



Setting up an Alpha-focus 24-7 Prayer Room

Prayer is one of the most important keys to the success of any Alpha course. In this report, Isobel Mead of *Churches Together* in Chepstow, describes how she ran a week of non-stop prayer, in conjunction with Alpha, with wonderful results. 'Everything about our course was blessed!' says Isobel.

Summary

I have prayed in organised 24-7 Prayer Rooms before, but organising one doing it for Alpha was much more focused. We found that casual visitors to the room were very taken with being able to pray for problems faced by their own families and friends. Others had signed-up to take on a one-hour prayer slot, in which we prayed for the courses and for people to come on them. I discovered that God is very interested in what you are doing and why. This was a surprise at first, then a great relief! It's good to know this before you start and then run out of steam by trying to do it in your own strength (after all, it won't be anything like as good if He isn't there.... ☺)

Planning

You will need:

- A Logistics Team to help you think through all the challenges.
- A budget of at least £100.
- A significant number of people willing to pray (If you go for a week, there will be 168 hours to fill...)
- A suitable location. Ideally you will need:
 - A separate area for your room - you can make walls with screens
 - Toilets that don't involve a long walk in the dark on your own
 - Tea and coffee making facilities
 - Good locks on doors and emergency exits
 - Somewhere for a night watchman to sleep
 - To keep a running total of perceived expenses as go around (that budget could be important)



An example:

Our 24-7 Prayer event was staged in a very difficult location.....the huge Anglican Priory church at the bottom end of town where there are many drunks late at night.

Our logistics meeting came up with the following problems:

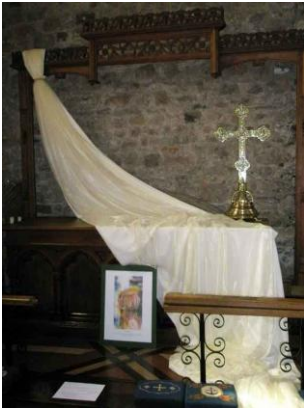
1. The church was open to the public between 10am and 4pm so people praying between those times had to expect to be disturbed by visitors.
2. The rest of the time the doors were locked and people would have to phone into the room when they got there to request entry. A copy of the time schedule would be needed so that the person inside would feel safe in opening the door.
3. The nights were covered 10pm to 6am by teams of people.....sometimes married couples and sometimes 2 people of the same sex.....some nights were livelier than others with the doors being tried by people passing etc. You will attract attention because your lights will be showing.
4. The nearest toilets were in a hall behind the church and reached by an uneven path through the graveyard with no lights. Any itinerant persons also used the porch of the hall to sleep in overnight.
5. Who were the key holders? Would the insurance cover this event where other people had access to the keys and the building?
6. Where would the time schedule be kept and by whom?

Our logistics meeting came up with the following solutions to our perceived problems:

1. We needed Stewards to guide visitors and talk to them to allow the pray-ers to get on with praying. That meant a separate time schedule just for Stewards.
2. A spare mobile phone was needed in the room at all times.
3. We put up a tent inside the church and behind a screen for the overnight sleeping arrangements and had a camping stove for tea/coffee.
4. We found a good sized cleaning cupboard inside the church which could be cleared sufficiently to put a camping toilet in, for night use only.
5. The insurance was OK and we used one existing set of keys which never left the church.
6. Since 12 congregations had been approached, there could only be 1 contact to phone or email and they were responsible for putting the schedule on a website on a daily basis for people to check for available hours.

Decoration

We had experienced a couple of 24-7 Prayer Rooms in our town but the person who had organised them was not available to help. Many days and nights later I realised that each 24-7 Prayer Room needs its own person to take up the baton because God wants to use individuals and our talents differ. Be prepared to have your ideas moulded, discarded (very gently), replaced by better ideas as you go along and expect that to happen right up to the minute you open the doors.



Much thought went into the décor of the room. The focus was Alpha and there would be a lot of Alpha material around because we wanted our pray-ers to concentrate on interceding for the autumn courses. We also wanted the daily visitors to the church to feel they were welcome and could participate in some way as well as picking up information about Alpha.

We (Churches Together) had used this same church in June to display an Art Exhibition by Christian artist Anne House and one painting called “The Narrow Way” was my first idea as a possible theme for the room. This developed into exploring the choices we all make in life and challenging how we make them.

The idea of a team to organise the room is fine but only if you know exactly what you want to achieve. One of our Logistics Team had been given a vision of a garden in the area next to the sanctuary we were going to use and we all felt that should be used in some way. We had many ideas, many of which were too expensive.

One person will usually have the call and will develop the room as they go. lots of ideas came (and often went again.....). A list of people with specific skills is useful (especially if you don't know one end of a paint brush from the other). I had a picture in my mind of the effect I wanted, of a river of light down and across the altar then down to the floor. When I came to actually set it up, I had an amazing confirmation from the Lord when I asked Him what He thought of it.....an immediate and brilliant shaft of sunlight onto the bottom of the fabric on an afternoon of dismal rain.....awesome! The job has a lot of pluses!

I changed many of my initial ideas and felt so definitely that the Lord was guiding me that it became easy. I got an artist friend to paint a garden scene on strips of lining paper and provided coloured paper and card for people to write prayer requests for friends and relatives which they then stuck on the garden scene. This same artist friend cut out bright flower shapes to decorate the outside of the screen which closed off one side of the room from the rest of the church. There were some very old memorial tablets within the room which I hid by placing boards of MDF covered in the same fabric as the “river of light” and stuck other things on the front of the boards. Another friend helped by making cards and bookmarks which we had in a craft area with pattern punches, inks pads and stamps, glitter pens etc....this is always popular. There was a CD player and a mix of Christian songs and some 24-7 CD's with rock, rhythm and cool music. The 24-7 guided meditations from the website were also printed but most people just wanted to concentrate on Alpha. We provided a Prayer Journal for thoughts, scriptures and prayers.

“Everything about our course was blessed”

Time scheduling

You have 168 hours to get people to commit to.

YOU need to provide a time schedule. THEY need to commit to coming to the venue to pray and to be on time.

Try to get the first 2 or 3 days filled up and don't worry too much about the back end of the week because people usually find that 1 hour is not enough and will book a further hour or two later in the week.

Try to get 1 person to volunteer to be the initial booking contact. Once the room is up and running then ideally there should be 7 people who take 1 day each to be the co-ordinator and be responsible for phoning around to fill spaces, clean/tidy the room daily.....but be prepared for that person to be you.....

Resources

The 24-7 Prayer website has very good resources and tips which are well worth following:

<http://www.24-7prayer.com>

The “24-7 Manual” is also a must have, not to mention “The Vision and The Vow” and “Red Moon Rising” by Pete Greig.

Did we feel it was worth the effort?

Without a shadow of doubt! Everything about our course was blessed. The Lord even gave us a prophecy to encourage us!

Would we do it again? Oh yes!