

# *Friendship Ablaze!*

## Section 4

### Prayer

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## Prayer Plan

Prayer is a vital aspect of ***Friendship Ablaze!*** Prayer is at the heart of our actions as we reach out to the unchurched and those who do not know love and hope in Jesus Christ. In order to touch others with the Gospel message, we must be in touch with the Lord and Savior who gives us our hope in everything we do and say. Our witness to others is His witness.

This Prayer Plan is designed as preparation for the ***Friendship Ablaze!*** celebration, to help individuals, congregations and schools focus on the “critical event,” one Christian giving witness to another so that person may encounter Christ.

The Prayer Plan moves from our earliest prayer memories, to personal prayer, to prayer with others, to participation in a Prayer Vigil event – all reminding us of the vital importance of our prayer life in Christ.

This plan can be used by various groups in various ways: by leaders for their personal preparation, by Bible study groups, by teams of volunteers, or given to the whole congregation for use in personal devotions.

### Prayer Memories

Here are some common prayer memories. How do they compare with your prayer memories?

Memory #1: *Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.  
If I should die before I wake,  
I pray the Lord my soul to take.*

A simple bedtime prayer for children--with a profound message. Cross-stitched, embroidered, and painted renditions of this prayer can be found in children’s novelty corners of major department stores and on the walls of children’s bedrooms. When we teach our children this prayer, one that we may have recited in years past, do we also teach its meaning? This prayer is a reflection of faith and trust in the promise of eternal life, a witness to belief in Jesus as Savior.

Memory #2: *God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food. Amen.*

The simplest of children’s table prayers, possibly the first one learned and repeated. This prayer can be easily translated into any language and can be spoken anywhere, anytime. With this

prayer we acknowledge, praise and thank God for providing us with life-sustaining food. When prayed at a public restaurant or a gathering of friends or family, this prayer, too, is a faith witness.

Memory #3: *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer, the prayer Jesus taught us to pray, is the model for all prayer. Learned in Sunday School, religious education, Bible class or worship, it is a universal Christian prayer. Like many songs and hymns, this familiar prayer unites people with its messages of love, gratitude, forgiveness and hope.

Memory #4: *God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

This Serenity Prayer usually enters one's life during difficult and challenging times. It reminds us "Who's in charge" and encourages us to be calm and listen to God's wisdom before making life-changing decisions. When prayed in private, it is of great comfort. When prayed in a group, it is also a witness.

All four of these prayers are ones that we may have memorized over the years. We can recall them quickly when the appropriate moment occurs. From childhood prayer and prayer triggered by crisis, prayers **Ablaze!** can emerge.

## Growth in Personal Prayer

While we may find it easy to repeat remembered prayers, praying in one's own words can be difficult. How to pray? When to pray? What to pray?

Prayer is a conversation with God. God listens to prayers of every type, length, and language, silent or spoken, anytime or place, simple or complicated. Do we pray as Jesus suggests in Matthew 6: 6? "*But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*" We thank our God and praise Him for all He has done and will continue to do for and through us. We talk to Him as our best friend – with joy, sincerity and candor.



Thousands of prayers—on the spot, unpracticed, silent and aloud--were uttered in the town of Sycamore, Illinois, on February 9, 2004, as St. John’s Lutheran Church burned. Although the building was destroyed, a community – churched and unchurched – was “ablaze” with the spirit of compassion. An overwhelming outpouring of support followed the devastating fire. The immediate spirit of hope exhibited by the pastors and people of St. John’s—“ablaze” with a living faith, alive in the spirit, trusting in God for the future--was also a witness to the community.

Think of times when you have prayed. Where were you? Why were you praying? How did you pray? Have you ever known and recognized an answer to your prayers?

Where were you on September 11, 2001? You probably remember exactly what you were doing when you heard about the tragedies in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, DC that day. What were your thoughts at that time? What were your prayers? Were they personal? Did they include people you knew who might be involved? Did you call friends and family? Did you mourn and pray with others – in worship, at home, in a public place? Did you take part in any prayer gatherings?

**Prayer Exercise:**

We can all recall events in our own lives, in the lives of our friends and family, and events in our communities, our nation or the world that have “brought us to our knees” in prayer. List some of these events:

Events in my life:

Events in the lives of my friends and family:

Events in my community:

In my nation:

In the world:

Think about these events and create appropriate prayers for one or more of them. You can start by filling in the blanks below and reading your completed prayers aloud. This exercise will help you create your own personal prayers, expressed in any way comfortable to you.

*Dear Lord,*

*Thank You for all You have done in \_\_\_\_\_ (my life, the lives of my friends/family, my community, my nation, the world). Your love and care are always unconditional. Please forgive me for anything I have done or said that offended You or anyone else. I humbly ask You to please help \_\_\_\_\_ (me, someone else, my community, the nation, the world) to know Your will and wisdom in dealing with \_\_\_\_\_ (describe need). Help me to say and do what is right in Your eyes, and to help others to know Your love, Your forgiveness, and Your power to save us when we are lost. Help me to be **Ablaze!** for You. I offer this prayer in Your name. Amen.*

Here are other ways of exercising personal prayer:

- Silent prayer
- Prayer journaling (see sample following page 4-11)
- Prayer during meditation over scripture
- Prayer during daily devotions
- Keep a prayer list
- Visiting on-line devotions/prayers

## Growth in Prayer with Others

We pray with others at various times and in various ways:

- Worship (liturgical prayers and prayers for specific people and/or circumstances)
- Meetings (prayers at beginning and end of church/school meetings)
- Activities (at church and school, including sports)
- Bible Studies (including the **Friendship Ablaze!** studies in section 3 of these **Friendship Ablaze!** materials)
- Family devotions
- Meals (at home, restaurants, churches...)
- Bedtimes (not just children!)
- Telephone conversations
- Hospital rooms



- Prayer Partners
- Prayer Chains
- Prayer Warriors
- Prayer Breakfasts/Lunches
- National Day of Prayer (first Thursday in May)
- Prayer Vigils
- Others (Can you think of more examples?)

We are “invited” to pray in many ways. While standing by the kitchen sink, preparing a meal, or driving the car, we may think about a circumstance or person and speak to God. We may call someone on the phone and pray with them. Have you prayed with or for someone who did not know Jesus as their Savior--a friend, a relative, a co-worker? When an opportunity to share your faith witness happens, do you ask God to help you find the right words for that person and situation?

One way to combine personal prayer and prayer with others is a Prayer Vigil. Prayer Vigils can be held in a sanctuary, a public meeting place, outdoors, or in a variety of other locations. The occasion for a vigil might be a holiday, special circumstance (like 9-11), celebration, fund-raising campaign or other event. A Prayer Vigil plan is included on the following pages as preparation for the ***Friendship Ablaze!*** celebration.

## Prayer Vigil

Begin planning for the *Friendship Ablaze!* Prayer Vigil eight weeks before the celebration. Throughout the planning process, keep in mind the purposes and desired outcomes of the Vigil and of the overall *Friendship Ablaze!* celebration. The following is one possible organizational structure to help you plan a Prayer Vigil.

### 8 weeks prior

- Recruit *Friendship Ablaze!* Prayer Vigil Team Leader
- Recruit Vigil Planning Team (4-6 persons)
- Set date/time/place for first organizational meeting
- Suggested agenda for first meeting:
  1. Pray for the *Friendship Ablaze!* effort.
  2. Clarify purposes of Vigil.
  3. Establish date/time/place for vigil, possibly for the 24 hours on the Saturday or Friday/Saturday (6 p.m. to 6 p.m.) before the *Friendship Ablaze!* Sunday celebration
  4. Communicate the vigil plans to church/school staff and leaders. Do this throughout the planning process.
  5. Assign Team responsibilities (leader, meeting recorder/reporter, church/school publicity coordinator, volunteer recruiter, site coordinator, church/school sign-up coordinator, vigil follow-up coordinator)
  6. Set date/time/place for the next meeting.
  7. Confirm team assignments for next meeting.
  8. PRAY!

### 7 weeks prior

- Second Prayer Vigil Team meeting
- Suggested agenda:
  1. Pray for the *Friendship Ablaze!* effort.
  2. Solidify date/time/place for vigil.
  3. Establish most effective methods for publicizing and inviting participation in the vigil within the congregation/school/community (i.e., posters, flyers, newsletter/bulletin/spoken announcements, community newspaper religion section, community bulletin board, special large neighborhood signs....). Encourage everyone to “bring a friend.”



4. Plan for the process of gathering Prayer Request Cards (see sample following page 4-11) from church/school to be included in the vigil with the Prayer Guide (see sample following page 4-11). The LCMS includes prayer requests (and other prayer resources) on their *Ablaze!* website, <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=5972>.
5. Prepare for the pre-vigil production and distribution of *Friendship Ablaze!* Prayer bulletin inserts during weeks 5, 6, 7 and 8. These prayer inserts are included in section 2, Worship, of these *Friendship Ablaze!* materials.
6. Prepare for Prayer Vigil site set-up and take-down.
7. Establish plan for and brainstorm a list of volunteers to recruit to help with the vigil – include all ages, church and school. (greeters/hosts--2 each hour, bulletin insert helpers, Prayer Guide helpers/folders, Prayer Request card organizer, sign-up helpers, site set-up & take-down helpers)
8. Provide for safety during the vigil (i.e., one entrance, one exit, access to telephone or cell phone and emergency phone numbers, lock-up arrangements before and after, etc.)
9. Begin to prepare, display, and distribute vigil posters and other publicity.
10. Provide vigil publicity announcements to those responsible for church/school newsletters.
11. Set date/time/place for next meeting.
12. PRAY!

#### Six weeks prior

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Prayer Vigil Team meeting
- Begin sign-ups for Prayer Vigil hours (for participants and for volunteers – need name, contact information, times available). Encourage participants to “bring a friend” (especially one with no church home) to the vigil.
- Begin distributing Prayer Request Cards from church/school. Provide receptacles in various locations (narthex, church/school entrances, fellowship areas). These requests will be for prayers to supplement those in the *Friendship Ablaze!* Prayer Guide and prayer list(s).
- Produce prayer inserts for weeks 5-8 (personalize the samples).
- Prepare/arrange for weekly worship announcements about the Vigil.
- Continue to pray for the *Friendship Ablaze!* celebration.
- PRAY!

#### Five weeks prior

- 4<sup>th</sup> Prayer Vigil Team meeting.
- Continue sign-ups for vigil participants and volunteers.
- Encourage those in church/school to invite friends (bring a friend), especially unchurched, to participate in the vigil.

- Arrange for volunteers recruited to help with prayer inserts for Week 5 bulletins.
- Continue weekly worship announcements.
- Review vigil plan with all leaders and volunteers.
- PRAY!

#### Two to four weeks prior

- Weekly meetings to check progress, discuss future plans/changed plans, etc.
- Continue sign-ups.
- Continue weekly worship announcements.
- Volunteers insert prayer bulletin inserts for worship.
- PRAY!

#### Week prior and week of prayer vigil

- Prepare and fold Prayer Vigil Guides.
- Finish collecting Prayer Request cards for church/school.
- Before the ***Friendship Ablaze!*** celebration, set up for Prayer Vigil on Friday afternoon/evening, depending upon day(s)/time(s) of vigil, availability of site, etc. (Set-up includes place of prayer and reception/greeting areas, signs indicating site entrance, and welcome participants and offer them a prayer guide and other materials.)
- Place a copy of the hourly greeter volunteer schedule (with phone numbers) at the table in the greeting area.
- Provide a sign-in sheet and ask each participant to print his or her name on the sheet. (Review these sheets after the vigil for evaluation & follow-up purposes.)
- Greeters/hosts give participants a copy of the Prayer Guide and any other items that might help guide their prayers. (They can keep these items.) Make Bibles available, so that they can use the verses suggested for prayer if they choose. They can also pick up Prayer Cards in the vigil site area and pray for the needs as written by others. Ask that they return the Prayer Cards to their original place so that others can also pray about them.
- After the last hour of the vigil, the volunteers collect the prayer cards and other items, and clean up the vigil site area.
- PRAY!

## Prayer Vigil Follow-up

- The Planning team should have a follow-up meeting within one week after the Prayer Vigil to celebrate, to evaluate and to address possible follow-up publicity and continuing encouragement of the purposes of ***Friendship Ablaze!***
- Continue to pray for the unchurched and the lost.
- Throughout the church and school, encourage people to keep a prayer list or prayer journal (see sample following page 4-11) and to pray daily for those on their lists or in their journals.
- Develop a Prayer Chain ministry, if your church does not already have one.
- Develop a group of Prayer Warriors to pray specifically and on a regular basis for your church/school families, staff and leaders – for their spiritual welfare, and for their work in saving the lost.
- Thank all who assisted with the Prayer Vigil and with other prayer-related activities in the past 8 weeks.
- Start planning for other prayer ministries, including the next Prayer Vigil!
- Pray for the ***Friendship Ablaze!*** results.
- Continue to share the love of Jesus with others!

***“For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:20***

Samples  
on the following pages

Prayer Journal Page

Prayer Vigil

Prayer Request Card

Prayer Vigil

Prayer Guide

These three items are available as Word documents for free download at  
[www.friendshipablaze.org](http://www.friendshipablaze.org).

# PRAYER ABLAZE! JOURNAL

*CRITICAL EVENT: When one Christian gives witness of the hope that is in them to another person so that person may encounter Christ.*  
**Ablaze!** -- Multiplying the Critical Event

*“Be joyful always; pray continually: give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

I Thessalonians 5: 16-18

DAY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ TIME: \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

1. **Friendship Ablaze!** Prayers (for unchurched friends, relatives, co-workers, and acquaintances)

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2. Other Prayers for Today:

Continuing Prayers:

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New Prayers:

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THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF ST. JOHN  
Anytown, USA  
***Friendship Ablaze! Prayer Vigil***

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Request: \_\_\_\_\_

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*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF ST. JOHN  
Anytown, USA  
***Friendship Ablaze! Prayer Vigil***

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Request: \_\_\_\_\_

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*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)



THE LUTHERAN CHURCH OF ST. JOHN  
Anytown, USA  
***Friendship Ablaze! Prayer Vigil***

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Prayer Request: \_\_\_\_\_

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*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

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