

## Park and Pray: Morristown's Week-Long Prayer Vigil

By Hannah Lythe



I have prayed in a lot of places before: In class when I am about to get a paper back; in line waiting to withdraw money from my bank account; in the car when my dad is driving. But never before have I prayed *publicly* in a truck parked on the side of the road in the dead of winter.

As I walked through the familiar streets of Morristown on my way to participate in a week-long prayer vigil, I expected to see a large truck prominently parked on the town Green with everyone gawking at its presence. Instead it was parked rather modestly and marked by a simple sign across the front reading "Praying for Morristown." I walked up the steps that someone had kindly fashioned and made my way into the prayer room. The walls were adorned with paper that bore heartfelt prayers that had been inked across it in marker—some blue, some green, some purple, but all beautiful. A man I had never seen before was playing a simple melody on a guitar as my friend read from Psalm 96. It was a wonderful moment: there I was, standing in the center of Morristown, in a room dedicated to prayer.

I made my way over to the couches where the man and my friend were sitting. My father had told me that each day was to be dedicated to a separate portion of the Morristown Community; that day they had been praying for the local hospital and other medical institutions, as well as for the police and fire departments. I looked at the wall and saw a small scribbled sentence that said "I pray for the police." Each word was misspelled and no letter was completely formed. Then I realized that a child had been praying for the police and had felt compelled to write on the wall. I was silenced as I remembered the prayers I had as a child: that the piano would disappear so I wouldn't have to practice, or that my mother would chose to cook dessert rather than broccoli for dinner. I was overwhelmed at the thought of the many people who had been in this room—all those ages, races, sexes, and cultures coming together to pray for one town.

The truck was a joint venture on the part of five churches, three of them being Christian and Missionary Alliance churches: The Spanish Alliance Church of Morristown, Morristown Community Church and Washington Valley Chapel. The town had approved the placement of the truck on the Green for five days, Monday through Friday. Every hour from 7AM to 10PM there was at least one person in the truck praying; most hours there were many more.

When I grew tired of sitting on the couch and my hands had grown numb from the cold, I stood up and moved around the truck, reading each individual prayer. People came and went for the hour that I was in the room, each one scribbling his or her own words on the wall. Some prayed for loved ones; others for the sick; and yet others for the poor and hurting. Seeing these pleas to God reminded me that prayer is the thing that holds us together. It is a moment of conversation that introduces God into our lives and allows us to commune with one another. It is the ultimate act of vulnerability: admitting to someone, to our God, that we are hurting, that we need Him. I realized then just how beautiful it is that God actually answers us.

When my time was up, I left humbled. I had caught only a glimpse of what had happened in that truck. The week ended with a celebration service on the Green, where all the churches came together once again to marvel over what God had done during those five days. I stood still and listened to people praising in English and Spanish. In one surreal moment both languages seemed to run together as a single verse of prayer. Here we were on the Green, right in the heart of the town, at the crossroads of the county seat. This was the place where George Washington was based during his two campaigns in the area. Yet we were all there on that day in the presence of God to adore Him in worship, to thank Him through prayer, and to know that we were loved.



Much has come from that week, including the powerful precedent of prayer. Attention from the press, which the churches never asked for, just articulated the depth and need for prayer both locally and globally. Each church hopes to come together again to continue with the prayer truck but also looks forward to further opportunities to serve the people of Morristown.