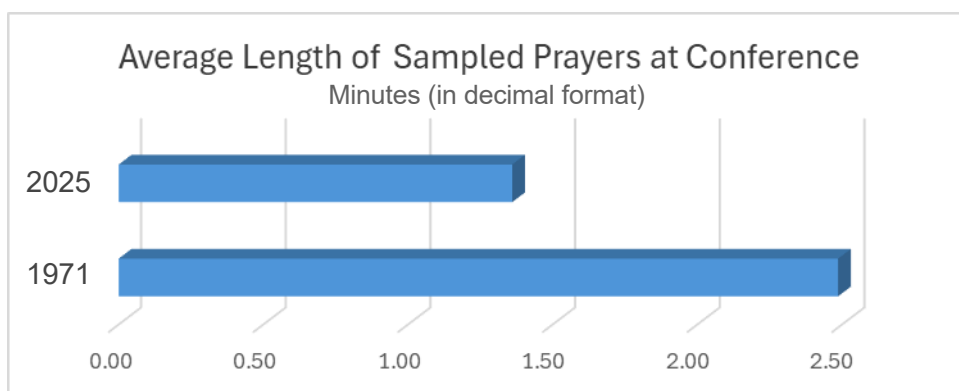


Prayers Then and Now (1971 and 2025)

Three prayers in each session is admittedly a very small sample. Observations made and comparisons drawn should therefore be taken with appropriate skepticism. Nonetheless, the way we pray does seem to have changed slightly between then and now. The changes highlighted on this page are NOT presumed to be broadly valid nor indicative of greater or lesser spirituality. They may say as much about the individual (and unnamed!) petitioners as the mood of the times, but even so, I find the differences to be interesting.

The change that first caught my attention is that prayers from earlier years seemed long to me. The record may have been a commissioning prayer from the late 1970s that lasted nearly four and one-half minutes. That turns out to have been unusual even then, but the chart below suggests that our public prayers now are only 55% as long as they were fifty years ago.



A second change found in these sample prayers is in the forms of address used. In the prayers from 1971, some form of Father (dear, gracious, our, heavenly) was used almost exclusively, in some 20 of 22 direct addresses. There was only one occurrence each of Lord and God. In the prayers from 2025, the Lord was addressed 5 times, and Father, God, and Jesus were addressed 4 times each. It is of interest to me that the 2025 prayers have made much more limited use of the term "Father," and at least one petitioner's predominate address was to "Jesus," the Son, who was never addressed in the sampled 1971 prayers.

In another change, 2 of 3 petitioners in 1971 made significant use of thee/thou/thine in their prayers. In 2025, these forms of address had been replaced entirely by some form of "you."

In general, the 1971 prayers were more specific in their mention of the "task of evangelism," more aware of a limited time to work before being "called home" to meet God "face-to-face," and more likely to express specific thanksgivings. The 2025 prayers included more declarations of praise or love for God and the only specific request that we be forgiven for our failings.

As these prayers drew to a close, they conformed very closely to one another. Four of six prayers were "in Jesus name" (though some said "we pray" and some "I pray"). One was "for Jesus' sake" and one was simply "in your name" (with the most recent address being "Lord"). All six ended, as this reflection does, with "Amen."