



# FROM THE EDITOR

By Mark A. Taylor

## Beyond Public Prayer Requests

**L**ast week I mentioned two ministries that are mobilizing prayer around the world.

The first, the World Prayer Team, is an evangelical group whose Web site ([www.world-prayer-team.org](http://www.world-prayer-team.org)) encourages Christians everywhere to share personal prayer requests.

The second, Harvest Prayer Ministries ([www.harvestprayer.com](http://www.harvestprayer.com)), is led by Dave and Kim Butts. This ministry taught thousands in more than 100 churches last year, including many readers of CHRISTIAN STANDARD.

Dave says he's excited about the World Prayer Team Web site, although at first he was skeptical. I was relieved to hear that, because skepticism was my initial reaction too. I'm uncomfortable with a flood of prayer requests from people I don't know and can't help. I already find plenty of those on prayer request lists at home. This reminds me of a growing frustration I've had with prayer request lists in general. I wonder about the health problems that usually dominate them. In meeting after meeting, when someone asks for prayer requests, we tend to limit our replies to illnesses and surgeries, giving far more details of other peoples' conditions than our own. I don't think this is good.

The Bible does tell us to pray for the sick (James 5). But that passage connects such prayer requests with the intimate involvement of the local church

("call the elders") and goes beyond physical concerns to remind us of the spiritual ("confess your sins to each other"). Are both of those factors present when most of us offer public prayer requests?

Maybe that word *public* is the problem. Maybe more self-revealing prayer requests are happening among smaller groups of Christians. Those who trust each other with their weaknesses pray for each other in private, sharing problems that don't need to be printed in the church paper, and obeying the apostle's command to "bear . . . one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2).

Dave recommends using Scripture to format prayers. "We'll find ourselves praying about what is on God's heart, rather than just what is on our hearts: prayers that claim whole nations for Christ, that invite Jesus to revive our churches and to reestablish his lordship over our culture."

It's been awhile since I've seen those items on a prayer request list. But that kind of prayer reflects great models of intercessory prayer we find throughout the Scripture: Solomon (1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 6), Nehemiah (chapter 1), Daniel (chapter 9), and Moses (Deuteronomy 9). That kind of prayer could change local congregations and the face of the church in the whole world. That kind of prayer will elevate our concern beyond ourselves to the very will of God.

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