

Pray
For
Newark



Newark Murder Rate Plummetts

*Changing the Spiritual Climate
through Prayer Evangelism*

A PrayForNewark Publication

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NEWARK REPORTS RECORD DROP IN HOMICIDES

In 2008 Newark, New Jersey, reported the largest one-year drop in murders in the city's history.¹ When the FBI's Uniform Crime Report for 2008 is released next fall, it will likely confirm what the unverified reports from the largest U.S. cities have shown—that Newark had the highest percentage decline in homicides in the nation last year.² Moreover, the Uniform Crime Report will likely verify that Newark no longer belongs on the list of the 25 "Most Dangerous Cities" in the U.S. for the first time since that report began in the mid-nineties.

This unprecedented drop in murders is particularly noteworthy, given that Newark was declared to be America's "Most Dangerous City" in 1996.³ In recent years many observers have noted that Newark is experiencing a revitalization. Some say this is due to new buildings downtown, including the New Jersey Performing Arts Center (1997) and the Prudential Center (which opened in 2007). Others point to the leadership of Mayor Cory Booker and a refocused police force under the direction of Police Director Garry F. McCarthy. Still others emphasize the increase in new housing units downtown and in neighborhoods across the city. *But there is one essential, undergirding principle behind all of these aspects of Newark's revitalization—a growing consensus that the city's spiritual climate is changing.*

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The Star-Ledger COLUMNS Paul Mulshine II



Newark sees sharp decline in murders

As deaths rise in other cities, police credit push to cut drug trade

BY JONATHAN SCHUPPE
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

About a year ago, as Newark's murder rate was dropping for the first time in half a decade, Police Director Garry McCarthy worried about a category of killings that remained stubbornly high: targeted shootings driven by the narcotics trade.

These murders, which McCarthy labeled "drug assassinations," would be key to cutting the city's murder rate further. At that point, he had already put in place many of the strategies that he'd helped develop as a commander in the New York Police Department — putting more cops on the street when most violent crime happens, going after fugitives, cracking down on quality-of-life offenses. So he started something new.

Since then, representatives of local, county and federal law enforcement agencies have gotten together every couple of weeks to divvy up the city's worst drug spots. The initiative, called Violent Enterprise Strategic Targeting, focused on busting lots of street-level crews and their managers — plucking up four or five at a time on whatever charges would stick, from murder and assault to carrying drugs or holding a gun.

"It seemed to follow that if you reduce the number of narcotics-related shootings, you'll reduce the number of murders," McCarthy said.

And it seems to be working. The number of shootings, including drug-related attacks, dropped significantly last year, driving the murder rate further down. As of early yesterday, Newark had 67 murders in 2008, compared with 99 the year before, and 107 in 2006. Of this year's murders, 36 percent were drug-related, compared with nearly half of 2007's killings, police say.

Newark's steep murder reduction led New Jersey cities, most of which either saw more modest drops or slight upticks. The

[See MURDERS, Page 12]

MATT RAINEY/THE STAR-LEDGER
Old St. Luke's church in Hope has

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This front-page headline announced Newark's largest drop in homicides in the city's history.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Let's consider the unusual circumstances concerning last year's drop in reported homicides. What is certain is that there were 43 days with no murders in Newark from January 13 to February 26, 2008. On February 28 the *New York Times* included a feature article titled, "A Calm Stretch Ends in Newark, but Officials Claim Progress on Crime." The article noted that the last time Newark had no homicides for that length of time was before the 1967 Newark civil disturbances that rocked our nation. The article also quoted a Columbia University professor, who calculated the odds of 43 consecutive murder-free days at one in 111,482.⁴

Certainly the excellent work of the police department must be acknowledged, but the fact remains the overall crime trends in Newark were mixed last year. In contrast to the decline in murders and shootings from 2007 to 2008, other categories of crimes actually increased last year—rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, and burglaries. The biggest of these increases was in robberies, which jumped 20% to 1449.⁵ What is going on, when the most highly publicized crimes—murders and shootings—are decreasing while other major types of crimes are increasing?

Let us share our perspective. The year 2007 marked 40 years since the devastating civil disturbance in Newark during July 1967. That disturbance triggered civil unrest in 125 other U.S. cities and accelerated the movement of whites, Jews, and other groups to the suburbs. As these groups moved from Newark to surrounding suburban communities, a sense of abandonment and hopelessness gripped the city during the next four decades.

Note that 40 is a number having Biblical significance. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. It rained for 40 days during Noah's flood. Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness during his temptation. Early in 2007, a man known for his sensitivity to the Biblical teachings made the statement, "This is the year to break 40-year curses."

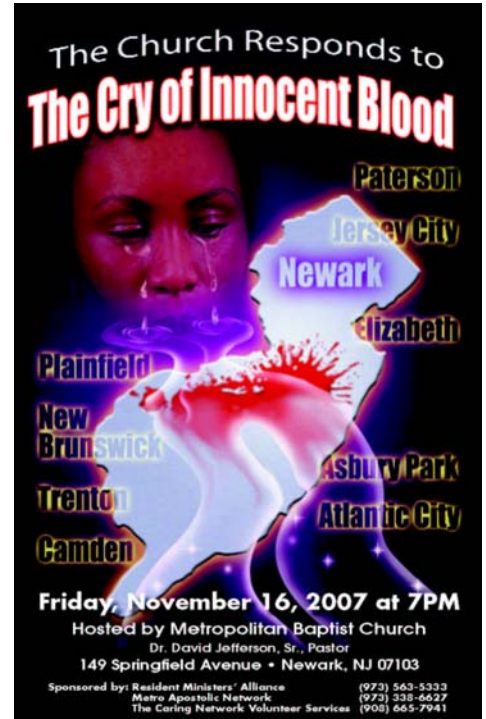
IDENTIFYING MURDER AS THE CITY'S FELT NEED

In Luke Chapter 10, Jesus instructs his disciples about how to minister to a city. His teachings on this subject can be summarized in four steps:

1. *Bless the people by speaking peace to them.*
2. *Have fellowship with them.*
3. *Pray for their felt needs (e.g., pray for healing of the sick).*
4. *Declare that the kingdom of God has come near.*

Ed Silvano of Harvest Evangelism uses the term 'prayer evangelism' to describe this model of ministry. He encourages those working with him to pray for the felt need of the city or nation where they are doing ministry.

It did not take much insight for the PrayForNewark team to identify murder as the city's major felt need. This view has been widely embraced by the citizens of Newark and has also been expressed by Mayor Booker on numerous occasions.



Chief Jay Swallow

As we prayed, there was a strong sense that we should call Chief Jay Swallow, a native American Indian having great spiritual authority over land issues, and invite him to come to Newark. A date was set, and the invitation was made to pray for an end to bloodshed in Newark and other major cities in New Jersey. This prayer meeting was already scheduled before Newark was traumatized by the horrific murders of three young people in a schoolyard massacre in August of 2007.



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New York Times photo documenting the unprecedented stop in murders for 43 days in January-February 2008

LAUNCHING THE ADOPT-A-STREET INITIATIVE

At this time some who cared for the city sensed that a city-wide prayer initiative was needed. Based on this perception, the PrayForNewark Adopt-a-Street program was started. *We sensed that as people adopt the city and its streets, businesses, schools and apartment buildings, the spirit of abandonment—the orphan spirit—will be replaced by the spirit of adoption. Similarly, the spirit of bondage/slavery will be replaced by the spirit of sonship.* We started encouraging individuals to pray for the streets and for the people that live, work or worship there, so that there would be peace and security—and specifically that there would be *no murders*. A website was launched, and this initiative was announced at the 2008 Martin Luther King, Jr., Urban Convocation sponsored by Dominion Fellowship Ministries. The above-mentioned period of 43 murder-free days coincided with the launching of the street adoption initiative.⁶

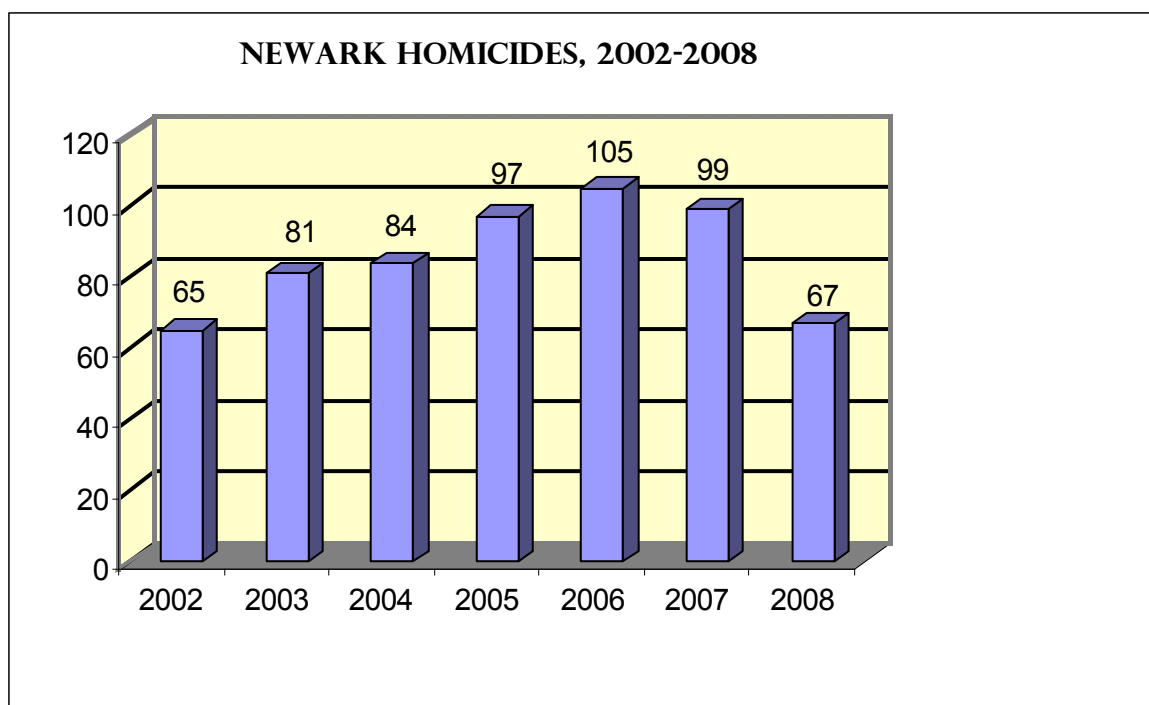
YOUR PRAYERS CAN CHANGE THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE

News reporters, criminologists, and city residents disagree about how to interpret Newark's unprecedented decline in murders. Can the drop be attributed to increased police manpower, better police force deployment, and/or the increased use of video surveillance cameras in high-crime areas of the city? Sociologist Andrew Karmen from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice thinks otherwise. "How much of the reduction can be credited to the police and to the criminal justice process?" he asked. "How much is due to underlying social conditions?"⁸

While reporters and academic researchers pour over the case reports and crime trends for Newark, let's not overlook the changes that are occurring in the spiritual climate. On November 30, hundreds of Newark residents assembled in the rain at Lincoln Park for the first-ever "Solidarity Sunday". On that occasion a coalition including Newark's four largest Protestant churches, Integrity House, and the New Black Panther Party prayed together and declared that violence and crime must come to an end in Newark.

We agree with Mayor Booker's assessment that "There is hope in the city of Newark." This fact was firmly established by Newark's Founders, who declared in 1666 that this city is to be as nearly as possible a "Kingdom of God on earth."¹⁰ As we move into a new era in American politics, there is no doubt that hope is rising in Newark, as in many other major U.S. cities. But let's not forget that the foundations for Newark's hope were established by the Founding Fathers and have been affirmed by the prayers of God's people throughout the city's 350-year history.

*by Joanne and Lloyd Turner,
PrayForNewark*



Source: Newark Police Records, 2002-2008.



Four Amish brothers from Pennsylvania have committed to pray for the Seth Boyden neighborhood every day.

STREET ADOPTER REPORTS

Several remarkable events have occurred since the street adoption process has begun. We will only mention a few in this publication:

- Green Street and Mulberry Street are intersecting streets in downtown Newark that are being prayed for every day. One day a worker from the Law Journal stepped onto the street at that intersection and was run over by a bus. Rescue workers noted that although there were tire tracks on her body, none of her bones were broken or organs injured.
- A woman from Thailand adopted Esther Street because she identified with the ancient Hebrew queen who had that name. For 21 days she prayed faithfully for peace, wholesome behavior and purity on the street and that evil would be exposed. It was at this time that one of the largest drug busts in the region took place at 13 Esther Street. This bust involved police officers from 4 counties and resulted in the arrest of 13 ring leaders as well as the confiscation of money and a cache of illegal drugs.⁷
- Four Amish brothers from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, adopted an entire section of the Weequahic neighborhood bordered by Freylinghuysen Avenue and Dayton Streets. This is an area where prostitution has been rampant for years. One day a woman who frequently drives by the area was surprised and wondered, “Where have all the girls gone?” Another ministry that distributes food and clothing in that area was amazed that these women began coming to request prayer every week. A spokesperson for that ministry declared, “There is definitely a change in the area.”



PRAY

**FOR
NEWARK**

DO YOU HAVE THE HEART TO PRAY FOR THE CITY OF NEWARK, NEW JERSEY?

People have been praying for Newark since its founding in 1666, and it is a Covenant City. The Founders of Newark moved from Connecticut to establish a "city on the hill", in which business and government were based on biblical principles. For this reason it makes good sense for Newarkers – and others who care about Newark – to pray for the well-being of this great city. This website is a non-denominational, non-sectarian location where you can register your desire to pray for a specific street in Newark. This site includes maps showing which streets have been "adopted" in each of Newark's five precincts. The maps will be updated on a monthly basis as additional streets are adopted.

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Website Design: Technology Community Outreach Ministry

FOOTNOTES

1. "Murders, shootings decline in Newark for 2nd year," by Victor Epstein, Associated Press, December 31, 2008. Reported on the website www.boston.com.
2. "Slaying sullies start of new year in Newark: Shooting of 26-year-old driver follows news of two-year decline in city's homicide rate," by Alexi Friedman, the Newark *Star-Ledger*, January 2, 2009. See also, "Newark sees sharp decline in murders," by Jonathan Schuppe, the Newark *Star-Ledger*, January 1, 2009; and "Newark Murder Rate Dropped 30 Percent in 2008," by Nate Schweber, The New York *Times*, January 4, 2009.
3. "America's Safest City: Amherst, N.Y.; the Most Dangerous: Newark, N.J." by Carla Fried, *Money* magazine, November 27, 1996.
4. "A Calm Stretch Ends in Newark, but Officials Claim Progress on Crime," by Kareem Fahim, The New York *Times*, February 28, 2008.
5. "Murders, shootings decline in Newark for 2nd year" (see footnote (1)).
6. See the Pray For Newark website at www.prayfornewark.org.
7. "Authorities nab 13 reputed gang members, drug dealers," by Mark Angeles, The Newark *Star-Ledger*, November 20, 2008.
8. Quoted in "A Calm Stretch Ends in Newark" (see footnote (4)).
9. Ibid.
10. History of Newark, New Jersey: Embracing Practically Two and a Half Centuries, 1666-1913, by Frank John Urquhart. New York and Chicago: The Lewis Historical Publishing Co, 1913, p. 66.