

RESEARCH REPORT

A Publication of Research, North American Mission Board, SBC

Survey of Church Prayer Ministry Coordinators

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April 2003

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Executive Summary

At the request of the Prayer Evangelism Unit of the North American Mission Board, a questionnaire was sent to 1,000 randomly selected church prayer ministry coordinators in late 2002. Their responses form the basis of this report.

Persons who volunteer as prayer ministry coordinator can be key leaders in their churches. They enlist and encourage intercessors, but are less likely to provide training for them. Maintaining prayer chains and praying for their pastors and missionaries are primary emphases of most churches with a prayer coordinator.

Three of 5 prayer leaders perceive a need for networking with other prayer leaders. “Communication of God’s working with other prayer ministries,” and “communication of prayer events and happenings” are primary examples of needs that networking might address.

Prayer ministry coordinators who are interested in attending training events desire help with basic concepts, such as teambuilding and broadening prayer opportunities. Training provided should be inexpensive (less than \$100) and should be in close proximity (within 50 miles) to their homes. This reflects that these folks are volunteers with little or no budget to work with.

More than half of the respondents listed praying for missionaries as part of their current prayer ministry. Those prayer leaders who would like future training listed “broadening prayer opportunities” as a desired element of training. Seventy percent were not familiar with SBC prayer publications from its two mission agencies. There is an opportunity for educating church prayer ministry coordinators as to resources available to them as they seek to broaden the prayer ministries of their church.

Introduction

The Prayer Evangelism Unit of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) seeks to encourage and support the efforts of prayer ministry coordinators (PCMs) in local Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) congregations. Local church prayer leaders will be key persons in recruiting Southern Baptists to “Be ... One In a Million” committed to pray regularly for personal repentance, personal revival, and a national spiritual awakening based on 2 Chronicles 7:14. The prayer initiative is an integral part of the “**What Now, America?**” and “**What Now, Canada?**” denominational emphases for 2005.

Methodology

Southern Baptist Directory Services (SBDS), the denomination’s internet collection site for congregational statistical and leadership data, asks for several leadership positions, including prayer ministry coordinator. On November 5, 2002, the addresses of 10,467 prayer ministry coordinators were downloaded from SBDS. Of these, 564 were duplicates and 44 had incomplete addresses. A random systematic sample of 1,000 records was chosen from the remaining 9,859 prayer leaders.

Response rates

An initial mailing of questionnaires to the 1,000 selected prayer coordinators resulted in 271 responses and 35 undeliverable addresses. A copy of the questionnaire is included as an appendix on pages 6 and 7. A second mailing was sent to the initial non-respondents. This mailing yielded an additional 134 responses and 15 undeliverable addresses. Thus, there were a total 404 responses. Subtracting the bad addresses because these persons never had an opportunity to respond, the response rate was 42.6 percent (406 of 950). This response rate compares favorably with historical response rates from mail surveys of pastors.

Results

The first question asked “*Are you currently in a position of prayer leadership in your church?*” About 3 of every 4 respondents (302 of 405) indicated they were prayer leaders. Eleven persons did not answer this question, and 92 answered negatively. Of those who were not prayer leaders, 33 (36%) reported that their church had a prayer leader (it just was not him or her). This means that 335 of the 405 congregations actually had a prayer leader (83%). The implication of this finding is that the estimated number of SBC congregations that have persons in a prayer leadership position is 8,155 (83% of 9,859). The remainder of this report is based on the 302 respondents who said they are prayer leaders in their church.

Respondents were next asked “*Which of the following responsibilities do (did) you have as prayer leader?*” The following table shows the responsibilities claimed, sorted from most to least common.

Table 1—Responsibilities of Church Prayer Ministry Coordinators

Response	Number	Percent
Enlisting people to pray (intercessors)	249	82.5 %
Updating prayer requests or enlisting volunteers to do so	233	77.2
Promotion of the prayer ministry of the church	200	66.2
Encouraging and supporting intercessors	181	59.9
Providing training for intercessors	70	23.2
Preparing, presenting, or overseeing the budget for prayer ministry	59	19.5

Prayer leaders perceived their role primarily as enlisting intercessors and updating prayer requests. Secondly, they promote the prayer ministry within their church and provide encouragement for intercessors. Few see themselves responsible for training intercessors or for preparing budget requests for the prayer ministry.

When asked “*As prayer leader in your church, are (were) you paid or volunteer?*” an overwhelming majority (95%) said they are volunteers. In fact, only 13 respondents were paid as prayer ministry leaders.

The table below shows the responses to the question “*What prayer ministries does your church offer?*” Over three-fourths of respondents reported their church included prayer chains as part of their prayer ministry. Over half also said that praying for the pastor and for missionaries was included. Between one-third and on-half mentioned prayer groups, prayer room, and prayer during worship services as part of their ministry. One of 4 respondents mentioned prayer walking as a prayer ministry element.

Noticeable for their lack on inclusion were lighthouses of prayer (6%) and the Be ... One in a Million (1%) emphases. The ministries not mentioned may simply not be recognizable to the typical prayer ministry leader.

Table 2—Elements of Church Prayer Ministries

Response	Number	Percent
Prayer Chains	238	78.8 %
Prayer for Pastor	167	55.3
Prayer for Missionaries	166	55.0
Prayer Groups	144	47.7
Prayer Room	120	39.7
Prayer for worship services by intercessors elsewhere in the church	102	33.8
Prayer Walking	76	25.2
Other (Please specify.)	53	17.5
Lighthouses of Prayer (Neighborhood Prayer)	19	6.3
Watchman	15	5.0
Moms in Touch	13	4.3
Elected Official Prayer Support/Adopt a Leader	12	4.0
Shield a Badge (Praying for Public Service Personnel)	9	3.0
Be...One in a Million	3	1.0

Of the 302 respondents who said they were prayer leaders, 181 (60%) answered yes to *“Do you see a need for a network of Southern Baptist Prayer Leaders?”* Applying the proportion of all respondents (181 of 405) to the universe of 9,859 implies a potential audience of 4,406 church prayer ministry leaders who would value such a network.

A follow-up question was asked of the 181 respondents who perceived a need for networking. The following table indicates their responses to the question *“If yes, what do you hope a Network of Southern Baptist Prayer Leaders will provide you and your congregation?”*

Table 3—Desired Benefits of Networking

Response	Number	Percent
Communication of what God is doing in other prayer ministries	150	82.9 %
Communication of prayer events and happenings	141	77.9
Mutual prayer support	126	69.6
Prayer resources	125	69.1
Training	118	65.2
Other	16	8.8

Prayer leaders that value networking definitely see a need for communication, particularly related to news about God’s working in other prayer ministries. These leaders would also value communication of prayer events. Each of these responses was received from about 4 of 5 leaders. Approximately 2 of every 3 respondents also mentioned mutual prayer support, resources, and training as benefits of a network of Southern Baptist prayer leaders.

Only 1 of 3 prayer leaders answered yes when asked *“Have you attended prayer training in the past?”* Those who had attended training previously and those who had not attended training previously were equally likely to be interested in future training. Overall, 55 percent of respondents (166 of 302) answered yes to *“Are you interested in attending future training events designed specifically for prayer coordinators?”*

The 166 prayer leaders interested in future training were asked *“What topics would you like to see covered in training?”* As the following table shows, only two elements of a prayer ministry were mentioned by more than half of these leaders. The most interest was in building a prayer ministry team and broadening prayer opportunities. The other potential training topics were of interest to between one-third and one-half of those who want training.

Table 4—Desired Training Topics

Response	Number	Percent
How to build a prayer ministry team	119	71.7 %
Broadening prayer opportunities	91	54.8
Job description and responsibilities of a prayer leader	81	48.8
Using technology in prayer ministry	70	42.2
Working with church staff	68	41.0
Designing and setting up a prayer room	54	32.5
Other	15	9.0

Distance and cost can be barriers to prayer leaders interested in attending training. Those leaders interested in future training were asked ***“How far are you willing to travel to a training event.”*** Of the 166 potential trainees, 59 did not respond to this question. Of the 107 who did respond, 45 (42%) indicated a willingness to travel 50 miles or less. Conversely, 58 percent would be willing to travel more than 50 miles. Additionally, only 22 percent would be willing to travel more than 100 miles.

The next question was ***“Given a quality training event, would a cost of \$100 be too expensive and keep you from attending?”*** A total of 148 potential trainees answered this question, with 70 (47%) respondents indicating that a cost of \$100 would be prohibitive. Thus, a clear picture develops that shows training for prayer leaders in SBC churches must be inexpensive and in close proximity to their homes.

SBC prayer leaders are not familiar with the National Association of Local Church Prayer Leaders (NALCLP), as only 2 persons said they were members.

One-third of the prayer leaders (100 of 302) responded positively to the question ***“Has your church partnered with other churches to host a large event, such as for the National Day of Prayer?”*** There may be some opportunities to encourage these partnerships through increasing awareness and training.

Leaders were asked about the use of denominational prayer resources, specifically ***“Do you use the North American Mission Board’s North American Missions Prayer-Gram or the International Mission Board’s Global PrayerGram to mobilize prayer support for missionaries?”*** Seventy percent of all SBC prayer leaders answered “no,” indicating they use neither of the mission boards’ resources for missionary prayer support. Twenty-six leaders use both resources, 16 leaders use only the Global PrayerGram, and 14 use only NAMB’s Prayer-Gram. It is obvious that neither mission board is reaching the important prayer leader audience as partners in promoting its prayer emphasis.

APPENDIX

Prayer Leader Questionnaire

1. Are you currently in a position of prayer leadership in your church?

[1-1] Yes

[1-2] No

If no, does your church have a prayer leader?

[2-1] Yes

[2-2] No

If yes, please provide the name and address of your current prayer leader.

2. Which of the following responsibilities do (did) you have as prayer leader? (Check all that apply.)

[3-1] Enlisting people to pray (intercessors)

[4-1] Providing training for intercessors

[5-1] Encouraging and supporting intercessors

[6-1] Preparing, presenting, or overseeing the budget for prayer ministry

[7-1] Promotion of the prayer ministry of the church

[8-1] Updating prayer requests or enlisting volunteers to do so

3. As prayer leader in your church, are (were) you paid or volunteer?

[9-1] Paid

[9-2] Volunteer

4. What is (or was) your precise title as prayer leader in your church? (Please choose only one.)

[10-1] Prayer Leader

[10-2] Prayer Coordinator

[10-3] Prayer Minister

[10-4] Other (Please specify.) _____

5. What prayer ministries does your church offer? (Please check all that apply.)

[11-1] Prayer Chains

[12-1] Prayer Groups

[13-1] Prayer Walking

[14-1] Prayer Room

[15-1] Prayer for Pastor

[16-1] Prayer for Missionaries

[17-1] Watchman

[18-1] Moms in Touch

[19-1] Be... One in a Million

[20-1] Prayer for worship services by intercessors elsewhere in the church

[21-1] Lighthouses of Prayer (Neighborhood Prayer)

[22-1] Elected Official Prayer Support/Adopt a Leader

[23-1] Shield a Badge (Praying for Public Service Personnel)

[24-1] Other (Please specify.) _____

6. Do you see a need for a network (or organization) of Southern Baptist of Prayer Leaders?

[25-1] Yes

[25-2] No

If yes, what do you hope a network of Southern Baptist Prayer Leaders will provide you and your congregation?

(Please check all that apply)

[26-1] Communication of prayer events and happenings

[27-1] Communication of what God is doing in other prayer ministries

[28-1] Training

[29-1] Mutual prayer support

[30-1] Prayer resources

[31-1] Other (Please specify.) _____

(Please complete back of questionnaire.)

7. Have you attended prayer training in the past?

[32-1] Yes [32-2] No

8. Are you interested in attending future training events designed specifically for prayer coordinators?

[33-1] Yes [33-2] No

→ If yes, what topics would you like to see covered in the training? (Please check all that apply.)

[34-1] How to build a prayer ministry team

[35-1] Working with church staff

[36-1] Using technology in prayer ministry

[37-1] Broadening prayer opportunities

[38-1] Designing and setting up a prayer room

[39-1] Job description and responsibilities of a prayer leader

[40-1] Other (Please specify.) _____

→ If yes, how far are you will to travel to a training event? _____ miles [41 to 44]

→ Given a quality training event, would a cost of \$100 be too expensive and keep you from attending?

[45-1] Yes [45-2] No

9. Are you a part of the National Association of Local Church Prayer Leaders (NALCPL)?

[46-1] Yes [46-2] No

10. Has your church partnered with other churches to host a large event, such as for the National Day of Prayer?

[47-1] Yes [47-2] No

11. Do you use the North American Mission Board's *North American Missions Prayer-Gram* or the International Mission Board's *Global PrayerGram* to mobilize prayer support for missionaries? (Please check all that apply.)

[48-1] Yes, we use the *North American Missions Prayer-Gram*

[49-1] Yes, we use the *Global PrayerGram*

[50-1] No

Please update your contact information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

E-mail: _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

Please return to: Research Services Team
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