

## **TRANSFORMING THE NATION ... THROUGH PRAYER**

Authors: Mel and Susan Finlay

“What do you do when God calls?”

“Why, you ignore the call, of course!”

Spoken in good humour, this was part of a conversation Susan had as she resigned from a position she loved and at which she excelled to answer a call into the unknown. She had just been told she was one of the highest performers in the international Executive Search firm she worked for, but God’s call was stronger than that of the Managing Partner.

It would be another two months before the question, “Called to what?” would be answered. All Susan knew was that she was to leave what she was doing to be freed up for a new adventure. The answer, when it came, was startlingly clear.

As part of her daily devotions, she was reading 2 Chronicles 6. King Solomon “stood before the altar of the LORD ... and then knelt down before the whole assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. He said: ‘O LORD , God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven or on earth - you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way.’” (2 Chronicles 6:12 - 14 NIV)

Susan describes what happened next. “I had a vision of all elected leaders in Canada who pray in the name of Jesus Christ standing together on Parliament Hill and offering up this nation to the Lord. They were acknowledging His authority and Dominion over Canada and praying that the Spirit of the Lord would fill them and guide them into His truth as they developed legislation and policy.... that Canada would indeed be a country which honours and serves the Lord. Then I was crystal clear on His call and our mission – *to call elected leaders who pray in the Name of Jesus Christ to pray, and to call Christians to pray for all leaders.* And then as I read further that the glory of the Lord filled that place and all knelt and worshiped, I could picture the Lord’s Hand of blessing covering our land.”

Thus Nation at Prayer was born.

The focus was to be on elected leaders in governments at all levels, municipal, provincial, and federal. They set the agenda for the nation. To have elected leaders who can pray in the name of Jesus Christ engaged in prayer on behalf of the country and of their part in government could indeed transform the nation.

But working as an elected representative is an isolating and often lonely task. The pressures and time commitments are enormous, and the temptations that go with power, whether the power is real or perceived, have brought down even the most resolute individual.

As important as it is to have elected representatives praying for the nation and their part in it, in the name of Jesus Christ, it is equally important that there be people across the nation praying for elected representatives.

Among that group of people who pray for elected representatives in the name of Jesus Christ, there needs to be a number of people, perhaps only three or four per day, who pray specifically for each of the elected representatives within their ward, riding, and constituency, so that each day every elected representative at all levels of government right across the nation, is covered in prayer.

More than that, leaders in all spheres of life need to gather together periodically for prayer. Prayer breakfasts are already being held in many large cities and small towns across Canada, bringing together elected representatives and leaders in business, community, church, education, emergency support services, the judiciary, health services, media and the arts – all walks of life, to seek God's guidance and blessing in the name of Jesus Christ. The goal is to have prayer gatherings in all communities across the nation.

Nation at Prayer does not focus on social issues, specific pieces of legislation, or stands taken and votes cast by specific elected representatives. All of those things are important, and there are well organized lobby groups, devoted prayer intercessors, and deeply committed individuals that address them. But that is not the role of Nation at Prayer.

Nation at Prayer focuses on three areas:

- *Calling elected Christian leaders and individuals to pray for themselves and for the nation*
- *Calling and facilitating Christians in each constituency, riding, and ward across Canada to pray regularly for their elected representatives regardless of political party or belief*
- *Stimulating the development of prayer gatherings in communities across Canada to bring together leaders in business, government, labour, churches and the community to pray for their community, the nation and the world*

Since Susan first received the call and was granted the vision we have talked with countless individuals right across the country, discussing the concepts, seeking advice, engaging in prayer. Our initial focus has been in two areas: federal elected representatives, and prayer gatherings. We have been welcomed by numerous Members of Parliament, in their constituency offices as well as on Parliament Hill. From the outset we have established a few ground rules, which we honour without exception. These ground rules are beneficial to anyone who engages in prayer with and for elected representatives.

First, confidentiality must be strictly and rigidly maintained. Prayer with elected representatives, as with anyone, is a matter of supreme trust. Meeting for prayer with a Cabinet Minister or a person who occupies a position of significance in the community, or any other elected representative, is a personal privilege and a unique opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work; it is not to be broadcast to others.

Second, prayer with an elected representative cannot be used as a means to lobby her/him, or to invoke God's name to direct them to vote a particular way. There is a place for lobbying - Mel in particular has been very active in advocating for particular positions on a number of social issues – but times of prayer with an elected representative are not for lobbying. Prayer involves asking the Holy Spirit to fill and guide the one being prayed for, according to God's good purposes.

Third, prayer is offered in the name of Jesus Christ. We meet for prayer only with elected representatives who can pray in Christ's name. Others are prayed for privately.

Finally, what should one pray for? We have asked a number of elected representatives that question; to a person, these are their top six requests:

- *Strong, Healthy Family Life*
- *Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Well Being*
- *Wisdom and Discernment*
- *Endurance and Patience*
- *Safety and Protection*
- *Courage To Do What Is Right and Grace In Doing It*

And for the nation, pray

- *that Canada will be a country that honours and serves God*
- *for the Prime Minister, Cabinet, Senate, Party Leaders, and Caucus of each party*

- *for Premiers, Mayors, and provincial and municipal Governments*
- *for the Supreme Court, judges and the judicial system*
- *that God will protect our land*
- *for military, police, fire and emergency services*
- *for the healthcare system and healthcare workers*
- *for educators, teachers, students*
- *for the Media and the Arts*
- *for national unity*
- *for Canada's leadership in International Relations and Policy*

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.” (Psalm 33:2)