

Up-LIFT-ing Prayer

May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of
my hands be like the evening sacrifice. Psalm 141:2

Do you sometimes feel like you're stuck in a rut of repeating the same prayers over and over? Do you wonder if you're missing something when you pray? Are you even feeling a little bored with your prayers and wondering if God might be bored too?

If you'd like to recharge your prayer life, LIFT on Thursday night might be the answer you're looking for.

LIFT is praying with others for many things – a lift of prayers, concerns, and united hearts to God mid-week.

"Topics vary week to week and sometimes we just stay in praise," said Cathy Cryer, Central's Associate Prayer Director. "Sometimes we pray for a team or event at Central, and sometimes we focus on more global, Kingdom concerns." The first Thursday of each month the group joins Underground Faith in praying for persecuted Christians around the world.

LIFT begins at 7 p.m. and in general ends by 8 p.m. "After the corporate prayers, which do not cover our own concerns, we may pair up one on one to share personal concerns and pray for one another," Cathy said.

"When the tornados hit, we prayed for all those impacted in Oklahoma and Missouri," said Rick Safriet, one of the Prayer Leaders. "It really depends on what's happening. Sometimes we just look at each other and sit in silence and allow God to open the door." He says the people who come to LIFT have huge hearts, and "God has blessed us dramatically," and led us in our prayers.

Lisa Park has been coming for about nine months. She says LIFT is warm and welcoming. Couches, overstuffed chairs, and other comforts fill the Starting Point room where the group meets. It feels like an inviting family gathering in someone's living room. Lisa has learned about prayer at LIFT. "Cathy's activities and ideas about what to pray for have helped me grow spiritually," she said. At first, Lisa was concerned about praying out loud. "But, I didn't feel awkward," she said. "There wasn't any pressure; I could go at my own pace." She now feels comfortable praying out loud, but encourages

that there's no pressure on anyone.

Norma Ward appreciates the friendly hellos and hearing, "I'm glad you came." She was searching for a new church when a co-worker invited her to LIFT. She decided to try LIFT first and if she connected there, then she'd attend services at Central. Norma did connect and has been attending LIFT and Central over a year now. "The encouragement to pray is so comforting," she said. "I like being with people who are there for the same purpose." Hearing the different concerns—for the church, ministry, and nation—emphasized the many areas in need of prayer in Norma's mind. "I could see how our prayers are so important," she said.

"I didn't pray for our nation, or community, or leadership in the church before, but I do now," Lisa said. She feels it's more powerful to pray with a group and share a connection concerning these issues instead of praying by herself. "What we pray about is very important, and until I went a couple of times, I didn't really get that," she said. Lisa now understands the importance of praying for the church and says, "Things in the church don't just happen." They need God's touch and our prayers asking for that touch.

"You can sit and listen," Rick said. Or, if you prefer to pray silently in agreement with the group, that's fine too. "Prayer from the heart is often more powerful than a pre-planned prayer," Rick said. "There's no need to be afraid. No one will force anyone to pray out loud."

Hearing others pray expanded Rick's prayers. "I hear others praying for concerns I haven't thought of, and it opens the door for me," Rick said. It also increased his prayer time with his spouse. A faithful few pray-ers come every Thursday, but Rick would love to see many more join in prayer each week. "It would be nice to see us move LIFT to the Worship Center," he said.

When he leaves LIFT, Rick feels refreshed, even if he came exhausted. "I'm right where I should be, and God responds. We all feel His presence very dramatically when we're together and as we leave."

Want to experience God's presence in a fresh way? Check out LIFT on Thursday nights. "You're in and out in an hour or hour and a half," Lisa said. At one time, she wondered if she really had time for LIFT. She discovered that when she'd go, it got her outside of her own world. "It makes me feel like I've done something," she said. "Being with a group that's praying about much bigger things—I'm always glad I've gone."