

INTERCESSORS FOR AMERICA

PRAYER LETTER

May 2011

Vol. 38, No.5

GOD, OUR REFUGE AND FORTRESS

David Kubal

Dictators overthrown. Political turmoil. Earthquakes. Unexpected nuclear disaster. All eyes linger on Japan's nuclear crisis as both sides of the Pacific recover from a rush to stock up on potassium iodine tablets. What was once available for less than \$10 per packet quickly shot past \$500 in one online bid to prevent radiation sickness.

And while pill suppliers reported shortages, the World Health Organization issued a statement urging calm.

Could there be a more fitting context to be reminded of Psalm 91:2, the National Day of Prayer's theme verse for 2011? The Bible urges calm with this life-saving message: "I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" The psalmist correctly understood that during uncertain times, we can count on God alone. Even His Son experienced political upheaval and economic uncertainty during His life on earth, so the Lord knows all about the tension of living in a hysteria-charged world.

Psalm 91 reminds us that it is God who saves us from "the fowler's

"I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.'"

—Psalm 91:2-3

snare"—outward attack; and He also saves us from the "deadly pestilence"—inward attack. The passage provides 20 statements of what God will do to protect us, with only one conditional statement in verse 9: "If you say, 'the LORD is my refuge,' and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent." The word "dwell," *ownab*, in Hebrew is significant. It is used to describe intimacy in a marriage—not a casual dwelling, but one of honesty, vulnerability, and commitment.

Our Founding Fathers understood this concept of dwelling in the presence of the Most High. Struggling to construct a country at a time of great uncertainty, they voted that our lawmakers would pray every day before beginning each session, additionally setting in place a National Day of Prayer on July 20, 1775. Today, in our uncertain times, let's intercede that the Church would kneel and embrace this same posture of prayer, dwelling in this promise: "He is our refuge and fortress; it is in God that we trust!"

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NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

May 5

PRAYER FOCUS

ALL IN AUTHORITY

Engage in private prayer and participate in local public prayer observances. Repent for national sin. Use the IFA "Top 130 U.S. Officials" bookmark (available on "Prayer Resources/Prayer Guides" at www.ifapray.org) and earnestly intercede for "all who are in authority." (1 Tim 2:1-4) Pray for your governor and other state officials as the Lord prompts. Pray for local city, township, village or county officials, judges, sheriff and police, school administrators, security, emergency, fire, rescue and public health workers, civil magistrates, and support staff. Intercede that the Lord will raise up, anoint, and grant courage to "spiritual statesmen." Join in praying the special *Prayer for the Nation*, written by Joni Eareckson Tada, at 12:00 noon. (See Page 4)

FIRST FRIDAY PRAYER

May 6

On the first Friday of the month we encourage all to fast and pray for our nation.

CORRUPTION

Repent for apostasy in the Church and the continued undermining of the authority of the Bible. Repent for the gross levels of corruption in public life, and for the public apathy which permits it to continue. Pray for the full exposure and resolution of corruption and scandal in all political parties and public offices, especially where the nation's security is being undermined. Pray for a reapplication of the Ten Commandments to national life.

KEEPING SABBATH

Prayerfully reflect upon the meaning of the Fourth Commandment. Repent of ways the Lord might reveal that you have not honored the Lord's Day or maintained Sabbath rest in your life. Pray for a greater revelation and understanding of Jesus as "Lord of the Sabbath" and of Sabbath rhythms to you, members of your family or household, your church, community, your nation and its leaders. (Mk 2:27)

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“A PIPELINE FOR GOD’S WORK”

Interview by Nicole Arnoldbik with Laurence Nevels

PROFILE SNAPSHOT

Intercessor: Laurence Nevels

Location: Oberlin, OH

Profession: Pastor

IFA member since: '70s

Meetings: Sunday 7:30 a.m. & 9:30 a.m., First Fridays 8-10 p.m.

“I know since I’m the pastor I’m supposed to have a vision, but it’s really God’s vision, and I just try to get as many people involved as possible,” says Pastor Laurence Nevels, a member of Intercessors for America since the ‘70s.

Serving the small community of Oberlin, Ohio since 1977, Nevels is a strong proponent of making prayer tangible. He often asks, “How does God want us to become the answer to our own prayers?” Last year, Nevels and several area pastors who meet weekly for the Oberlin Pastors Prayer Fellowship (OPPF) mobilized their churches to send \$1,743 to Haiti after the catastrophic earthquake in January 2010. Meeting every fifth Sunday at 5 p.m. for a combined worship service, the churches seek God to learn how He wants to use them in practical ways to bless their congregations, community, nation, and world. Last May, the Lord prompted an evangelical church to provide a large portion of the funds for

Nevels and two other pastors to attend the Global Day of Prayer conference in Cape-town, South Africa.

“The same amount we raised for Haiti was how much it cost each pastor to fly to South Africa—only a dollar difference in price,” says Nevels, encouraged to see how God orchestrates an ongoing exchange of blessing. “God was honoring us, and the conference was the height of my effort and involvement in prayer movements, letting me see what God is doing around the world in 220 nations.”

Eager to reach out to local needs by matching prayer with action, one Oberlin church also collected a large donation called “Gifts of Love” to distribute through the OPPF to struggling church members in December. Selected recipients were able to pay off debts, buy groceries, save for a car, and pursue a driver’s license as a result of the churches’ collective generosity.

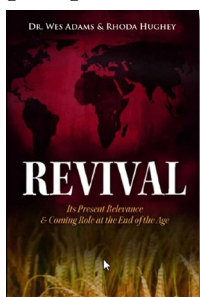
For nearly five years, the OPPF has been meeting each Sunday morning at 9:30, a routine that initially phased out before being revived by two pastors who genuinely grasped the need for fellowship among leaders of the area’s 15-20 churches. As many as nine pastors now commit to intercession, rotating from church to church to discuss and pray over pastoral issues, concerns, failures and successes. As the community’s senior pastor, Nevels notices the difference that prayer and worship are making across town. “Attendance varies,”

he says, “but the worship services have brought unity within our community in an astronomical way.”

He credits the annual Pentecost Sunday silent prayer march—an Oberlin event spearheaded by the OPPF—as a catalyst for tremendous blessing. “We really believe that because of prayer the crime rate has lessened. . . . The enemy has not been able to do as much as he would do.”

Nevels tells encouraging stories of more in-depth involvement in the community, including his time as a chaplain at a maximum security state prison where he conducted special prayer initiatives and services in preparation for the National Day of Prayer. Throughout his prison ministry he was blessed to see a move of God, reporting: “While many of those men were incarcerated, they’re not locked out from the power of prayer or the effect of God. One prisoner who prayed me into prison to be a chaplain is now a pastor partly because I prayed him out of prison.”

On a smaller scale within his own church, Nevels is dedicated to intercede with three to ten other men who join him every Sunday morning at 7:30 to “hear from headquarters.” Every First Friday he also carves out time to meet with his fellow church leaders from 8-10 p.m. for what he calls “late-night prayer,” often structuring the evening according to the prayer points and news items found in Intercessors for America’s prayer letter. “Prayer is foundational to our ministry,” he explains. “It’s the pipeline for God to work. And personally, the prayer letter has been very helpful because it focuses me and helps the ministry team to align ourselves with what the Lord is saying.”



REVIVAL

Dr. Wes Adams & Rhonda Hughey

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SHOULD WE BE DOING “CHURCH” DIFFERENTLY?

Leanna Cinquanta

If there is one passage in the Bible that is second in importance to John 3:16, it is most certainly **Matthew 16:18**—“**On this Rock I will build My (Church) and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.**” Why is this verse so vital to our lives as followers of Christ? Because it is the only place where we can learn exactly what Jesus intended the gathering together of His people to look like. **A close look at this passage reveals something shocking that will radically change your view of “church.”**

Our word “church” is from the Greek “*kuriakon*.” This word is used only twice in Scripture—1 Cor 11:20 The “Lord’s (*kuriakon*) supper;” and Rev 1:10, the “Lord’s (*kuriakon*) day.” This statement itself should raise a red flag for the reader, as we know that our English translations have “church” occurring far more than twice. So what is the other word in the New Testament that our English versions render “church”? The word is *ekklesia*. It is first used by Jesus when He says “. . . upon this rock I will build my church (*ekklesia*)” (Mt 16:18). We commonly understand this word means, “called-out (ones)” in that it is a compound of “*ek*” (out of) and “*kaleo*” (called). However, what we fail to ask is what did the word mean in the context of Jesus’ community and culture. Only when we understand this can we know what Jesus was envisioning for the gathering together of His people.

Why do you suppose Jesus used this unusual word instead of *sunagoge* or synagogue which was the common word for a gathering of God’s people? Jesus regularly participated in the worship that happened in the synagogues. It was the common place where followers of the true God came together to do pretty much the same thing we do today in our churches. So why didn’t Jesus use that term?

To understand why He didn’t, we need to know what *ekklesia* means. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* it means “A

“... upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” —Matthew 16:18

*regularly convoked assembly, especially the general assembly of Athenians.”*¹ The *Ekklesia* was “the principal assembly of the democracy of ancient Athens during its ‘Golden Age’ (480–404 BCE).”² It had “final control over policy, including the right to hear appeals in the public court, take part in the election of chief magistrates. . . .” Assemblies of this sort “existed in most Greek city-states, continuing to function throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods.”³ It was “an elected assembly with the purpose of ruling. It was the *ekklesia* who made fundamental political and judicial decisions.”⁴

From all of the above, it should be abundantly clear that the word Jesus used was not a religious word at all. It was a political word intended to give His followers not only a very important identity as citizens of His nation, but also an essential purpose of serving the community and of outreach. The *ekklesia* was intended to influence the whole land, extending God’s government throughout the world. In other words, **Jesus never intended the gatherings of His people to be merely or even primarily a religious service. However due to the mistranslation of *ekklesia* into “church” the rich meaning has been buried for centuries and lost beneath a heavy shroud of religious tradition.**

Synagogues were primarily a religious gathering, but Jesus never came to start a religion. He is King of Kings. Why would the King of the universe limit Himself and His followers to something merely religious? His intention was total conquest of society. His vision was for God’s Government to be established throughout the earth in the same way as it is in heaven (Mt. 6:10).

When we see this, then we can also see why the word *synagogue* was not nearly sufficient to describe what Jesus’ followers—His elected officers—were to be and do.

But what does this mean for us? How should this change what we do and how we conduct our lives as Christ followers? How can we begin to shift our elephantine religion of *synagogues* to become, as Jesus intended, “the connecting link between the dying Savior and the dying world?”⁵ For the sake of brevity in this article, I must ask you to spend some time in prayer and let the Lord reveal that to you.

But here’s a teaser: When believers gather together, the normal course of events must no longer focus on singing songs or listening to a sermon on how to improve our personal lives. A little singing and a little teaching of the Word is absolutely essential; however, the focus should not be on those inside the building, but on how those inside the building can impact those outside. The focus must shift from knowing more to applying what we already know in order to bring that knowledge to others who don’t know it yet. Those who are actively applying what they know should be the primary speakers, sharing testimonies, announcing future plans, and calling others to action.

When we do this, then we will be the dynamic powerhouse of Kingdom-focused governors Jesus envisioned. Instead of a mere religious synagogue, we will then be His *ekklesia*.

Footnotes:

¹ Oxford English Dictionary.

² Wikipedia, Ecclesia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesia_%28ancient_Athens%29. [May 2010].

³ Encyclopedia Britannica, History and Society: Ecclesia: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/177746/Ecclesia>. [May 2010].

⁴ Petersarchive.com, The Relationship of the *Ekklesia* to the Basileia of God: http://www.preteristarchive.com/PartialPreterism/walker-don_pp_03.html. [May 2010].

—Leanna Cinquanta, M.Div., D.Min., Founder of TellASIA Ministries – www.tellasia.org, Initiated a multi-denominational movement in India called the 2020 Network which has resulted in 113,000 salvations and 4,000 new house-based churches in the past two years. www.leannacinquanta.com

CREATION CARE PRAYER DAY MAY 20

Nationwide Day of Prayer | www.creationcare.org

WORLD PRAYER ASSEMBLY, MAY 2012

★ Jakarta, Indonesia will host the World Prayer Assembly (WPA), May 14-18, 2012. The event is expected to gather 5,000 to 7,000 ministry leaders from all walks of life, and from as many as 220 nations, to create a once-in-a-generation “holy assembly” hosted by the Indonesian and Korean prayer movements. The WPA will be a new paradigm for an international congress, and the agenda will not just be to follow a conference program, but to give God room to speak as leaders seek Him together, much like the early church leaders did at Antioch. Focusing on paramount international concerns that need His transformation, the event will incorporate significant times of prayer, listening and response to the Lord. Anyone with a heart for prayer who is making an impact on his/her community or sphere of influence is invited to attend the assembly. Current or aspiring ministry leaders under age 30 are especially encouraged to join. To learn more and respond to a preliminary invitation, visit www.worldprayerassembly.com. (WPA 5/14/2011)

JUSTICE DEPT. AIDS MUSLIM TEACHER

BERKELEY, ILL. – When middle school math teacher Safoorah Khan requested three weeks off for a pilgrimage to Mecca, she was denied. School officials could not accommodate her vacation dates because they felt that the end-of-semester marking period was a critical time to lose their only math lab instructor. As a result, Khan opted to resign and make the trip anyway. The Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the Illinois school district, accusing the administration of violating Khan’s civil rights by forcing her to choose between her faith and her job.

As the case proceeds in federal court in Chicago, it has sparked discussion over whether the Justice Department is acting with purely legal motives, or whether suing on Khan’s behalf is an opportunity for the Obama Administration to reach out to Muslims and campaign for the assimilation and tolerance of Islam. According to the Washington Post, the lawsuit “may well test the boundaries of how far employers must go to accommodate workers’ religious practices—a key issue as the nation grows more multicultural amid the Muslim population increases.” (WP 3/23/11)

In America Today...

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER MAY 5, 2011



Joni Eareckson Tada
Honorary Chairman

★ COLORADO SPRINGS, CO – The 60th Annual National Day of Prayer will take place Thursday, May 5, 2011. Millions will unite in prayer at thousands of events from coast to coast. The theme, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” is based on the verse from Psalm 91:2: **“I will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.”** (NDP 5/5/11)

Prayer for Our Nation

Joni Eareckson Tada, Honorary Chairman

**Almighty God,
You are our Mighty Fortress,
our refuge and the God in whom
we place our trust.**

**As our nation faces great distress and
uncertainty, we ask Your Holy Spirit to fall
afresh upon Your people—convict us of sin
and inflame within us a passion to pray for
our land and its people.**

**Grant the leaders of our country an
awareness of their desperate need of
wisdom and salvation in You until sin
becomes a reproach to all and
righteousness exalts this nation.**

**Protect and defend us against our enemies
and may the cause of Christ always
prevail in our schools, courts,
homes, and churches.**

**Lord God, send a spirit of revival
and may it begin in our own hearts.**

**Remember America, we pray.
Remember the foundations on which this
country was built.**

**Remember the prayers of our nation’s
fathers and mothers,
and do not forget us in our time of need.**

**In the name of our Savior,
Jesus Christ, Amen.**

HEZBOLLAH SITES EXPOSED

★ The Israeli military published a map detailing what it believes are nearly 1,000 underground bunkers, monitoring sites and weapons storage facilities of militant Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon. Many of the sites are located in the zone where Hezbollah is forbidden to stockpile weapons under the U.N. sponsored truce that ended Israel’s summer 2006 war with the guerrilla group. Hezbollah has set up some 550 bunkers, 300 monitoring sites and 100 weapons storage facilities, according to an article on the military spokesman’s website. The facilities are allegedly placed in 270 villages, and many are near schools, hospitals, and private homes. (WP 3/31/11)

GOODY-TWO-SHOES ARE IN

★ A firm that calculates overall likability of celebrity personalities says that “bad girls” like Miley Cyrus’ and Lindsay Lohan’s positive scores are dwarfed by their negative scores, indicating the public’s distaste. “We’re talking about substantial turn-offs,” says the firm’s owner Steven Levitt. Responding to viewer disapproval, family-friendly brands are choosing “good girl” celebrities to represent them, even paying well for it. Hollywood’s latest crop of starlets are tending to behave better, demonstrate a stronger work ethic and even consider it their duty to be positive role models for fans. (FN 4/1/11)

NO LONGER LIVING THE DREAM?

A survey from the website, Rent.com, reports that 87 percent of U.S. adults “no longer consider owning a home to be the most essential aspect of their American Dream.” For decades, home ownership has been associated with the phrase, American Dream, because it was something people could attain. Now the gap between the dream and the possibility is considered much harder to bridge, and the survey reveals that most Americans feel that no amount of time, effort or sacrifice will necessarily guarantee a home. The Minneapolis Star Tribune writes, “Such benchmarks are going to be in flux as we navigate a world that’s more global, and thus more economically volatile.” (W 2/2011)

NATIONAL MOTTO REAFFIRMED

★ The House Judiciary Committee voted in favor of the “In God We Trust Resolution.” (PC 3/2011)

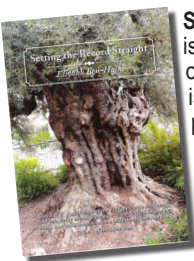
GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER JUNE 12

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☐ = An answer or development to an IFA First Friday or On Watch in Washington prayer point.
Caucus; WP=Washington Post; W=The Week; WPA=World Prayer Assembly

Publication index: FN=Fox News; NDP=National Day of Prayer Task Force; PC=Prayer

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Setting the Record Straight by Eliyahu Ben-Haim – The question of Israel’s legitimacy as a nation in the family of nations is an issue that is being raised more frequently every day and even in the Church. In many circles, present day Israel as a fulfillment of God’s prophetic word is denied as a false interpretation of Scripture. This is a battle that is not going away, but to the contrary, is increasing in intensity. These questions and negative attitudes toward Israel’s legitimacy as a nation need answers. This book provides a historical, legal, and scriptural response. 36 pages, \$7.00 + \$3.50 shipping. See ordering information above.



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“I will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust.” —Psalm 91:2