

We Are On the Road to Revival

Volume 27

1971 Saskatoon Revival (in Pastor Bill McLeod's own words)

In 1962 I moved from Winnipeg with my wife Barbara to Saskatoon to become the pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. It had a membership of 175, a good congregation, and very interested in Evangelism and Missions. The trouble was that nobody was really doing either.

I introduced an evangelism series to try and get them involved. Nobody showed up. That was when I began to pray for revival. I began by emphasizing the Wednesday night prayer meeting. We had around twenty-five people attending. I would say things like this, "Miss Sunday morning if you have to; miss Sunday evening if you must; but never miss the prayer meeting unless you are dead." People began to take this seriously and the prayer meeting began to grow. We got up to fifty and then eventually to a hundred. And, over a period of time we got up to a hundred and fifty.

At least 5 years before the Revival, we then began to end our Sunday evening meetings with a half hour of prayer for revival.

Later on we suggested that people should ask God to waken them through the night to pray for revival. This became a very important thing and people began sharing with me how they were praying for long periods of time during the night. One lady told me how she was usually prayed out in five minutes. Now, she said, I am praying for forty minutes at night and am not tired.

Before the revival began in 1971 we had the beginning of revival twice. On one occasion at a Saturday night Deacons prayer meeting somebody made the statement that if we were not dealing with our sins then praying was useless. God came on the scene and tears began flowing. Everybody was affected. Had I asked these men to share their experience the next morning-Sunday-in the service, we might have had a revival then.

On another occasion, one Sunday morning, while I was preaching, I sensed a new power in the meeting and then I saw people getting up and going to other rooms where they could be alone with God. Obviously something deep was going on but it was short lived. Certainly it was an indication that the Lord was moving us in the direction of a genuine revival.

Having later invited Ralph and Lou Sutura to conduct a week-and-a-half of meetings, they arrived and they gave us a large banner about Revival they wanted us to put up on the outside wall of the church. We did so but that very night a rain and windstorm blew it down into the mud and it was never used again. It was not needed, and the week-and-a-half turned into 7 weeks.

We started on a Wednesday evening with about 150 people. They gave an invitation and four or five people responded and there were some making things right with others. This kept on and by Saturday night our 300-seat church was crowded out. We simply had to get a larger building.

There was an Anglican building a few blocks away from our building and they said we could rent it. It would seat around 600. The first night there we were crowded out and we asked the young people present to come and sit on the floor on the platform. Many did so, but we only spent two nights there and we simply had to move again.

The Alliance congregation already had missionaries in town for their annual missionary conference and they cancelled their conference and offered their building to us. We could seat close to a 1000 people in their building and we speedily saw it fill up and we had to move again.

We rented the largest church building in the city-a United Church building, It would seat 1600 people and it speedily filled up and then we started having two evening meetings to handle the crowds.

People began phoning us to enquire as to what was going on. Others began to drive or fly in to Saskatoon to see firsthand what God was doing.

Early on, some church leaders refused to refer to this as a true Revival since they believed it never left Saskatoon; however, this changed once they became aware that we had stopped counting teams going out of Saskatoon after we reached 2000 (including every province in Canada and every state in the United States and many countries all around the world).

The Chief of police in Saskatoon issued a report to the daily paper and said, "I am not a religious person but I do know the difference between ordinary church work and revival. Revival has come to our city because we are having people coming in to us confessing to crimes."

We also saw many people come under such deep conviction of sin that they could not speak without bursting into tears.