

# Fulton Street Noon Prayer Meeting

*formerly led by Jeremiah Lanphier*



## NEW YORK'S 1857 REVIVAL - TODAY'S HEADLINES QUICKLY BECOME YESTERDAY'S NEWS.

What is important today – even who or what is popular or important – is often forgotten by tomorrow. The Bible teaches that history will always remain relevant for today's Christian and that time doesn't alter truth. We can still learn and benefit from the richness of our spiritual heritage and history. The New York City's Fulton street Noon Prayer Meeting sparked a revival in 1857 which spread to America, Ireland, Wales and South Africa is a piece of history that can change the future.

In September 2019, my wife Dorothea, and I stood on Fulton street between the crossing of West St and Greenwich St, next to where the World Trade Centre used to be. We saw thousands of people that filled the streets, subways, boats and busses. Some were tourists, like us, from all over the world, some vendors trying to sell something or employees working in one of the high rising buildings. I remember thinking that this was the birthplace of the 1857 revival in New York City. I was also astonished that most people today are oblivious of what has happened in the past, and what the power of God has done. God brought this place to a standstill due to the crash of the economy. God raised up one man with a burden that ignited the spark. I looked around me and wondered what it will take for God to do it again. I tried to imagine what could happen if God send a fresh breath of heaven and touched the hearts of people anew. I believe that God's power to bring His Kingdom and Glory to Earth will once again rain down in New York and the world.

### *The Condition*

Ernest Wadsworth in his book, *Will Revival Come?* explained that the conditions in 1857 were similar to those facing the church and country today. The population was smaller, but the sin and corruption were no less than they are today. Many people were living in idle luxury, gripped by lust, pleasure and entertainment. Broken homes, sex scandals, free love and other sinful behavior were common. Gambling, murder, robbery and mob rule were widespread. Sunday was a day of pleasure and God's house was often deserted as cults and false religions captured the minds of thousands. The Church was torn by strife and false teachings. Due to immigration America experienced an unusual population growth and it led to work shortages and race riots. The unresolved slavery issue split the churches and country.

## *The Spark*

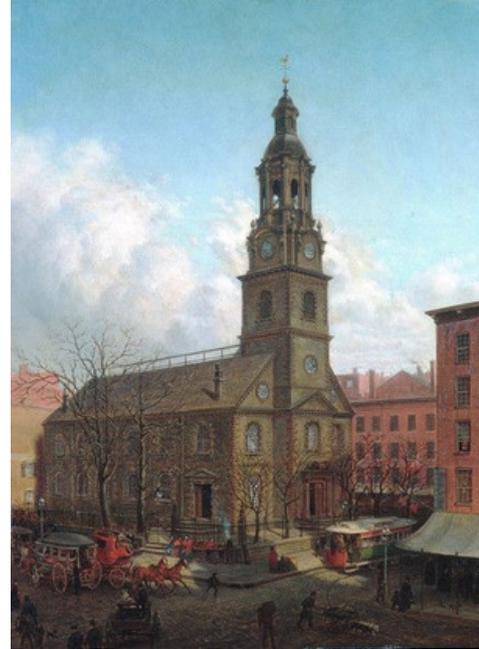
God used the dire circumstances to set the stage for what was to come. The stock market crashed on October 10, 1857. Economic instability caused people to fear for their wealth and future. Banks and factories closed while railroads were bankrupted. People became poor overnight. Financial distress affected everyone, and unemployment touched the masses. Hunger and homelessness went hand in hand with hopelessness. Suicide became commonplace as the United States came to a spiritual, political and economic low point.

## *The Burden*

These conditions drove devout Christians to seek closer fellowship with one another in prayer. The political and economic crisis turned the hearts of the people back to God. Jeremiah Lanphier, a Dutch Reformed home missionary to poor immigrants, became burdened about the conditions in the city. Month after month he went door-to-door sharing the Good News, distributing tracts and holding Bible studies with whoever would listen. Eventually, he grew tired and discouraged as his efforts delivered little results. What sustained him was the knowledge that he was obedient to the Great Commission. He discovered that even as the body needs food, the soul and spirit needed prayer. On September 23, 1857, he launched a weekly, noon-hour prayer meeting. It began with only six in attendance. Twenty people came the next week, and more than thirty attended the weekly prayer meetings the following month. Local papers published the prayer meeting, and by November it has become a daily prayer meeting with more than 200 people attending each day. More prayer meetings were started, and by April 1858 10,000 people were gathering daily for prayer in New York.

## *The Revival*

One of the focus points was to pray for the conversion of friends and loved ones. People that prayed for loved ones started to reach out to them by giving them tracts and inviting them to the meetings. Even non-Christians attended the meetings requesting prayer for their needs and got saved. Conviction of sin broke out and gripped all. The answers to prayer were spectacular. People from all classes were saved and brought to Christ. An estimated 1 million people got saved through the revival. Remarkable when considering that the nation was only about 30 million people. There was an increase of Christian love as interracial tensions decreased and a significant drop in crime was recorded. New Churches sprang up to help the new and young believers. Charles Spurgeon who visited America in that time said: "In some New England towns you can scarce find one unconverted person."



Within a few short months the little prayer meeting sparked an awakening that eventually spread across America and around the world. Spiritual revival quickly spread as people participated in thousands of daily prayer meetings throughout the country. Revival broke out in as many as ninety colleges between 1857 and 1859. In 1859 God's almighty reviving work leaped across the Atlantic and swept through Ireland, Wales and South Africa in 1860. It was a movement of people who simply prayed, and in response, God worked in their lives, communities and country in remarkable ways.

Could it be that history is repeating itself? Has the stage been set for another spiritual Revival? The United States and the rest of the world finds itself in crisis due to the current Covid-19 virus and pandemic. Life as we know it has changed. The lives of billions of people are disrupted, impacted and affected in one way or another. Flights are cancelled and airlines are stranded. Businesses are closed, stock markets are collapsing as the economy struggles and unemployment is increasing. People are living in fear of the unknown as news outlets keep us informed about the numbers of people who have tested positive for the virus, deaths due to the virus and governmental lock downs. Humanly speaking, things can only become worse. The world is in turmoil. We cannot depend on government, social grants and churches to fix the problems. Our only hope is in the living God. The stage is set for Revival! Do you believe that? Prepare yourselves. Don't hope – Expect!

**Some thoughts for reflection. Perhaps the time has come for us:**

- To realize and agree that the conditions today is very similar to those of 1857.
- To recognize and acknowledge God's hand, work and activity in the world as we are stripped from all our comforts, securities and ushered into the unknown.
- To humble ourselves before Him and ask forgiveness for those things that we know is wrong in His sight, personally and relationally.
- To pray and seek His face that He may be gracious to us in our time of need.
- To repent from all those things that we know is wrong.
- To reach out to our loved ones and those in our immediate circles.
- To recommit ourselves in a new thrust to evangelize the world through the Great Commission, as we hope, expect and await His revival blessing.

**Practical Points:**

- Set some time aside every day to reflect on your spiritual life and own walk with God.
- Make a list of all your family members, neighbors, friends and people that God has brought into your life.
- Start to pray for the people on your prayer list.
- Reach out to them with email, social media, phone etc.
- Share with them the Good News of Jesus Christ and what you are learning from Him in this time. Once the lockdown is finished – visit, encourage and support those on your list and help them to grow in their faith.

- Dr Francois Carr - fcarr@heartcrysa.co.za

---

*“I have heard your prayer ... I have chosen this place for Myself ... When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, if My people ... I will hear... I will forgive... I will heal.”*  
(2 Chronicles 7:11-13, NKJV)

---