

40 Days of Prayer for the Economy of the Metropole, Uitenhage and Despatch.

Background

This prayer initiative originated with one of the local businessmen in Uitenhage whose business is seriously affected by the economic slump. After sharing the vision with other businessmen, it was decided on a strategy of 40 days of prayer. The focus of this event will be on the economic recovery of the region, poverty and unemployment in the Metropole and more specifically, Uitenhage/Despatch. This event coincides with the 46 days of Lent starting on 25 February, Ash Wednesday on the Jewish calendar, until 11 April. During Lent the Sundays are not counted as part of the 40 days therefore the dates are not corresponding with the number of days of fasting.

This prayer initiative takes place against the background of severe job losses especially in the motor industry. Apart from people being retrenched, major companies like VW and Good Year as well as component suppliers are closing for intermittent periods and some are also working short time. This seriously affects the income of employees whose disposable income decreases, negatively affecting businesses located in the areas where these employees traditionally buy their goods with subsequent negative affects on retailers. The international economic recession does not make things any easier. Small and medium enterprises have also reported a decline in sales

Strategy

This is not a prayer chain or a prayer watch and not an effort to formulate a stand-alone prayer initiative but the focus is merely to add specific requests to existing opportunities where people are already praying and thus creating a greater awareness of the need for prayer for the economic situation. Special initiatives nevertheless are not excluded and you are encouraged to be creative in your approach. If time allows, prayer guidelines, relevant to the focus of that specific week, will be updated every Monday. Christians are invited to participate in the prayer strategy in one of the following ways:

1. To incorporate the prayer guidelines into existing weekly prayer meetings.
2. To organize additional prayer meetings for this purpose, to pray on site, to prayerwalk specific areas where businesses are located, to read and pray through news articles in the business section of the newspaper every day, to pray for business owners in your church, to phone or to visit businesses in your immediate area etc.
3. To fast, either certain days during the 40 days or to participate in a Daniel fast.

Key components of economic growth and recovery.

Economies are very complex but for any economy to grow in a specific area there are a few simple conditions. First and foremost, the flow of money into an geo-

graphical areas must increase, for the economy to grow in that area. If there is no added inflow of money and certain businesses prosper, it is simply at the cost of other business, meaning that some do worse while others do better. The economy is not growing in such a scenario. It is also important that once money has flowed into an area, that money needs to stay in circulation in that area for as long as possible. A simple example of this is to encourage consumers to spend their money in a specific area and not to go and spend it elsewhere, (for instance in Cape Town) if they can buy the same product locally or get the same service locally.

Money flows into an area in one of the following ways:

- Investment from outside the geographical area, allowing money to be channeled into a specific area.
- Expanding capital expenditure programmes by government. This leads to more employment and subsequently more spending.
- Easy access to credit, making credit available by private banks to individuals and small and medium enterprises as well as the informal sector.
- Tourism is a major source of money flowing into a local economy.
- The increase in Exports is another catalyst for economic growth.

Taking the current local and national economic scenario into account, the most promising of these prospects seems to be capital expenditure programmes by government and tourism. Prospects for major developments at Coega, (the major site for investment), are, in light of the international economic crisis, somewhat bleak. Apart from the investment by PETRO SA there are no other major investments on the cards. Exports, especially from the motor industry, have taken a serious dip and the current economic policy by Government and private banks makes the access to credit very complex and difficult. This fortunately also has a positive side. With the Government already committed to capital expenditure programmes, in view of the latest budget speech and the 2010 soccer world cup coming to the Metro, these two possibilities hold the most promise for growth. Increase in exports, availability of credit and new investments are only predicted towards the end of next year and 2011.

The prayer guidelines for the 40 days of prayer are compiled against this background.

The Spiritual Roots of Poverty

Poverty has spiritual roots and must be dealt with accordingly, through repentance and prayer. The dynamics of such an initiative will be different from this one. It will most probably deal with tithing, giving, corruption, greed, unrighteousness in the workplace, tax evasion, sin on the land etc. This is nevertheless not the focus of the 40 days of prayer. There were several initiatives over the past years that dealt with these dynamics. This nevertheless is also an ongoing process.

Prayer Focus Areas

To make it easier the guidelines are divided into 7 focus areas that can be used for each of the six weeks during the 40 days.

Week 1: 25 February—3 March. Focus: The response of the church/Families

Week 2: 4 March—10 March. Focus: Unemployed and Retrenched:

Week 3: 11 March—17 March. Focus: National/Provincial/Local Government efforts—Capital Expenditure programs

Week 4: 18 March—24 March. Focus: Tourism/ World Cup Soccer 2010

Week 5: 25 March—31 March. Focus: Investment and Exports

Week 6: 1 April—7 April. Focus: Small and medium Enterprise/Informal Sector/BEE

Week 7: 8 April—11 April. Focus: God , our provider

Prayer Guidelines

These are just guidelines. You can also add your own guidelines which may be more relevant to your own personal circumstances.

Week 1: 25 February—3 March. Focus: The Response of the Church

It is estimated that there are more than 600 major churches in the Metro, not counting the hundreds of house and independent churches. This represents a formidable support system in times of difficulty.

Pray:

- For churches to become more aware of the needs of their members, especially the unemployed and retrenched as well those that are having financial difficulties.
- For churches to create opportunities for members to get help with financial planning, for instance inviting a debt counsellor to come and address members, budget planning, business management, to create opportunities for networking, etc.
- For churches to effectively deal with the negative stigma of unemployment, retrenchments and financial difficulties and to create an environment in which members feel free to openly discuss their problems. For people to understand that it is actually ok to experience difficulties.
- For churches to help members seek to find other employment - for instance, by utilising notice boards, church bulletins, networking with other churches, etc.
- For churches to become active in ministries in poorer areas or to support ministries working there already, for instance soup kitchens. For churches to be able to give guidelines to their members in dealing with the poor, beggars and vagrants.
- For churches to become more involved in community structures.

Week 2: 4 March—10 March. Focus: Unemployed and Retrenched
More than 35000 people in the Eastern Cape are employed in the motor industry,

the industry most effected by the economic downturn. This represents 24% of the workforce; 2500 have already lost their jobs, with more being retrenched. More than 6000 workers are working short time. This is happening against the backdrop of already high unemployment figures in the Eastern Cape. The number of re-trenched people qualifying for Unemployment Insurance rocketed by more than 20% last year, and the situation is getting worse.

Pray:

- For the many people that have been retrenched and who are facing debt and a lack of food and other basic necessities. For them to deal with the disappointment and bitterness of losing a job. For men who have lost their role as provider in their homes, for their families to be more understanding and supportive. For those who have been rejected by the community.
- For them to find other sources of income.
- For those that qualify for unemployment benefits to be helped by the Department of Labor effectively.
- For those that have been unemployed for a long time to regain their hope and faith in God and to find employment even in these difficult times.

Week 3: 11 March—17 March. Focus: National/Provincial/Local Government efforts—Capital Expenditure programmes

During a recession one of the most popular ways in which Governments all over the world try to stimulate an economy is to embark on capital expenditure programmes. A good example of this is the response of the US government at the end of last year promising programs worth billions of dollars. This is also a strategy implemented by the SA government which was reflected in Mr. Trevor Manuel's most recent budget speech of 2009. Provincial and local governments are tasked to implement these programmes.

Pray:

- For national, provincial and local government to effectively identify needs for these programmes, the formulation of the programmes and the implementation thereof. Areas that have already been identified are infrastructure development and the building and maintenance of hospitals and schools.
- For the allocation of tenders for the implementation of these programmes, to be transparent and fair. That corruption in tender procedures will be prevented and exposed.
- That political agendas will not play a role but that the needs of people will be a priority.

Week 4: 18 March—24 March. Focus: Tourism/ World Cup Soccer 2010

It was recently reported in the press that the FIFA 2010 Soccer Stadium in Port Elizabeth will be the first of the newly built stadiums to be completed. Construction companies are on course for completing the stadium by the deadline set out by the organizers a year before the event kicks off.

Pray:

- For the successful completion of the stadium, infrastructure and support structures.

- For the a resolution to the planned Rapid Transport System that has led to the Taxi strike.
- For business, local government and the tourism industry to successfully integrate their different roles.
- For the South African Sports Coalition (SASCOL) office that recently opened in Port Elizabeth. They will be responsible for coordinating the different Christian outreach programmes commencing on 9 June this year.
- For service levels, especially of the tourism sector, to improve to the level of international standards.
- For the process of recruiting, training and equipping the 1000 volunteers who will be deployed at the stadium.

Week 5: 25 March—31 March. Focus: Investment and Exports

The major role-players in presenting the Metro as an investment opportunity to the rest of the world are Local Government (NMMM), the Coega Development Corporation (CDC) and Mandela Bay Development Agency. The last time a major investment was reported on the website of the CDC was during October last year. That was when Petro SA was granted a manufacturing licence for its planned \$11Billion oil refinery. Their website also reported 14 smaller investments in the IDZ (Industrial Development Zone), many of them local companies establishing new ventures in the IDZ. There is very little serviced land for industrial development available in the Uitenhage/Despatch area with most of the development happening at the Automotive Retail Park between Uitenhage and Despatch. Future developments will also focus on the adjacent land.

Pray:

- For the Metro to become a major investment destination for national and international companies and corporations in spite of the international recession.
- For the efforts of the NMMM and CDC to attract investment, to be successful.
- For the successful implementation of the Metropolitan Spatial development Framework of the NMMM that sets out the prospect of future industrial development across the Metro.
- For the Uitenhage and Despatch development Initiative (UDDI) that is the major role player for investment in the area for the successful completing of the automotive park and implementation of future developments and to attract investment in the park.
- For political agendas, corruption and unrighteousness in decision making by role-players to be minimal.
- Pray for the continuation of export contracts for motor manufacturers as well as related and other businesses.

Week 6: 1 April—7 April. Focus: Small and Medium Enterprise/Informal Sector/BEE

It is estimated that the informal sector, will in future, become one of the most important sectors providing employment for people. This is nevertheless one of the most neglected sectors in terms of providing training, credit and opportunities to do business. It is a sector locally, that to a large extent is undeveloped. For instance

the informal sector in KwaNobuhle is mostly nonexistent. Small and Medium enterprises are also severely affected by the economic downturn with almost all business reporting a decline in business. The Port Elizabeth Business Confidence Index, the major indicator of confidence in the local economy, has shown a continuous drop in month to month value since its highest point in April 2007. There is also no indication of a recovery of business confidence soon.

Pray:

- For the development of the informal sector, for them to obtain access to credit, training opportunities and access to bigger markets.
- For struggling businesses all over the Metro to find creative ways of doing business. Especially for Christian Business owners and managers who are confronted on a daily basis by unethical, unrighteous, corrupt and unlawful business practices. For them not to compromise even if it means less business.
- For Christian business owners, managers and even employees who deal with business owners, managers and employees of other faiths. For them to have wisdom and insight in working with or dealing with people of other faiths.
- For the Port Elizabeth Regional Chamber of Commerce (PERCCI) to be able to continue their invaluable service to large and smaller business concerns as they have done over many years.
- For the successful implementation of the Black Economic Empowerment strategy by businesses, for wisdom for business owners on how to deal with the demands of labour practice and labour law and to turn this into a win-win situation for both employers and employees.

Week 7: 8 April—11 April. Focus: God - our Provider

It is often during times like these that common sense, business savvy, ingenuity, creativity and any other qualifications required to prosper, simply do not provide answers. Many business owners, employers and employees are at this point. They simply do not have answers for themselves and their businesses. But it is often during such times that God does miracles so that we, as his children, can bring glory to His name. This is indeed a time of miracles. The following excerpt by Bennie Mostert is a good summary.

“ As Christians, we must learn to focus on our Father and to trust Him for our daily bread. He promised to care for His children and the proof is that Christ paid the full price for us. Remember that your needs are not bigger than God’s ability to provide. Keep your eyes on God and not on your needs or on the people who could possibly give you a job or help you financially. God is our father and he will care for you.” By Bennie Mostert in : Practical Prayer: Touch the world by praying God’s Word.

Pray:

- That unbelievers will turn towards God and that they will put their faith in Him as their Saviour, Helper and Provider.
- That believers will seek God’s face, turn from their wicked ways and follow Christ in all that they are doing, and to trust Him in the first place for a break-

through in their lives.

- That believers will become more conscious and willing to live a simpler life, for them to be willing to share their resources with those that do not have resources so that Christ can be glorified through it.

For believers to put in a bigger effort to seek Gods face corporately, for the establishing of 24/7 prayer watches in every region in the Metropole

Cast all your anxiety on Him because he cares for you. (1 Pet 5:7)

Relevant Websites:

- Coega Development Corporation: <http://www.coega.com>
- Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality: <http://www.mandelametro.gov.za/>
- Nelson Mandela bay Soccer World Cup : <http://www.nelsonmandelabay.gov.za/FIFAWORLDCUP/Default.aspx>
- Mandela Bay Development Agency: <http://www.mbda.co.za/index.php>
- PERCCI: <http://www.percci.co.za/>
- Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism: <http://www.ibhayi.com/home/home.asp>
- UDDI: <http://uddi.co.za>

Relevant Christian Sites

- Transformation Christian Network: <http://www.tcn.org.za>
- PE Church Net: <http://www.pechurchnet.co.za>
- Unashamedly Ethical: <http://www.unashamedlyethical.com/>

For more information about prayer initiatives in the Metro please contact the Transformation Christian Network office at 0415815726.

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