

Introduction:

There is a rich history of prayer in central Illinois. There have been expressions of this, including 24/7 prayer, in recent years and decades. Over the years in this region, each heightened emphasis of prayer in which intercession is elevated more than normal, each time 24/7 prayer watches have burned for a season, they've served as labor pangs that eventually gave birth to more prayer. We must not forget that it's prayer that births more prayer just like it's prayer that gives birth to more souls coming to know Jesus. Though God's kingdom timing may seem somewhat delayed at times, he's used all the prayers, intercessions, supplications, giving of thanks, etc. to cause more of an expression of prayer in His due time. The Greater Peoria House of Prayer is the result of Jesus' zeal for prayer and His church, but also very importantly because of the many, many faithful intercessors (many we may never know until we meet them in Heaven) who have cried out for the Lord to move in this strategic region for such a time as this.

I. My Abbreviated Personal Prophetic Journey Related to the House of Prayer

- A. I came to know the Lord in the summer of 1999 at a Christian hockey camp. I had just graduated high school. I grew up catholic so the things of God to me were interpreted as a catholic. Prayer was with a rosary. Church was 30 minutes. Being spiritual was knowing exactly when to stand, kneel and sit. I actually didn't really know there were other types of churches.
- B. After I got saved, I began to make Spirit-filled friends and started checking out their churches. I began to get exposed to live worship and passionate preaching and I was hooked! On one particular morning, I was at an altar call listening to worship after the preaching and began to pray, "Lord, please let them play one more song. Just one more song." Something like that. They played an extra song. I prayed again. They continued with another song. I was thinking, "This is amazing! I can pray and God will answer right away."
- C. It was during this altar call that the Lord Himself put a thoughtful question in me that has never left me to this day. It has been that steady voice on the inside over the course of years pulling me toward the reality of the house of prayer. The question was, "Why does this ever have to stop? Why do we stop playing songs? Why can't we do worship all day so people like me can just sit here?" Those thoughts invaded me during that altar call. I didn't have language for that being an encounter with the Lord. I didn't know He was speaking to me. Looking back, I would have to say that's one of my most profound experiences aside from salvation. I was marked for day and night worship with prayer and I didn't even know it.
- D. It wasn't long after that when I began to find verses like Psalms 27:8 and Psalm 27:4. I remember reading them for the first time and saying, "Lord, that's me! Wow, what I feel is in the Bible. Incredible! I just want to seek you and see who you are!" I taught myself the guitar (primarily) so I could worship by myself and be with the Lord.
- E. It wasn't until after receiving this mark and knowing some of these verses that I began to hear about what was going on at the International House of Prayer in Kansas City. When I saw they were talking about these same verses and were doing what I was feeling, I couldn't believe it. The things I was feeling were truly God! He's stirring an entire generation with this reality.
- F. I decided to do all I knew to do to walk into this reality of the house of prayer. Between 1999 and 2014 is 15 years. A lot has happened in that amount of time. I've lived in a couple of different cities (during my hockey playing days), graduated from college, gotten married, have three kids, worked in the corporate world nearly 10 years, and on and on. Meanwhile I'm serving in my local church, saying yes to the Lord as best as I know how. Serving, doing discipleship groups, leading prayer meetings, helping with worship, preaching when asked to, etc. During conferences I would help coordinate 24/7 prayer. I did all I knew to do. The entire time my heart would be burning for the local day and night expression. In some seasons it would fade, and then in the next season it would be strong again. The burden never left me, but I just knew it had to be the Lord and His timing to see it established in Peoria.
- G. I'm skipping a lot here, but from about Christmas-time of 2011 through now, I've been in literally the craziest season of transition I could ever think of. During a time of coffee with my friend Kalman Nagy, I told him I felt like I was in transition. A month later I spoke a message on preparing because we never know what's around the corner. Six months later, in July of 2012, was the first Behold Him event that went 31 days. This was the eye of the hurricane of transition for me in which Jesus revealed Himself to me as Chief Intercessor who is currently praying and the leader of the prayer movement. Out of this it was decided we must continue the intercession amongst the churches that attended Behold Him on Saturday nights. We called it the Saturday Night Prayer Room and I stepped into leadership in that time calling us to go for it in prayer. That was November 2012. A second Behold Him focused on the first commandment was in January 2013. The only way I can best describe 2013 is "zeal for Your house has consumed me" (Psalm 69:9). I was thinking about transitioning into the house of prayer full-time daily and almost constantly. I was scared. I was excited. I thought it was God. I thought it was crazy. But the question/word from 1999 was burning in me; it never left me (Isaiah 30:21).

II. Key Prophetic Events Leading to the Birthing of the Greater Peoria House of Prayer

- A. Throughout 2013, I'm still working a very demanding job in the corporate world. I'm stressed, I have no favor and all I can think about is Jesus and the call on my life. He kept saying things like, "You won't regret taking a risk to follow Me. I've called you to this." I'm a prophetic mess pretty much all of 2013. It would take me hours to go line by line to tell of all the warfare, prophetic words, encouragements, confirmations, etc., but here are just a few. (I'm truly thankful for this season, by the way.)
- B. I began to pray, Lord if this is you, you have to provide a building. I prayed other things, but this seemed the hardest. It was the first thing that happened. In July of 2013, Scott Schilling came to me and basically said, "This upper room is yours for free. The Garage (the ministry that formerly met here) is in transition and wants to do house of prayer stuff. It's yours. Free." Prayer answered. (We started renting the bottom level soon after moving in. Ironically, the business that moved out was a wedding supplies business.)
- C. I also had my friend Jeremy talking to me even before the Greater Peoria House of Prayer was launched that he wanted to do it full time here when it started (and he has!). I had someone email me that they wanted to financially support the house of prayer. I had all these small but clear indications that God was in it (building, money and co-laborer). My pastor and eldership team felt it was the Lord. I had people coming to me who didn't even know I was thinking about going into ministry and telling me, "I sense when you go into ministry, the Lord will provide for you." Things like that. Secret prayers were being confirmed dynamically. And on and on. All a bunch of weighty confirmations.
- D. The most consistent prophetic words that kept coming for a season were the "don't despise small beginnings" (Zechariah 4:10) type of words. They began in the July/August 2013 timeframe. I was constantly thinking how the Saturday Night Prayer Room was a small but significant beginning and to take it very seriously. I felt like I should fully engage as much as I could given life circumstance. I preached a message on why we need to be wise and "all in" during the manger season as the wise men were when Jesus was born. People would just "randomly bring up" like, "Hey, did you know Zechariah 4:10 was in the context of the rebuilding of the temple?"
- E. Just a couple of days later on a Wednesday early evening, I was taking the trash out of the Chi Alpha house and a guy working at Avanti's smoking a cigarette says, "Hey bro, whatcha doing over there?" I told him it's a campus ministry, we're working on updating the house, that we do prayer, or something like that. He looked at me all funny and smiley and literally said to me, "Cool... small beginnings man... small beginnings." I was so stunned I just stared at him and thought maybe it was the Lord or an angel... smoking!
- F. A couple of leaders began thinking about Behold Him 2014 and potentially having an IHOPU team bring students. So Phil Kellenberger brought a team to help us plan it during November of 2013. During his visit, I asked him what he felt the Lord saying to me and the little Saturday Night Prayer Room. His response was nonchalant but the Lord through him, "Just stay faithful in the season of smallness. Don't despise it." Something to that effect. That was a massive breakthrough "suddenly" weekend, by the way. We had been praying for awhile to have everything in order to move over, and that weekend—literally in 24-48 hours—it all came together.
- G. So we moved over to this current East Peoria location soon after the IHOPU planning team came and we started morning prayer from 6-8 a.m. on December 16, 2013. I was on break from work. We had a good number coming for about a month. Six people came on Christmas day. I was blown away.
- H. But I'm still thinking, should I do this full time? Should I really leave my job and do what I'm called to do? Has God made it clear enough? I said, Lord, give me an audible voice like you gave Mike Bickle in 1983. Over time, I felt I discerned the Lord's response, "I did speak to you audibly. It was in 1983. That word was for you too. It's for this generation. It's for anyone who would say yes to it."
- I. One day I received two prophetic words from a man on the same morning. One was the "don't despise small beginnings" word and one was the "I'll take care of your family" word. He said, the Lord is saying, "test Me in this..." It was the last straw. I was shocked. I've received all these words! You're saying start full-time! As in, leave your corporate job and pray and build My house of prayer.
- J. So I did. I'm leaving out a major amount of details. My parents and parents-in-law were nervous but supportive. We'd been talking to them all over the years about doing this so it wasn't out of nowhere.
- K. We started day prayer meetings (6-8 a.m.) and night prayer meetings (6-8 p.m.) as we felt Luke 18:1-8 was our starting point. We felt to do verse seven, a day meeting and a night meeting, stay faithful in it and obey as the Lord speaks and provides resource.
- L. This brings us to where we're at today. My heart says, "Look what the Lord has done! I want to be faithful to Him in this work."