

Sweet Hour of Prayer at Rittenhouse Baptist

By Dian Kidd

Baptist churches have historically experienced Revival (with a capital R) as a week, sometimes two, of evangelistic preaching services led by a guest preacher invited in from another church. The Revival would involve singing, preaching, altar calls, often a dinner or two, maybe a "Pack the Pew" night, and always the hope that church members would have a renewed walk with God and those lost would experience salvation. Not many churches hold those historic types of Revivals with a capital "R" anymore, but the desire for renewed relationships with each other and with God and for those far from God to be brought near to Him remains strong in our churches. It is with this desire in mind that Rittenhouse Baptist Church, where Clay Bowers has been the senior pastor since 2000, embarked upon a week of prayer in late April.

Phil Baker, Rittenhouse Student Minister, first came up with the idea. Each night had a similar format but a different focus. The time frame was set at a little more than an hour. Each evening utilized scripture and various worship songs with *Sweet Hour of Prayer* being sung every evening to provide continuity of focus. There was no guest speaker, and the focus was on maintaining a prayer attitude. About a third of the congregation gathered nightly for public and individual prayer and praise.

The theme of the first night was holiness and repentance. People had an opportunity to reflect upon the call to holiness. Some felt led to confess sin publicly which "was done in an appropriate way," said Pastor Bowers.

The next night the church prayed specifically for God's leadership in the direction of the church – what changes should be made, what the church should focus on in the coming year. The church prayed for unity among the members.

On the third night, the church focused on the community. They prayed for specific ministries of the church that provided outreach to the community.

The Prayer Revival culminated on the fourth night (a fifth night having been prevented by severe flooding) with the Lord's Supper and a foot washing service. It was the first foot washing service that Pastor Bowers is aware of in the 55 year life of the church, except for one experienced by the student ministry. "It's not something that we traditionally do," said Bowers, and continued that the foot washing service had pushed a few to the edges of their comfort zone in spite of the fact that men washed men's feet and women washed women's. "It fostered a greater sense of community," though, said Bowers, "There were several touching moments." He shared that some who had difficulty kneeling or rising because of age or other infirmities were readily helped by those around them. At one point, near the completion of the service, a deacon went out into the

UBA PRAYER FOCUS

"Prayer is important," says Dr. Tom Billings, UBA Executive Director, "and during these times, we have much to pray about."

During the rest of 2009 and through Easter of 2010, UBA is placing a special emphasis on prayer in the local church.

Prayer Ministry Team

formed this year to provide UBA churches with information about special opportunities for prayer

Prayer Page on the Website

www.ubahouston.org provides information about prayer resources, prayer requests, and unreached people groups

Week of Prayer for Children

August 17 - 23

Information to be provided to congregations soon

Sharing the Gospel

Spring 2010

Churches to receive information to assist them in providing prayer support for an effort to reach every household in the Houston area with the gospel in their heart language

Prayer Ministry Leaders

Contact information may be sent to diankidd@ubahouston.org

Encouraging One Another

Join Rittenhouse in sharing with us your stories about what God is doing in your church through prayer.

congregation, brought his wife forward, and knelt and washed her feet. "It was very moving," said Bowers.

And what was the response to this Prayer Revival? One woman told Pastor Bowers, "Every night I came and prayed, 'God, let me feel your Spirit,' and every night I was not disappointed. I could feel the presence of the Lord in this place." Some others who had been concerned with some recent changes in the church expressed that they had enjoyed it, that they felt a greater sense of community, and that they could sense a new direction for the church.

During this final half of 2009 and into 2010, UBA is placing a special emphasis on the importance of prayer through the local church. If you'd like to share an experience of what God is doing in your church through prayer, contact Dian at diankidd@ubahouston.org or at 713.957.2000.

If you have a Prayer Ministry Leader or contact person who is not receiving information from UBA, please send the name and contact information to Dian Kidd, 2916 West TC Jester, Houston, TX 77018.