

Missionary Families of Christ

CORPORATE WORSHIP (PRAYER ASSEMBLY)

As part of our regular life in MFC, the members come together once a month for a chapter prayer assembly. This activity is in lieu of household meetings. Attendance at these prayer assemblies is required for all members.

Purpose

The prayer assembly is important for the life of MFC for the following reasons:

1. The larger body (the chapter) has an opportunity to worship the Lord together, thus affirming that we are His people and we are one.
2. This is a time to allow the Lord to speak to us as a body, through prophecies, inspired Scripture readings, exhortations and personal sharings. Through these words from the Lord, we receive guidance, encouragement and strength as a body.
3. This is an opportunity to fellowship and meet our brethren from other households and units, and thus to develop and strengthen relationships.
4. It affords an opportunity for united and thus more effective action in the areas of intercession and spiritual warfare.
5. It helps us be attuned to and appreciate what God is doing in and through MFC, thus sharpening our vision and our sense of mission.

Ingredients

The typical prayer assembly would have the following components:

1. Arrival, registration, fellowship
2. Gathering song(s)
3. Call to order
4. Introductory exhortation
5. Worship
6. Personal sharings
7. Closing summary and exhortation
8. Intercessory prayers
9. Announcements
10. Closing song

The prayer assembly proper would be for the duration of from 1-1/2 to 2 hours.

Leadership

The chapter prayer assembly is usually led by the Chapter Servant. The Chapter Servant may also ask another MFC senior (elder) to lead, or assign a senior Unit Servant to lead. The latter would normally be a potential Chapter Servant and his leading the prayer assembly would be a part of his training and exposure.

The prayer assembly leader normally handles the following:

- * Introductory exhortation.
- * Worship.
- * Closing summary and exhortation.
- * Intercessory prayers.

It is possible to assign a different person as worship leader and another person for the intercessory prayers. However, it is preferable to have the same person handle all the elements stated above.

Resource persons needed

Conducting a chapter prayer assembly would require the following support personnel:

1. Service team

- * Setting up the chairs
- * Setting up the sound system
- * Registration table, including tithe collector
- * Novelties table
- * Ushers to guide people if needed
- * Snacks, if any
- * Clean-up after the meeting

2. Music ministry

- * While the music ministry could consist of one person playing guitar or keyboard, it is recommended that the chapter develop a full-blown music ministry, with various instruments and a number of singers.
- * The music ministry leader should be a gifted person who can choose the right songs as the prayer assembly progresses. The music ministry leader chooses the songs, unless the prayer assembly leader dictates his own choices.
- * The songs to be sung should be the officially-approved songs in MFC.

Physical arrangement

The arrangement of those participating in the prayer assembly is important and should be conducive to an atmosphere of intimacy and oneness.

1. The basic arrangement is to have people seated in somewhat circular or square rows radiating from the middle of the assembly.
 - * The middle (which is off-center) should be an open space in the form of a square, roughly 4m x 4m.
 - * A first row of 3 or 4 chairs should be on each of the 4 sides of the square (thus totalling 12 to 16 chairs in the front rows). There should be an aisle or adequate space for people to pass emanating from the 4 corners of the square and outward.
 - * The prayer assembly leader positions himself at the front, at one of the sides of the middle square.
 - * Behind the front row where the prayer assembly leader sits, there should be a few more rows, say 3 to 5 rows.
 - * The rest of the chairs are to be positioned in rows behind the other 3 front rows in the middle. Since the square gets bigger, each row would progressively have more seats. Additional aisles for people to pass can be provided towards the rear rows of chairs.
2. The music ministry should be situated in a place where eye contact can be made between the prayer assembly leader and the music ministry leader. The music ministry takes its cue as to when to play from the prayer assembly leader.
3. Aside from the front row on one side of the middle square where the prayer assembly leader sits, there is no particular seating arrangement to be followed. The front places are not reserved only for leaders. Members may sit anywhere.

FORMAT

For good order in the prayer assembly, the following format should be followed:

1. The start of the prayer assembly is signalled by a gathering song. At the end of this song, all should be seated and no longer engaged in any conversation.
2. New songs may or may not be taught. If new songs are taught, this should not take more than 10 minutes or so.
3. Introductory exhortation.
 - * The purpose of this is to prepare the assembly to worship the Lord. It is not simply making opening remarks, but rather an attempt to focus and attune the assembly to coming before the Lord in vibrant praise and worship.
 - * This may be in the form of an inspired Scripture reading, a sharing, expounding on a

theme, and the like, all followed by an exhortation to worship.

- * This may be as brief as less than a minute or as long as 7 minutes or so.
- * During this time, the assembly remains seated. After the exhortation, the leader asks all to stand.

4. Worship.

* Music.

- The music ministry usually starts off with a rousing song, one which naturally propels the assembly to loud and vibrant praise.
- The music ministry continues to make a joyful noise with its instruments during the times of verbal praising.
- As the praising is toning down, another praise song is sung. The continuity should not be broken by allowing the praising to stop before starting the second song. Also, the momentum should not be inhibited by pausing to make an announcement as to what song is to be sung.
- If the praising is still very vibrant, the music ministry leader (or upon signal from the prayer meeting leader) may decide to have a third fast song.
- As the praising tones down, a slow worship song is played.
- The worship song leads automatically to singing in tongues.

* Words from the Lord.

- One might be inspired to have a prophecy in song, which can blend into the singing in tongues.
- When the singing in tongues has stopped, there is a time of silence. This is a time of waiting on the Lord to speak. This can last from just a few seconds to a minute or so.
- During this time, those with prophecies, visions and inspired Scripture readings come forward and present themselves to the prayer assembly leader, who decides on who will be allowed to speak out.
- It is possible but not necessary to have discerners who will “clear” what words are to be spoken to the body.
- The leader may allow a few to speak. Normally it should not number more than 5 persons or so, unless in his discernment the leader believes that the Lord would want to speak through more people.

* Prayers by the leader.

- The prayer assembly leader may respond to any specific words from the Lord. For example, a call to repent; or a call to pray for one another; or a time for those present to go to others to be reconciled.
- Normally, the leader would just say a prayer on behalf of the assembly, which

prayer would close the time of worship.

- There are to be no individual prayers of thanksgiving and petition (as is done in a household meeting).
- After his prayers, the leader asks everyone to sit down.
- If there were others who wanted to speak a word from the Lord but were not afforded the opportunity during the time of worship, the leader can still call on them at this time.

- * The time of worship would normally be from 30 to 45 minutes.

5. Personal sharings.

- * This is a time for calling upon individuals to come to the front and share about something significant in their life in the Lord.
- * It is suggested that those who want to share either inform the prayer assembly leader before the meeting, or if led to share as the prayer assembly is in progress, may pass on to the leader slips of paper with their name and a one-sentence description of the content of their sharing.
- * The leader decides on whom he will call upon to share.
- * The leader may insert a song after every few sharings.
- * The total duration of this portion of personal sharings can be from 30 minutes to one hour.

6. Closing remarks.

- * Up to this time, the prayer assembly leader tries to discern what is God's overall message for the assembly, from his own spiritual preparation before the prayer assembly, to the time of worship, to the words from the Lord, and through the personal sharings. He then puts everything together and gives a closing exhortation.
- * This is not just a summary of what has already transpired, but a weaving together of the various elements into a clear overall word of the Lord for the body.
- * This may take anywhere from a few minutes to 10 or more minutes.
- * After giving the message, the leader asks everyone to stand.

7. Intercessory prayers.

- * These are prayers of petition and intercession made by the prayer assembly leader (or the one assigned) on behalf of the whole assembly.
- * This portion normally would be about 5 minutes, going through 3 to 5 aspects of intercession.
- * It can be ended by reciting or singing the Lord's prayer.
- * The leader then asks everyone to sit down for the announcements.

8. Announcements.

- * These can be about coming schedules, reports on activities, birthday and anniversary celebrants, and the like. There should not be too many announcements since this portion should not take too much time.
- * These are usually done by someone designated by the Chapter Servant.
- * After the announcements, the leader asks everyone to stand for the closing song. This song must be vibrant and joyful.

Individual involvement

Every member should participate wholeheartedly and actively in the prayer assembly. More specifically, all should:

1. Prepare themselves spiritually prior to the start of the assembly.
2. Bring their Bible, songbooks and paper for notes.
3. Come early and take time to fellowship.
4. Come to order quickly at the end of the gathering song, and follow the directions of the prayer assembly leader.
5. Participate actively in praise and worship.
 - * Singing with gusto
 - * Raising hands, clapping, dancing
 - * Loud vocal prayers of praise
 - * Singing in tongues
6. Be sensitive to the Spirit. If led to speak a word from the Lord or to give a personal testimony, they should boldly present themselves to the leader.
7. Enter into the prayers being made by the leader or other persons and make these prayers their own.
8. Actively listen to the personal sharings and the exhortations. There should be no private conversations going on.

Other important considerations

1. The prayer assembly may be held on any day of the month, to be decided by the Chapter Servant.
2. Two or more chapters may have a joint prayer meeting on occasion, as agreed on by the Chapter Servants. This should not be very often.

3. It is not necessary to have a Mass prior to the prayer assembly, especially if this will result in the prayer assembly ending very late. If the members become tired and hungry, it may not be too conducive to having a vibrant prayer assembly. It is an option to pray the rosary before the prayer assembly.
4. This is not normally the time for a teaching, although a mini-teaching may be an element during the prayer assembly. If the Chapter Servant wants to have a regular teaching, he should schedule a teaching night on another occasion.
5. Punctuality.
 - * The prayer assembly should start promptly at the appointed time. If at all, the only permissible delay would be for not more than 10 minutes or so.
 - * If at the appointed starting time there are still very few present, the prayer leader can opt for the music ministry to teach some songs. This way the meeting starts on time, while allowing more time for others to arrive.
 - * Obviously, the physical arrangements and the service and music teams should be in place much earlier than the starting time.
6. Members are not allowed to smoke or eat during the entire length of the assembly.
7. Members should put aside their cell phones during the duration of the prayer assembly.
8. Members are not allowed to sell items or solicit business for their personal accounts, unless specifically authorized by the Chapter Servant.
9. Members should not leave until the prayer assembly is over, i.e., after the closing song. If anyone has to leave earlier, he/she must seek permission from the Chapter Servant or Unit Servant beforehand and sit at the rear in order to be able to leave quietly.
10. The men should help in putting away the chairs and in the clean-up of the place, if this is requested by the leader or by the service team.
11. Guests may be invited to the prayer assembly.

Pastoral comments

1. It is important for us in MFC to have a similar or uniform way of conducting our monthly chapter prayer assembly.
 - * It is a tangible evidence of our unity and our being a part of the one MFC which is a worldwide family.
 - * It is a reflection of our unique culture in MFC.

- * It enables any MFC member to attend an MFC prayer assembly anywhere in the world and just easily enter into the proceedings.
 - * It makes MFC distinguishable anywhere. If Chapter Servants simply conducted the prayer assembly in any way or manner they deemed desirable, we would very quickly witness so many variations and possibly cause confusion and division within the larger MFC.
 - * The "structure" of the prayer assembly is intended not to restrict the Spirit, but in fact to have good order, which should enhance the workings of the Spirit.
2. Even given the above, however, it certainly is possible that the prayer assembly leader would be led to deviate from the "structure" at a particular prayer assembly or portion of a prayer assembly. We do have this flexibility to adjust to a genuine leading of the Spirit.
 3. All MFC members ought to see the chapter prayer assembly as a gift to us from the Lord, intended to build up the body.
 - * We do not focus merely on the abilities of the leader or how interesting the sharings are. We are not there to be entertained.
 - * We focus rather on the message of the Lord to us personally and to all of us corporately.
 - * We need to realize that it is the Lord himself who is present and is ministering to each and every one, and that the Lord gives himself fully to the person who would accept him without preconditions.

"be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." (Eph 5:18b-20)

(SG. Oct 7, 2019)