

His name was Jeremiah Lanphier. The date was September 23, 1857. The location was New York City.

For days Lanphier had been handing out flyers inviting people to a time of prayer. He likely distributed more than twenty thousand flyers by himself.

He was a man under God's conviction. He was desperate for a move of God, and he knew no human-powered system or organization could manufacture such a move. So he prayed. And he called others to prayer as well.

Lanphier probably had great anticipation that many would show up at noon on September 27. The city had a population of nearly one million. His flyers were likely seen by more than the original twenty thousand recipients of the flyers.

He went to the Old Dutch North Church located on Fulton Street, entered an empty room on the third floor, pulled out his pocket watch and sat down to wait. The placard outside read: "Prayer Meeting from 12 to 1 o'clock – Pray 5, 10, or 20 minutes, or the whole hour, as your time permits." It looked like no one had the time. As the minutes ticked by, Lanphier prayed, waited, and wondered if it were all a mistake. For thirty minutes no one showed up. Then he heard the footsteps of a few coming to the prayer meeting. Six other people joined him.

Their numbers increased to fourteen the next week. Then twenty-three the next week. And the prayer meetings continued to grow.

The presence of God was so powerful, those who were in the meetings decided to have the gatherings every day. And the numbers continued to increase. By winter of 1857 the prayer meetings were filling three large churches every day. Then, by March of 1858, every available public hall and church in New York City was filled every day.

Horace Greeley, the famous newspaper editor, sent a reporter to attempt to count the numbers at these meetings. He could only make it to six locations by horse and buggy in that one-hour period. He still counted sixty-one thousand people.

A movement had begun. The prayer meetings spread across the nation. At one season of this movement, ten thousand people were becoming believers each week. More than one scholar has estimated that one million people became followers of Christ through these prayer meetings.

Three things stand out about this spiritual awakening. First, it was a laymen's movement – almost entirely. Except for a very few, ministers were on the sidelines. Second, it was a nonsectarian movement. At the first Fulton Street meeting, of the six persons present one was a Baptist, one a Congregationalist, one a member of the Dutch Reformed Church, and one a Presbyterian. Denominational differences were forgotten in a concern for people's souls. Third, it was a revival of prayer. Never, since that time, have Americans bowed before the Lord in such unity.

Many Christians prayed fervently, obsessively, and passionately during the days leading up to November 5, 2024: prayers for and against Donald Trump; prayers for and against Kamala Harris; prayers for the rapture to preempt Election Day. Just imagine if the same fervency and passion was displayed in our prayers for the lost souls in Cochran and Bleckley County!! We might very well find ourselves in the midst of another astounding revival. Grace & peace, love you. PK