had never seen. Should I stop or keep going? My illness requires expending a significant amount of energy to do basic things. I just wanted to go home. But with the words *go* and *stay* playing in my head, I noticed there was a place to park close to the door. I went in . . . and just about tripped over a recumbent bike that was just inside the door! The salesman said it had been brought in over the weekend—before I had even prayed! The bicycle was so perfect that I bought it on the spot.

Now, how could I get it home? I was so excited about my miracle that I went on Facebook (online social network) as soon as I got home—although I didn’t say anything about needing to get the bike home. Within 20 minutes a friend called and asked, “Do you need help getting it home?” Her husband was home that day and could pick up the bike for me. Wow! He stopped at the church to pick the pastor to help him. It was another miracle that they were both available.

The two men picked up the bike and delivered it to my place within an hour of my purchase.

Sometimes we take only the big things to God in prayer. Yet He is interested in all aspects of our lives. We just need to remember to go to Him and not limit Him. There are many ways for Him to look after our needs. What needs can you take to Him today?

**Story #2: “I Know He Cares”** by Sharmila Rasanayagam-Osuri (Originally from Sri Lanka, Sharmila now lives in Kensington, Maryland, with her husband, her son, and her daughter. She enjoys reading and music.)

**Text:** He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. Ps. 91:15.

God has promised that He will answer even before we call. I experienced this first hand when we were on a trip visiting India. The train journey from Delhi to Pune seemed to take forever, but thankfully we were just one night away from reaching our destination. Everyone was busy doing their own thing. All of a sudden a passenger my parents had befriended noticed that the pouch my Dad had around his wrist was missing. This wouldn't have been an issue except that this was the pouch that contained all our passports and traveler's checks.

My father pulled the chain to signal the train to slow down enough so he could jump off, followed by my brother. They both began running back the way the train had come. Within minutes the train started moving again, leaving my Dad and brother behind.

My mom and I were in tears, with no idea what to do or what was going to happen next if Dad and my brother couldn't find the missing pouch. We would not be able to leave the country if we did not have travel documents or the personal ID documents that were also in the pouch.

We did the only thing we both knew we could, pray. We pleaded with God for the safety of our loved ones and for a miracle in their finding the pouch. The odds against my Dad finding the pouch were pretty high. The station master confirmed that as well when he directed us to the next large train station.

Having confidence that God could do everything, we continued to pray and trust Him. When our train pulled into the Pune station, we had a message waiting for us: not only were both my Dad and brother safe but the pouch had been found . . . intact.

What a mighty God we serve! Not only had God used a stranger, at just the right time, to alert my dad that the pouch was missing, but against all odds amidst the teeming crowd, God had kept that pouch safe and intact for my Dad to find.

Years have passed since this incident took place, but I am often reminded of this miracle and of the mighty God we serve. Tell someone today how God has answered *your* prayers.

**Story #3: “Roxy”** by Dalores Broome Winget (Dalores is a retired 30-year elementary teacher living in Warwick, Pennsylvania, with her husband. This much-published writer has two children and two granddaughters.)

**Text:** And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Matt. 21:22.

“Mom, you’ve got to pray for Roxy!” My son’s voice on the phone sounded frantic.

Concerned, I asked, “What’s the matter?” Roxy was my granddaughter’s new puppy, a tiny brown and white wiggly bundle of joy. And oh, how little Juliana loved her. In fact, we all loved her!

“Juliana was carrying some straight pins,” Rich continued,” and dropped them on the floor. Roxy ran over and swallowed one before Juliana could pick it up. We rushed her to the vet. After taking an x-ray and finding the pin, the vet explained that Roxy had to have surgery or she would die.”

My son continued, “There was one other option that the vet explained. We could take Roxy to an Emergency Vet Clinic and perhaps that vet could reach down into her stomach with little pinchers at the end and pull the straight pin out. Madelin [my daughter-in-law] and Juliana took her there. Unfortunately, Roxy’s stomach was full of food so the pin was buried. The vet couldn’t find it. Madelin and Juliana are on their way home. I can’t afford \$3,000 for the surgery, so we all need to pray.”

I promised I would pray. And I did. “Dear God, please spare Roxy. Juliana is only 11 and she loves Roxy with all her heart. I don’t know how you’ll do it, but please spare that little puppy’s life.” I must say that I had doubts. How could a straight pin possibly make its way through all those tightly wound puppy intestines without any damage?

About 10 minutes later, the phone rang again. It was a jubilant Juliana.

She said, “On the way home, Mommy said, ‘We forgot to pray to Jesus.’ So we pulled over to the side of the road and prayed. Grandma, Roxy’s not going to die. I prayed to Jesus and He told me she would be all right.”

Four long, worrisome days later, a happy Juliana called again. “Grandma, Roxy passed the pin. She’s going to be all right just like Jesus told me.” Today Roxy is a healthy-one year old pup and still a wiggly bundle of joy. So whatever you are facing in your day today, please remember the important lesson that a child taught me: nothing is too hard for God!

**Story #4: “Espresso Prayer”** by Denise Hochstrasser (Denise is married, has three adult daughters, and three grandchildren. She travels widely as Women’s Ministries Director for the Inter-European Division in Bern, Switzerland.)

**Text:** Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Matt. 7:7, 8, ESV.

First Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to “Pray without ceasing.” *Well, I thought, this is what I’ve been doing. I’ve prayed and prayed . . . and gotten even more weary and discouraged.*

Praying without ceasing can be very difficult for busy women. “My only quiet place,” a busy young mother once told me, “is in the bathroom sitting on the toilet. But I can’t stay there all day.”

Then I discovered a little book entitled *Espresso Prayer*. Espresso (a Latin verb form meaning “to press out”) is also the name of a strong-flavor coffee served in small cups. Though not interested in coffee, I found helpful the writer’s comparison of prayer to espresso. The author of the book explained that, throughout the day, we can formulate short prayers, like espresso servings in smaller cups. God doesn’t ask us to spend all day on the same long or “big” prayer. God asks us to pray “espresso” prayers throughout the day—short, strong, and aromatic. With God we can develop something like an SMS (Short Message Service). We can do this by sending Him short, concentrated messages all day long. I have now started, besides my morning and evening prayer sessions, making espresso prayers a way of life.

When I see a mother in the supermarket struggling with a defiant child, I pray a short, intense prayer for her instead of judging her. *Please Lord, give this lady a special blessing for the day.* When I see a young man in the street, searching through waste in trash bins, I pray, *Dear Lord, help this young man find a shelter for the night.* In church, when I see an elderly person complaining about noisy children, instead of shaking my head, I pray, *Dear Lord, help this lady to find joy in the shiny and bright eyes of the little ones.* I now pray many espresso prayers during the day sending God SMS “texts”. And He has answered so many of these.

I would like to encourage every one of us to develop an SMS “culture” with our Creator. Espresso prayers will reach Heaven during those times when we can’t be on our knees for hours. Unceasing prayer becomes a reality throughout the day as we develop new prayer habits. Prayer becomes a greater joy and a way of life that will bring you rich rewards, as it has me.

**Facilitator:** [At this point, you can ask for volunteers from the congregation who would be willing to share a personal testimony about prayer. In case people are shy about starting, you

might be prepared to share one of your own to give others an encouraging prompt to get up and share. Affirm each testimony, encouraging the presenter to continue telling his or her story to others until Jesus comes. At the appropriate time, end the program with prayer. This prayer can be offered in small groups. Encourage the congregation to pray for the Holy Spirit's power in each person's testimony-sharing during the days ahead. Pray also that God will set up the right "divine appointments" during which the testimonies can be shared.]

*Closing Prayer*

## **Program Idea #2:**

### **“Turning Need into a Prayer Ministry”**

Program needs: a song leader, a program facilitator, and four other women readers.

*Song Service*

*Welcome and Opening Prayer*

*Program Introduction*

**Program facilitator:** Good afternoon/evening. The Bible shares that Joseph told his brothers that God had turned their cruel treatment of him into blessings for many (Gen. 50:20). God promises in Romans 8:28 that He can use all things—even pain, loss, and need—into good things. He did this for Joseph, and He will do it for us. According to this promise in Romans, God doesn’t waste any of our life experiences—even the painful and challenging ones. He has a redemptive use for them.

Ellen White wrote that “Storms of trial and adversity may break upon [the believer], but he is not swayed from his foundation, for his soul is riveted upon the eternal Rock. . . . workers in the cause of God will be men [people] of prayer, and will have success” (*Review and Herald*, July 10, 1879). So when we cover with prayer life’s trials and adversities, God has a plan to use them—with success.

This [afternoon], therefore, we want to explore the topic, “Turning Need into a Prayer Ministry.” In their own words, we are going to hear from different women from different parts of the world who did this very thing. Each woman will share (1) what challenging or painful life situation caused a need in her life. Then she will tell how she prayed over this situation and reached out beyond her prayers. Finally, we will hear how God granted His success to these prayers. Each woman will also share at least one tip for how *you* might allow God to turn a present need in *your* life into a prayer ministry. [Note: tailor the number of ministries you share to your program time parameters.]

#### **Ministry #1: Praying for Our Children**

**Facilitator: Who among us, man or woman, does not worry about our children? Of course, we hope that our children will always make the right choices in life. But when they do not, what are we to do?**

Our first need-into-prayer ministry testimony comes from Dr. Deborah Harris of North Carolina in the United States. Deborah, longtime university professor and teacher of children with special needs, is president and CEO of Deborah Harris, Inc., a speaking and consulting business.

Harris, also known for her inspirational messages, has founded the powerful Praying for Our Children ministry ([prayingforourchildren.org](http://prayingforourchildren.org)) which has gone global.

At this time, I will invite a stand-in for Dr. Deborah Harris to join me at the podium. She will be responding to my interview questions with the actual words of Dr. Harris. (Reader #1 comes to the podium)

Welcome, Deborah. I understand that you have been a single parent for many years. Deborah, how did your ministry, Praying for Our Children, come into existence? What was the challenge or the need you were facing when it did?

**Reader #1:** This is how Praying for Our Children evolved as a ministry. Some years ago, my college-age children turned into people I did not know. They caused me all kinds of grief. Out of a motherly desperation to “save” them, I began searching for ways I could get them under “my” control. God instead instructed me to pray for them.

**Facilitator: How did you reach out beyond your own prayers?**

**Reader #1:** I was focused on prayers being answered regarding my children, only to realize God had a bigger plan. His plan was revealed as I traveled around the world delivering messages to God's people and asking audiences to pray for *my* children.

Hundreds of parents, burdened by the journeys of their children, pleaded with me to pray for their children as well. I was moved by men and women groaning for their children’s well- being, and I was compelled to start a ministry that would unite people around the world to stand in the gap for our children.

We have found that prayer is the most powerful tool we have to protect our children and lead them through challenging and often life-changing experiences.

**Facilitator: How has God blessed your prayer efforts and answered your prayers?**

**Reader #1:** Lifelong friendships have been established through our programs, in particular, First Tuesdays, which is a worldwide campaign that unites people in prayer for our children from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. Whether by coming together in a home, at a church, or on a telephone conference call, our First Tuesdays program has become a forum for people to share their family-related challenges and victories in prayer. The testimonies are limitless, and my own children are among the miracles wrought through prayer. My children were the catalyst for this ministry, but they now are the engines that keep this ministry running.

In addition to prayer—and through prayer—God has enabled us to sponsor several camps especially designed for the needs of single parents with challenging teenagers. God has helped

us provide each family with spiritual and family counseling, not to mention bonding opportunities through experiences in the out-of-doors as well as a year's follow-up family support. Everything we have been able to do for others, however, has been bathed in prayer.

**Facilitator: What would be your counsel to someone who feels called to turn his or her pain into a prayer ministry?**

**Reader #1:** Accepting God's calling in your life and responding to His leading is the best way to start your prayer ministry. It will not be easy, but starting small, staying focused, and praying without ceasing ensure God's richest blessings.

**Facilitator: Amen and thank you. (Reader #1 returns to her seat). God cares so much about our children, doesn't He? Thank you, Dr. Harris. I hope this interview now has you thinking about ways to pray more effectively for the children in your life.**

### **Ministry #2: Praying to Combat Separation and Loneliness**

**Facilitator:** Let's turn our focus now to a different part of the world: South Africa. (Reader #2 comes to the podium) We live in an age of electronic devices, and the Internet has proven to be a mighty channel for ministry.

We want to talk to Cordell Liebrandt, whom God led to begin a unique prayer ministry. Online! Once again, I will invite a stand-in for our interviewee to join me at the podium. She will be responding to my interview questions with the actual words of Cordell Liebrandt. (Reader #2 comes to the podium)

**Cordell, let me first introduce you. You were a Union women's ministries leader for a number of years and also hosted a religious television program. Currently you are serving in a pastoral capacity as chaplain for six schools. Where are you doing that?**

**Reader #2:** In the Cape Conference, Southern Africa Union.

**Facilitator: Very good. We want to extend a special welcome to you today.**

**Reader #2:** Thank you.

**Facilitator: So tell us, how did your weekly online prayer group ministry begin?**

**Reader #2:** It began when a friend sent me an e-mail that read, "When my arms can't reach people who are close to my heart, I always hug them with my prayers." That e-mail affirmed what I'd always believed: that even though my friends are in different parts of the world, I could stay connected to them through the vehicle of prayer. Separation, isolation, and



loneliness can motivate us to reach out or stay in touch. Those simple words compelled me to start an online prayer group that has now been going for more than ten years.

**Facilitator: How would one start an online prayer group?**

**Reader #2:** I'd suggest the following four points.

1. Pray and ask the Lord to show you whom to include in the prayer group. I recommend five to eight, but no more than ten, for maximum participation.
2. Once the Holy Spirit has impressed you whom to include, contact the ladies and invite them to partner with you in prayer. It should be understood that confidentiality is required.
3. Pray for a group leader. She will be responsible for sending a reminder each week to members to submit their praises and prayer requests. She will also compile the list of requests and send it out to the group. The leader can include a short devotional thought or words of encouragement with her reminder.
4. Select which day of the week works best for the group to set aside for intercession. For example, if the reminder is sent out on a Monday, participants have a day to respond, and the leader can compile the list and send it out on Tuesday evening, ensuring everyone receives the list and can be interceding together on Wednesday.

**Facilitator: These are wonderful suggestions. Do things always run smoothly? What can a person starting an online prayer ministry expect?**

**Reader #2:** Don't be discouraged if some members choose to be minimally involved. Being part of this prayer ministry is for their growth too, and many pray faithfully each week, even if they don't send in their requests.

With time, the needs and demands of life will change, and some will find that the group is no longer a good fit. This is a good time to downsize if the group has become too large, but usually there is someone just waiting for an invitation to join.

The trust, fellowship, and spiritual growth that will occur within, and between, members of the group is truly life changing. There is power in prayer!

I love this quotation on prayer which comes from *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 250. It says, "Prayer unites us with one another and with God. Prayer brings Jesus to our side, and gives to the fainting, perplexed soul new strength to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan."

**Facilitator:** What a wonderful and encouraging thought! Thank you so much, Cordell, for sharing this unique technology-based ministry to combat loneliness. Maybe your prayer ministry will encourage others to start their own. All it takes is "two or three gathered

together” in the Lord’s name, right? Even if the gathering is electronic. (Reader #2 returns to her seat)

### **Prayer Ministry #3: Praying in Time of War**

**Facilitator: Times of world crisis—as in political unrest and war—give us cause to pray, don’t they?** We’ll next hear the words of a mother. Her son is a Seventh-day Adventist army doctor who was sent to the Middle East to set up the first field hospital in a very dangerous area of crisis and armed conflict. (Reader #3 comes to the podium)

Patty Hyland, you have been a pastor’s wife for over 50 years. With your husband you have ministered to others in Sri Lanka, the South Pacific, and the United States in the State of Oregon. You also served as Women’s Ministries director for the Guam-Micronesia Mission for a number of years when your family was living and ministering in Palau. You are currently serving as a volunteer chaplain, I understand. I am sure you have many stories you could share about that.

**Yet I am particularly anxious to learn more about how God turned your motherly concern for your son’s safety into a community prayer ministry. I believe you were teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) at a community college when your army doctor son was deployed to Iraq. Is this correct?**

**Reader #3:** Yes, that’s right.

**Facilitator: One day you were sitting with an acquaintance in a Military Support Group at that community college. What happened?**

**Reader #3:** My friend, Marianne, leaned over toward me and whispered, “Isn’t something missing in this discussion here?”

I nodded my head and answered, “Yes, we desperately need prayer. But this is a government institution where prayer and Bible reading are not allowed.” At the close of the meeting, I suggested to Marianne that we start to meet outside. She whispered her consent and later brought several others with aching hearts, lonely for loved ones in harm’s way in Iraq.

We formed a prayer circle to pray for our loved ones. I closed that session with a reading from Psalm 107:1-3. “O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord tell what He has done, how He has saved them from their enemies, and brought them home from foreign lands.”

**Facilitator: How did the people in your circle respond?**

**Reader #3:** There was a loud “Amen!” Then with tears in their eyes, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, wives, and brothers shared how very thankful they were for the prayers offered as we held up each son, each daughter, each soldier in earnest prayer. I could sense the power of the Holy Spirit working in many lives that first evening. So I decided that at our next session I would bring a box of *Steps to Christ* by Ellen White for whomever would like to take home a copy of that book.

And the prayer group grew.

**Facilitator: How did people become aware of your prayer ministry? Just by word of mouth?**

**Reader #3:** Yes, but I also put a small advertisement in the newspaper inviting relatives of military troops serving abroad—or at a home base—to join us for “Prayer and Praise” every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. Our get-together followed the Military Support Group held on the college campus.

**Facilitator: I imagine that praying together brought a unity of spirit into the group.**

**Reader #3:** Absolutely! We really bonded. We had little red, white, and blue heart-shaped metal badges made for us to wear. Inscribed on them were these words: “Support Our Troops In Prayer.” Though our group began after the 911 attacks in New York City in 2011, many in our Prayer and Praise Group still wear these badges. They are constant reminders that we will keep praying until every soldier is safe at home.

**Facilitator: Tell us about your own family’s soldier.**

**Reader #3:** My own son, an army physician, was stationed in Spiker, near Tikrit. He experienced the trauma of aiding hundreds of soldiers and civilians who were victims of ID bombs. Many of the soldiers for whom he cared had missing arms and legs. Three times young army soldiers died in his arms as he was trying to save their lives. Later he suffered several months of major depression, grieving over the fact that he had not been able to save those lives.

**Facilitator: That must have been traumatic.**

**Reader #3:** It certainly was. Then the Army asked our son to do research on PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). In fact, it became his primary focus as he completed a Masters in Public Health degree at the University of Washington. Now God is blessing as more soldiers are receiving two years of mental health treatment following their deployments.

**Facilitator: Where is your son now?**

**Reader #3:** At present, he is serving in Kuwait. Please pray for him and remember, as well, to pray for all the dear young people from many nations who are serving around the world in harm’s way!

**Facilitator: How would you suggest someone start a prayer support group for families with members serving in the military?**

**Reader #3:** Just make friends with them and, when the time seems right, ask if they would like for you to pray for their loved one. Most people are wide open to prayer support in time of war.

**Facilitator: Thank you so much, Patty, for your inspiring story and ministry.** (Reader #3 leaves the podium)

#### **Prayer Ministry #4: Crisis-Based Prayer**

(Praying for Help against Principalities and Powers)

**Facilitator: Our final prayer ministry experience developed in the country of Rwanda. (Reader #4 comes to the podium) Carolyn Sutton spent nearly a decade serving as a missionary ESL teacher in central Africa, including in Rwanda. I understand that, while in Rwanda, a simple knock on your front door was the beginning of a prayer ministry for you, correct?**

**Reader #4:** Yes. One afternoon a student of mine knocked on my front door. I'll call her Angelique. She was only 13 or 14. I could tell she was troubled about something. Her mother, to whom she'd been very close, had recently died in a public transportation accident. Her father had remarried a woman who didn't like Angelique. To compound her distress, Angelique's paternal grandmother had just told the girl that she'd been summoned by the ancestral spirits to meet with them over her upcoming spring break from school. The grandmother said that the spirits had a message for my student.

By now Angelique believed in the Bible and wanted to know how she could avoid this upcoming confrontation, the thought of which terrified her.

**Facilitator: What did you tell her?**

**Reader #4:** I told her to pray and have faith. Frankly, I didn't know what else to tell her because this looming situation seemed so overwhelming to both of us. Besides, I was afraid of getting involved. So I hoped she would just pray more and leave me out of it because I felt so helpless. Then Angelique asked me, "How does one pray and how does one have faith? Will you teach me?"

How could I refuse her desperate plea—although I had no idea how to begin? We decided to get together to pray and read the Bible for guidance as to how she should—or shouldn't—proceed with her grandmother's mandate. Since Angelique had a full academic schedule and I taught classes while also homeschooling our son, she and I had no free time to meet during the day. The only mutual "free" time my student and I had was at 5:30 in the morning. In order to have privacy and not wake anyone else up—either in my house or in the girls' dormitory—we decided to meet on a rocky outcropping near a rather dense forest. We agreed to do this twice a week.

That first Tuesday we were individually terrified while trying (in vain) to find each other in the pre-dawn darkness. However, God gave us the courage to try again on Thursday. Soon another student asked to

join us. She too wanted to know how to pray and have faith. Before long, three girls—and then six—were coming to study in the dark on the rocky outcropping. For over two years we studied the Bible by kerosene lantern—and under a leaky “roof” of umbrellas when it rained. Our group prayer list grew, and how we prayed!

**Facilitator: And how God answered, right?**

**Reader #4:** Absolutely. For starters, Angelique’s grandmother never mentioned, ever again, a séance with the ancestral spirits. That was a huge answer to our prayers.

During those prayer group years several girls made decisions for baptism. Others were convicted of certain sins, confessed them, and made things right with people they had wronged. All of us learned to forgive. The girls’ prayer group got so large that we eventually had to divide into two more groups.

And here’s the wonderful thing—I didn’t lead out in the new prayer and study groups. You see, older girls from our original prayer group began getting excited about what they were learning from the Bible. They were astounded as they experienced God’s answers to their prayers. The Holy Spirit began giving them a burden to teach and spiritually mentor younger girls living in the dormitory. It was some of the original prayer group girls who formed these new groups to prayerfully minister to their little sisters in the faith.

**Facilitator: So you experienced God turning a need, involving spiritual warfare, into a prayer ministry. I understand Angelique developed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and was baptized.**

**Reader #4:** Yes, and the prayer group continued for a number of years after I left Africa and returned to my home country. And what friends-for-eternity a prayer group like this makes! To this day I praise God for fulfilling Romans 8:28 in this situation of crisis when the “rulers of the darkness of this world” were threatening to discourage a young believer.

**Facilitator: What word of advice would you have for someone wanting to start a prayer group like this?**

**Reader #4:** Just focus on a crisis—any crisis. You won’t have to look far. Invite at least one other person to join you in prayer to seek God’s guidance and comfort. Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20, KJV). God will take it from there and be in charge. He will take charge of your prayer group, the answers, and your growth in faith.

**Facilitator: Thank you for sharing. (Reader #4 leaves podium)**

We have just heard about four far-reaching ministries that God grew from times of challenge, loss, or fear. So let me ask *you* now. What issue in your life or in the life of someone you know might be the possible seed from which God could grow a prayer ministry?

For the next ten minutes, let’s divide into groups of three to five individuals to discuss prayer ministry options we have right here in our own congregation. Then we will come back together to share.

*-Allow time for full-group discussion of current member needs and ways those needs might be turned into a personal—or full church—outreach ministry.*

*-Come up with specific strategies (just two or three) with which to follow through concerning any viable prayer ministry options.*

*-Determine who will take the initiative on these strategies and when they will report back to the church body or the Prayer Ministries Committee.*

**Facilitator: Let's have a special prayer to end our program. We want to invite the Holy Spirit's guidance as we move forward with our prayer ministry initiatives.**

*Benediction*

## Collaborative Group Prayer Activity Ideas

**Neighborhood Prayer Walk and Fast:** Let church members divide in groups of two or three to walk assigned streets or neighborhoods surrounding the church. Perhaps members could take sharing pamphlets that would encourage people they meet to pray and have faith in the Bible.

Plan a time of fasting on behalf of area people outside the church. Let the mid-week prayer service be the next opportunity for members to debrief about new contacts and ongoing prayer needs.

**Becoming Answers to Prayer:** After song service and informal program preliminaries, briefly share about the experience of Rhoda in Acts 12:1-17. Not only was she praying for the imprisoned Peter, but *she herself became part of the answer to those prayers!* She was the one to take the news of his release to the other believers in the house.

In small groups, discuss needs on the church prayer list and then brainstorm how members themselves could help meet these needs. Follow through.

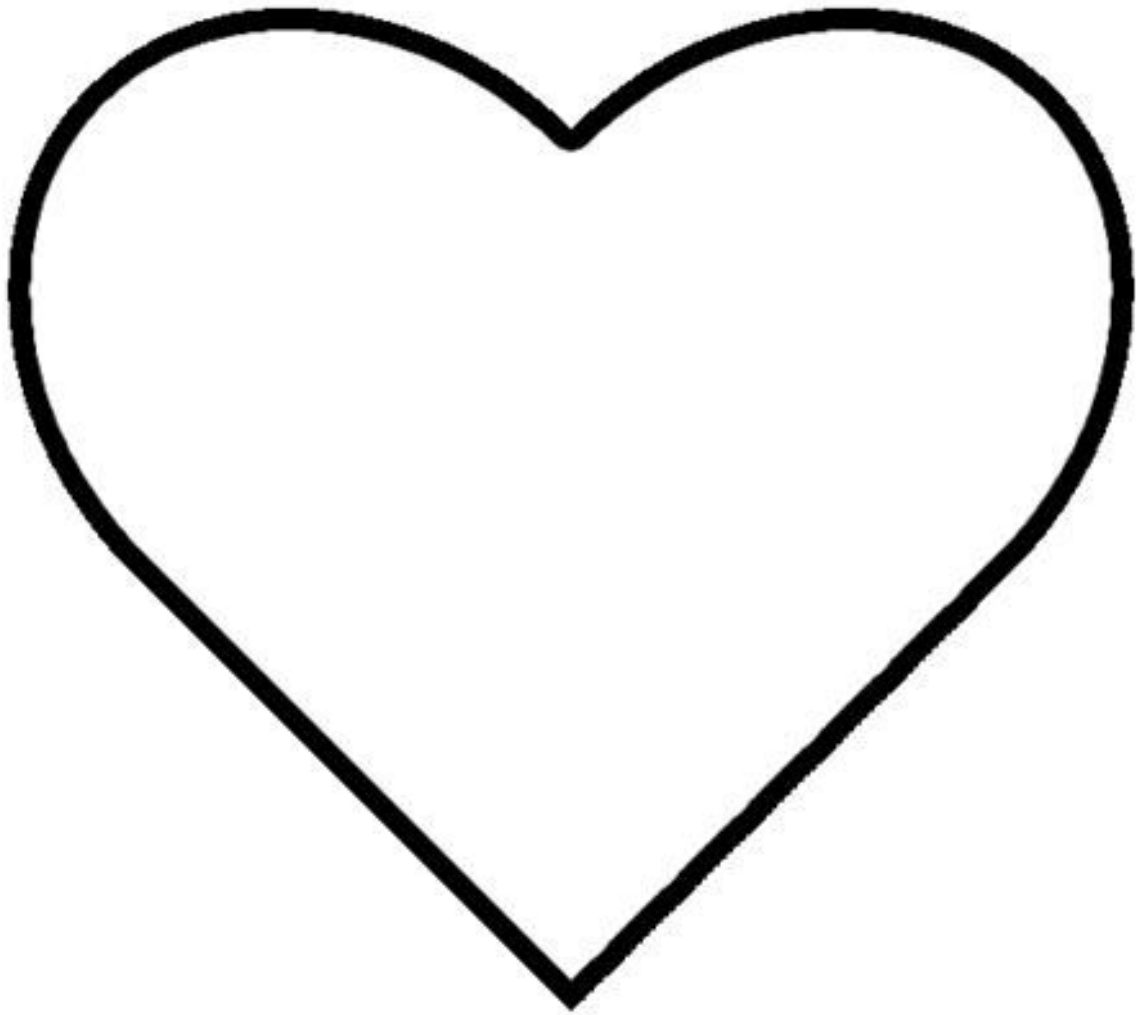
**Planning Ahead:** Plan a follow-up Sabbath afternoon prayer service in the near future to come together to praise, sing, and pray. At that meeting attendees can brainstorm about starting up small intercessory prayer ministries. After all, as the testimonies in Program Idea #2 prove, even one person can start a prayer ministry that will touch many.



**God hears my prayers for those I love.**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_



Lord, hear  
our prayer.

**Directions:** In the heart above, write or draw pictures of the people and things you are talking about with God. Trace the words in the prayer underneath.