TOO BUSY TO PRAY: USING APPLICATION TECHNOLOGY TO CONNECT THOSE IN NEED WITH THOSE READY TO PRAY

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DEDICATION

This work on prayer and intercession is dedicated to my spouse, Sheila Gipson, who has for many nights and days prayed for me, my daughters, Sonia Gipson Rankin and Cynthia Gipson Lee, family prayer warriors, my grandchildren, Chinor, Naomi, Zacharias, Sarai, Isaac, a new generation of prayer warriors, my siblings, nieces, and nephews.

ABSTRACT

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First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens (First Baptist) has a rich history of being a praying church. But in today's fast-paced and global community, how do we stay connected in prayer? How do we get to hear one another's stories concerning the challenges of life? How do we intercede for others and encourage a discouraged people? This project focuses on how to leverage digital and social networking technology to allow those that may be geographically distant or time challenged to feel connected and encouraged in prayer.

This research project designed a web-based and mobile device application to engage the local and geographically distant community in joining one of three virtual prayer groups where they could share prayer narratives within the group and commit to praying for the needs of other group members. Each prayer request was anonymously posted on the groups' virtual prayer wall and anonymously forwarded by email to a random prayer group member. The prayer group member committed to praying that day for the request and responding anonymously back through the application with a written prayer or words of encouragement.

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CHAPTER 1

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The role of technology in the life of the church and the spiritual growth of the individual is an ongoing conversation. Brandon Vogt, a writer and speaker on theology, technology and social justice, asserts that new media like podcasting and videocasting have made the Church's ancient traditions more accessible and portable than they have ever been before.[1] Matt Swaim, author of *Prayer in the Digital Age*, warns against the careless use of social communications media.[2] Jennifer Fulwiler, in writing the foreword to Matt Swaim's book, states

> The breathtaking advances in technology over the past few decades have left us with unprecedented access to information and opportunities for communication… Used well, the social media revolution could spread the Gospel message with tremendous force and allow us to reach out to one another on a wide scale; used poorly, it could led to a level of widespread spiritual apathy heretofore unseen in the church.[3]

This paper is not to start a new conversation, but to join in the continuing dialog concerning theology and technology. This paper uses a narrative inquiry and storytelling methodology to explore the obstacles and challenges associated with intercessory prayer

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[1] Brandon Vogt, *The Church and New Media* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2011), 93.

[2] Matt Swaim, *Prayer in the Digital Age* (Missouri: Liguori Publications, 2011), xiii - xiv.

[3] Ibid.

in a digital age.[4] It examines the transformational impact of utilizing a new media tool to assist local and geographically distant communities in praying one for the other. This paper is not meant to be a comprehensive study of the effect of technology on the church nor even a detailed exposition on intercessory prayer, but to contribute to the conversation of the interconnectivity and intersections regarding intercessory prayer and technology.

Swaim asserts that one of the dilemma's when it comes to social communication is that those who are savvy about technology have typically lacked proper moral formation, and those who are morally formed have typically not been all that savvy about technology.[5] This raises the question as to how does my moral formation and knowledge of technology shape my overall perspective on the conversation of intercessory prayer and technology?

Theology of Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory prayer is a prayer in which we put aside our personal needs and we pray for another person or situations. It's not the same as prayers for oneself, for 'enlightenment,' spiritual gifts, guidance, a personal matter, or any glittering generality. Intercession is not just praying for someone else's needs, it's praying with the real hope and real intent that God would step in and act for the positive advancement of some specific other person(s) or other entity. It's trusting God to act, even if it's not in the manner or timing we seek. None of us are fully aligned with God's purposes. There will

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[4] Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities* (Louisville: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008), 74.

[5] Swaim, *Prayer in the Digital Age*, 121.

always be a difference between the two. It's okay to ask for what we want from the situation; that's a part of being honest with God. We can pray that our request somehow be found in the divine purposes and pray for doorways to a better way if it can't be. Maybe God will provide a ram as with Abraham when sacrificing Isaac (Genesis 22; 1-18). But God may have other plans, and our part is to trust that God's plans will be best.

Intercessory prayer does not work by our own power, as if we were the Almighty. When prayer is answered, it is answered in God's way, and it may not be at all like the 'victory' we are 'claiming.' Every Sunday when a minister prays the pastoral prayer, and lifts up the names of the bereaved, hospitalized, and shut-in, the minister and congregation are interceding in prayer on behalf of others. We pray corporately, which is intercession, for the pastor, leadership, and the church. We stand in the gap for our members and visitors. Intercessory prayer demonstrates our connectedness to others, and that there is interconnectedness to God. We bear each other's burdens. Douglas Steere, author and authority on the spiritual life, cited Baron von Hugel as stating,

> I wonder whether you realize a deep, great fact? That souls – all human souls - are interconnected? . . . that we can not only pray for each other, but suffer for each other. . . . I was able to offer to God, to Christ for my child that He might ever strengthen, sweeten, steady her in her true, simple, humble love and dependence upon Him. Nothing is more real than this interconnection – this gracious power put by God Himself into the very heart of our infirmities.[6]

Steere asserts that intercession is the most intensely social act of which the human being is capable.[7] And there is a beneficial effect when a person knows that others are praying

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[6] Douglas V. Steere, *Dimensions of Prayer* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1962), 67.

[7] Ibid.

for them. On the effects of intercessory prayer and healing, Steere asserts that "The knowledge of the existence of these prayers might help to restore the patient's own faith in an ultimate restoration to health." [8] Even when the person didn't know that he or she was being prayed for, Steere affirms the efficacy of secret intercessory prayer.[9] This means intercessory prayer seems able to touch the life of another at the core of his or her being. And in the extremity of disease, we can be supported and even healed by the help of the prayers of others of whom we outwardly know nothing.[10]

In the Bible there are examples of people interceding on behalf of other people and situations. Abraham interceded to the Lord on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16-33). Moses was known as a great intercessor; he interceded for the people of Israel that God would not destroy them, and forgive them of their sins (Exodus 32:12-14). Even when the people knew they sinned, they would go to Moses and ask him to pray to God to rectify their situation (Numbers 11:1-2). The prophet Samuel interceded for the people of Israel when they sought out a king to rule Israel rather than allowing God to be sovereign in their lives. The Lord turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friend (Job 42:10). Even where such prayer does not avail for its precise object, it has its results. David tells us that he prayed for his enemies; he says, in Psalm 35:13, "As for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting." And he adds, "my prayer returned into mine own bosom."

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[8] Steere, *Dimensions of Prayer*, 77.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

Richard Foster, a Christian theologian and author in the Quaker tradition, states that, "If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this lead us to prayer. Intercession is a way of loving others."[11] Foster views intercessory prayer as a priestly ministry and assert that one of the most challenging teachings in the New Testament is the universal priesthood of all Christians.[12] As priests, we have the sacred obligation of going before God on behalf of others.[13] Steere argues that in Christian intercessory prayer there is a consciousness that our act of prayer enters into a great sweep of intercession that is already going on.[14]

The model intercessor is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When Jesus was on the cross, he prayed to God to forgive the people for what they had done (Luke 23:34). Jesus interceded on our behalf that God would send the comforter to be with us forever (John 14:16). Jesus intercedes for us, "There is one mediator between God and people, Christ Jesus (I Timothy 2:5)." Romans 8, verse 34 states, "Christ Jesus who died, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." Dorothy Norwood, songwriter and gospel singer, wrote, "Somebody prayed for me, they had me on their mind, they took the time to pray for me."

Steere proposes that the intercessory path of assisting one another over the critical thresholds has been left open to humankind by God's design.[15] Steere suggest that,

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[11] Richard J. Foster, *Prayer* (New York, NY: Ashgate Publishing Group, 1994), 191.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Steere, *Dimensions of Prayer*, 68.

[15] Ibid., 69.

"While the ultimate goal of God is constant, the divine strategy of reaching that goal may be swiftly and joyously altered in the light of the occurrence of the costly prayers of committed men and women."[16]

Interceding in prayer for others is critical. Prayer takes place within a set of theological beliefs. Philip Clements-Jewery, in *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought*, states than an understanding of the nature of petitionary and intercessory prayer interacts strongly with the Christian doctrine of God.[17] The image that is held of God influences the way the prayer of intercession is understood. The way we pray is determined by what we believe about the nature of God and the nature of man. A view that asserts that God is distant, predictable, and rooted in natural laws might view prayer as a meaningless exercise. [18] A view that believes in a personal God who has an interest in engaging a personal relationship with individuals might view intercessory prayer in the light of a relationship between human persons and God.[19]

Clements-Jewery contends that certain things may be granted to people only when they are asked for from God.[20] This asking is the necessary condition for God to respond

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[16] Steere, *Dimensions of Prayer*, 69.

[17] Philip Clements-Jewery, *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought* (Abingdon, England: Ashgate Publishing Group, 2005), 137.

[18] Larry Van De Creek, Scientific and Pastoral Perspectives on Intercessory Prayer: An Exchange Between Larry Dossey, MD, and Health Care Chaplains (Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press, 1998), 4.

[19] Clements-Jewery, *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought*, 138.

[20] Ibid.

by giving what is needed. It expresses the personal nature of the relationship between God and the one who prays and is also a means of strengthening that relationship. Clements-Jewery asserts that the requirement that God is to be asked before intervening in human lives is a safeguard against either spoiling or dominating the person who stands in a personal relationship with God.[21] Clements-Jewery adds that it could also be seen as a diminishment of personhood if God intervened on all occasions without being asked.[22] There is a distinction between God's bringing about what a person needs even when that person has not asked God for it and God's giving in a personal way in response to prayer.[23] God's gifts can be received in a personal way only when a personal relationship to God is acknowledged. The prayer of asking for oneself or for others is an expression of such a personal relationship with God and a means of strengthening it.[24] Praying one for the other strengthens our relationship with each other and with God.

Personal Intercessory Prayer Formation

A core belief exists within me today that says, no matter what we are going through, God hears the cries of His people and God answers the prayers of His children (Psalm 34:17). I have no doubt that this type of faith was influenced from hearing my mother cry in the night and pray in faith for God to make a way. God never failed her, and God has never failed me. But the most effective element in formulating my faith in

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[21] Clements-Jewery, *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought*, 138.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 139.

[24] Ibid., 138.

prayer has been experience. I know for myself what prayer can do. I believe in the power of God to move through corporate, individual, and intercessory prayer.

My faith was shaped during those early times by the worship services that I attended and by the faith stories that were shared in our family. My mother and grandfather often shared the story of my healing following the intercessory prayer of my grandfather. I was born with a severe case of club feet, where the soles of both feet were curved inward. The doctors said that I would never walk without extensive surgery. This would require breaking and re-setting both ankles. Even then, I would require crutches or some other assistance to walk. The medical procedure was not within reach of my family's financial abilities. But one thing that *was* within their grasp was prayer. Every morning, before going to the fields where he worked as a sharecropper, Papa (my maternal great-grandfather) would stop by and pray and anoint my feet with oil. Then he would tell my mother, "He's going to be alright." And God healed me. With no medication, with no surgery, God ***healed me***. I have heard this story so many times, until it seems as if I remember experiencing it. It began to shape my understanding of who God is. A core belief exists within me today, one that says God moves through our intercessory prayers for others.

I never fully realized the interconnection of this memory with other memories on prayer until an exercise in a class at Drew University in July 2011 required me to look at the stepping stones of my life. One year, when I returned home from break at Southern University, my oldest sister arrived at my mother's home in the middle of the night. She lived in the house directly behind our home with her young son and three young daughters. My mother went to my sister's house to stay with the remaining kids. From

the hospital, my sister called and said that my niece's fever was at 104 degrees and that they were rushing her by ambulance to the larger hospital, which was 50 miles away. The doctor said that my niece had spinal meningitis and might not make it through the night. My mother asked me to stay with my nieces and nephew as she left to meet them at the receiving hospital. I received a call the next morning at my sister's house (one of two homes on my street that had a phone) saying that my niece had made it through the night, but that her fever had not broken. The doctor said that even if she survived, that the high fever for such a long period of time would most likely severely affect her brain. I remember that as I began to straighten up the living room and to sweep the floor that I prayed. I asked God to care for and heal my niece. I prayed for a total healing with no side effects. I told God, "If you heal her, I will start going back to church." While away at school, my church attendance was basically at zero. I bargained with God and said, "If you heal my niece, I will serve you. I will do whatever you tell me to do." My niece was healed and became the second in our family to attend and graduate from college. As I prayed in class that prayer of remembrance, I was reminded of how my great-grandfather had prayed for me. And my prayer for my niece was not about bargaining with God, but interceding in prayer for others.

Family Intercessory Prayer Formation

As long as I can remember, we have always been and continue to be a praying family. Growing up in rural Louisiana, my family prayed at meals, at church, during challenges, and at special events, such as, birthdays, holidays, and graduations. This is what I passed along to my children, and what they experienced in watching their grandparents pray. This is what they have begun to pass along to their children. They

remember with fondness, the extended family standing in a large circle on holidays, holding hands while my mother lifted up a matriarchal prayer of thanksgiving for the event. Each person in the circle would then quote a scripture or words of thanksgiving. We seemed to have always prayed.

Last year, my youngest daughter put forth an idea to use the free conference call technology, provided by FreeConferenceCall.com, to start a twice a month family prayer call. The prayer calls started with my older daughter, her spouse and children, our younger daughter, her spouse and children, my spouse, and myself. It quickly was expanded to include the family of our two nieces who we raised in our home while they were in high school. It finally expanded to include all family members: siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandchildren, and in-laws. An email reminder for our weekly prayer states, "We may be miles apart, but through today's technology, we can remain closely united and help pray for each other."

Theology and Technology

The technological explosion has influenced the direction of today's spiritual quest and desire to meet to pray. In *The Blackwell Reader*, Marie McCarthy contends that even with a gap between those with regular, effective access to digital technologies and those without, the auditory and visual stimulus at our disposal has left little or no time for contemplative thinking, focused awareness, or participation in spiritual activities.[25] A primary source of satisfaction for me is finding innovative ways to employ technology to

[25] Marie McCarthy, "Spirituality in a Postmodern Era" in Woodward, J. & S. Pattison, (eds.), *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 194-195.

accomplish spiritual growth for the family, church and community. I am technical by trade. While working for the Bell System, I obtained my graduate degree in Computer Science. Purdue University is where I met my spouse, who was also working on her Masters of Science degree, and we were married before the end of the semester. That was over 38 years ago, which also serves to mark my years of experience in the software development field. Years after being married, I accepted the call to ministry. Blending my love for ministry with technology allowed me to serve as the webmaster for First Baptist,[26] the Central Jersey Community Development Corporation,[27] and the Harvest of Hope Family Services Network, Inc.[28] websites.

In utilizing technology as a tool for ministry, I developed an internet based software application called Member Service Request Tracking (MSRT) used by First Baptist to track the pastoral care needs of church members. First Baptist had previously processed requests for services such as death and hospitalization notification, home visitation, and job searches by collecting information via phone calls and online forms and disseminating it by paper records to church volunteers. The MSRT application allowed the church to automatically deliver request for services of any kind to a centralized ministry point of contact or a specific resource for workflow management. It can be accessed from any computer connected to the internet, and helped to revolutionize the way First Baptist meets the needs of the congregation and the communities they

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[26] First Baptist website at http://fbcsomerset.com.

[27] Central Jersey Community Development Corporation website at http://cjcdc.org

[28] Harvest of Hope Family Services Network, Inc. website at http://harvestofhopefamily.com/

serve. This technology helped serve the churches protocol needs, but did not address the work of the church: Saving souls and serving as hope in an often hopeless place.

What about prayer and intercession? How can technology be used for the good of the praying community? The challenge and opportunity addressed by this thesis is how to blend prayer and technology in such a way to make those who are geographically distant feel connected in prayer.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Prayer and the Black Church

Prayer meetings actually date back to the time of slave religion. Since church meetings were the only types of gatherings permitted, worship services, prayer meetings, and Bible study sessions were often the context in which insurrections were planned.[1]

The religion and prayer life of slaves were both institutional and non-institutional, visible and invisible, formally organized and spontaneously adapted.[2] Regular Sunday worship in the local church was paralleled by illicit, or at least informal, prayer meetings on weeknights in the slave cabins.[3]

Mrs. Sutton, a former slave, explained it this way:

> Lot of them would want to have meetings in the week, but the white people wouldn't let them have meetings, but they would get a big ole wash kettle and put it right outside the door, and turn it bottom upwards to get the sound, then they would go in the house and sing and pray, the kettle would ketch the sound. I s'pose they would kinda have it popped up so the sound would get under it.[4]

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[1] C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 203.

[2] Ibid., 212.

[3] Ibid.

[4] George P. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 40, quoted in Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 34.

Prayer meeting and intercessory prayer has deep roots in the Black church. Richard Allen, a former slave who had joined a Methodist society in Delaware around 1780, began preaching as a licensed exhorter in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.[5] Upon arriving in Philadelphia in 1786, he "established prayer meetings" and "raised a society…for 42 members."[6] In 1809, the first official challenge to the restrictions on female preachers in a black denomination came from Jarena Lee.[7] Jarena approached the pastor of the newly established Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Richard Allen, and sought a license from him to preach. Although Allen could see women leading prayer meetings, he drew the theological line against female preaching.[8] However, he did permit her to hold prayer meetings and to "exhort."[9]

In the summer of 1811, 23-year-old Pavel Svinin arrived in Philadelphia to serve as secretary to the Russian consul.[10] When he departed two years later, he had amassed a collection of 52 watercolors, which he intended to use as illustrations for his travel memoirs about the United States.[11] Fourteen of the images were purchased from John Lewis Krimmel, a young German immigrant who painted images of street life in Philadelphia, including *Black People's Prayer Meeting* (see Appendix A), a caricature of

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[5] Ibid., 51.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid., 279.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 280.

[10] Africans in America – Part 3, PBS: Public Broadcasting Service ,http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part3/3h253.html (accessed July 19, 2013).

[11] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 51.

a Methodist religious service.[12] The text of Svinin's memoir describes a dimly lit, dilapidated hall in which black worshippers "leapt and swayed in every direction and dashed themselves to the ground, pounding with hands and feet, gnashing their teeth, all to show that the evil spirit was departing from them."[13] The unfinished painting illustrates a minister standing in the doorway of a sunlit, well-kept church, exhorting the congregation gathered outside. While exaggerated with contemporary stereotypes of black appearance and behavior, the "Black People's Prayer Meeting" did manage to convey the emotional intensity of the Methodist church.[14]

In the mid-18th century and throughout most of their history, the majority of Black churches in the South were rural institutions with a serious shortage of ministers.[15] Distances traveled by rural clergy to reach their churches could range from one to 400 miles.[16] This inevitably meant that most black rural churches were inordinately dependent upon a network of loyal and devoted laypersons for church activities like prayer meetings, weekly Sunday school, and choir rehearsals.[17] Although the rural churches were among the earliest institutions founded by African Americans, independent Black urban churches were founded only a few years after their rural

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[12] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 51.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 96.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

counterparts.[18] Leading the list of weekly activities for the majority of urban churches were Bible study groups followed by prayer meetings, youth groups, and women's clubs.[19] Lincoln and Mamiya contend that this rank order gives a view of where Black urban churches placed their priorities.[20] The moral messages of saving for a rainy day, learning to read and write, getting an education, finding a job and working hard, and supporting the family were reinforced in Sunday School, Bible study sessions, and prayer meetings.[21]

By the 1850s, the First African of Savannah was the largest of 13 Black Baptist churches located in the Savannah area.[22] The regular pattern of Sunday worship consisted of an early morning prayer meeting and preaching at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.[23]

In 1906, William Seymour, who preached the doctrine of speaking in tongues, started a prayer meeting in the home of Richard and Ruth Asbery.[24] The meeting caught fire, and Seymour and others finally received the tongues gift of which he preached.[25]

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[18] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 115.

[19] Ibid., 146.

[20] Ibid., 146-147.

[21] Ibid., 243.

[22] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1978), 197.

[23] Ibid., 198.

[24] Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 178.

[25] Ibid.

There are over 500 million Pentecostals and Charismatics who trace their spiritual ancestry back to this prayer meeting spiritual awakening at Azusa Street, Los Angeles.[26]

Lincoln and Mamiya contend that spirituals are important, "first in their coded meaning, and second in their therapeutic value as survival tools."[27] Songs enabled the enslaved, to "visualize and to believe in the impact of God's power."[28] J. W. Work, in 1940, wrote a spiritual:[29]

Can't Hear Nobody Pray

Oh Lord
And I could hear nobody pray
Couldn't hear nobody pray
O way down yonder by myself
And I couldn't hear nobody pray
In the valley
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
On my knees
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
With my burdenA-couldn't hear nobody pray
And my Saviour
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
Chilly waters
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
In the Jordan
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
Crossing over
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
Into Canaan
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
Hallelujah!

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[26] William Seymour and the History of the Azusa Street Outpouring, Revival Library http://www.revival-library.org/pensketches/am_pentecostals/seymourazusa.html (accessed July 25, 2013).

[27] Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 352.

[28] Patricia Liggins Hill, *Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1997), 15.

[29] J. W. Work, http://www.negrospirituals.com/news-song/i_couldn_t_hear_nobody_pray.htm (accessed December 6, 2013).

A-couldn't hear nobody pray
Troubles over
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
In the kingdom
A-couldn't hear nobody pray
With my Jesus
A-couldn't hear nobody pray.

Historians believe that this is an example of a spiritual that functioned during slavery as a signal song with a coded meaning that an escape attempt had failed and the survivors were trying to re-group, emotionally and spiritually.[30] The Black gospels have also sought to visualize the impact of God's power in prayer. Andrae' Crouch wrote: [31]

Somebody Somewhere Is Praying Just For You

Somebody somewhere is praying
Just for you
Somebody somewhere is praying
Just for you

They may be way overseas
But they're down on their knees
And they are praying
Just for you

They may not even know your name
But they're praying just the same
I know they're praying
Just for you

Somebody somewhere is praying
Just for you

I know that you got problems in your life
That you cannot sleep at night
It seems everything you try to do
Never turns out right

[30] http://ctl.du.edu/spirituals/freedom/coded.cfm, ctl.du.edu (accessed December 6, 2013).

[31] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJhPBiwIL7o (accessed December 6, 2013).

And no matter how hard you pray
God seems so far away
And it's going to take a miracle
If you are going to see your change

But I got news for you
That help is on the way
God's got some people
And they're praying for you today

Somebody somewhere is praying
Just for you

They may be old They may be young
Speaking other tongues
But I know they're praying
Just for you

Somebody somewhere is praying
Just for you

The Black church has played a crucial role in the passing on of the African traditions and values. Letty Russell contends that as in the days of slavery, the Black church is the filter through which faith affirmations and principles of spiritual formation have been transmitted.[32] One critical aspect of the African tradition and the Black church is its prayer meetings.

Prayer in First Baptist DNA

First Baptist, the context in which I serve, has a rich history of being a praying church. First Baptist is a predominately African-American, American Baptist Church USA (ABCUSA) with a very diverse membership, geographically, educationally, politically, economically, and generationally. First Baptist is in Somerset, New Jersey,

[32] Letty M. Russell, ed., *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1985), 30.

with members from as far away as Atlantic County, Philadelphia and New York. Approximately 3,000 people attend First Baptist worship services each week.

First Baptist is a large church with a small beginning. The narrative that follows of First Baptist's beginnings is documented in *First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens: Through the Years*.[33] In October 1933, Mrs. Georgia Anderson and Deacon Elijah Anderson of New Brunswick began mid-day prayers. These mid-day prayers continued from their house to the home of Deacon and Mrs. John Brunson in Highland Park. Prayers and business transactions were held "under the apple tree" at the Brunson's. These weekly prayer meetings became successful and more spiritual friends joined. For several months, prayer services were held in the homes of these pioneers. The number of praying Christian members grew to 18. They continued to pray for guidance and used "The Word" as a source of divine deliverance. The search began for a place to worship while meeting regularly at Deacon Barber's home in New Brunswick. Mrs. Anderson had seen a place on Lincoln Highway which she thought would be suitable – an abandoned gas service station. The owner, Mr. Billy Gulf, rented them the service station for $4.00 a Sunday. Reverend Smith, Pastor at the Antioch Christian Church in Perth Amboy, assisted in organizing the small church while the members were meeting from house to house. The first worship service was held on November 10, 1937 in the abandoned service station. The church, known as the Lincoln Garden Missions, was initially incorporated under the name of Galilee Baptist Church.

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[33] Daisy Virgil, Researcher and Copy Editor, *First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens: Through the Years* (Unpublished, 1994), 5-6.

First Baptist grew from the few members in 1933, who gathered for mid-day and weekly prayer meetings in homes and under an apple tree in Highland Park, to less than 100 members worshiping and praying in an abandoned gas station on Franklin; and now to a membership in excess of 5000 in a sanctuary on the same location as the gas station. First Baptist has been in its current edifice since 2003, and the original worship building, which used to cost $4 to rent weekly, is now worth $17 million. Although First Baptist is physically located in the economically wealthy Central New Jersey, the church and the community it serves are located in the lowest socioeconomic area of Somerset County.[34] The church borders two cities: New Brunswick and the Somerset section of Franklin Township, and two counties: Middlesex and Somerset.

The main sanctuary and the fellowship hall are the two most prominent spaces in the physical building complex. Although there are also many class rooms, activities, and events, the life of the church is centered on the three worship services on Sundays.

The main sanctuary is organized in a modern stage setting with a podium. One of the most prominent icons in the main sanctuary directly behind the podium is the stained glass windows that were transferred from the old church. Today, a founders' room exists and is dedicated to housing a pew and other historical artifacts of the church's story.

Prayer in First Baptist Worship Service

A critical analysis of a typical Sunday worship service at First Baptist helps to give insight into the nature of prayer and the doctrine of God in the life of the church.

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[34] United States Census Bureau, American FactFinder, *Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 for Franklin Township, Somerset County, New Jersey.*

The order of service is printed in a bulletin that is passed out by the ushers to each person as they enter the sanctuary. Philip Clements-Jewery in *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought* states than an understanding of the nature of petitionary and intercessory prayer interacts strongly with the Christian doctrine of God.[35] The image that is held of God does influence the way the prayer of intercession is understood. Prayer takes place within a set of theological beliefs. Embedded in the flow of the worship service at First Baptist are five different opportunities to pray.

The call to worship is led by a minister and is followed by the congregation standing and participating in songs of adoration. As the songs are sung, the congregation spontaneously stands, sway, sing, and clap their hands. After two songs, a minister ascends the stage and prays a Prayer of Invocation for the presence of God's Spirit. The second prayer, called the Pastoral Prayer, led by the pastor or officiating minister is the chief prayer of a church service and typically includes thanksgiving, supplication, and intercession. The third prayer is called the Offertory Prayer. Upon taking their seats, all present pray in unison the written prayer listed in the bulletin, to thank God for His blessings and to present offerings to be used in God's service. The central worship moment is the proclamation of the Word by the preacher. The congregation participates in the sermon with affirmations of "Amens" interjected at points of common experience. The invitation to discipleship by the preacher encourages those who are present and listening online to give their heart to Christ. This is followed by the fourth Prayer of

[35] Clements-Jewery, *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought*, 137.

Thanksgiving and Commitment. The congregation is led by the minister in thanking God for those that have come forward and committing to love them as Christ loved the church. The final Prayer is performed by the minister as part of the Doxology and Benediction. This is a prayer that expresses glory to God in the form of a song at the conclusion of the service.

Prayer in First Baptist Church Life

There are other opportunities for prayer and intercession in the life of the church. Although First Baptist is best understood today as a multi-cultural church, First Baptist still embraces its Black church tradition and doctrinal style. This heritage is reflected in its Wednesday night prayer meetings.

McCarthy contends that every authentic spirituality is rooted in a tradition.[36] Historically, the Black church prayer meetings were used to encourage a discouraged people. To come and unit with others, who have most likely experienced the same struggles, and to hear the pouring out of hearts making requests that resonate with other hearts. The prayer meeting was a place for the reception of divine power and individual deliverance. It was in the prayer meeting that God's people would intercede for other individuals, sons and daughters, spouses and friends. As a practice, it was beneficial for believers and non-believers to pray with each other, even apart from God's answer to the prayer. After the busyness of a day, and the inability to shake off the cares of the world, there is a kind of divine excitement that comes upon the gathered sometimes at prayer meetings. It is in the spirit of prayer that we find corporate and individual strength.

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[36] McCarthy, "Spirituality in a Postmodern Era" in Woodward, J. & S. Pattison, (eds.), *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 195.

First Baptist Wednesday night prayer meetings have served as a place and time for congregational members, family, and friends to come together to ask for, receive, and intercede in prayer. First Baptist prayer meetings include songs, worship, reading of Scripture(s), and extemporaneous prayers offered by any person present at the meeting. There are testimonies that recount the Lord's work in someone's life.

The tradition experienced by Jarena Lee of non-licensed "called" members being allowed to exhort during prayer meetings finds itself alive and well at First Baptist. In the late 1982, when I answered the call upon my life and approached our Senior Pastor at that time, the Rev. Charlie H. Brown, Jr., I was encouraged to attend Wednesday night prayer meetings. Each Wednesday night, one of the called non-licensed individuals in the crowed was either assigned or randomly called upon to share a word from the Lord. The experience not only taught me to always be ready to share the word of God, but also immersed me in a community of like-minded individuals centered on prayer, intercession, and preaching. The practice of coming together on Wednesday nights was crucial in my early days of becoming a preacher and active member of the congregation.

In the late 1980s, First Baptist held week-long shut-in services starting on Friday night to Saturday morning. A shut-in service is a prayer meeting with the purpose of increasing the desire of those attending to hear God's voice and be in God's presence. My spouse, two young daughters, and I would attend the all night shut-in service from Friday night at 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Saturday morning. Young children, such as my daughters, changed into their pajamas and slept in the pews. The adult participants engaged in different activities during the night such as times of individual prayer, corporate prayer, reading scripture, singing hymns without the distraction of music, and

alter prayer to seek the gift of tongues. In 1990, with the arrival of a new Senior Pastor, the focus of the prayer meetings reverted from a Pentecostal style back to a more traditional Baptist format and the ending of shut-in services.

Milton Sernett, in *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness,* points out that historically, African-American prayer meetings and shut-ins were used to encourage a discouraged people to come and unite with others who have most likely experienced the same struggles.[37] It was in the prayer meeting that God's people would intercede for other individuals, sons and daughters, spouses and friends. As a tradition, it was beneficial for believers and non-believers to pray with each other, even apart from God's answer to the prayer.[38]

In her work, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice,* Mary Clark Moschella contends that religious practices, when they become habitual and are automatically or unconsciously performed, express the group's habitus.[39] Pierre Bourdieu defined habitus as "embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history."[40] Many who come to Wednesday night prayer meeting may not know of the history that it embodies. It has become a habit, a part of their nature. Practices, places, history, and

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[37] Milton C. Sernett, *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness, 2nd ed*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 146.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 52.

[40] Ibid.

people contribute to a habitus.[41] Particular places acquire meanings for individuals over time and through historical events and eras.[42]

Savage and Presnell asserts that attitudes toward prayer are transmitted across generations through recurring patterns of social interaction, including ritual behavior that conveys their meaning.[43] The founding members of First Baptist, descendants of both freeborn and enslaved Africans, transmitted a rich history of praying one for the other into the congregation's DNA. Over the years, First Baptist has had Wednesday Night Prayer, Saturday and Wednesday Noon Day Prayer, 6:30 a.m. Sunday prayer for clergy, deacons, deaconesses, trustees, and ministry leaders, Lenten prayer, Operation Back to Work Prayer Lines, classes on prayer, and the formation of a Prayer Posse ministry dedicated to pray for members of the church and the community. But relative to the size of the congregation, participation in any prayer activity has been less than two percent.

First Baptist Wednesday night prayer meetings are not well attended, usually with less than 30 participants. Some insight to the effectiveness of the Wednesday Night Prayer session was offered in an interview with one of the deacons at First Baptist. Deacon E. (name redacted) has been a member of First Baptist for 30 years and a deacon for over 50 percent of that time. That interview follows:[44]

David: Do you attend the Wednesday Night Prayer Meetings?

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[41] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* , 53.

[42] Ibid., 54.

[43] Savage and Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*, 134.

[44] Deacon E. 2006. Interview by author, June 5. Notes. Somerset, NJ.

Deacon E.: I used to. I used to attend all of the time. But now I am so busy that I just don't get a chance to attend. Deacon G. and Deacon W. still go. They love it. It's a part of them. Deacon G. leads the devotion when his health allows it and Deacon W. will get a song started. And somewhere along the line you know Deacon W. will pray. And he always ends it with, "God Is. God Is. God Is!" I love it!

David: What did you find most beneficial?

Deacon E.: I remember our Sunday school teacher, Sister B., saying that prayer is the backbone and the structural foundation of the church. The strength of a church comes from those that pray. I used to really enjoy going for the prayers. It was something. You just felt so good after. And as a young deacon, you learned a lot. I remember once during testimony time a lady had gotten up and was giving a really long and personal testimony, but it was really someone else's testimony and a little too personal. We didn't know it, but Deacon H. knew the lady and the situation. And he stood up and said, "Do you want to pray?" But the lady just kept on "sharing." So Deacon H. said, "Let's pray." He then had everyone stand and intercede in prayer in a general way for the situation.

David: With the size of the church membership now in the thousands, why do you think that we only have 15 to 25 people attending prayer meetings?

Deacon E.: I think that part of it is time. Everyone today is just busy. Busy with work. Busy with school. Busy with their children. But another part is that they just don't know. They don't know about prayer, and they really don't know about the need for corporate prayer beyond what we do on Sunday morning.

David: So how do we recapture the spirit and benefits of the prayer meetings as part of our congregational life?

Deacon E.: I don't know. But we really need to. If you find a way let the chairman (Deacon K.) know. He's trying to find a way to rejuvenate the Wednesday Night prayer meetings.

Some things that hinder prayer meeting attendance might be long prayers and a lack of commitment to growth. Many members at First Baptist are unfamiliar with the

rituals of prayer meetings and intercessory prayer. These children of the "baby boomer" generation were not raised in a traditional Black church and know little of their heritage relative to prayer meetings and intercession. Dutch Sheets states that, "We don't wait well. We're into microwaving; God, on the other hand, is usually into marinating."[45]

First Baptist and Technology

How can technology be used to increase participation in the prayer ethos of the church? First Baptist uses technology to integrate people into the life of the church. At a luncheon with a visiting guest minister and the associate ministers of First Baptist, the Senior Pastor of First Baptist stated,

> Our membership comes from all across the state, with many coming from some distance away. With public transportation almost non-existent in the state, it is imperative that we use technology to bridge the gap for things like Bible Study.[46]

Nicholas Negroponte, in *Being Digital*, states that the post-information age will remove the limitations of geography.[47] Negroponte asserts that Digital living will include less and less dependence upon being in a specific place at a specific time.[48] The First Baptist website features many online opportunities: online giving, streaming and on-demand videos, podcasts, Facebook, Twitter, blog, surveys, and sign-up for church e-mail blasts. First Baptist has an average of 500 participants viewing online each

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[45] Dutch Sheets, Intercessory *Prayer* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1996), 17.

[46] Rev. Dr. DeForest B. Soaries, Jr., Pastor of First Baptist shared on July 28, 2013.

[47] Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995), 165.

[48] Ibid.

Sunday[49] and over 20,000 unique visitors to the First Baptist web site each month.[50] At a 9:00 a.m. service at First Baptist, the Reverend Dr. Cheryl Sanders stated that "Facebook and Google is available to us today, charging the world not necessarily on God's agenda, but available to us to spread God's word."[51]

Today, First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens (First Baptist) has a very geographically diverse congregation, with members coming from as far away as 120 miles and over 500 worldwide online viewers of the weekly Sunday services. But busy schedules and the physical distance of members from First Baptist present challenges to the gathering of members during the traditional mid-week prayer meeting service. Many members at First Baptist today do not adhere to the tradition of a prayer service in the sense of a historical format. The old ways of coping and maintaining homeostasis in the community are not working because the physical, geographical proximity and social forms that sustain stability have changed. Although the reasons for intercessory prayer have changed from the reasons their ancestors prayed in hidden alcoves on plantations, the need is just as great. Economic challenges and high unemployment have led to overloaded schedules and physical relocations. How do we "gather" in a fast-paced, worldwide, socially connected community at a particular location and time to begin the

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[49] View Overview – Google Analytics, google.com,https://www.google.com/analytics/web/#report/visitors-overview/a19048749w38173884p37754806/%3F_.date00%3D20130805%26_.date01%3D20130805/ (accessed August 5, 2013).

[50] View Reports - SmarterStats,Webcontrolcenter.com, https://smarterstats3.webcontrolcenter.com/default.aspx#page=L0NsaWVudC9mcm1WaWV3UmVwb3J0cy5hc3B4P0N1c3RvbT1GYWxzZSZSZXBvcnRUeXBlPVJlcG9ydEl0ZW0mc3ViUmVwb3J0TmFtZT1WaXNpdG9yc19UcmVuZA__&section=UserActivity&lbh=false (accessed August 20, 2012).

[51] Rev. Dr. Cheryl Sanders, Pastor of the Third St. Church of God, Washington, D.C. shared at First Baptist on July 28, 2013.

practice of prayer to continue the work of telling our own stories of challenges, intercession, and hope among believers and those struggling? Transformation must take place or the church may lose its opportunity to develop itself further in the area of addressing the needs of its members to come together in prayer.

McCarthy describes her method of transformation "as a process of retrieval, critique, and reconstruction."[52] McCarthy depicts her method as a way to reframe and recast the past to be more "fitting, lively, and meaningful"[53] in a postmodern era. In *Finding Our Story: Narrative Leadership and Congregational Change*, Larry Golemon says that narratives we live by, handed down by culture and religious traditions, must be retrieved, deconstructed, reconstructed, or replaced by re-storying our lives according to newfound strengths and capacities for change.[54]

In today's fast-paced and global community, how do we stay connected in prayer? How do we get to hear one another's stories concerning the challenges of life? How do we intercede for others and encourage a discouraged people? A method of transformation may lie in the intersecting of technology and prayer.

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[52] McCarthy, "Spirituality in a Postmodern Era" in Woodward, J. & S. Pattison (eds.), *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 192 – 205.

[53] Ibid., 202.

[54] Larry Goleman, ed., *Finding Our Story: Narrative Leadership and Congregational Change* (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 2010), 10-11.

CHAPTER 3

TOO BUSY TO PRAY

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. (1 Tim. 2:1 NLT)."

Brandon Vogt, a writer and speaker who blogs about theology states,

> Christianity reveals a God who uses all sorts of media to get his message across, from pillars of fire to bright stars, from burning bushes to talking donkey. He delivered the Ten Commandments on chiseled rock, painted rainbows to signal his covenant and used a cross to display his love…history has shown that God showers down new mediums at specific times to spread his Word in new ways.[1]

In *The Art of Leading People Through Change*, John Maxwell points out that in the Voter's Assembly Minutes of 1908, Mr. Grueber introduced the following nine reasons not to introduce the typewriter into their church:[2]

1. The paper must be put into the machine and aligned properly, tabs must be set. This is not easy. When writing by hand, one simply begins, exactly where you want with no restrictions.

2. With a typewriter, you have to constantly remember to capitalize and put in punctuation. It is easy to forget, and to go back and change things is hard. When writing by hand, such things are automatic.

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[1] Vogt, *The Church and New Media*, 15.

[2] John Maxwell, *The Art of Leading People Through Change.* In Leading In Times of Change, eds. Dale Galloway (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2002), 23.

3. With the typewriter, you have to have been trained to find the proper keys. This takes time. We already know how to write.

4. With the typewriter, you are limited to the size and spacing of the type. When writing by hand, you can use any size letters or style you want.

5. With the typewriter, centering and setting margins is not easy; when writing, it is no problem.

6. A typewriter breaks down and costs to be fixed. Writing does not.

7. Correcting a mistake after something has been typed is a problem; when writing by hand, it is not.

8. The church has gotten along for over 1900 years without a typewriter; why do we need this now?

9. Instead of learning a machine with all the above drawbacks, time should be spent on penmanship.

If we replace the word "typewriter" with "computer and internet," I am sure that a Mr. Grueber of today could find numerous reasons not to introduce the computer and internet technology into the church, especially when related to something as spiritual as prayer. But technological advancements are not new to the church.

This chapter examines the definition of technology, the influence of selected technologies on the life of the church, and finally the development of a new medium of technology, *Pray4Me*, to accomplish God's command to pray for all people.

David Noble, a critical historian of technology, credits Harvard professor, Jacob Bigelow, with being the first to coin the word 'technology.'[3] Noble summarized the concept by stating that "the term 'technology' came into use to describe the realm of the

[3] David F. Noble, *The Religion of Technology Theology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1997), 93.

useful arts, reshaped by science…"[4] According to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, the word "technology" is derived from the Greek word "tekhnologia," meaning "systematic treatment of an art or craft."[5] Today, the word technology has come to represent knowledge that deals with the creation and use of technical means and their interrelation with life, society, and the environment.[6] Nobel asserts that, for the early church, technology was the means of creating efficiencies so that more time might be devoted to contemplation and prayer.[7]

Beginning around 500 B.C., the Roman Empire built an elaborate system of 372 roads to connect its 113 provinces, covering more than 400,000 kilometers.[8] The purpose of this road system was primarily military and economic, to efficiently move armies, trade goods, and official communications across the Empire.[9] But it was the Roman road system that also allowed the early apostles to quickly spread the gospel of Christ.[10] [Thus the association of this inherited technology with evangelism is commonly derived.]

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[4] Noble, *The Religion of Technology Theology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention*, 223.

[5] http://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=technology&submit.x=61&submit.y=23, American Heritage Dictionary Entry: technology (accessed July 23, 2013).

[6] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/technology, Dictionary.com (accessed July 23, 2013).

[7] Noble, *The Religion of Technology Theology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention*, 25.

[8] Liberty H. Bailey, and Wilhelm Miller, *Cyclopedia of American Horticulture, Comprising Suggestions for Cultivation of Horticultural Plants, Descriptions of the Species of Fruits, Vegetables, Flowers, and Ornamental Plants Sold in the United States and Canada, Together with Geographical and Biographical Sketches* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1990), 320.

[9] William Kaszynski, *The American Highway: The History and Culture of Roads in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2000), 9.

[10] Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 33.

It is a given that the printing press revolutionized the Church, serving as a major catalyst to the Protestant Reformation. Perry Brown, editorial director for the American Tract Society, asks the question, "Without printing, would there have been a Protestant Reformation?"[11] It was in the year 1450 that Johann Gutenberg developed a technique for commercial printing using movable type. The "process became known as letterpress, and enabled Gutenberg to produce printed books of high quality. Most notable of these was the Guttenberg Bible of 1455."[12]

The Church has been forever impacted by the technologies fueled by electrical current. It was the manipulation of electrical current that created the first telegraph, thus opening the era of immediate long-distance communication.[13] Long-distance voice communication has extended the reach of spreading the word in the Church. The technology of radio, telephone, and television has advanced the spreading of the gospel in ways too numerous to mention here. Suffice it to say, the Church continues to use radio, television, and computer technology to advance the goal of evangelism. Church web sites and video streaming are increasingly seen as opportunities to engage the culture with the message of Christ. This brings us to the challenge of how to use new media of technology to accomplish God's command to pray for all people.

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[11] Perry Brown, "Preaching From The Print Shop," ChristianHistory.net, http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1992/issue34/3433.html (accessed July 24, 2013).

[12] Keith Wicks, *Key Moments in Science and Technology: Milestone From The Wheel To The Web* (London, England: Hamlin, 1999), 97.

[13] Mary Bellis, "The History of the Electric Telegraph and Telegraphy," About.com, http://inventors.about.com/od/tstartinventions/a/telegraph.htm (accessed July 24, 2013).

Years ago to lock the door on my 1962 Rambler required physically placing a key into the door lock. Now, by using a small battery-operated device hanging on my key chain, I can arm my car alarm and lock the doors from 30 feet away. Today, with the new mobile applications on your phone, you can check your fuel tank level, remaining oil level, tire pressure, and lock your car from anywhere in the world. If we can use internet and wireless technology to lock our cars located in the U.S. while we are in China, then why not use internet technology to intercede for a mother in Nigeria that is praying for healing from physical and emotional wounds?

The Project

The purpose of this project was to connect those with a narrative of need with people ready to pray using a native and mobile web based application technology. The intention of the project was to engage the local and geographically distant community in joining at least one of three prayer groups using an application specifically designed for the project where they could share prayer narratives within the group and commit to praying for the intentions of other group members.

The scope of the project was limited to three distinct groups. The first group consisted of 10-15 adults who joined by invitation only and was called the "It's Time To Pray" prayer group. The second group, called the "Our Praying Committee" prayer group, was composed of the Local Advisory Committee (LAC) members. The final group was comprised of the world-wide-web community at large and was called the "Global" prayer group.

The Team

The preliminary planning of the project required forming a LAC[14] to assist with the planning, development, and implementation of the project. The criteria for member selection were to select individuals with varying degrees of technological savvy, diverse exposure to First Baptist traditions, and varying geographical distances from the church. The LAC team was recruited through informal individual conversations. Each person selected brought his or her enthusiasm, experiences, and involvement in different aspects of the life of the church to help in the advising, planning, and implementing of the project. Seven team members were selected by providing a mixture of various experiences in the church's ministry (see Appendix L).

Although verbal commitments were received from the LAC candidates, it was important for the LAC to be aware of the project and its scope. A formal e-mail was sent to the members, discussing the focus of the project, the duration of their commitment, and thanking them for volunteering to serve on the committee.

The Process

The initial meeting of the LAC took place at First Baptist on Sunday, September 9, over breakfast in the fellowship hall and it was fantastic. Lots of energy and enthusiasm! At the meeting, the chairperson of the LAC was introduced along with each member of the committee. We discussed the role of the LAC and the task of the committee as outlined in the Drew Doctorate of Ministry manual. We also discussed the phases of the project, details about the proposed project, and the topic outline. Members

[14] The term changed from Lay Advisory Committee to Local Advisory Committee because licensed clergy were members on the advisory committee.

exchanged stories around their own experience with prayer at First Baptist and in their personal lives. Members shared about busy schedules and personal challenges in different aspects of their lives and remarked on the timeliness of the project. The LAC team was enthusiastic about forming a prayer group for the LAC. Excitement and ideas flowed freely in discussing the topic outline for the project. The chairperson of the committee scheduled a conference call for our next meeting to continue work on the topic outline.

The follow-up conference call was held on September 13 and continued the work on the topic outline and prospectus. Discussion and comments from the conference call was used to prepare the final topic outline. On October 8 and 9, my Project Colloquium for Worship, Spirituality, and Preaching was held at Drew. At the session, a presentation about the project phase was given and each student presented a five-minute brief synopsis of his topic outline. Following the general session we broke into our smaller cohort groups, accompanied by our faculty advisor, for a time of detail presentation and collaboration upon our topic outlines. One suggestion that was given concerning my project was to make sure that the defined scope could be accomplished within the required timeframe. It was a very good session. Little did I know that events of the next few weeks would test the resolve of my classmates and the LAC to intercede for each other.

On October 22-29, 2012, Hurricane/Post-Tropical Cyclone Sandy, one of the deadliest and most destructive hurricanes of the 2012 Atlantic hurricane season, moved from the Caribbean to the U.S. Eastern Seaboard, ultimately making landfall near

Brigantine, New Jersey around 7:30 p.m. on October 29.[15] The storm resulted in an enormous impact to life and property in both the Caribbean and continental United States, particularly in the Tri-State area/New Jersey coastline/to New Jersey-New York communities.[16] The National Hurricane Center's Tropical Cyclone Report estimated the death count from Hurricane Sandy at 147 direct deaths.[17] Sandy and the Nor'easter that followed damaged or destroyed at least 650,000 houses and left approximately 8.5 million customers without power during the storm and its aftermath.[18]

My classmates and the LAC used social networking media to touch base to see how each other fared. Many individuals were struggling to get power restored, repair damage to homes, find fuel for cars, and keep families warm and safe. It was an encouragement to all to know that as they prayed for others, others were praying for them.

On November 26 and 27, 2012, my Prospectus Colloquium was held at Drew. Comments and ideas were incorporated and the project Prospectus was approved by my advisor. A final copy of the Prospectus was shared with the LAC. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my Research Determination Form and I was given the go-ahead to begin the implementation of the project.

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[15] http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/assessments/pdfs/Sandy13.pdf, NOAA National Weather Service (accessed July 21, 2013).

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

On December 12, 2012, the LAC had a great meeting over the sharing of pizza, information, and ideas. One of the things discussed was the creation of a pre- and post-questionnaire by the committee to be used in the project. I shared with the committee two basic forms of questions that are known by different labels: quantitative verses qualitative, closed verses open-ended, and numerical verses narrative. Some examples given were that a question that asks the participant to rank how often they pray in a week from 1 to 5, with 1 being never and 5 being very often would be considered a quantitative, closed, numerical type question. A open-ended question that solicits more than a one word or numerical response would be to ask the participant to tell about a time when he or she was in need and did not have the strength to pray for himself or herself. The goal of the questionnaire was to be both quantitative and qualitative relative to the subject of intercession and prayer in today's rushed and busy society. The pre- and post- questions would help to gauge any change or transformation in a person's view after four to six weeks of praying and being prayed for on a daily basis. Additional statistics from the project application called Pray for Me (*Pray4Me*) would be used to help analyze how often a person prayed or requested prayer. Each committee member was encouraged to submit ideas for two or more potential questions to the chairperson for the pre- and post- questionnaires.

The Implementation

Thus began seven weeks of design, development, and implementation. The first step in the process was to create a storyboard, also called a wireframe in software design. A storyboard is a graphical organization of illustrations or images in sequence for the

purpose of pre-visualizing an interactive media sequence.[19] It is a tool that is helpful to brainstorm and capture ideas before taking action. The storyboard for the *Pray4Me* application was created based on my experience and discussion with some of the LAC members (see Appendix H). One of the LAC members, Cynthia Gipson-Lee, then used the storyboard to create a user interface design for the web application (see Appendix I). The goal of user interface design was to make the user's interaction as simple and efficient as possible, in terms of entering and responding to prayer request. The design process sought to balance the technical functionality and visual elements of the application to create a web process that was not only operational but also usable and adaptable to the changing needs of the project.

Web Platform

While the user interface design was underway, I concurrently used the storyboard to develop the functional design of the application outlining exactly what web software code had to be developed and delivered for the application. Although there are many software languages available for web programming, I selected one that I was most experienced with, Active Server Pages (ASP). Developed by Microsoft, ASP is not a standard programming language, but a Microsoft technology that lets you use a special scripting in your web pages. To have an application written in ASP required having a website on a hosted server that supports ASP. The hosted server provider that I selected is a company called Go Daddy. For less than $7 a month, I received a shared web hosting space where the *Pray4Me* website resides with many other websites. Each site

[19] http://www.thefreedictionary.com/storyboard, Dictionary, Encyclopedia and Thesaurus – The Free Dictionary (accessed July 30, 2013).

has its own space, separate from other sites. This is generally the most economical option for hosting, as many people share the overall cost of the server maintenance. I also purchased the domain name my*Pray4Me*.com for $10 per year. The domain name allows a user to type http://my*Pray4Me*.com to get to the web application. The development of the application required the design of a Microsoft Access database consisting of eight tables and the software coding of 37 ASP modules.

Android Platform

With the web application development underway, the LAC member began the user interface design for Android phones and tablets (see Appendix J). Because of physical space limitations on the screen, designing for mobile devices is different than designing web applications. Although the same functionality is provided in the web and mobile applications, the user interface experience and software coding is distinctively unique. A conscious decision was made to target the Android mobile platform and not the Apple iPhone and iPad mobile platform based on scope and cost. My advisor and cohort had expressed concern that a web and Android version of the application might be a larger scope that could be accomplished within the allowed timeframe. Given that the Apple platform coding is different from the Android platform, adding a third version was not something that was feasible. Since I had recently completed training in introductory Android programing, I chose to go with the Android version. Additionally, the cost to declare oneself an Android developer for deploying applications through the Android Play Store is $25, contrasted with the $100 fee required to create an Apple developer account.

The development for the Android platform proved to be a much larger effort than anticipated, and it quickly became evident that the one week class on Android programming was insufficient to accomplish the task. The Android mobile version of *Pray4Me* required the software coding of an additional 21 modules on the website and 36 modules on the mobile platform. The Eclipse Integrated Development Environment (IDE) tool was chosen as the code editor to develop the mobile platform modules. All of the modules were coded in a programming language called JAVA verses the ASP language for the web application. The book, *Android Wireless Application Development Volume I: Android Essentials*, by Lauren Darcey and Shane Conder, provided the foundation needed to complete the design and coding of the mobile platform modules.[20] To reduce duplication and minimize effort, the mobile platform used the http protocol to leverage the web application modules and database on the website.

On February 5, 2013, we welcomed a new LAC member to the team and continued to work on completing the development of the pre- and post- questionnaires. The basic *Pray4Me* application (web and Android platforms) was completed and ready for a five week testing period by the LAC. The web version of the application was available through the browser on any Apple platform (MAC, iPhone, iPad) and Windows based personal computer. The stand-alone app was available only on the Android platform. An email was sent to the LAC with an invitation to join the "Our Praying Committee" prayer group. Although an "About" page would be available in the final version, the basic test version had no help instructions. To make the application as easy

[20] Lauren Darcey and Shane Conder, *Android Wireless Application Development Volume I: Android Essentials* (Crawfordsville, IN: R.R. Donnelley, 2012), xx.

to use as possible, input was solicited as to areas that were difficult to maneuver or understand.

March 10, 2103 marked the completion of the testing of the web application, Android application, pre-survey (Appendix B), and post-survey (Appendix D). A pre-invite email with background information on the *Pray4Me* project was sent to 50+ members and non-members identified by the LAC to participate in a new "It's Time To Pray" prayer group (see Appendix F). Mary Clark Moschella asserts that people stories, particularly their faith stories, are personal and often highly valued.[21] The letter of invitation was sent to obtain an informed consent from the participants for the sharing of their prayer request and responses. In addition, the invitation letter reviewed the commitment of the participants to pray daily and to familiarize the participants with the mobile and web based *Pray4Me* application. The LAC and others also shared the information on their Facebook and social networking pages to invite participants to a new "Global" prayer group. A follow up e-mail was sent to all participants that joined (see Appendix G).

Project Deployment

The live use of the project started on March 18, 2013, with 15 of the 50 plus invited participants joining the "It's Time To Pray" prayer group. The 30 percent acceptance rate satisfied the 10-15 target group size that was anticipated in the project prospectus. There were also 24 participants in the "Global" prayer group and nine participants in the "Our Praying Committee" prayer group.

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[21] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* , 88-89.

By joining a prayer group, participants committed to submitting a daily prayer request. Using their personal computer, Android smartphone, or tablet, the participants could submit an anonymous prayer request and receive a response at any time. The process invited both those who needed prayer and those who wanted to help by praying for the people in their midst. The prayer request was anonymously posted on the groups' virtual prayer wall and was anonymously forwarded by email to a random prayer group member. The prayer group member committed to praying daily for the request and to responding back through the *Pray4Me* application with a written prayer or words of encouragement. Both the requestor and the one who interceded in prayer were kept secret. The capabilities provided through the *Pray4Me* application augmented the prayer services that were currently offered at the participants' local place of worship.

In addition to joining a prayer circle by invitation, the participants could create their own prayer groups, submit a prayer request, respond to a pray request, view pray request that require their attention and view all pray request for their group.

The *Pray4Me* Android platform was made available through the Android Play Store and through a direct link, http://my*Pray4Me*.com/APK/*Pray4Me*.apk, on the *Pray4Me* web application. For quick access, I included a matrix barcode, called a Quick Response (QR) Code, image on the *Pray4Me* website. A QR code is an optically machine-readable label that is attached to an item that records information related to that item.[22] The image I embedded in the QR allowed the scanning of the image by an

[22] http://archive.is/20120915040047/http://www.qrcode.com/en/qrfeature.html, Archive.is (accessed August 3, 2013).

Android phone or tablet to automatically download the *Pray4Me* application (see Appendix K).

On April 23, 2013, my Drew Report Back Session was held at Concord Baptist in Brooklyn, New York with my advisor and the rest of my Drew cohort group. At the meeting each member of the cohort presented an overview status of their project. The day was a very enlightening day as I had an opportunity to hear some of the great things that the others have been able to accomplish with their projects and share what the *Pray4Me* project had accomplished.

On April 30, 2013, after six weeks of daily prayer for one another, the *Pray4Me* web and mobile application began to request, at login, for participants to complete an online post survey. Through open questions, the post survey allowed the sharing of written narratives around the experience. The *Pray4Me* process performed a post snapshot of the March 18-April 30 statistical data.

The final step was the site visit to First Baptist Church by my Drew advisor. Due to a death in my extended family, the site visit was re-scheduled from the month of May and held on June 6 at 7:30 p.m. in the First Baptist Board Room (pizza was served). Honesty and candor by the LAC was beneficial when discussing the overall quality of the project and its results. All LAC members present shared background narratives on their experiences with prayer and technology along with their experience with the *Pray4Me* process. The site visit also provided a time for the LAC to associate a face with the Drew Doctorate of Ministry process. The familiar setting and informal demeanor of the Drew advisor made for a comfortable and forthright evening of sharing.

CHAPTER 4

METHOD AND MEASUREMENTS

Henry David Thoreau, American author, poet, and philosopher said, "All of our inventions are an improved means to an unimproved end."[1] Thoreau states

> Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end…we are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate.[2]

The statement raises the issue of whether we evolve and create technology simply for the sake of technology itself. Are we adapting technology to an area that is not an issue? And when we do, does it really help?

Six Questions for Conversation

Neil Postman, author and cultural critic, in a seven part video lecture called *Technology and Society*, provides six questions that he asserts need to be addressed when anyone tells us about a new technology.[3] The answers to these six questions can offer insight into the ways that the *Pray4Me* application and approach transforms or intrudes upon the First Baptist and internet cultures.

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[1] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854), 37.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 2," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13bXaYsn33U - Timestamp 21:09:33 (accessed July 17, 2013).

Postman's first question is: *What is the problem for which this technology is a solution?*[4] As a church on Sunday, First Baptist has many forms and opportunities for prayer. But dedicated intercessory prayer is traditionally on Wednesday night, Saturday noon day, or online. The problem becomes that, for a church of 2000–3000 members, we have only one to two percent of the congregation interceding in prayer on Wednesday nights and through the current online prayer request. The challenge facing First Baptist is one of reclaiming and reforming the Wednesday night prayer meeting narrative of intercessory prayer for time challenged and geographically distant worshipers. But from Postman's perspective, is the problem of not being able to conveniently gather together to pray a problem that most of us desire or need to have solved? And if so, is an internet-based application technology a solution?

In today's fast-paced world, the use of e-mail and the internet for social networking makes the community and world a smaller and connected place. A study from the Barna Group explored how Americans use digital technology and social networking to get the products, services, and content they desire. The Barna study also examined how the Christian community engages with technologies.[5] Over the last 15 years, e-mail has become an essential part of our culture and commerce.[6] In 2008, nearly

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[4] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 2," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13bXaYsn33U - Timestamp 21:10:47 (accessed July 17, 2013).

[5] *Barna Technology Study: Social Networking, Online Entertainment and Church Podcasts*, Barna Group, http://www.barna.org/media-articles/36-barna-technology-study-social-networking-online-entertainment-and-church-podcasts?q=technology (accessed August 15, 2012).

[6] Ibid.

four out of five Americans who accessed a computer had sent an email in the past week.[7] The Barna study found that computer users over the age of 50 were just as likely as younger adults to use e-mail.[8] While millions of Americans have taken advantage of emails, most remain on the sidelines when it comes to other digital technology: just one-quarter of computer users have a personal webpage, personal blog, or home page on a social networking site (such as Facebook or MySpace).[9]

People within the Christian community were found in the Barna study to be just as immersed in digital technologies and social networks as those outside of the community. Matters of faith played very little role in differentiating people's technological habits. One exception noted in the Barna study was access to spiritual content via podcasting. The study found that over one-third of what was termed born again Christians and evangelicals had listened to a sermon or church teaching via digital recordings available on the Internet (often called a "podcast").[10] The profile of people who had listened to sermon podcasts cut across generational lines, with older adults just as likely to listen as young residents.[11] Residents of the South were twice as likely as those in the Northeast to access church podcasts.[12] Similarly, Protestants were more

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[7] *Barna Technology Study: Social Networking, Online Entertainment and Church Podcasts*, Barna Group, http://www.barna.org/media-articles/36-barna-technology-study-social-networking-online-entertainment-and-church-podcasts?q=technology (accessed August 15, 2012).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

intrigued by such content than were Catholics.[13] African-Americans were very loyal listeners.[14] Furthermore, those who were economically downscale (defined as those who did not attend college and whose annual pre-tax household income is $20,000 or less) were more likely to listen to church podcasts than were upscale adults.[15]

First Baptist currently streams its three services on Sundays live through the internet. The number of online viewers average over 500 viewers per Sunday with almost one-third using their mobile phones and tablets.[16] The geographical location of the viewer's range from across the United States to as far away as Ghana.[17] The First Baptist 9:00 a.m. sermons delivered by the Senior Pastor are available via Podcast within 48 hours of the live sermon.

Internet technology is not a transformative trend only in the business world; it can be a transformative agent in our congregations. The challenge is how to leverage digital and social networking technology to allow those that may be geographically distant to feel connected and encouraged in prayer.

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[13] *Barna Technology Study: Social Networking, Online Entertainment and Church Podcasts*, Barna Group, http://www.barna.org/media-articles/36-barna-technology-study-social-networking-online-entertainment-and-church-podcasts?q=technology (accessed August 15, 2012).

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] View Overview – Google Analytics, google.com, https://www.google.com/analytics/web/#report/visitors-overview/a19048749w38173884p37754806/%3F_.date00%3D20130805%26_.date01%3D20130805/ (accessed August 5, 2013).

[17] Ibid.

Postman's second question is: *Whose problem is it?*[18] Who will benefit and who will pay for it? Philip Clements-Jewery, in *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought,* defines the scope of intercession as an activity of persons that needs to be seen in the light of a relationship between human persons and God.[19] Both the person praying and the person prayed for benefit from their prayer exchange. Clements-Jewery states that, "To pray is to be caught up into a network of relationships, not only between human beings, but also into the Trinitarian life of God in whom the persons are to be conceived in terms of movements in relationships."[20]

There is a distinction between God's bringing about what a person needs even when that person has not asked God for it and God's giving in a personal way in response to prayer.[21] Clements-Jewery contends that certain things may be granted to people only when they are asked for from God.[22] This asking is the necessary condition for God to respond by giving what is needed. It expresses the personal nature of the relationship between God and the one who prays and is also a means of strengthening that relationship. Clements-Jewery asserts that the requirement that God is to be asked before intervening in human lives is a safeguard against either spoiling or dominating the person

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[18] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 2," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch ?v=13bXaYsn33U - Timestamp 21:16:50 (accessed July 17, 2013).

[19] Clements-Jewery, *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought*, 138.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

who stands in a personal relationship with God.[23] Clements-Jewery adds that it could also be seen as a diminishment of personhood if God intervened on all occasions without being asked.[24] Praying one for the other strengthens our relationship with each other and with God.

Postman's third question is: *What new problems might be created by solving the original problem?*[25] Postman contends that almost all new technological solutions create new problems in addressing a problem to solve.[26] Will digital praying change the nature of our gathering together to pray? Will a microwave-type prayer request weaken our resolve to wait before the Lord in prayer? What are the social and psychological effects of cyber praying?

One of the new challenges that the *Pray4Me* cyber praying technology introduces is the issue of the namelessness of the participations. You do not know with whom you are really communicating. This anonymity allows people to say whatever they like in requesting or responding to prayer. People who are anonymous on the internet can make raciest or sexiest remarks. It can become a challenge for the creator and moderator(s) of a prayer group to monitor and block such remarks.

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[23] Clements-Jewery, *Intercessory Prayer: Modern Theology, Biblical Teaching and Philosophical Thought*, 138.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 3", C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpUbhrzSPnY - Timestamp 21:18:23 (accessed July 17, 2013).

[26] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 3," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13bXaYsn33U - Timestamp 21:19:40(assessed July 17, 2013).

Another challenge of social networking on the internet and specifically the creation of individual prayer groups with the *Pray4Me* application is that individuals may be exposed to different scams in the form of various prayer requests. This can include such internet scams as check cashing, job offers, dating, and request for financial assistance for fake situations. To help guard against this, the *Pray4Me* application allows individuals to join user created prayer groups only by invitation. The creator or moderators of a group must invite new members through email invitations generated by the application. No individual can join a prayer group except by invitation. The only exception to the rule of "by invitation only" is for those wishing to join the world-wide-web "Global" prayer group. Any individual can join the "Global" prayer group without an invitation. The *Pray4Me* application allows the creator or moderators to remove or block individuals from any prayer group, including the "Global" prayer group.

As a future enhancement, to assist the creator or moderators of groups, it would be helpful for the *Pray4Me* application to display in the prayer request and prayer response, the internal ID number assigned to the person. If necessary, the ID could then be blocked by the creator or moderator from future participation.

There is no easy way to really know with technology the possible cost of technology. Postman contends that to look at the possible cost of a solution leads us to his fourth question.

Postman asks: *Which people and what institutions will be most seriously harmed by this new technology?*[27] Helliwell and Putman state that there is an increasing

[27] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 3," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13bXaYsn33U - Timestamp 21:23:09 (assessed July 17, 2013).

recognition that our well-being is shaped by social factors such as our social relationships.[28] In their article, "Beyond Money: Toward an Economy of Well-Being," Diener and Seligman contend that people need supportive, positive relationships and social belonging to sustain well-being.[29] People need social bonds in committed relationships, not simply interactions with strangers, to experience well-being.[30] With cyber prayer technology infringing on prayer meetings, groups at First Baptist such as new members, non-members, and seniors may miss out on the chance to benefit in building and maintaining friendships through physical socialization with people outside of their normal relationships. Mary Clark Moschella contends that the work of creating a safe space on Wednesday night in which new and honest speech can emerge and new connections can be forged in a community is theologically crucial.[31]

The *Pray4Me* application sought to establish a safe and friendly virtual environment to allow the sharing of prayers one for another.[32] When asked in the project's post assessment evaluation if the *Pray4Me* application "impacted your interest in gathering physically together with others to pray," 50 percent responded with a positive affirmation. One individual actually joined a local prayer group.

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[28] John F. Helliwell and Robert D. Putnam, "The Social Context of Well-Being," Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Biological Sciences, http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/359/1449/1435.full.pdf+html (accessed July 18, 2013).

[29] Ed Diener and Martin E. P. Seligman, "Beyond Money: Toward an economy of well-being," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 5, no. 1 (2004), 1.

[30] Ibid., 19.

[31] Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*, 143,145.

[32] Savage and Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*, 88.

It was important to stress to the members of First Baptist that the *Pray4Me* application is not intended to be a replacement for the gathering together to pray on Wednesday and Saturday. The goal of the project was to augment what is already done as part of our tradition of prayer.

An online prayer approach could be intimidating to individuals that are not technologically savvy or that resist technological changes. Internet technology can be intimidating for some simply because it renders many things that they have known and understood all their lives as redundant.[33] This includes everything from e-mail replacing posted letters, to banking online instead of in traditional financial institutions, to buying books from the likes of Amazon instead of a brick-and-mortar bookstore.[34] Some individuals may fear that written online prayers to the exclusion of extempore prayer inhibits the working of the Holy Spirit and leads to a stunted prayer life. The facelessness of internet prayer could run the risk of dehumanizing the action of prayer and intersession. Is the prayer response from an anonymous person or computer generated? Is the prayer responses spirit led or just human wishes of good will in logically putting thought to text? Written prayers are no less spirit led as extempore prayers. The fact that someone takes the time to formulate a response to a prayer request does not make it any less an authentic expression of their innermost self.

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[33] Gordon Hamilton, "Why the older generation can find the Internet intimidating," Helium, http://www.helium.com/items/1607397-why-the-older-generation-can-find-the-internet-intimidating (accessed August 13, 2013).

[34] Ibid.

Postman's fifth question is: *What changes in language are being forced by these new technologies, and what is being gained and lost by these changes?*[35] For example, does the *Pray4Me* application change our understanding of the words community, conversation, and fellowship?

Postman contends that community on the internet is mostly made up of people with a common interest.[36] In contrast, Postman accesses that the more traditional meaning of the word community is people who do not necessarily have the same interest, but who must negotiate and accommodate their differences for the sake of social harmony.[37]

What are some of the gains and losses in being a part of this online *Pray4Me* community? One of the gains in this new community is the broadening of the circle. In one month, the total number of participants in the *Pray4Me* groups was greater than the number of participants attending the traditional First Baptist Wednesday night prayer meeting. But this gain did not come without a major loss. In the traditional prayer meeting community of First Baptist, each gathering always concluded with those present in the community holding hands, forming a large circle while being led in a community prayer. Following the prayer, it always took another 10-15 minutes for everyone to disperse. But these 10-15 minutes each Wednesday was enough for the forming of bonds between members of the community.

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[35] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 4," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRZUolLIgQo - Timestamp 21:31:10 (accessed July 17, 2013).

[36] Ibid., Timestamp 21:33:24.

[37] Ibid., Timestamp 21:33:50.

On the topic of conversation on the internet, Postman asserts that two people typing messages to each other have very little about it that is similar to a conversation.[38] The conversation of the traditional prayer meeting community is of spoken form while written text is the language of the *Pray4Me* application community. Written prayers have their advantages. Writing a prayer to God helps keep us focused. Intercessory written prayer helps us to remember specific things that we want to thank God for or ask of God. But often, we write in a very different way to how we speak. This can mean that a good written prayer response really does not come across as well as a spoken prayer and may be perceived as a lecture to the person for whom we are interceding in prayer. Negroponte says that the voice carries not only the sound but all the associated features that make it have the traits of being understanding, deliberate, compassionate, or forgiving.[39] Negroponte proposes that embedded in sound is information about feelings.[40] Voice is important because a written prayer should carry as much personality as a spoken prayer. Written prayers may sometimes come across as if they are written by committee, and may not sound sincere.

Postman's sixth question is: *What sort of people and institutions gain special economic and political power from this new technology?*[41] Postman contends that the transformation of a technology into a medium, the exploitation of a technology, always

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[38] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 4," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRZUolLIgQo - Timestamp 21:32:39 (accessed July 17, 2013).

[39] Negroponte, *Being Digital*, 147.

[40] Ibid., 148.

[41] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 5," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2bcloFDc8Q - Timestamp 21:38:35 (accessed July 17, 2013).

results in a realignment of power.[42] This question then becomes, what transformational impact did the *Pray4Me* application have on First Baptist and those participating in the project?

The *Pray4Me* project sought to observe changes and discern transformations that unfolded as the First Baptist congregation embraced the retrieving and reframing of a rich tradition of prayer using digital and social networking technology.[43] The *Pray4Me* application tracked how many requests were made and by which groups. The evaluation of transformation used the pre- and post- internet surveys along with application statistics to reflect on the state of the context prior to and after the intersecting of technology and prayer.[44] The major design of the survey questions was qualitative in nature, using an approach to allow people to articulate their thoughts and concerns on intercessory prayer and technology.

There were a total of 52 participants in the *Pray4Me* project (see Figure 1). Forty-eight percent of those responding to the pre survey identified themselves as non-members of First Baptist.

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[42] Neil Postman, "Technology and Society – Part 5," C-SPAN, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K2bcloFDc8Q - Timestamp 21:38:50 (accessed July 17, 2013).

[43] Savage and Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*, 123.

[44] Ibid., 124.

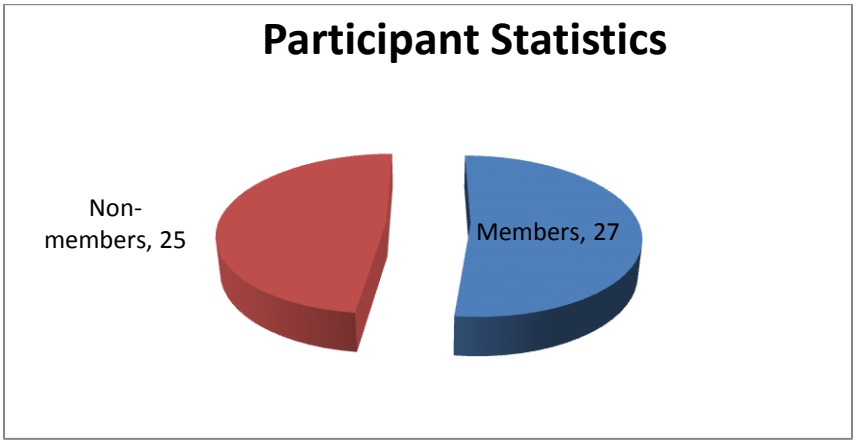

Figure 1. Participant Statistics

This distinction allowed for the analysis of the data by two groups; one from my area of context and another that may or may not have had exposure to the culture of First Baptist. The following is the total breakdown of participants by prayer groups: the "Global" prayer group had 24 participants; "Our Praying Committee" had nine participants; "It's Time To Pray" had 15 participants; one additional private group was formed by a participant having four additional participants (see Figure 2).

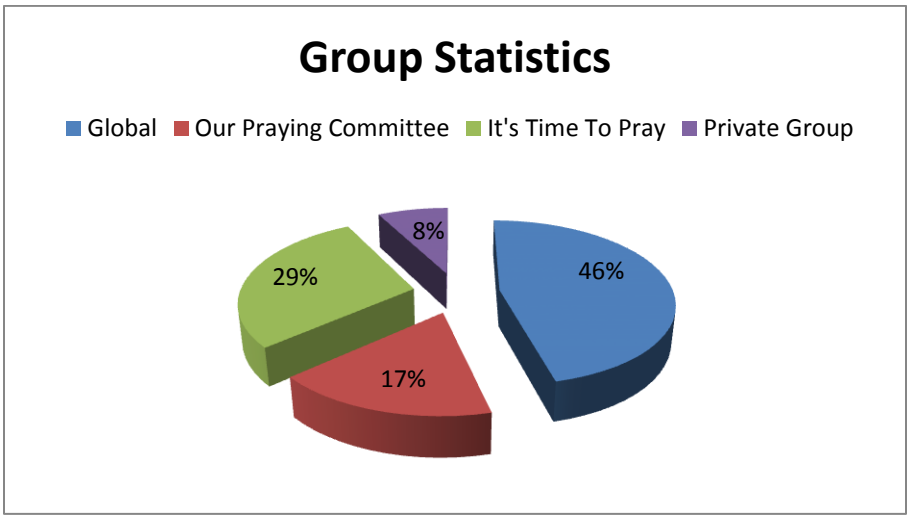

Figure 2. Group Statistics

One-hundred forty-nine prayer request were received with 68 percent of the request originating through the web based platform (see Figure 3).

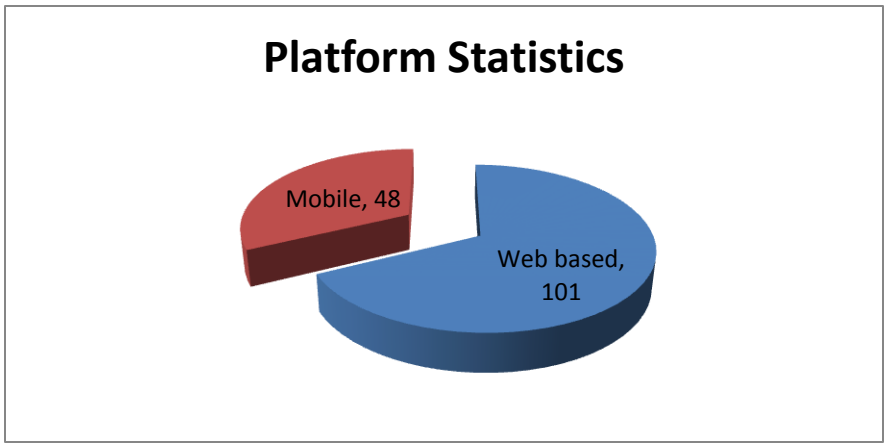

Figure 3. Platform Statistics

The high percentage of web-based usage may have been due to the fact that most of the members of the committee did not have Android smartphones for mobile access to the *Pray4Me* application.

Pre-Assessment Evaluation Results

The questions for the pre-assessment survey were a collaborative effort with the LAC and were selected for ascertaining the individual's previous experiences and concerns with intercessory prayer and technology. A summary analysis of the survey results (Appendix C) was performed for each pre-assessment question on the survey.

Over 50 percent of the members responded affirmative to availability to physically attend prayer meetings compared to 25 percent of non-members. One interesting fact is that, although 55 percent of the members responded that they are able to attend Wednesday prayer meetings, only eight percent said that they attend often.

Thirty percent of the members responded that they had submitted a prayer request to First Baptist prior to the *Pray4Me* application. First Baptist currently has a form on its website to request prayer. The form is forwarded to the pastoral care team to intercede on behalf of the request. The comments showed the experience to be easy and overall positive. One comment expressed the concern of whether the request was received by anyone. Positive confirmation that someone is praying with you can be important to how we view an experience.

Fifty-five percent of the members indicated that they pray most of the time for others such as friends, church members, and co-workers. Almost 80 percent of non-members said that they pray most of the time for themselves and their immediate family.

The list in prioritized order of who do members ask for intercessory prayer was friends, family, spouse, parents, and clergy. The prioritized list for non-members was family, friends, self, clergy, and spouse.

Twenty-three percent of both members and non-members answered that they were not comfortable with requesting prayer from people that they did not know. Some of the reasons given were the personal nature of some prayer requests and concerns of not knowing others or their commitment to prayer.

The two top reasons given for participating in this online *Pray4Me* project were being asked by a friend and because of specific life needs that required prayer.

The overwhelming reasons given by members and non-members for what intrigued them the most about the *Pray4Me* project were assurance that someone was praying, an opportunity to use technology for spiritual formation and the anonymity in requesting prayer.

Post-Assessment Evaluation Results

The questions for the post-assessment survey were a collaborative effort with the LAC and were selected for ascertaining the individual's experiences and concerns with intercessory prayer and technology following the completion of the project. A summary analysis of the survey (Appendix E) was performed for each post-assessment question on the survey.

Sixty-percent responded affirmative that their participation in *Pray4Me* impacted their interest in gathering physically together with others to pray, with one individual actually joining a local prayer group. Those that responded negatively sited schedules that made it difficult to physically gather at a church.

After participating in the *Pray4Me* project, results conveyed positive feedback expressing a feeling of being more connected to others and being made mindful to pray for others. Sixty-seven percent responded affirmative that after participating, they would now be more apt to pray for someone or ask for prayer while the remainder expressed that they prayed before the project and will continue.

The two main expressed challenges encountered by praying anonymously with the *Pray4Me* project was that it was difficult to find time to write the prayer responses and that not being aware of the gender made it difficult in knowing how to phrase the prayer. The greatest challenge expressed with requesting prayer was knowing and feeling comfortable with how much to share in a prayer request. Another challenge was not being sure if the person praying could figure out who was requesting the prayer. Remaining anonymous was important for some expressed prayer needs.

All responses were positive in seeing technology used to enhance prayer. One individual stated, "If God can communicate through a donkey, then God can use technology to help us to communicate with Him and one another."

Sixty-seven percent of the participants responded affirmative that they felt more connected after experiencing the *Pray4Me* project. Benefits of participating in the project included the anonymity of the prayer request, knowing that someone was praying on their behalf and quacking have others join in prayer concerning situations in life. The overwhelming reason given for what intrigued them most about the *Pray4Me* project was the assurance that someone was praying on their behalf.

The ethos of the group based on the pre-survey could be described as one that was available to attend prayer meetings, but did not attend often; currently submitted pray request; prayed for others; requested prayer from friends, family and spouse; not comfortable when asking others to pray; participated in the project because they were asked or had a need in their life; and was looking for an assurance that someone was praying on their behalf.

The ethos of the group based on the post-survey could be described as one who's interest was impacted by the project to gather physically to pray; felt connected to others; prayerful and mindful to pray for others; more apt to ask for prayer and to pray for others; having a positive view of technology and prayer; and appreciative of the assurance that someone was praying.

CHAPTER 5

LESSONS LEARNED

Project Successes

One aspect of the project that worked as designed but was not quite successful was the 65 percent average response rate to the 149 prayer requests that were issued in the six weeks of the *Pray4Me* project. Although a 65 percent response rate to prayer requests may be good from a statistical perspective, it may be much lower than hoped for to the 35 percent requesting prayer but did not receive any confirmation that someone was standing with them in prayer. To help to minimize the response rate shortfall, the *Pray4Me* application automatically monitors the pray request response rate for each participant and based on their individual response rates may exclude the participant from being selected to pray. For example, if an individual has not responded to the last three sequential requests asked of them, they would be temporarily excluded from the selection pool. This allows individuals who are on vacation or not available for other reasons to not be called upon until they return. Upon responding to any pray request, the individual is automatically reinstated for selection.

Another aspect of the project that worked as designed but was not quite successful was the capability that allowed the participants to create their own prayer groups. To help guard against the possibility of internet scams, the *Pray4Me* application allows individuals to join the participant created prayer groups only by invitation. No individual

can join a prayer group except by invitation. The creator of a group must invite new individuals through email invitations specifically generated by the application. The problem that developed is that out of the 15 new groups created since the inception of the project, only one group has invited additional participants. The groups appear to have been created around themes with the expectation that those with like interest would join. The reality is that there is no mechanism within the *Pray4Me* application for someone to request to join a user created group. If the creator of the group does not send an invitation from within the *Pray4Me* application, others using the application are not even aware of the existence of the newly created group. All user groups are privileged groups known and available to join only by invitation. Subsequent to the conclusion of the project, a message was added by the *Pray4Me* application to remind the creators of new prayer groups to invite participants. To date, this change has had no impact on encouraging creators to invite participants.

Project Challenges

One of the challenges more difficult than anticipated was encountered early by the LAC when logging into the application. The web application is accessed by typing the address of the *Pray4Me* webpage: http://my*Pray4Me*.com into any web browser. A browser is a software application for retrieving and presenting information from web servers. The major web browsers are Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Opera, and Safari.[1] The problem dealt with the reality that different security setting may exist for each user browser. In the testing phase of the *Pray4Me* application,

[1] http://mashable.com/category/browser/, Mashable (accessed July 31, 2013).

the security setting on some LAC browsers would not allow the passing of "cookies" between web pages. Cookies are small files, which are stored on a user's computer. They are designed to hold a modest amount of data specific to a particular client and website, and can be accessed either by the web server or the client computer.[2] The *Pray4Me* web application used cookies to pass and validation username, password and other information. Since the security settings could vary by user, the entire *Pray4Me* web application had to be redesigned to eliminate the use of cookies for the passing of information between modules. This turned out to be a major effort and caused a delay in the targeted implementation date.

Pleasant Surprises

One surprising aspect of the project was an added flexibility to the *Pray4Me* application provided by the Android platform. By simply clicking on the smartphones microphone, I was able to verbally speak a prayer response and have a text translation automatically created and sent to the individual requesting prayer. Saying a prayer felt more natural for me than typing a prayer into the *Pray4Me* application.

Project Transformation

Seven months after the project completion, the total number of participants in the *Pray4Me* project increased from 52 to 149. The number of prayer request increased from 149 to 337. The use of mobile devices to submit pray request increased from 32 percent to 69 percent (see Figure 4).

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[2] http://www.whatarecookies.com/, "What are Cookies? - Computer Cookies Explained," whatarecookies.com (accessed July 31, 2013).

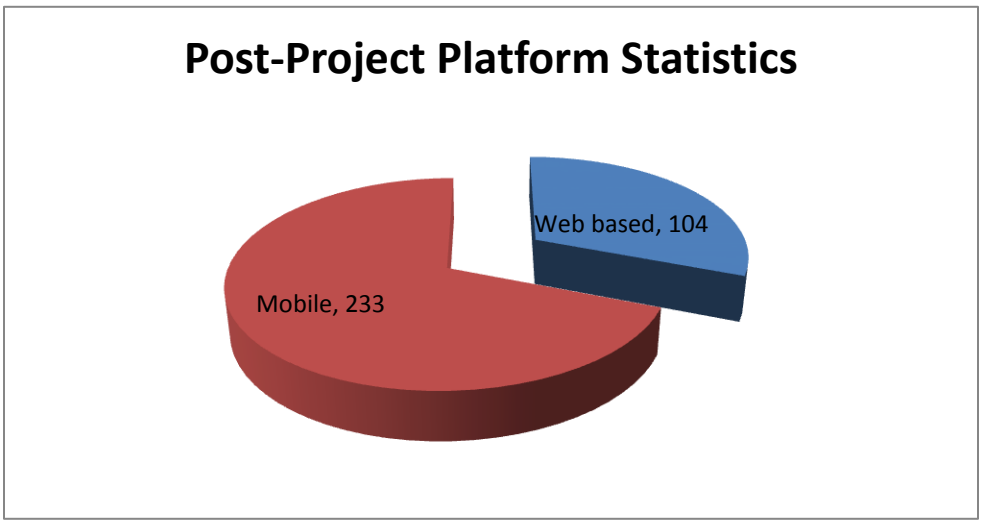

Figure 4. Post-Project Platform Statistics

This shows a decisive swing towards the use of the mobile Android application as the preferred method of access of the *Pray4Me* application. The number of prayer responses increased from 98 to 219. Interestingly, the average response rate for prayer requests remained unchanged at 65 percent.

Personal Transformation

One of the transformational points for me from the *Pray4Me* project came from an encountered experience on the project and being in dialog with others concerning the topic of theology and technology. Swaim, and personal experience, taught me that a proper understand of how to use particular forms of media is essential if we want to build up the church in the digital age.[3] If we are going to introduce new technology into the

[3] Swaim, *Prayer in the Digital Age*, 120.

church, then we need to be intentional in developing and publicizing how the tool can be effectively used to deepen our relationships with God and others.[4] As the developer of the *Pray4Me* project, my vision was one of inner hope and expectations of what the project could accomplish. But the project experience made me more sensitive to how the use of technology can be a double-edged sword. Being a participant of the project helped me to realize that although technology can be used for the good of the praying community, the use of technology can heighten fears, and anxiety related to the spiritual nature of prayer. With social media tools, I have always been perplexed as to why people would gather online to meet other people and share personal information and experiences about cooking, golfing, professional alliances, finding employment, religion, politics, and even lifestyles. Erik Qualman asserts that one of the biggest benefits of social media is enabling users to stay connected with friends and family who are geographically separated.[5] The *Pray4Me* project gave me a different perspective on the human need to feel connected one to the other. The need for people to feel connected runs deep. Qualman also states:

> As human beings, we have the dichotomous psychological need to be an individual, yet feel connected to and accepted by a much larger social set. Accordingly, people are willing to keep open running diaries as a way to stay connected and accepted.[6]

The challenge becomes how to balance the desire for anonymity with the need for connectedness.

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[4] Ibid., xiii.

[5] Erik Qualman, *Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms The Way We Live and Do Business* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2011), 2.

[6] Ibid., 4.

Where Do We Go From Here

A number of enhancements are in the works for the *Pray4Me* mobile platform, such as voice-to-text and text-to-voice prayer request and responses; enhanced personal prayer group functionality; and IPhone and IPad platform support.

Qualman points out that micro-revenue streams are huge for social media.[7] Micro-revenue is generated by charging fractions of pennies for ads to be displayed and clicked on a social media platform.[8] This can be a huge revenue generator for a social media application when collected from thousands or hundreds of thousands of businesses.[9] Allowing ads to be displayed while viewing the *Pray4Me* web based or mobile platform could generate future development revenue. To be profitable under this model requires a large base of users.

Some social media mobile applications associate a one-time fee or even a small monthly fee for download or service utilization. Since the *Pray4Me* mobile application was deployed as a free Android application, the product can never be re-distributed for charge. However, an upscale version, such as *Pray4Me Pro* can be developed and distributed as a fee based application (such as .99, 1.99, etc). The key to creating a Pro version of *Pray4Me* is to give the users of the application something of value. Value added features might be in the form of providing the ability to share testimonies, praise narratives, instant one-on-one and group prayer chats, and receiving a daily personalized

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[7] Qualman, *Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms The Way We Live and Do Business*, 30.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 31.

prayer based on profile and identified needs. Again, to be profitable under this model requires a large base of users.

Qualman states that historically, word of mouth has been the most beneficial marketing effort for businesses. Social media takes word of mouth and puts it on digital steroids and essentially turns it into "world of mouth."[10] With very limited advertising, the *Pray4Me* application has grown to 100+ downloads. The *Pray4Me* application can be an excellent tool for use by any churches choirs, deacons, ministers, ushers and support groups in forming their own local prayer groups. Just think of its potential use if shared not just by word of mouth, but through video sharing websites, social media, and e-mail.[11]

[10] Qualman, *Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms The Way We Live and Do Business*, 266.

[11] P.S. One year after the live deployment of the Pray4Me application, the total number of participants increased from 52 to 290. The number of prayer request increased from 149 to 550. The use of mobile devices to submit prayer request increased from 32 percent to 80 percent. The number of prayer responses increased from 98 to 324. Over 43 personal prayer groups have been formed.

APPENDIX A

BLACK PEOPLE'S PRAYER MEETING

Image Credit: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Roger's Fund, 1942. (42.95.19)

©1985 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art

APPENDIX B

PRE-ASSESSMENT EVALUATION

PRE-ASSESSMENT EVALUATION / SURVEY

Please complete the brief survey before continuing

First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens (FBCLG) Member: ○ Yes ○ No
If yes, how many years have you been a member? 0

Project: Pray For Me

Project Date(s): -

1. FBCLG offers prayer meeting every Wednesday at noon and 6:30 p.m. Are you able to attend during one of these times? ○ Yes ○ No
2. How often have you attended prayer meetings in the past? Select One

How did you feel about the process?

3. Have you ever submitted a prayer request? ○ Yes ○ No

4. Most of the time, when you pray (select one):
   - ○ Do you pray for yourself and your immediate family?
   - ○ Do you pray for the needs of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers)?
   - ○ Do you pray for strangers?

5. When you need prayer, whom do you usually ask to pray for you and why?

6. Are you comfortable with requesting pray from people that you do not know? Explain why or why not.

7. Explain why you are participating in this online **Pray For Me** project.

8. What aspect of the **Pray For Me** project intrigued you the most (select all that apply):
   - ☐ The anonymity in requesting a prayer.
   - ☐ The assurance that someone is praying for me.
   - ☐ The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android).
   - ☐ The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request.
   - ☐ The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
   - ☐ Other

Submit Survey

APPENDIX C

PRE-ASSESSMENT EVALUATION RESULTS

PRE-ASSESSMENT EVALUATION / SURVEY RESULTS

Project: *Pray4Me*

Course Date(s): 3/11/2013 - 4/30/2013

First Baptist Member?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Yes
543	Yes
545	No
546	Yes
547	Yes
548	Yes
549	Yes
550	Yes
557	Yes
560	Yes
563	No
575	No
590	Yes
591	No
593	Yes
611	No
613	Yes
614	Yes
615	Yes
616	No
619	No
627	No
628	No
629	No
637	Yes
638	No
646	No
647	No
649	No

If yes, how many years have you been a member?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	5
543	20+
545	20+
546	20+
547	8
548	20+
549	0
550	15
557	5
560	0
563	0
575	0
590	0
591	0
593	20+
611	0
613	20+
614	5
615	4
616	0
619	0
627	0
628	0
629	0
637	0
638	0
646	0
647	0
649	0

1. FBCLG offers prayer meeting every Wednesday at noon and 6:30 p.m. Are you able to attend during one of these times?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Yes
543	Yes
545	Yes
546	No
547	No
548	No
549	Yes
550	Yes
557	Yes
560	(blank)
563	No
575	Yes
590	(blank)
591	(blank)
593	No
611	(blank)
613	Yes
614	(blank)
615	No
616	No
619	Yes
627	No
628	No
629	No
637	(blank)
638	No
646	No
647	No
649	No

2. How often have you attended prayer meetings in the past?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Rarely
543	Rarely
545	Occasionally
546	Occasionally
547	Rarely
548	Occasionally
549	Rarely
550	Rarely
557	Rarely
560	(blank)
563	Occasionally
575	Never
590	(blank)
591	Never
593	Never
611	Never
613	Rarely
614	Often
615	Never
616	Never
619	Rarely
627	Never
628	Never
629	Often
637	(blank)
638	Never
646	Never
647	Occasionally
649	Never

3. Have you ever submitted a prayer request? How did you feel about the process?

User Number	Survey Response
538	(blank)
543	Yes. Process is pretty easy. Feel good getting burden out and know someone will pray for me.
545	No.
546	No. Never submitted, always ask those I know to pray for me.
547	No. I feel encouraged about the process.
548	No.
549	Yes. Someone would be praying for me.
550	No. I like it. However, face-to-face is a challenge. I do Girlfriends virtual prayer daily and participate in a virtual Bible Study.
557	(blank)
560	(blank)
563	No. Very interesting.
575	No.
590	(blank)
591	No.
593	Yes. great
611	No.
613	Yes. Not sure if it was received by anyone.
614	Yes. I think it's efficient but easy.
615	No.
616	No.
619	No.
627	No.
628	No.
629	No.
637	(blank)
638	No.
646	Yes. At peace
647	Yes.
649	No.

4. You indicated that most of the time, when you pray that you –

User Number	Survey Response
538	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
543	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
545	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
546	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
547	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
548	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
549	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
550	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
557	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
560	(blank)
563	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
575	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
590	(blank)
591	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
593	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
611	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
613	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
614	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
615	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
616	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
619	pray for the need of others (e.g., friends, church members, co-workers).
627	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
628	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
629	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
637	(blank)
638	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
646	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
647	pray for yourself and your immediate family.
649	pray for yourself and your immediate family.

5. When you need prayer, whom do you usually ask to pray for you and why?

User Number	Survey Response
538	(blank)
543	Husband, parents and family because they know me best. I don't need to explain a lot, but I can if I want.
545	Close friends; feel comfortable that they will not think badly of me.
546	Friends and acquaintances, because I feel that a person who knows me will more likely include prayer that they know I need but did not request.
547	I ask my wife first and then my mom. My wife knows me well and I know that she will pray for whatever I ask and fail to ask. My mother has always been a prayer warrior and a pillar of spiritual strength for our family. She knows how to get a prayer through to God.
548	Sister and friends. I trust them to be diligent to pray.
549	My spouse and close friends, because I know they will pray for me.
550	Friends, because it is private.
557	(blank)
560	(blank)
563	My family and friends.
575	Family members. They have expressed belief and trust in God.
590	(blank)
591	Family.
593	Rev. Gipson
611	Don't usually ask.
613	Family members and friends. I ask those that I know will pray.
614	Usually for me when I have schoolwork and projects coming up.
615	I ask my parents because they are close to me in distance and I see them every day.
616	I don't usually ask anyone to pray for me.
619	My pastor and family.
627	My best friend.
628	Hasina or my wife. Cause I trust them.
629	Paul because he is my spiritual mentor.
637	(blank)
638	Anyone because I need God to come to me immediately.
646	Myself.
647	Friends and family and my church members.
649	I pray for myself and my family and that the Lord heals me of my coltis and acid reflux.

6. Are you comfortable with requesting pray from people that you do not know? Explain why or why not?

User Number	Survey Response
538	(blank)
543	Yes. I feel that help can come from all directions.
545	Comfortable because of the confidentiality of not knowing me and vice versa.
546	I am. I do pray for those in government that I do not know personally and I pray when it is requested, regardless to whether I know the person or not.
547	Yes.
548	Somewhat. Concerned about the commitment of others.
549	Yes. When I know it is anonymous.
550	Prayer is prayer – a process for me.
557	(blank)
560	(blank)
563	Yes. I feel as a Christian and a person who prays a lot if more than one person prays in Jesus name for each other it would be heard. The more prayers the better.
575	Yes. It is good to go to God in agreement.
590	(blank)
591	Yes.
593	Yes. I need prayer from any and everyone!
611	Yes.
613	Yes. The prayers of the saints availeth much.
614	No. Because I really don't know them and don't feel obligated to do so.
615	Yes. Because I know all I need to know about them to pray for them.
616	I've never done it. I don't think I am comfortable with it because the things I pray about are of a personal nature.
619	Yes. Because it's prayer and it shouldn't matter who it comes from as long as they have a good heart and spirit.
627	I am comfortable. But I would prefer to know more about the organization.
628	I'm comfortable. The more prayer the merrier.
629	Yes. Anyone can pray for anyone.
637	(blank)
638	I am turning every way indeed for God
646	No. I'm not that good in asking others.
647	Yes. I am willing to offer prayer, I believe in receiving from others.
649	Yes. Because praying for someone doesn't hurt anything.

7. Explain why you are participating in this online Pray For Me project.

User Number	Survey Response
538	(blank)
543	I feel that it is a creative way for community prayer.
545	To know that someone is praying for me gives me a greater comfort.
546	This project is led by a dear friend and I always like to support my friends. Also, I am embarking on praying globally for a virtual community of which I am part. I have begun posing prayers online for my group twice a day and it seems to be appreciated. My prayers are intended to encourage and to keep everyone focused on the ultimate goal.
547	Prayer is direct communication to God, our father. Through Jesus Christ we have a direct link to Him and I feel that prayer is the most intimate expression of our trust and faith in God. Prayer has increased exponentially in importance for me and I'm honored to participate in this project.
548	Although a little apprehensive of strangers praying, I do like the fact that someone would be praying.
549	Because I believe in the power of prayer.
550	To take every effort to increase my time in focusing on God's Word and works.
557	(blank)
560	(blank)
563	I was asked to by my cousin and find that it would be something I would like to do.
575	Yes. It is good to go to God in agreement.
590	(blank)
591	School project for family member.
593	Great and new way to ask for and receive prayer.
611	Helpful.
613	I need prayer and I am willing to pray for others.
614	Because the requester asked me to do so and he does so much for me so I'll help him out.
615	I did this because my grandfather does a lot for me and I wanted to give back to him.
616	I like to be helpful and I think this can do good in linking people who need pray with people who pray for them.
619	My aunt posted it on fb and it wouldn't hurt to try it.
627	I am sore in need of prayer. I have many overshelming issues in my life right now.
628	Cause I'm tired.
629	To try something new with my prayer life.
637	(blank)
638	I am turning in any way I can for God.

646	I have plenty of pray needs.
647	Having health problems and family and friends that I miss and love. I believe that pray will help from myself and all believers.
649	Because prayer matters to me.

8. What aspect(s) of the Pray For Me project intrigued you the most?

User Number	Survey Response
538	(blank)
543	The assurance that someone is praying for me; The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android); The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
545	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
546	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
547	The assurance that someone is praying for me.
548	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request.
549	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
550	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android); The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation; Engage with people I know. I'm growing.
557	(blank)
560	(blank)
563	The assurance that someone is praying for me.
575	The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
590	(blank)
591	The assurance that someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
593	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android); The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
611	The assurance that someone is praying for me.
613	The assurance that someone is praying for me; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
614	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that

	someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation; The ability to pray for others.
615	The assurance that someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
616	The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android); The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation; I like the potential this has for a widespread prayer group.
619	The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request.
627	The assurance that someone is praying for me.
628	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android); The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation; It will hopefully inspire me to pray more.
629	The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android).
637	(blank)
638	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android).
646	The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation; Helping others and they also helping me in prayer.
647	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
649	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me;

APPENDIX D

POST ASSESSMENT EVALUATION

POST-ASSESSMENT EVALUATION / SURVEY

Please complete the brief survey before continuing

Project: Pray For Me

Project Date(s): 3/11/2013 -

1. Has your participation in PrayforMe impacted your interest in gathering physically together with others to pray? Explain.

2. Now that you have submitted a prayer request and been prayed for or have prayed for someone that submitted a request, explain how you feel about the experience?

3. Would you now be more apt to pray for someone or submit a request when you have a need than before participating in **Pray For Me**? Explain.

4. What was the most difficult part of praying anonymously with the **Pray For Me** project?

5. Explain what challenges you encountered requesting prayer from someone you did not know?

6. What is your view on technology and prayer?

7. Would you say that now you feel more connected in prayer with others than before this experience? Explain how.

8. What did you find to be most beneficial while participating in PrayforMe?

9. What aspect of the **Pray For Me** project intrigued you the most (select all that apply):

- ☐ The anonymity in requesting a prayer.
- ☐ The assurance that someone is praying for me.
- ☐ The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android).
- ☐ The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request.
- ☐ The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
- ☐ Other

Submit Survey

APPENDIX E

POST ASSESSMENT EVALUATION RESULTS

1. Has your participation in *Pray4Me* impacted your interest in gathering physically together with others to pray?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	No. Schedules still make it difficult to gather at the church.
549	No.
557	Yes.
613	Yes. I have actually joined a local prayer group.
619	Yes.

2. Now that you have submitted a prayer request and have been prayed for or have prayed for someone that submitted a request, explain how you feel about the experience.

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Good experience. It allowed me to quickly ask for prayer and made me mindful to pray for others.
549	This has been a great experience in knowing that someone is praying for my needs.
557	(blank)
613	Having someone stand in prayer with me and standing with others in prayer made me feel more connected to the body of Christ.
619	(blank)

3. Would you now be more apt to pray for someone or submit a request when you have a need than before participating in *Pray4Me*? Explain.

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Yes. Praying for someone is all about knowing that they need prayer.
549	It's the same. I prayed before for people and will continually respond to prayer needs.
557	(blank)
613	Yes. Just based on convenience and knowledge of needs would make me more apt to pray for others.
619	(blank)

4. What was the most difficult part of praying anonymously with the *Pray4Me* project?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Sometimes not knowing gender made it more difficult in how to phrase the prayer.
549	I didn't have any difficulty praying anonymously.
557	(blank)
613	Finding the time to write the prayer response.
619	(blank)

5. Explain what challenges you encountered requesting prayer from someone you did not know.

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Knowing how much to share.
549	I wasn't sure if the person could figure out who is requesting the prayer.
557	(blank)
613	Feeling comfortable with how much to share.
619	(blank)

6. Explain what challenges you encountered requesting prayer from someone you did not know.

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Knowing how much to share.
549	I wasn't sure if the person could figure out who is requesting the prayer.
557	(blank)
613	Feeling comfortable with how much to share.
619	(blank)

7. would you say that now you feel more connected in prayer with others than before this experience?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	It felt good to know that others were standing with me in prayer.
549	Yes.
557	(blank)
613	Yes. It overcomes the obstacle of distance and provides instant notification of needs.
619	(blank)

8. What did you find to be most beneficial while participating in *Pray4Me*?

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	Quickly having others join with me in prayer concerning a situation in my life.
549	The anonymity of the prayer request.
557	(blank)
613	Knowing that someone else was praying for me.
619	(blank)

9. You indicated the following aspect(s) of the *Pray4Me* project that intrigued you the most as –

User Number	**Survey Response**
538	The assurance that someone is praying for me.
549	The anonymity in requesting a prayer; The assurance that someone is praying for me; The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
557	(blank)
613	The assurance that someone is praying for me; The accessibility of entering a prayer request on my smartphone (Android); The convenience of using my desktop and or laptop to enter a prayer request; The opportunity to use technology in a positive way for spiritual formation.
619	(blank)

APPENDIX F

INVITATION TO JOIN *PRAY4ME*

In need of prayer but don't have the time or ability to gather with others to pray? In today's fast-paced and geographically distant world, how do we stay connected in prayer as a group, family or community? How do we get to hear one another's stories concerning the challenges of life? How do we intercede for others and encourage a discouraged people? *Pray4Me* is the answer! Using your personal computer, Android smartphone or tablet you can submit an anonymous prayer request and receive a response at anytime.

In completing my doctor of ministry program at Drew University, I have developed a web based and Android enabled site that hosts a network of Christian believers who show the power of Christ by interceding for any-and-all who ask for a word of prayer. Praying for and having someone pray for you through this site will forge a stronger connection to individuals whose geographical location or busy schedule prohibit gathering together for prayer. Additionally, the prayers offered on this site are anonymous, both the requestor and the one who intercedes in prayer, are kept secret.

When you submit a prayer request, it will be anonymously posted on the circles virtual prayer wall and anonymously forwarded by email to a random pray circle member. The prayer circle member commits to lift the prayer request up through the day to God and to respond back through the *Pray4Me* web or Android based application with a written prayer or words of encouragement. You will receive an email from the *Pray4Me* application with the anonymous response to your prayer. Don't forget to add p4m@my*Pray4Me*.com to your accepted email address list to receive pray request and responses to your prayers.

If you are interested in participating in the project from March 18th through April 30th, please respond to me at dgipson@drew.edu. You can preview the site and download the Android app at http://my*Pray4Me*.com.

The project also allows you to create your own private prayer circles that you control and allows you to send invites to your family and friends. So go ahead, respond today, input your prayer request and watch the Master work. As Cece Winans says, "It's Time To Pray."

Rev. David Gipson

First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens

771 Somerset Street

Somerset, NJ 08873

dgipson@drew.edu

APPENDIX G

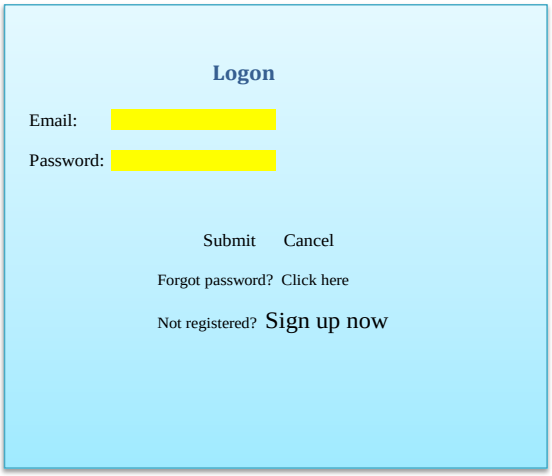
RESPONSE TO JOINING *PRAY4ME*

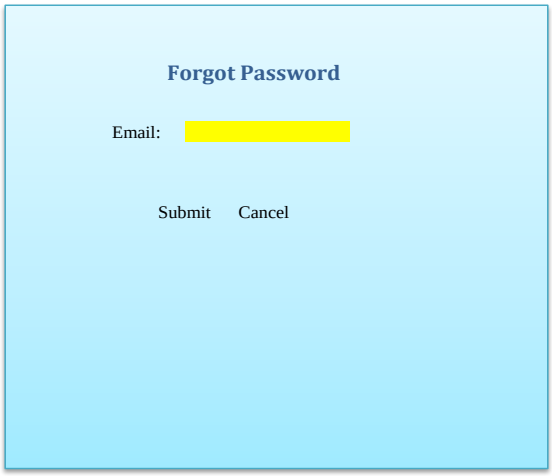
Thank for your interest in using the *Pray4Me* web or app. Remember, you don't need to have an Android phone to pray for others. Just go to http://myprayforme.com. Login using your email address. Click on "Forgot Password" if you need to receive your login password. Don't forget to add p4m@my*Pray4Me*.com to your accepted email address list or check your spam or junk mail box.

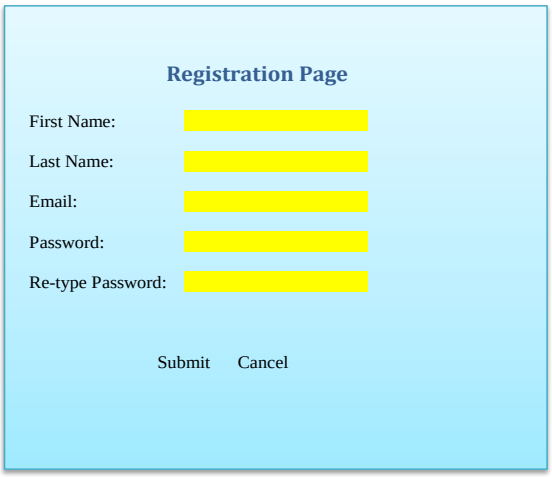
God Bless!

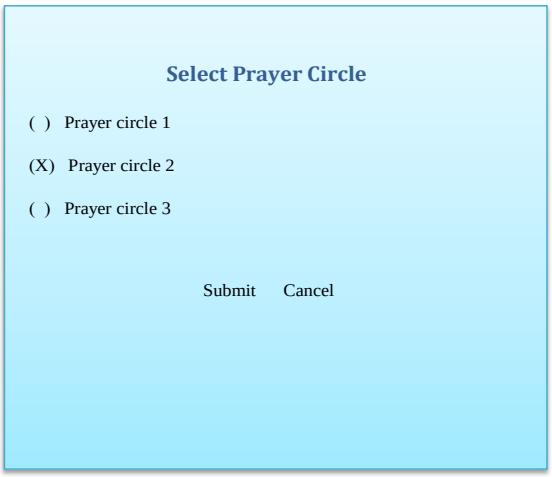
APPENDIX H

PRAY4ME STORYBOARD DETAIL









My Commitment To Pray List

(Select to send a prayer response)

Select	Date	Request
( )	10/11/2012	Going through trials on my job. Pray for my strength in the Lord.
(X)	10/10/2012	Doctor exam scheduled for today.

Previous Next

Submit Cancel History

Respond To Selected Request

Prayer Request:
10/10/2012 Doctor exam scheduled for today.

Response:

Dear Lord, please let the doctor visit today be Successful and the diagnoses be favorable. Amen.

Send Cancel

My Commitment To Pray History

Date	Request
10/10/2012	Doctor exam scheduled for today.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please let the doctor visit today be successful and the diagnoses be favorable. Amen.

10/9/2012	My son is driving me crazy!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Keep our children safe, protect them from harm, give them wisdom, enlightenment, and strength to resist temptation when it comes their way.

Previous Next

Cancel

My Prayer Needs List

Date	Request
10/11/2012	Pray for my patience in dealing with my boss.

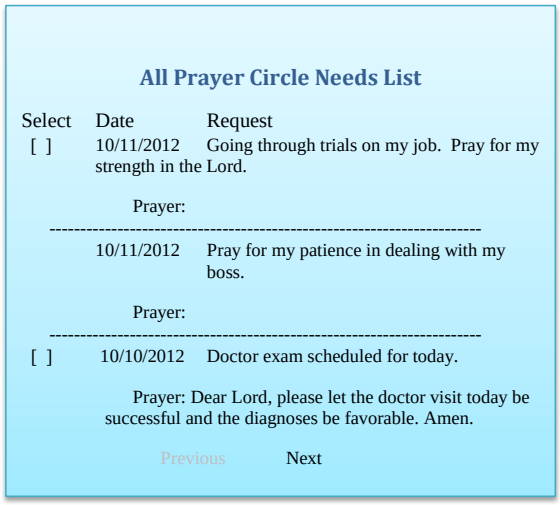
Prayer:

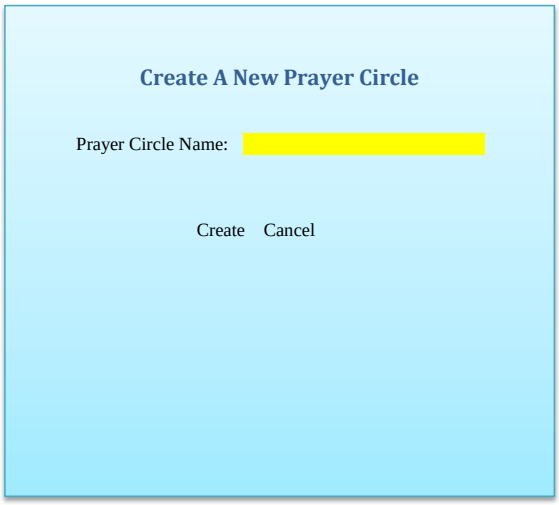
10/6/2012	Prayer for my friend who is going through a very rough time in his life.

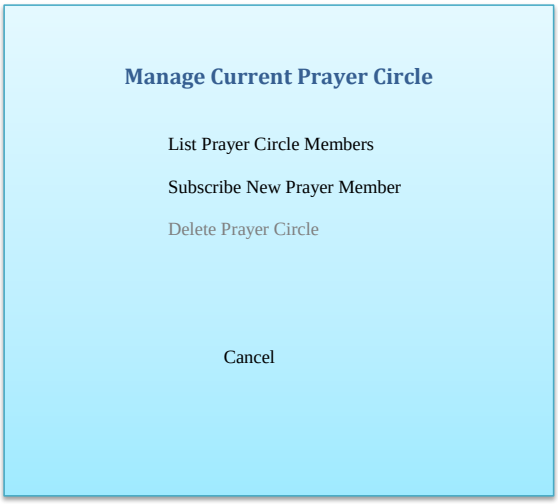
Prayer: God. We know that the situation is in Your hand, and we trust You. We ask you for strength and for wisdom that this friend of our friend would be able to endure this situation and be able to handle it in a way that would bring glory to Your name. Amen.

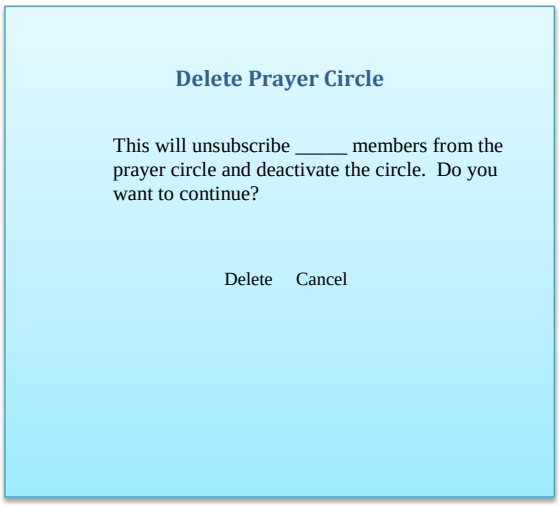
Previous Next

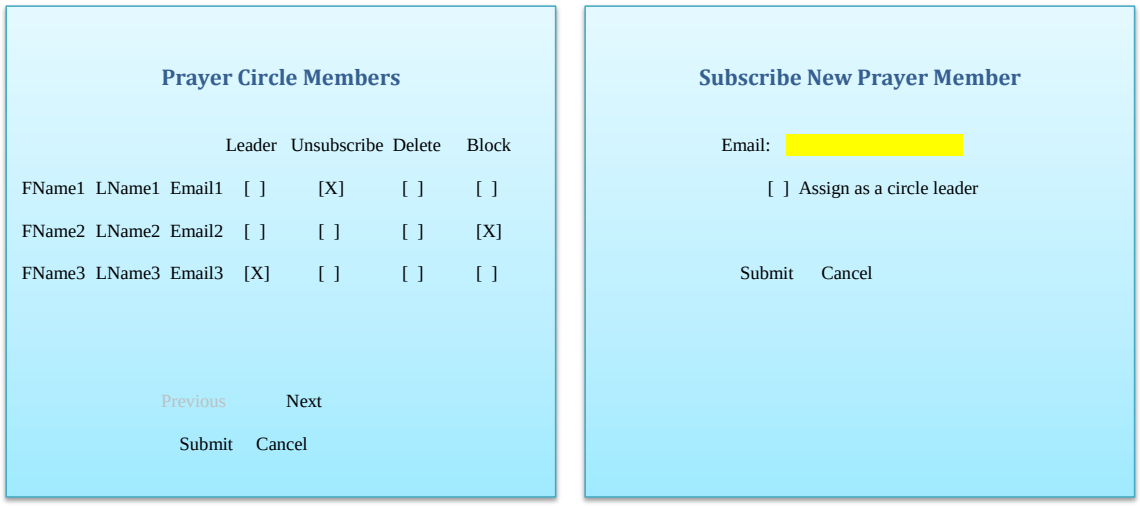
Cancel


All Prayer Circle Needs List
Select Date Request
[ ] 10/11/2012 Going through trials on my job. Pray for my strength in the Lord.
Prayer:
10/11/2012 Pray for my patience in dealing with my boss.
Prayer:
[ ] 10/10/2012 Doctor exam scheduled for today.
Prayer: Dear Lord, please let the doctor visit today be successful and the diagnoses be favorable. Amen.
Previous
Next


Create A New Prayer Circle
Prayer Circle Name:
Create
Cancel

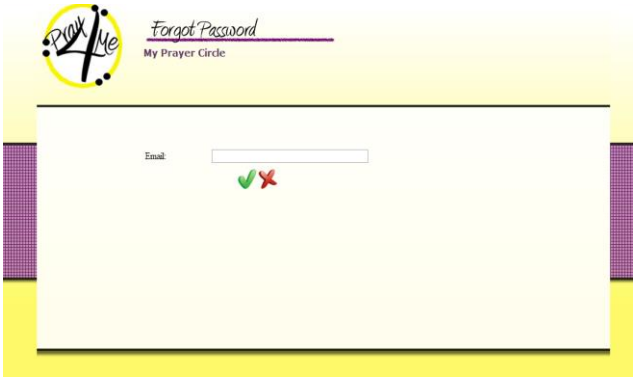

Manage Current Prayer Circle
List Prayer Circle Members
Subscribe New Prayer Member
Delete Prayer Circle
Cancel

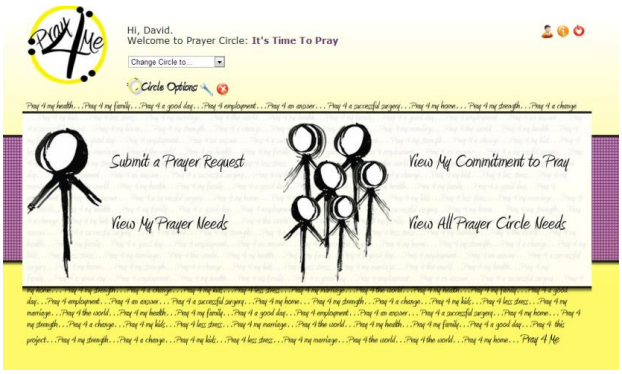

Delete Prayer Circle
This will unsubscribe _____ members from the prayer circle and deactivate the circle. Do you want to continue?
Delete
Cancel


Prayer Circle Members
Leader Unsubscribe Delete Block
FName1 LName1 Email1 [ ] [X] [ ] [ ]
FName2 LName2 Email2 [ ] [ ] [ ] [X]
FName3 LName3 Email3 [X] [ ] [ ] [ ]
Previous
Next
Submit Cancel
Subscribe New Prayer Member
Email:
[ ] Assign as a circle leader
Submit Cancel

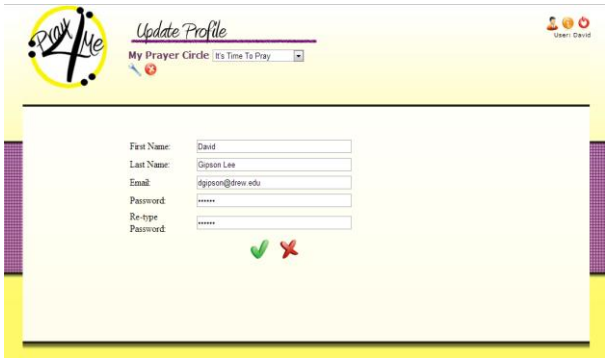
APPENDIX I

PRAY4ME WEB GRAPHIC DESIGN




Hi, David.
Welcome to Prayer Circle: It's Time To Pray
Change Circle to...
Circle Options
Submit a Prayer Request
View My Commitment to Pray
View My Prayer Needs
View All Prayer Circle Needs

Unsubscribe
My Prayer Circle It's Time To Pray
This will remove David Gipson Lee (dgipson@drew.edu) from the prayer circle: It's Time To Pray


Update Profile
My Prayer Circle It's Time To Pray
First Name: David
Last Name: Gipson Lee
Email: dgipson@drew.edu
Password:
Re-type Password:

Submit a Prayer Request
My Prayer Circle It's Time To Pray
Prayer Request:

My Commitment to Pray
My Prayer Circle It's Time To Pray
There are no prayer needs currently on your list

Respond to Prayer Request
My Prayer Circle It's Time To Pray
Prayer Request:
4/18/2013 Pray for my wife's safe return from China on tomorrow.
Response:

History
My Prayer Circle It's Time To Pray
Date
Prayer Request
4/18/2013
Pray for my wife's safe return from China on tomorrow.
Prayer:
4/11/2013
Please say prayers for my son and his wife that God will grant them jobs and may they find faith in Jesus.
Prayer: Eternal Father, You are a loving God and generous to your children. Be

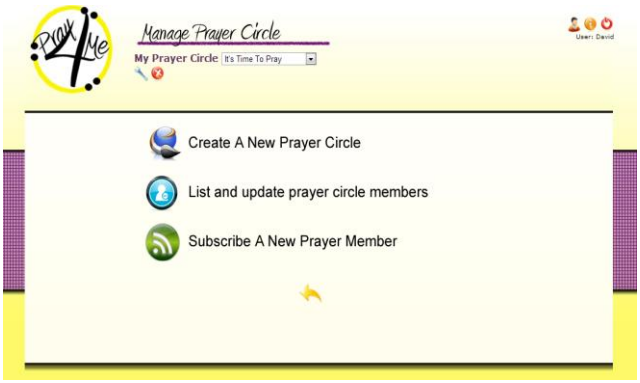
My Prayer Needs
My Prayer Circle It's Time To Pray
Date
Request
5/1/2013
Pray for my Uncle Jack, our family and his soon walk with Christ.
4/26/2013
Pray for my brother-in-law who is epileptic and is having severe headaches.
4/25/2013
Hello Brothers & Sisters n Christ ,
Please continue to keep us in your prayers. My uncle,dad "Uncle Jack" is getting tired. I pray for strength and God's Blessing. Uncle Jack is truly a

All Prayer Circle Needs
My Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
Date
Request
5/1/2013
[Self] Pray for my Uncle Jack, our family and his soon walk with Christ.
4/26/2013
[Self] Pray for my brother-in-law who is epileptic and is having severe headaches.
4/25/2013
[Self] Hello Brothers & Sisters n Christ , Please continue to keep us in your prayers. My uncle/dad "Uncle Jack" is getting tired. I pray for strength and God's Blessing. Uncle Jack is truly a

Create A New Prayer Circle
My Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
Prayer Circle Name:

List Prayer Circle Members
My Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
Select
Leader
Block
Cloak
linda_below@yahoo.com
L
Rudrow
lrudrow1@gmail.com
CARE
Ministries
careministries96@gmail.com

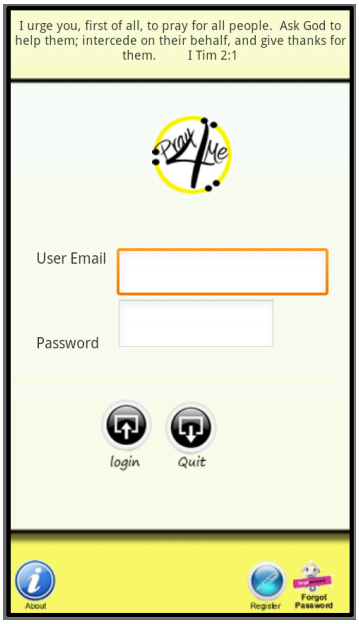
Subscribe New Prayer Member.
My Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
Email:
Assign as a circle leader

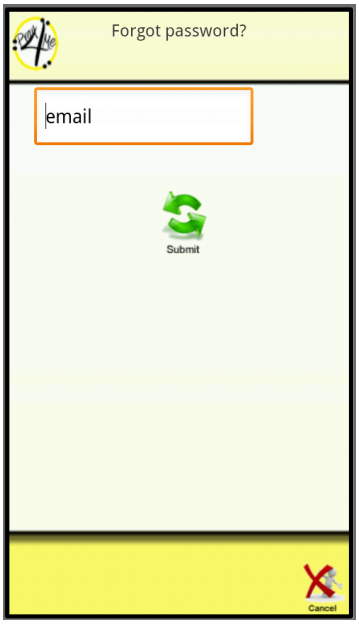

Manage Prayer Circle
My Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
Create A New Prayer Circle
List and update prayer circle members
Subscribe A New Prayer Member

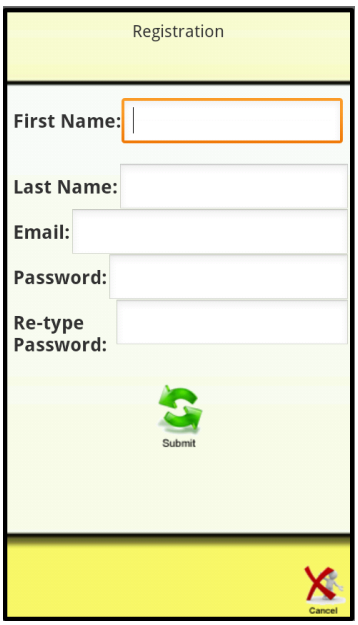
Delete Prayer Circle
My Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
Delete Prayer Circle: It's Time To Pray
This will unsubscribe 15 members from the prayer circle and deactivate the circle. Do you want to continue?

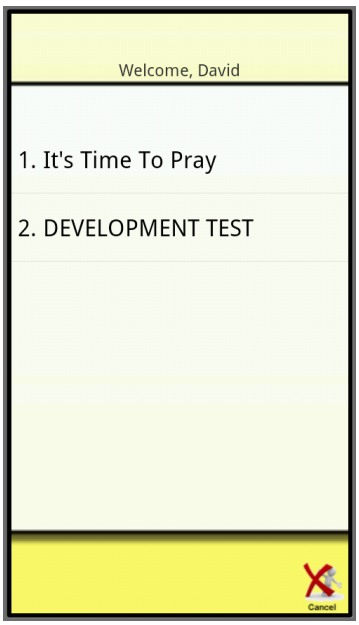
APPENDIX J

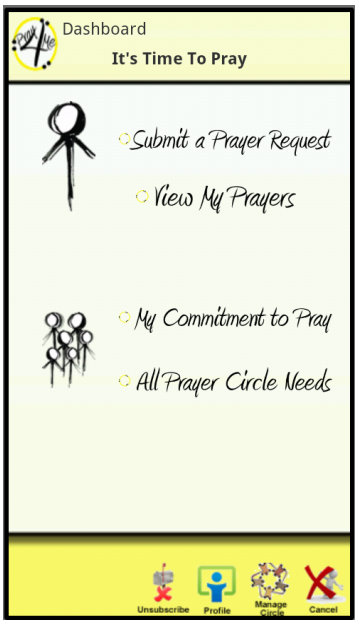
PRAY4ME ANDROID GRAPHIC DESIGN

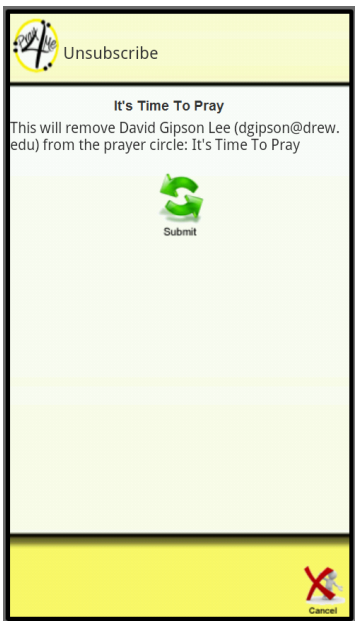


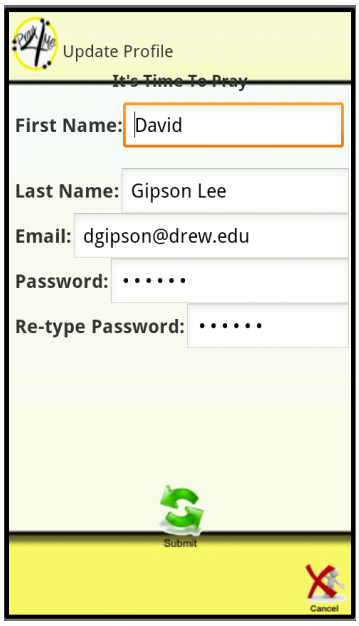


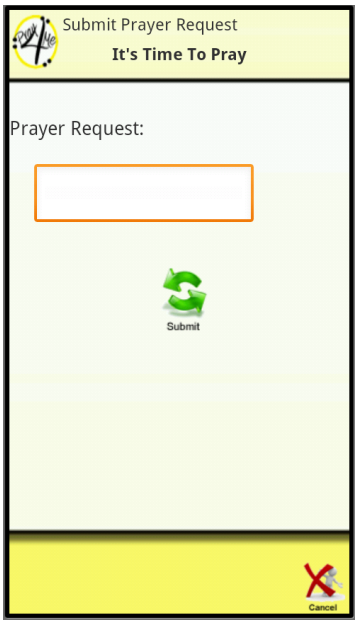


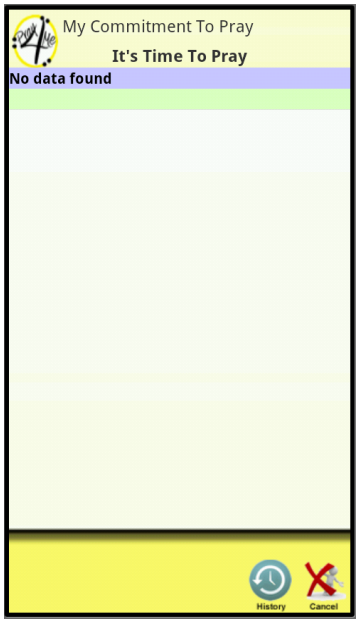


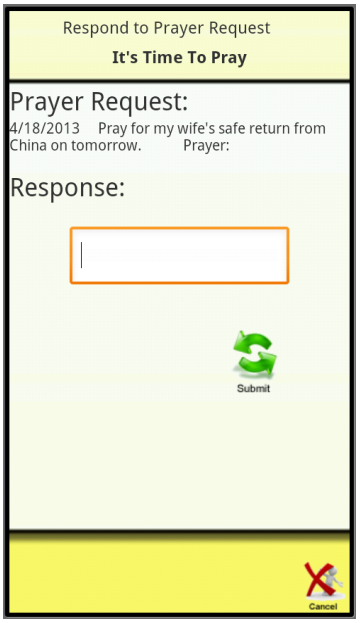

Dashboard
It's Time To Pray
Submit a Prayer Request
View My Prayers
My Commitment to Pray
All Prayer Circle Needs
Unsubscribe
Profile
Manage Circle
Cancel

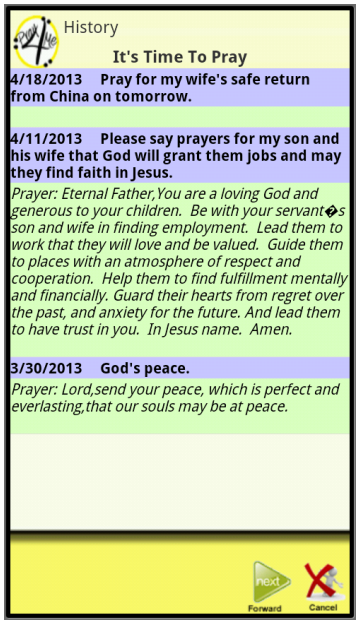

Unsubscribe
It's Time To Pray
This will remove David Gipson Lee (dgipson@drew.edu) from the prayer circle: It's Time To Pray
Submit
Cancel

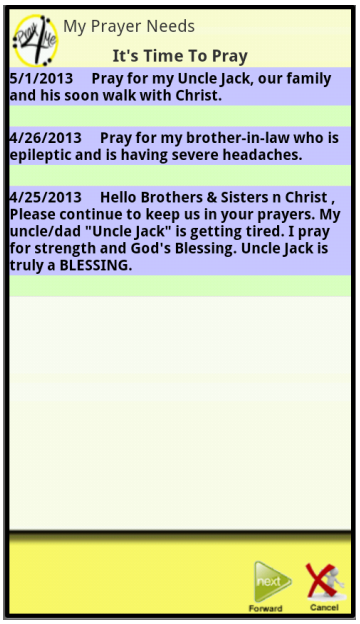

Update Profile
It's Time To Pray
First Name: David
Last Name: Gipson Lee
Email: dgipson@drew.edu
Password: ••••••
Re-type Password: ••••••
Submit
Cancel

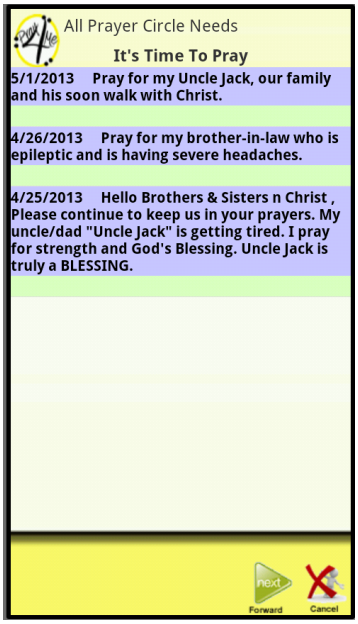

Submit Prayer Request
It's Time To Pray
Prayer Request:
Submit
Cancel

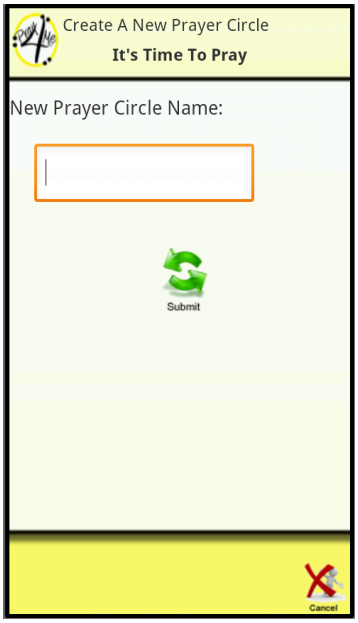

My Commitment To Pray
It's Time To Pray
No data found
History
Cancel


Respond to Prayer Request
It's Time To Pray
Prayer Request:
4/18/2013 Pray for my wife's safe return from China on tomorrow. Prayer:
Response:
Submit
Cancel

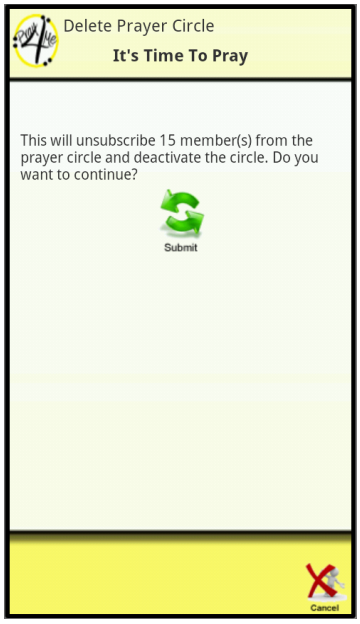

History
It's Time To Pray
4/18/2013 Pray for my wife's safe return from China on tomorrow.
4/11/2013 Please say prayers for my son and his wife that God will grant them jobs and may they find faith in Jesus.
Prayer: Eternal Father,You are a loving God and generous to your children. Be with your servant's son and wife in finding employment. Lead them to work that they will love and be valued. Guide them to places with an atmosphere of respect and cooperation. Help them to find fulfillment mentally and financially. Guard their hearts from regret over the past, and anxiety for the future. And lead them to have trust in you. In Jesus name. Amen.
3/30/2013 God's peace.
Prayer: Lord,send your peace, which is perfect and everlasting,that our souls may be at peace.
Forward
Cancel

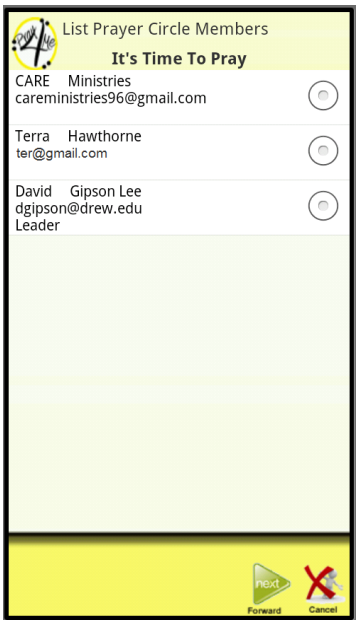

My Prayer Needs
It's Time To Pray
5/1/2013 Pray for my Uncle Jack, our family and his soon walk with Christ.
4/26/2013 Pray for my brother-in-law who is epileptic and is having severe headaches.
4/25/2013 Hello Brothers & Sisters n Christ , Please continue to keep us in your prayers. My uncle/dad "Uncle Jack" is getting tired. I pray for strength and God's Blessing. Uncle Jack is truly a BLESSING.
Forward
Cancel

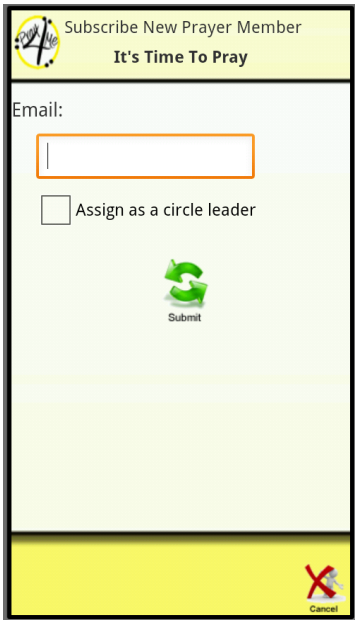

All Prayer Circle Needs
It's Time To Pray
5/1/2013 Pray for my Uncle Jack, our family and his soon walk with Christ.
4/26/2013 Pray for my brother-in-law who is epileptic and is having severe headaches.
4/25/2013 Hello Brothers & Sisters n Christ , Please continue to keep us in your prayers. My uncle/dad "Uncle Jack" is getting tired. I pray for strength and God's Blessing. Uncle Jack is truly a BLESSING.
Forward
Cancel


Create A New Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
New Prayer Circle Name:
Submit
Cancel

Manage Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
Create A New Prayer Circle
List and update prayer circle members
Subscribe A New Prayer Member
Delete Prayer Circle
Cancel


Delete Prayer Circle
It's Time To Pray
This will unsubscribe 15 member(s) from the prayer circle and deactivate the circle. Do you want to continue?
Submit
Cancel


List Prayer Circle Members
It's Time To Pray
CARE Ministries
careministries96@gmail.com
Terra Hawthorne
ter@gmail.com
David Gipson Lee
dgipson@drew.edu
Leader
Forward
Cancel


Subscribe New Prayer Member
It's Time To Pray
Email:
Assign as a circle leader
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APPENDIX K

QR CODE

Two ways to download your FREE P4M Mobile App:

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APPENDIX L

CANDIDATE AND LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

David Gipson (candidate)

Linda Rudrow (chairperson)

Dr. William Cambell (Director of Pastoral Care – LAC consultant)

Iva Croston

Lloyd Doaman, Jr.

Cynthia Gipson-Lee

Reginal Johnson

Patricia Robinson

Beverly White

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