**Tool Kit for Planning a Prayer Vigil**

Before planning an event, it’s helpful to define your vision and goals. Try to be as specific as possible in defining your goals for the Prayer Vigil.

* Who do you want to reach?
* What specifically do you want this event to accomplish?
* For what or whom are you praying?
* Communicate your vision and goals in advertising.
* Share the vision and goals with any speakers or musicians so that the elements of the worship support the vision and goals.
* Some examples might be that you want the Prayer Vigil to reach your surrounding community to pray about a recent local incident, or you may want to hold a Prayer Vigil with other churches in your area to pray for unity.

Host your Vigil in a strategic location. Remember that prayer is not limited to the church building. For example, if you are praying for the local schools, meet in front of the school to pray. If you are praying for peace after a shooting, hold the Vigil in the neighborhood where the shooting occurred.

Let your voice be heard.

* Make and display signs, such as “Praying for Peace.”
* Invite the local media to attend and explain to them ahead of time your vision and goals.
* Take pictures and post on social media.
* Invite clergy to wear collars, robes, or stoles, as appropriate to solemnize the event. Invite laity to wear prayer shawls or crosses.

Make the event participatory. Some ideas include:

* Invite people to write prayers on a “Prayer Wall” of fabric or butcher block paper.
* Invite people to light a candle as they pray.
* Invite verbal responses to prayer.
* Invite people to read Scripture aloud, in their own native language.
* Prayer involves speaking to God and listening. Remember to include some time for silent listening during the Vigil.

Collect and deliver prayers to local officials, law enforcement, other churches, schools, etc. as a tangible reminder of the support of prayer.

Make proper preparations for the Prayer Vigil. Some ideas:

* Recruit a planning team to design the Vigil.
* Consider designating a hashtag to follow on social media.
* Apply for a permit, if the Vigil will take place in public.
* Plan for audio support, such as a portable sound system, microphones, electricity.
* Ask congregation members to invite their neighbors and friends. Personal invitations work.
* Advertise via social media, postcards, email, newsletters, banners, and word of mouth.
* Provide chairs for those who cannot stand for the entire event.
* Gather any supplies, such as candles, cards, pens, etc.
* Plan to provide at least water to the participants.
* Ask congregation members to serve as greeters and hospitality team.
* Consider having a sign in sheet to make contact with participants after the event.
* Prepare a press release ahead of time to give to any news outlet, explaining who you are, what your vision is for the Prayer Vigil, and your goals.
* Prayer-walk the space ahead of time, offering the event up into God’s hands to use for God’s service.
* Recruit a clean-up team to break down any equipment and return any supplies to the church.
* Gather with your planning team afterwards to evaluate, compile lessons learned, and write thank you notes to any leaders involved.

Some Prayer Resources:

* *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, by Richard Foster
* *A Spiritual Formation Workbook*, by James Bryan Smith with Richard Foster
* *Deep is the Hunger*, by Howard Thurman
* *Beginning Prayer*, by John Killinger
* *Too Busy Not to Pray,* by Bill Hybels
* *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook,* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun
* *Fifty Ways to Pray,* by Teresa A. Blythe
* *Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*, by James M. Washington
* *Breath Prayers for African Americans*, by Edna G. Jordan
* *Celtic Prayers from Iona: The Heart of Celtic Spirituality*, by J Philip Newell
* *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, by Marjorie J. Thompson
* *Draw the Circle: The 40 Day Prayer Challenge*, by Mark Batterson