

YONGE STREET MISSION



PRAYER  
FOR THE  
CITY

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BY: BILL RYAN,  
DIRECTOR OF STAFF CARE



## BLESSING OTHERS

*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure.*

Matthew 12: 34, 35

*I* will always remember a sermon delivered by our former Executive Director Glenn Taylor. He talked about the power of the words that we speak and their effect on the lives of others. He said that in our conversations, we either invite people to live by blessing them or we invite them to die by cursing them. Do we offer words of encouragement or discouragement? Are we aware of the tone and the inflection of our voice and the expression shown on our face? The combination of each of these methods of communication merges to produce a clear, unmistakable message.

In our prayers, we often appeal to God on behalf of others. On occasion, like David in some of the Psalms, we curse others. Often we do this because we have been hurt and so we lash out. Sometimes we curse due to our lack

of understanding, patience or compassion. We speak in haste, not considering the consequences of our words if God were to actually act upon our request.

Jesus calls us to live by a different standard – one that summons us to bless others. Let us be known as people who bless others. Our words should be used to bring healing to people who are suffering and encouragement to ones who are disheartened. We are called to bring harmony out of discord and laughter where there is anguish. Our speech can bring life to others.

In the same way in our prayers, may we seek the wellbeing of all. Let us ask God to bless the city and all of its citizens. Let us ask God to bless all who lack understanding with wisdom. Let us ask God to bless all who are in pain with comfort. Let us ask God to bless us with eyes that see the true beauty that is all around us. Through our prayers, our words and our deeds, let us invite people to truly live.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Bill

*Prayer for the City is written by  
Mission directors and staff.*

*As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.*

Genesis 8:22

Many people at Church at the Mission are in the autumn of their years or have led colourful lives, our leaves bronzed and golden through exposure to the worldly elements. Many have been exposed to extreme conditions, our branches bowed and scarred. Some of us continue to go unnoticed, yet stand tall and steadfast against the cold wind and beating rain. All people have a story to tell. All people can offer support and shelter.

When we, as Church, pray for one another, let us uphold one another in the prayers of our hearts. In so doing, not only do we bless each other – we bless the Lord our God! Pray that as we open the eyes of our hearts to see the beauty of His creation as the harvest season comes to an end, each one of us will discover the saplings that grow beneath their leafy canopy. Pray that as we discover God's shelter for the saplings, may we also discover the faith to know how much more our Sovereign God will protect His children!

Father, we thank you for providing our daily bread and for all who labour to bring Your harvest home. Bestow upon us a generous heart, that ALL might share from Your garden. This we ask, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour – Amen.

*He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*

Matthew 13:31

During chapel time at the children's overnight camp last summer, everyone was reflecting on the theme, "Who is Jesus?" One young man named Denny answered, "He is my wings." When asked why, he replied, "Freedom is important to me."

Amazingly he had summarized in a few words the purpose of the children's programs – to give freedom to kids whose lives hold many restrictions and challenges. Denny came to our overnight camp five years ago as a frustrated, angry preteen seeking change. Over the next four years he received care, friendship, tutoring and leadership training. He found direction and purpose and evolved into a gentle teenager and a great role model. He has become a popular and respected youth volunteer. He holds down part-time jobs that enable him to buy bus tickets, school supplies and have a slice of pizza with his friends – things that used to be a luxury to him and his family.

Please give thanks for the children who come to the Mission and pray for continued blessings of growth, maturity and freedom.

At age 18, Roland had never been in a dentist's chair. Growing up poor in downtown Toronto, going to the dentist had never been an affordable option. Now his teeth were missing or rotten and causing him great pain.

It took some coaxing by Evergreen Health Centre staff for Roland to put his name on the list. Even as he sat waiting, staff had to continue to reassure him that it wouldn't be all that painful and that the result would be worthwhile.

Once begun, the process was long and arduous. Correcting a lifetime of dental neglect doesn't happen overnight. In fact, it took several sessions of sitting in the dentist's chair before all the cavities had been filled, the plaque had been scraped off, and the missing teeth had been replaced with a bridge.

What a miraculous transformation resulted from those hours in 'the chair'! Suddenly the shy and somber young man was beaming from ear to ear. He walked taller, spoke clearly and had the courage, at last, to apply for a job.

Please offer a prayer of gratitude for all the volunteer dentists, hygienists and other health care professionals who tirelessly give of their time and talents to heal and transform the lives of street-involved youth in the Evergreen Health Centre. Pray that this healing work may continue to help youth make positive changes in their lives.

At times it can be hard not to feel overwhelmed. Day after day we see lives in constant flux, with little respite from various external and internal conflicts. In spite of these barriers though, people continue to carry on with resolute determination.

At YSM, we share in these ups and downs with our community. Sometimes we can get past the turmoil and for a few minutes just chat about the small stuff – the ballgame last night, movies we like and musings on the weather. On the surface, these are things of little intrinsic value but it's in these moments that we see beyond all the conflict to the whole person.

Our community members are people created by God and of great value to God.

Give praise to God who loves and takes care of each one of us, even in times of uncertainty. Pray that all would know God's peace.

*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

John 16: 33

*In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ...Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David.*

Luke 2:1, 4

In Luke's version of the birth narrative, there is precise information about the context in which these world-changing events will take place. Jesus is born in a time and place and amongst a family setting. It helps us understand his story.

Many individuals who use YSM's services have had much dislocation in their lives. Those who have lived on the streets have often moved between shelters and boarding homes. Refugee families have left familiar clans and cultures for a country that is different in social norms, food, family and climate.

One of the deepest human needs we see is the desire to be known, for others to comprehend and appreciate our story. At potluck meals, everyone contributes food from home with a story about the recipe's origin. They become feasts where a time, place and people who have been very important are remembered and celebrated. Our digital storytelling program this past year matched seniors with youth from the Regent Park community to capture stories and build links across time and place.

Please pray that every member of our community would feel known – that staff, volunteers and other community members would listen to their stories throughout the year to learn about their special times, places and people. Amen.

“Jesus, it is depressing and scary to see  
How much I need for today  
I have no money for my daily needs  
When someone looks at me, I feel afraid that they  
know it!  
I am in deep trouble  
I have people depending on me  
Now I don’t know how to provide for them  
You, the provider of all, help me in my crisis  
Each time the telephone rings, I am afraid  
It is someone calling to ask me to repay what I owe  
When I get my daily mail, I am afraid to open it  
Because it usually is unpaid bills  
I repent for the times I spent lavishly  
Without thinking  
Forgive me for using all that I had mindlessly  
Jesus, please have mercy on me  
You always helped me through my hard times  
You never waited for me to thank you  
I am sorry that I was ungrateful  
Today when I stand and pray  
I have nothing to offer you but my tears  
Tears of loss, depression and guilt  
Thank you Lord for being here  
And understanding my pain. Amen.”

Pray for all who are in financial crisis in St. James Town.

Please pray for people who don’t have money to buy food, for children who are victims of a parent’s overspending and for all who need God’s presence and guidance this week.

*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.”*

Luke 2: 13-14

At last Christmas week is here, with all of the pressure of a deadline. At the Mission we will have reached out to about 5,000 individuals by Christmas Day, making sure that all who turn to us receive a measure of comfort and cheer.

These can be cold and bleak days for many in our community, but we are very fortunate to receive the outpouring of generosity from families, schools, churches and corporate groups from across our great city.

God’s great gift of love is freely shared by Mission staff and volunteers along with holiday meals, food, toys and other gifts. This is felt and deeply appreciated – a lady who turned to us a few years ago wrote:

*“Your warm welcome and outstanding efforts helped me with food and moral support. God bless you and thank you for bringing hope to many people in need like me!”*

Please remember in your prayers the thousands of people in need helped by the Mission at this time of year. May we all remember and give thanks for the greatest gift of this holy season.

*For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.*

Deut. 15:11

Yonge Street Mission is called to demonstrate God's love, peace and justice to people living in economic, social and spiritual poverty in Toronto. Nonetheless, the need for God's love, peace and justice is world-wide.

In our world today, many people are disadvantaged in one way or another. Some lack the basic necessities of life, food, clothing and shelter; some face discrimination because of religion, race, social status and gender.

We have wars, famine, natural and man-made disasters. We see pictures of the effect of these disasters on the lives of people – despair on their faces as they feel helpless.

Yonge Street Mission and many other national and international organizations work to bring hope where there seems to be none. To provide where there is a need, to educate where there is lack of knowledge, to give counsel in the face of emotional despair, to bring the light of Christ into lives where spiritual darkness exists.

Pray that through these good works the life circumstances of many will change for the better and they will receive the peace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. We ask that you join us in prayer for Yonge Street Mission this week, and for all in need of God's love, peace and justice in the year ahead.

Throughout the year, many young people come to volunteer with YSM. They come with their school/church group, family or on their own.

They help to serve meals, sort clothing donations, restock the shelves of our food bank, paint hallways and warmly welcome people to the YSM community.

Volunteering with YSM is often a meaningful and transformative experience for young people. Not only do they learn about urban poverty and the communities we serve, they also learn about the impact they can have. They learn that by engaging a community member in conversation, they can journey with someone. They learn to value each task no matter how small, and they learn that they too can be advocates for the poor.

These lessons inspire youth to return home and raise awareness among their peers, to strengthen their spiritual journey, to start social justice groups at their schools/churches, to commit to an ongoing volunteer role or to lead food and clothing drives. Many of the young people who volunteer with YSM become leaders in their schools, families and churches. They are changed by their experience and can become the change that is needed in their own community.

Please pray for the young people that will come to volunteer with the Mission this year. Pray that their experiences be rewarding and that they discover within themselves the gifts they have to offer. Bless them in their journey to make Toronto a better city.

Lord, make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me bring your love.

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.

These wonderful words, written by St. Francis of Assisi, capture exactly the prayer and daily activity of Evergreen Drop-In staff.

For peace, hope and love are exactly the elements that staff endeavour to share with youth who enter the Drop-In.

Recent research indicates that youth don't take to the streets for fun. They are driven to the streets by addictions, abuse, violence, family disruption, etc. They come to the streets full of fear, mistrust and rage and transmit their negative feelings to those around them, often even to those who try to help them.

Staff get to know youth when they come to the Drop-In. They build trusting relationships, encourage youth to make better choices for their lives and let them know that they are valued and cared for.

Only after that bond of trust has been established and the youth's self image and worth have been improved, is it possible for youth to begin to think about long term goals. Only after youth have recognized the negative impact of the abuse they experienced in their lives and the damaging effect of their anger on others are they able to learn how to interact with others in appropriate and positive ways.

Pray for staff that they might continue to reach out in love to street-involved youth and be channels of God's peace.

*“How can I hope to get a job as a 17-year-old with no education, no skills and no experience?”*

This is a frequent question in the Evergreen Employment Centre where so many street-involved youth come seeking assistance with what seems like a hopeless task – finding a job.

Teenagers who leave behind school, friends, family and home and move to the street are ill prepared to survive in the employment jungle. Full of high hopes and lofty expectations, their aspirations are common to youth – computer programmers, social workers, executives – but they have none of the foundational requirements to achieve their goals. Many have never worked. The only ‘professions’ for which a great many poor and homeless people feel qualified are panhandling, drug dealing or prostitution.

Fortunately, Evergreen employment counsellors transform the minimal bits of experience that youth have, and activities in which youth are accomplished or interested, into a picture of someone who might just get hired by a prospective employer. It won’t likely be a great job to start, but with the encouragement and coaching that youth receive from our staff, they are able to get into the employment stream, knowing that they will then be able to work their way up.

Please pray that Evergreen counsellors may, with ingenuity and creativity, assist youth in finding employment. Pray that youth will have the strength and support needed to move away from the streets.

*The Lord is my strength and song; he has become my salvation. He is my God and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.*

Exodus 15: 2

We serve a God who cares deeply about the injustice and abuse that occurs around the world and in our own communities.

Many community members live in difficult circumstances with few resources here in Canada and yet find a way to support loved ones in desperate situations in other parts of the world. One woman has sent money for children in Bangladesh who have trouble paying school fees. She lives with her husband, two teenage sons and a baby in a one-bedroom apartment in downtown Toronto. She talks about how much she has and how she wants to help others “back home”.

Pray for the families in our Women & Family Programs who struggle with poverty and settlement in Canada. Pray for the families that they have left behind and continue to support through their prayers and meagre resources. Pray that they will find the strength and joy of God to help them overcome their sadness when they remember their loved ones.

Pray for their children growing up with poverty, for their protection, success in school and for helpers to guide and support them as they grow. Pray that God might open the “eyes of our hearts” that we will love and accept people of different faiths and cultures. Pray that all who attend our programs will experience God’s love through our actions.

## FEBRUARY 1 – 7

*So Peter was kept in jail, but the people of the church were praying earnestly to God for him.*

Acts 12: 5

Being in prison is often a traumatic experience, whether it is deserved or not.

It is also a time for great reflection and exploring options for life changes. Please pray for our women who are currently incarcerated, for ones who are making the decision to let God direct their lives. May they grow in their faith, strengthen their foundation in Christ and allow Him to direct their path. Pray that God will put good people in their lives and open doors of opportunity upon their release so they can start life afresh.

Pray for the women on the street who, because of addictions, poverty or enslavement, feel forced to sell themselves. Prostitution is a most abusive lifestyle that not only robs one of dignity but hope as well. Pray that women trapped in the sex trade will find freedom from the bondage and healing from their torments. Pray that God will give every woman the strength and courage to grab on to the help that reaches out.



**Y O N G E  
S T R E E T  
M I S S I O N**

**306 GERRARD ST. EAST  
TORONTO, ONTARIO M5A 2G7  
PHONE: 416-929-9614  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-416-5111  
FAX: 416-929-7204  
WEB SITE: WWW.YSM.CA  
CHURCH AT THE MISSION  
24 HOUR PRAYER LINE:  
416-929-9614, EXT. 3502  
EMAIL: CATM@YSM.CA**