

Signs of a Culture of Prayer

How do you measure the effectiveness of a culture of prayer in your church? Here are some signs that should be present:

1. “Here and now” prayer, rather than “later and somewhere else” prayer. When someone is asked to pray about a specific request, the norm is to pray right “here and now” rather than the request being put on a list and prayed for at another time when the person is not there.
2. There are a variety of prayer ministries, but the bottom-line goal is that each individual is being encouraged to be “devoted to prayer.”
3. Leaders regularly describe and demonstrate their commitment to both personal and corporate prayer. This can happen in a passing reference as they preach or teach, or it could be more intentional. Also, they attend and invite others to be a part of any corporate prayer times.
4. Corporate prayer is a regular part of the weekend services. This can happen in many ways: small groups, one word, responsive, unison, etc. But it is common for people to pray out loud during the service.
5. Following the Moravian principle, “no one ministers unless someone prays.” When the worship team meets, they don’t just do a quick prayer at the beginning of their worship time. For example, they read and pray through the words of a few songs they will be doing on Sunday. They take time to worship unrelated to Sunday. They pray for the upcoming worship experience, that people will enter into the flow of worship, etc. Or when planning a Vacation Bible School, leaders not only ask for people to coordinate the crafts, games, or stories, they also ask for a person to direct the prayer. And perhaps they have a team actually praying during the VBS itself. Hopefully each ministry team incorporates prayer into all it does.
6. There is an appreciation and application of “all kinds of prayers” (Eph. 6:18). Prayers are skilled in many types of prayers—intercession, worship-based prayer, prayer for specific requests, and so on. There is also an appreciation for many styles: quiet, loud, solo, all together at the same time, and others.
7. At the leadership meetings they “pray as much as they discuss.” This was a challenge given to me as a pastor—and our normal pattern for years. We tried to spend as much time in prayer during our meetings as we did discussing issues.
8. There is a “prayer” line in the budget and a specific person who manages it.
9. Any prayer pastor or coordinator (whatever term is used) is seen and recognized as staff, whether paid or volunteer.
10. Ephesians 6:18 does a great job of summarizing some key points here. Praying . . .
 - in the Spirit—sensitive to specific things the Spirit wants us to pray about.
 - on all occasions—large groups, small groups, individuals, home groups, etc.
 - with all kinds of prayer—offering all our requests.
 - while being alert—keeping the prayers fresh and letting the Spirit’s creativity flow through our prayers.
 - always keep on—the value is not seen only in the results, but in the process.
 - for all the Lord’s people—a variety of needs.

This one verse in Ephesians offers a great start on describing a culture of prayer!