

Shereen's Letter June 21st 2009

We have had two Breakthrough for Wholeness prayer services in Champaign-Urbana. Our beginnings have been small: The first year we had about 200 people; about half that number came the second year. When it was over, we went on with our daily lives, as did the rest of the world. Whether events are big like the recent elections in America and Iran, or seemingly trivial, like a birth over 2000 years ago in a manger, we (along with the rest of the world) tend to move quickly to the next big thing. And since it is hard to know if what happened made any difference to anyone at all, our passions can slowly peter out. I have found myself in that place.

On those two nights when pray-ers from different churches came together to pray for people just like themselves, what happened? One person was healed from cancer. Another accepted Jesus as Savior. Others reported feet being straightened, pain disappearing, peace where there had been anxiety, and refreshment where there had been exhaustion. Of course, we also have had reports of people being prayed for who saw no changes in their situation. We are all still learning together.

The community saw charismatics, protestants, Catholics, and nondenominational Christians come together to pray for each other. Medical communities joined with church communities to pray for those who needed wholeness in ways that the medical communities or churches could not provide by themselves. African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Caucasians joined together to pray for each other. In these small beginnings, we experienced the unity that is in Christ as well as comfortableness with our diversity.

But God does not stand still even when we are petering out. As we are now praying and listening for what is next, it seems to us that this is only the beginning of what God has in his heart. Across Champaign-Urbana, prophetic voices have said that we should establish "healing prayer rooms." Breakthrough for Wholeness has heard this call as our next step in following God's particular cloud for us. Prophetic words have said that it will not be easy; but we also hear God saying that we should "not despise the small things" (Zechariah 4:10). We know it is not by might or power but by God's Holy Spirit that these mountains will come down: The blind will see, the lame shall walk, captives will be set free, widows will be comforted, and the poor will see justice. We know also that God is asking us to walk with his Son Jesus as he does what he did while he walked the earth—what he longs to still do through his Holy Spirit in us.

As we pray for God's next steps for us, we are getting checks in our spirit. It is not yet the time to begin with a healing prayer room. Instead it seems important to set up "a small thing"—a once-a-month, 24-hour time to pray for Breakthrough for Wholeness in/for the Champaign-Urbana community, with pairs of pray-ers manning each hour for 24 hours. We envision following the practice already begun with the November prayer services—different churches joining together to pray for God to break into our community with his wholeness. One possibility is that a different church or organization could host the night

each month. People would be free to sing, dance, read scriptures, or pray as they are led. We will keep a book to record what is heard in each hour of praying. The book will serve not only to give direction to our next steps, but to build our faith as we read and see God's faithfulness toward us in each step we take.

We have the beginnings of an outline of God's calling for us and his prophetic word "to not despise the small beginnings." Although we understand that at first some hours will be unmanned, we nevertheless must begin this ministry by trusting God over time to raise up his watchers on the wall. The tapestry to be woven here will reflect the hearts of the many pray-ers who are asking God to break into this community with his wholeness and freedom. This tapestry will show a wonderful picture rather than a mish mash of discordant threads. It will be rich in many different hues and colors reflecting our God, who draws us to the unity that is in Christ while enjoying each of us in all our differences. God has promised to bring us to a place of more wholeness. As we walk with him, the gifts of our diversity and our unity in Christ will be marred less and less by the smallness of our own ways.

Our calling—given nearly 2000 years ago to heal the sick, to set the captives free—is still ALIVE and ACTIVE. God has told us to pray for the laborers because they are few. He is asking, "Whom shall I send?" Our hearts' cry is, "We will go, but not unless you go before us." We hear him answer that we should be strong and courageous and must not despise the day of small things. And his answer comforts and strengthens our lame legs so that we are ready to walk forward again. It is our hope and prayer that others will want to join with us in praying for God to break in with his wholeness in Champaign-Urbana—to be watchers on the walls.