**Sermon Series on the Vows of Membership in the UMC**

**1st Vow of Membership *“I will support the church with my prayers…”***

**Introduction**

My aim this morning is, first, to so persuade you from God's Word and from church history of the primacy of corporate prayer that you will never view the prayer meetings of our church the same again.

Second, my aim and my prayer is that you will determine to take one step forward in your participation and confidence in prayer, not just as an individual, but with other believers, gathered together with the purpose of seeing God's glory manifested.

Why am I talking about this today?

I bring the issue of praying together up for three reasons:

1. Corporate prayer is on par with preaching and teaching as a priority in a healthy church.
2. Praying together is a vital key to opening God's presence and work among His people in unique ways. And
3. The tendency among believers, even among those who occupy leadership positions in the church, to think of prayer gatherings as the extra-curricular activity in the life of the church.

It's good to have, but not important enough to join; something you briefly tack on to a meeting before you get down to the real business. There are a growing number of believers who view prayer meetings as optional, secondary,

**Consider the following….**

**A: Leadership requires prayer to cover those sent into the fields of ministry…**

**Acts 6:1-5**

**The Choosing of the Seven**

**6 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+6:1-5#fen-NIV-27103a)**] among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”**

**5This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.**

***B: Prayer releases Heaven’s plan for mankind….they are answered with the breath of God…***

**Revelation 8:1-5**

**8 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.**

**2And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.**

**3Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all God’s people, on the golden altar in front of the throne. 4The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God’s people, went up before God from the angel’s hand. 5Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.**

***C: Prayer sets the course of history…………………..***

***Romans 1:18***

***18The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,***

***Joel 2:1-2; & 12-14***

***An Army of Locusts….2 Blow the trumpet in Zion;  sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand—2    a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times nor ever will be in ages to come.***

***Rend Your Heart***

***12“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart  with fasting and weeping and mourning.” 13Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God,  for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.
14Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing—
grain offerings and drink offerings  for the Lord your God.***

**Throughout biblical history, these solemn assemblies for prayer marked extraordinary spiritual breakthroughs for God's people. To prepare us for this evening, I want to place before you the truth of God's Word that accurately diagnoses the present danger that our nation is in, not from terrorists, but from God. I also want to show you from history the place that intense times of crying out to God have in the outpourings of the Spirit of God in revival. And it is my prayer that a Spirit-created urgency and intensity will overtake our souls, so that tonight's Prayer Summit becomes too important for you to miss. To that end, pray with me.**

**Since 1947, The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has depicted on its cover what is called the Doomsday Clock. This clock registers how close the world is to nuclear apocalypse by the proximity of the minute hand to midnight. These nuclear scientists weigh both positive and negative factors in the world and make their determination about how close we are to ruin.**

**The last time the clock changed was in March of 2002. After considering the continued threat of terrorism, the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, and the action or non-action of nations in regard to peace, the team of scientists adjusted the clock to read seven minutes to midnight. (source: Claude King) In their estimation, we're dancing on the edge of disaster.**

**But far more ominous than any human danger is the unspeakably awesome wrath of God. Romans 1:18 tells us that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people. What is the wrath of God? The word used here describes a settled and abiding disposition against something.**

**To say that God is wrathful describes His determined and continual opposition towards that which repulses Him. God's wrath is the reflex action of His perfect holiness against that which is unholy. And get this: When God is wrathful toward a person, it doesn't mean He's flying off the handle in a rage or loosing control in a fit of anger. No, when God's wrath rests upon a person, it means He has set Himself in battle array against that person.**

**The OT prophet Joel shocked the nation of Israel when he ordered the blowing of the trumpet, which is akin to turning on the air raid siren. At that sound, everyone drops what their doing to gather for war. What enemy was bearing down on them? What army threatens them? Once they gather, Joel explains who is breathing down their necks: God Himself is coming! The Lord raises His voice in the presence of His army. His camp is very large; Those who carry out His command are powerful. Indeed, the Day of the Lord is terrible and dreadful- who can endure it? (Joel 2:11) God had seen Israel's sin and had come to fight against them.**

**That's the biblical picture of God's wrath. Generations after Joel, the Apostle Paul picks up this theme in Romans 1:18 and tells us that God is on the move, continuously, deliberately, like an unstoppable army. He rumbles into the lives of those whose attitude is irreverent, perverse, and idolatrous (that's godlessness). He squares off against all actions that are loveless, immoral, and pridefully rebellious (that's unrighteousness).**

**It's a disturbing thought to consider that our own Lord may be the One stirring up our enemies against us. We Christians complain about secular humanism, about the pervasive subjectivism, about the removal of critical spiritual elements from public schools and judicial settings. We grieve over media bias and the homosexual agenda and the creeping immorality on the airwaves and on television. We perceive ourselves to be victims and pray for the Lord's protection. And in one sense, this is right. The Bible says we live in the last days, demon-possessed days.**

**Therefore…prayer is our first vow…first priority…and sets the foundation for not only God’s plan but our role in His plans for all mankind through Holy Spirit infused ministry.**

**METHODISTS ARE CALLED TO BE A PRAYING PEOPLE!**