



CANADIAN CONFERENCE of Mennonite Brethren Churches

Video Update – July 2016 **Willy Reimer, CCMBC Executive Director**

For years, we've been praying that God would move in new and dynamic ways across Canada. We know from history that prior to any of the Great Awakenings, prior to any of the great movements of God around the world – where God suddenly moved and people responded and people came to Christ or their faith was renewed – we know from history and from the writings of people like Dr. J. Edwin Orr that those revivals were preceded by incredible times of prayer.

Following the American Revolution, it's not very well known, but it's a fact that America really fell into disarray. Alcoholism was rampant; it was really a very, very difficult situation. In fact, numerous leaders thought that the church was completely dead in the U.S.A. at that time.

In fact, Chief Justice of the United States, John Marshall, wrote a letter to the Bishop of Virginia, whose name was James Madison. He said the church was too far gone to be redeemed. That was the official thought at the time.

Jonathan Edwards, the famous preacher, was inspired by another writer in Scotland, and he wrote a response to this pamphlet that this Presbyterian minister John Erskine had written, calling people to pray. Jonathan Edwards' title for his booklet was *A Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of All God's People in Extraordinary Prayer: for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, Pursuant to Scripture Promises and Prophecies*. (How's that for a title of a book?)

The piece that he talked about was "extraordinary prayer." What is "extraordinary prayer"? It is a kind of prayer that is different from praying for meals, praying for Bible study or a regular prayer meeting. "Extraordinary prayer" takes prayer to another level because it comes out of this place of desperation: of crying out to God, of getting up early in the morning, staying up late at night, taking your noon hours to go pray. It's sacrificial prayer. It's desperation. It's recognizing the call of God and the need to pray for God to speak and move among us.

Numerous times, starting in 1758, there was a revival, 50 years later there was a revival...about every 50 years, there have been different revivals.

One of the great ones started as the Welsh Revival, famously started by Evan Roberts, the former coal miner who was studying for ministry. He heard a speaker speak one day and say, "God bend us!" was the prayer, and Evan Roberts said, "God bend me." That began what became known as the Welsh Revival, which transferred over into the States. In the States, it spread throughout the whole northeast. At that time, there was a population of about 30 million people and a million Americans came to Christ – quite an amazing thing. Another million, from the research of J. Edwin Orr, had their faith renewed.

In 1969, pastor Bill McLeod of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Saskatoon started feeling the need to get people together to pray. So he brought people together in his church, and he created cells for prayer. They met all over the city in these small cell groups to pray. He started 24/7 sign up for prayer. That went on for two years.

After that time, as he felt this prayer movement growing, he invited the Sutera twins to come for meetings in Saskatoon. They were known as sort of “revival preachers.” They came in the summer of 1972. At the same time, pastor Walter Boldt, the Alliance pastor, was having meetings as well. (I think he actually tried to get the Sutera twins to come but couldn’t because pastor McLeod had already invited them, so they had other meetings at the same time.)

So, these meetings were going on. The Sutera twins had been invited for 12 days of meetings. But God started to move as God really got a hold of people’s hearts in these meetings, and it just kind of built bit by bit by bit. It was clear that God was doing something unique that they had not planned for but they had prayed for.

Pastor Boldt decided that he was depriving his people of the good things that were happening at these meetings at Ebenezer Baptist. He cancelled the meetings he was having. The churches joined together, and then that started to grow and grow and grow.

They outgrew Ebenezer Baptist and moved over to Memorial Alliance Church, outgrew that and went over to United Church, which was the biggest church in Saskatoon at the time. (I think it sat 1600 people.) They outgrew that, and went to the Civic Centre, which sat 2000 people.

Many, many people – hundreds of people – came to Christ and had their faith renewed at those meetings, which lasted 7 weeks instead of 12 days. From there, pastor McLeod went to Winnipeg to preach, the Sutera twins went west to preach. It’s one of the great revival stories in Canadian history.

My heart is that we would have that kind of story again in our day.

[That prayer, which Jonathan Edwards talked about as being “extraordinary,” is sacrificial. It’s sacrificing our time to pray. It’s having our hearts changed – that we would do that willingly and joyfully. It’s united prayer; it’s across denominations, across churches! It’s praying for God to move, regardless of what denominational flag we fly.

And it’s focused prayer: we are praying for friends, for family – by name. We are crying out to God for our cities, for our country, for our leaders! We are asking God to do an extraordinary thing.

Oh, I pray God would do that among us! And I pray that it would begin with each of us. That it would begin with me and with you, that we would begin to pray. That we would be inviting others to join us, others in our churches and across our cities and across our countries.

Oh Father, that you would come and move