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Even ministers need moral support  
By Jeff Wright  
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Nearly 50 evangelical pastors and other ministerial leaders gathered at a south Eugene church Thursday to pray.

They prayed for returning University of Oregon students, for local elected officials, for steadfastness as church leaders and, if you live in or around Eugene or Springfield, they prayed for you.

"Let's pray for the peace of the community," said Brian Cuff, pastor at Church of the Harvest, which hosted the gathering. "We ask for fresh vision, and to know how we can best submit to you."

The service, held each month at a different church, is organized by onehope, an umbrella group of evangelical leaders. For six years, under various names, the organization has served as a spiritual support group for pastors.

It's enjoyed a small resurgence the last year or two - by reaching out to more women pastors, adopting a "90 Days of Serving" summer outreach project, and sponsoring a Global Day of Prayer event that last spring drew roughly 2,000 people to Civic Stadium.

The organization has a Web site and an administrative assistant whose salary is covered by about 25 contributing churches.

Among those in attendance Thursday was Brian Hutrum, pastor at First Evangelical Church west of downtown. Hutrum said what brings him is simple:

"We're all on the same team," he said. "This is a tough enough job as it is. You need to connect with guys who are going through the same things that you are."

Cuff recalled that when he moved to Eugene 15 years ago, he tried to find a pastors' prayer group without success. "There were only three of us," he said. "I was pioneering a church. I *needed* someone!"

Onehope is the offshoot of a pastors' group in the 1990s called the Lane Association of Evangelicals. For years, that group held monthly luncheons at a local restaurant with a guest speaker each meeting.

But the association fizzled as many pastors began to feel a need to connect more personally with one another and to focus their prayers toward the larger community, said Steve Buss, associate pastor at Willamette Christian Center and a member of onehope's "envisioning team."

The organization was renamed Mission Eugene Springfield in 2000. But the name caused confusion - some thought it referred to the Eugene Mission, and the acronym MES is not what leaders had in mind - and so was rechristened onehope early last year.

"It communicates our mission statement in just two words," said Buss, who proposed the new name. "It says to people we are united on this one hope of Jesus."

The group's evangelical flavor and orthodox beliefs were clear enough Thursday as the pastors began their service singing several hymns led by Chip Demetri, worship pastor at Norkenzie Christian Church in north Eugene.

"What can wash away our sins? What can make us whole again?" sang the group in full-throated unison, many with hands upraised. "Nothing but the blood, nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Craig Curtis, pastor at Camp Creek Church east of Springfield, then reminded the pastors there are more than 50 citations in the Bible that he described as "one another" verses.

"We are asked to love one another, encourage one another, admonish one another, greet one another, serve one another, accept one another, honor one another, forgive one another, submit to one another, be devoted to one another," he said.

"Some of these things happen at these meetings."

Curtis then asked the pastoral leaders to break into groups of two and three for personal prayer, inviting them to share from the heart. The room first filled with an overlay of informal chatting. But then, among some of the groups, eyes began to close, supportive hands were placed on shoulders, voices turned quieter and more urgent.

After 15 minutes, the group again became one, as pastors gave turns offering a series of public prayers and petitions.

"Lord, we ask that you would come and visit this community so that around the world people will say, 'The Lord is there,' " Buss said. "We ask that you would be seen, heard, experienced, honored here in Lane County. Pour out your Holy Spirit on those who don't yet know you."

Before the service closed, pastors gave a standing ovation of appreciation to Deanna Trujillo, associate pastor at City of Destiny Church in Springfield, for her work in promoting the group's 90 Days of Serving

program.

They then surrounded Cuff and other pastoral staff at Church of the Harvest, asking for God's blessing on their work.

Before the service, Buss reflected on what it's like to be part of an evangelical group in a city and state that, statistically speaking, are among the least religious regions of the country.

"I used to be a hippie - I love living in Eugene," he said. "And there are communities in the South that don't have what we have with onehope."

## **ONEHOPE**

**What:** Support group for evangelical pastors and ministerial leaders

**Events:** Monthly rotating service; pastors' prayer summit at Cannon Beach each January; Global Day of Prayer each Easter season; 90 Days of Serving outreach each summer

**More information:** [www.onehopenetwork.org](http://www.onehopenetwork.org) (<http://www.onehopenetwork.org>)

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