



Delaware-Maryland Synod, ELCA
Mission through Congregations Team

Evangelism Ministries
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AT THE HEART OF EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM: THE PRAYER COVENANT

Christians are a people of faith surely, but a people of prayer definitely! Our lives in worship and in the world are stitched with prayer – both the historic prayers of our church catholic as well as the prayers of a humble heart open before the Almighty. But, even as we pray “thy kingdom come,” we often do not expect a response – and are overwhelmingly surprised when God answers our prayers in an affirming way. We call them miracles!

As a people of faith, however, every effort we begin and carry-out in Christ’s name should be an effort that is founded on prayer for God’s guidance, wisdom, power and intervention. The Prayer Covenant can be a powerful place to begin this effort.

- ✘ A Prayer Covenant should have a finite period for which you are covenanting to be in prayer for a particular purpose or cause. This encourages participation, commitment and follow-through. A year or a liturgical season can be starting places.
- ✘ A Prayer Covenant is best offered to the congregation at a beginning point in the congregation’s life. Examples would include in January for the calendar year, on Advent 1 for the liturgical year and in September for the program year. Other options for shorter duration might include for the seasons of Advent and Christmas or Lent and Easter, for example.
- ✘ A Prayer Covenant is best begun with a small group of leaders 2 to 5 at the most (with a rostered leader taking part) clarifying the mission of the congregation or ministry for which the covenant is being created. It is important to be clear as to what the need is for a prayer covenant. A renewed sense of mission? Unity in a time of division? Healing in a time of brokenness? Hope in a time of uncertainty? And hopefully, in time, perhaps new directions in a time of growth, health and a “holy satisfaction!” The Prayer Covenant should be constructed carefully and succinctly so that it is useable. Be concise. An example is appended for your information.
- ✘ Publicize the Prayer Covenant well, emphasize that this is a commitment to *daily* prayer and ask people to make a *commitment*.
- Give them time to think it over (a week or two).
- ✘ Kick the covenant up the chain of command, so to speak. Bring it to every group in the congregation to hear about and examine. Invite feedback. Begin with the Council and don’t forget small groups that often wield great power in the church: choir, altar guild, etc. Broad support and investment can only benefit the process.
- ✘ Introduce the Prayer Covenant to the larger congregation with a series (2 or 3, perhaps) of Mission Moments or Temple Talks in the services of the church. Perhaps as an introduction to the Offering or the Prayers of the People. Lift up “covenant language” from scripture – God with Moses, God with Abraham – indeed Jesus with the world (*this is a new covenant in my blood...*).
- ✘ Make the signing of the Prayer Covenant part of the service when the time comes. Invite folks who care to sign to come forward at the offering, or on their way back to the pew from communion or during a hymn. Provide folks an opportunity to sign it in the fellowship space for a week or two following the “big day” before displaying it prominently. When you conduct new member orientation, provide an opportunity for new folks to sign on too!
- ✘ Record the name of those who sign the Prayer Covenant – and periodically send a post card encouraging their efforts and lifting specific congregation-wide concerns.

Challenges for Prayer Covenant Ministries

- ✘ A Prayer Covenant has, as a major part of its work, a sense of accountability. Practically speaking, there is some way to have participants “report” that they are keeping their covenant responsibilities.
- ✘ The Prayer Covenant is created in a large and bold format so as to permit all who wish to participate a place to sign it. It is then displayed in the public space of our church as a reminder of the commitment made by those who have covenanted to be in prayer.
- ✘ The bulletin and newsletter carry a tag line that refers to the congregation’s commitments. For example: **Grace Church – a Prayer Covenant Keeping Congregation**, not unlike those who are Stephen Ministry Congregations or “In the City for Good!,” etc.
- ✘ **The most important piece in the area of accountability is providing covenant keepers cards to return as an additional offering each week. It simply needs to have a line on it like “I/We kept our St. John’s Church Prayer Covenant this week” with a line to sign and a place to date it. These can be kept in a clear bowl in a public space, or affixed to the wall around the displayed covenant to give tangible witness to the prayers offered on behalf of our common work. At Peace, Glen Burnie we are experimenting this year having printed our offering envelopes with: “As an additional offering for the Work of God through Peace Church, I/We have kept our Peace Church Prayer Covenant” with a place to sign!**
- ✘ Prayer is powerful, and the use of the Prayer Covenant can add a powerful dimension to our work in reaching out in the name of Christ. The Prayer Covenant is most effective when it has a strong sense of accountability that reminds us regularly of our commitments to be a people of prayer and that accountability begins to bear witness to this important work among the people we are called by the Spirit to share with in ministry.



Sample Prayer Covenant

2004 Prayer Covenant

The Faith Community of Peace Church

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Endeavoring to service Christ and His Church in Mission and Ministry, the People of Peace Church Covenant with one another this year to be in prayer for God’s will and direction for us and our congregation.

Believing in God’s grace, mercy, forgiveness and love, we turn away from past troubles and disagreements and look to the Spirit’s leading to embrace God’s future for us and for our congregation.

Trusting in God’s promises, we will pray daily for:

+ Our Mission and Unity as a community of faith;

+ Our Pastors, Staff and Lay Leaders;

+ Our Lutheran Church including our Bishops, Mark and Jerry;

+ Our community, friends and family, that they would know Christ;

+ Our obedience to God’s Word and the Holy Spirit’s leading;

+ Ourselves, that we would be full of faith and courage to go as God leads.

And, together, we will embrace every opportunity to share in Worship, Prayer and Study, that God would lead us into a bright future of hope and new opportunities to serve Christ and our Neighbor.

May God bless our Covenant and Commitments we make today, that we would grow in Him each day as a congregation as His people.

The People of Peace Lutheran Church
Epiphany 2004

Know that your Synod Staff is ready and able to assist you in your efforts. Let us know what’s working for you, so we can share it with others! For information, a consultation or other resources, contact Pr. Bill Gohl, 410/766-3283.