

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE NATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER (NHOP): by Dorean Lowry

BEFORE:

Please bear with me and understand that this is my very own version of what I think these next three months will be like. All the thoughts/words are mine – not from any other sources.

In the beginning -

My sister gave me a brochure which was my introduction to The National House of Prayer (NHOP). Reading the information made me realize this organization takes praying for our Nation very serious. The brochure invites Christians from across our country to come for a three month commitment to learn how to pray for our nation and leaders.

Government/MP successes and failures are reported in the news papers or television news on a regular basis. To be honest I take media information with a grain of salt. I admit a sense of apathy, a lack of knowledge and information regarding Government processes. I'm really not a good candidate to apply for enrollment in their three month interim programe.

However, my heart is deeply moved by the invitation of learning how to pray for our leaders and nation. At the same time I feel I have nothing to offer NHOP, but I also feel God wants me to apply. I am ready to obey His nudging and submit my application. Beside my own application, NHOP has a requirement for two written references from my church and a lengthy long distance interview. I have little faith in being accepted. But, the impossible is happening, I am accepted. *What will I learn by going to Ottawa?*

Shortly after being accepted, I have an invitation to meet the founders and directors of NHOP who will be speaking at a church in Langley the week of Canada Day. What a great time for me to meet Rob and Fran Parker. Rob was a Baptist Pastor in Vernon prior to following the Lord's guidance to start NHOP. Rob shared scripture where "**God commands his people to support those in authority**". The leaders at NHOP realize the fact that "never before in our country's history have there been so many Christians involved in Parliament/Government". Canada has what is referred to as a 'large sea of Christian young people' who are interested in a fair and just government and praying for our government.

Hearing Rob's heart and information for our nation from a Biblical point of view is starting me to ask questions of myself and those around me. With the number of Christians in Government why are fair and just decisions hard to come by? I am beginning to think is the lack of prayer support the first answer? Although I do not feel

political, God's direction is to pray for the guidance of those who govern our nation. If I don't vote, I should not complain. After voting do I remember to pray for the MP that has been sent to the 'front lines' to represent us? How often do I actually and actively pray for our nation, our government and our leaders? How should I pray? How can my prayer support begin at home before heading to Ottawa? All these questions, and I don't have the answers. Feeling rather guilty, I need to meet Russ Hiebert face to face before heading to Ottawa. There are far too many questions cropping up and I don't have answers.

After preparing a list of questions, I ask God "if I didn't know a thing about Russ Hiebert as a Member of Parliament, would my questions still be the same"? I feel comfortable that I am on the right track. One of the questions is "how may I actively pray for Russ"? Thinking for a few moments, Russ's reply is asking me to pray for **wisdom**. As we go down the list, I also ask about his family. His wife Andrea and young family of Kate 3, and Marie 5 month, rent a small apartment close to Parliament Hill. When both Russ and Andrea are required to attend an evening function sometimes they have a sitter, but that is not always possible. The thought occurs to me that perhaps this young man has put his family life on hold in order to serve you, me, the Peninsula, our nation. Other MP's perhaps must leave their families at home for various reasons. There is so much I am pondering, questioning and trying to understand. At this time I am getting excited and looking forward to this time in Ottawa and finding some answers.

When all is said at this time – I have the following scriptures with me: Ps 37:5-7 "*commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him*". Daniel 10: 12-13. "*Do not be afraid, Daniel (Dorean). Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them*" and Zephaniah 3:17 "*The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing*". I want to learn from God through this journey how to pray for our leaders, our nation. I believe this will be a huge spiritual learning season for me and I look forward to what God will show and teach me. Armed with my Bible, prayer support and a journal – I'm on my way!

'Step by Step' was the chosen song on that Sunday morning before I left for Ottawa. While traveling this song keeps reminding me that I am not walking in blindness or alone, God is ahead of me in each step and He has opened the door for me to head to Ottawa.

Stay tuned.....

DURING:

This will be ‘one blind person’s version of time spent in Ottawa, at the National House of Prayer (NHOP) and Parliament Hill – otherwise known as ‘The Hill’. This is my own version of what I learned, saw, felt and heard while intentionally taking this time to learn from God via NHOP: how should I stand on guard in prayer for this my country?

I was picked up at the railway station and headed to NHOP which would now become my residence. Three minutes away from our destination we were rear ended! Naturally there was grave concern regarding any lasting results of the impact. My fears were soon dissolved. Kirsten Harty on staff at NHOP seized the opportunity to pray fervently for my recovery. I will never forget that first prayer response and my introduction to ‘**THE NATIONAL HOUSE OF PRAYER**’! That is exactly what we are here for: to pray. Why was I so amazed at this prayerful event? I have much to learn.

National House of Prayer: what a meaningful and appropriate name for this residence. Since my arrival Sept 13th I have been challenged with a two-week boot camp along with 9 young people. I did wonder why it was called boot camp and will find out soon enough. I may have years of vintage over these young people, but I must say they have a great sense of being one family for this three month time frame. From their sense of humour, sharing laundry time, time spent in various smaller groups or one on one sharing our common bond - of God leading us to this fine place, to be set aside for a time to learn how to uphold our nation in prayer. Each one of us is 'part of the body of Christ' and each one brings various gifts of grace, compassion, encouragement, music, worship and other rich gifts not as yet known. The young people ranged from 19-42 years of age. Three had their teaching degrees and a young man also had a couple of years of Bible School. A lady from New Westminster and I were called Prayer Missionaries while the younger folk were referred to as a Nazarene (one set/called aside). The only difference in their project and mine was the young people worked as a volunteer each Tuesday afternoon in the office of an MP (sometimes from their own riding). Also each had to present a message they prepared on one of our class topics and ‘preach’ it back to us. My project was to work two hours a day in the office of NHOP.

We were given a list of churches we could attend in reasonable proximity to residence or any church of our choice. My first Sunday I choose a Roman Catholic Church. This was my very first experience with Catholicism. Yes, I am ready to have my heart and mind opened to meet God in His house wherever that is. Services started with familiar worship songs, the message was on “pride” which made me think it was especially prepared for me. After visiting a couple of other churches, I felt most at home at St. Albans Anglican Church. In fact so at home I joined their choir for the duration of my time in Ottawa.

Both spiritual and practical lessons have carefully prepared by the teams of Rob/Fran Parker and Richard/Terry Long (both Rob and Richard were Baptist Pastors). We also had two people living in residence who conducted some of the classes. Kirsten is the example of a prayer warrior. Young Jeremiah had earlier been on the three month Nazarite program but left to return to university. He soon returned to work on staff at NHOP as leader for the devotion time and worship services.

The usual daily schedule would start with breakfast at 7-8 AM; at 8AM we join together for an hour of devotions studying the book of Matthew; from 9-10 worship time; 10-12 noon we were in class under the direction of the Parker's or the Long's and sometimes an invited guest. Some of the subjects we covered included:

Corporate intercession;
Praying for government;
God's role for governments;
Imposing our value;
Healing our land;
The Truth Project - what is truth?
Lifestyle of prayer- creating a House of Prayer (HOP);
Praying with Authority;
Church and Government.

This is naming just a few topics. The practical sessions mostly led by Terry long – were priceless. After the boot camp each of us were scheduled to take turns leading devotions and worship as well as conducting the classes that we had been taught. Who could see that coming and now I know why it has the name of boot camp!

Can you imagine a three hour prayer walk around our parliament buildings and our group breaking out in our Canadian National anthem while standing in front of Champlain's monument? I know the gardeners working on the grounds must have wondered what was giving us such spontaneity to sing with such gusto. We are so used to closing our eyes, with folded hands, head bowed to pray, but why not actually talk to God with our eyes open and in this case walking around the area of prayer concern? I stood in awe when I read the scriptural writings on the parliament buildings. Learning of the need for apology and restoration for some of our historical issues was a big lesson for me. All this is to aid us in 'learning *how* to prayer for our nation'. I realize now that we can spend time praying **or** praying *effectively* and *intentionally* when you know criteria. The criterion comes from the heart of God - asking Him to lead us in prayer, what does He desire for the issue, the party, the person(s), what is His will? The 127th chapter of Psalms affirms this intention when I/we pray: *“If God doesn't build the house, the builders only build shacks. If God doesn't guard the city, the night watchman might as well nap. It's useless to rise early and go to bed late, and work your worried fingers to the bone. Don't you know he enjoys giving rest to those He loves?”*

What brought me to the National House of Prayer was a small spark laid on my heart to learn how to spend time in prayer for our leaders/parties. Praying it will become a flame to take home, to share humbly. That is what I came for **BUT** what took place in my heart while set aside for these three months I am not the first to say: "I came to learn how to pray for the nation **BUT** God first needed to touch and change my heart".

What was 'the' change? As I have already said I really was not sure what I was getting myself into, but strongly felt led to follow the door that God had opened. Along with the classes on prayer for our nation the Lord laid a clear purpose on my heart to reach out to the spouse(s) of our MP's. Upon hearing the high rate of divorce in government my heart was burdened for the marital relationships. For various reasons some spouse are not able to and some may choose not to travel with their mate. The working day of an MP is not only stressful, but many long hours, especially when you consider time changes and late committee meetings. When they return to their home riding there is always more work, demands and challenges to be faced. On my second visit to Question Period (QP) I had a wonderful opportunity to sit with a lovely lady. I took the liberty of complimenting her on her dress code. Admittedly she was somewhat taken aback at my boldness but she did respond with a smile. She introduced herself as the wife of one of the MP's on the front lines. A week later I met her outside the Centre Block and greeted her by name (that was God helping me as I am bad with recalling names). She was so taken that I remembered her 'name'. (Isn't this how we think of God when He reminds us that He knows our name?) After sitting with her a few more times at QP, she started introducing me to other wives as 'Dorean from the National House of Prayer'. One particular day I was joined by five wives in the government members' gallery of QP. Although I don't know a soul outside of NHOP in Ottawa – God led my path to cross the path of some of these wives while out and about on several occasions.

On any given day and as often as possible NHOP would invite MP's and their family to come for dinner. What a thrill it was to have Russ, Andrea, and Kate and baby Marie come and dine with us. One particular evening we had five MP couples, including a Sikh MP and his wife, plus one MP whose husband and family were at home in MB. The usual agenda after dinner was to move upstairs to the Worship room and have a time of questions and sharing with our guest(s). We had the privilege of hearing some powerful testimonies of MP's and their spouse. Although we would ask if we might pray with and for them, the answer was always a definite 'yes', it was a real joy to have this time together before our God. On this occasion it was impossible for me to meet with each guest that is until they were retrieving their coats to leave. One of the wives asked if I was also a Nazarene. I explained because of my vintage I was a prayer missionary but my heart was there for the spouse. If you could have seen the look on her face, it was priceless. This is not to my glory but to realize there is a want/need to know someone/somewhere/somehow is listening, caring and up-holding them in prayer. Although we only had a brief encounter she met me about a week later on The Hill. Not

only did she remember my name, she invited me into the hall of parliament to speak with me. She wanted to know more of my intention in being a prayer support for the spouse. The assurance of someone praying for them as a spouse was encouraging to her and affirmation for me to a very good reason why God had called to me Ottawa.

My thoughts are: there may be a rented apartment for the family of the MP but where and how do you stay connected back home? Where is your family, church family (if you have one), your neighbours and friends or even a playground? Where do you shop for groceries, which Doctor and pharmacy do you use? Unlimited questions and who has the answers? Who do you call? I did have the opportunity to babysit the Hiebert children a few times. I loved the time with the children and also with them as a family.

The Parker's, Long's, Jeremiah and Kirsten are constantly on site at QP and on The Hill watching for an opening into the lives of each of the MP's. They have a genuine heart for our nation and the leaders in our government. As NHOP has been in operation only five years they know this will take time. Only in God's time other Members of Parliament will make themselves available to come and dine and let us pray with and for them. I would invite you to join with me in considering to pray for the ones not yet reached.

What an event to attend Question Period (QP) on Mondays and Wednesdays and sometimes on Thursdays. If we carefully followed the morning issue of the Globe and Mail news paper, the subject matters to be challenged for that day at QP were known. We soon learned to which committee(s) each MP was assigned. By attending the committee meetings I found myself in on the real heart of the matters. This is where the business of politics takes place. Several times an MP would come and say 'thank you for the support of being here' knowing full well our support was prayer; asking God for wisdom, patience and justice on both sides of the committee.

Friday afternoon from 1-3 PM would find us at the Senators Chapel on the Hill which is led by a retired Corporal and his wife. This couple has knowledge and information regarding governmental situations both at home and abroad which were shared during the time of prayer. For the most part these subjects of prayer were not to be shared outside the chapel. I was always amazed at their spiritual insight for each prayer concern. I will say they also included Vancouver and the Olympics which of course would be a common and known concern.

The NHOP facility also hosted various prayer groups during the week. Once a month we hosted/served a prayer breakfast for Pastors from Ottawa and vicinity. After breakfast the Pastors would head to the prayer room for a time of prayer within their own group. Some off site groups on a weekly basis came to share their prayer concerns and burdens. Among them were The Exodus Cry team (human trafficking); Christian Military Fellowship and representatives from the Christian Embassy. Listening to real concerns for these various groups is the reminder of the need of prayers rising to God Almighty for comfort, help,

discernment and wisdom. Most of the surrounding neighbourhood of NHOP consisted of immigrants. NHOP hosted a couple of bar-b-ques as an outreach for approximately 400 hundred children including parents attended the events. We also participated in a few prayer walks in this residential/apartment area surrounding NHOP. Thursday's mornings we volunteered at a local mission making sandwiches for the noon hour. Through the Mission we also had the blessing of serving both Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner to the homeless.

Teams (like a Bible study group) or individuals came to NHOP for a week as guests. They received in that period of time in a nutshell what I was experiencing during the three month period. During the week the guests have the opportunity of meeting with their own MP before attending QP. Upon the availability of the MP/spouse/family a dinner invitation at NHOP was extended. The week includes two sessions at QP, a tour of Parliament and Friday afternoon at the Senate Chapel. The guests are also shown other points of interest around Ottawa. Although the guest teams would have some of their own in-house classes, they also are included in our morning worship services and any of the evening sessions.

Graduation – yes we were honoured with a graduation dinner, acknowledging our time spent learning what God intended for our nation through the rule of government. I've not mentioned a group of significant people, the board of NHOP. I fully admire their involvement, direction and work with NHOP. I would like to remember them in prayer as they seek to honour God in their service for our Nation.

For the most part each of us is wondering what will life look like after graduation? What are we going home for and with what? In other words **“NOW WHAT, GOD?”** I headed home praying that the little spark that was in my heart when I left my home in August of 2009 might well be an Olympic flame as I head home.

AFTER:

December 12th I returned to my home from Ottawa still singing ‘Step by Step’. January 5th has arrived and all the family Christmas visiting is completed and now I may return to the completion of my experience of NHOP **or** will it ever be completed?

First of all, I am so happy to be back at home and at WRBC. Thank you for the support of prayers, encouragement, letters, notes, emails and interest.

This has been the most wonderful experience of my life! I would not trade it for anything in the world.

It has given me great joy to share this experience with a willing audience. Just reading the journal that I kept quite faithfully has raised a question ‘might I return to NHOP?’ I am asking “God now what”? As long as I am willing, I know God won’t stop preparing me for the next step or chapter in His purpose, plan and will for me.

Some things I do know: I’ve come away from NHOP with a heart changed by God, still learning how to seek God’s heart in the matter of our Politicians and Government and then intentionally pray His will, a fist full of email addresses and promises of praying for and being in touch with the lives that God drew across my path.

Will you perhaps be the next person to attend NHOP and see what (changes) God has in store for you? Would you even consider going with your Bible study group for a week?

I trust this information gives each of the readers a thirst for praying for our nation – asking God what is in His heart, then praying intentionally!

Submitted because:

He equipped me to go.

Dorean Lowry