

YONGE STREET MISSION



PRAYER
FOR THE
CITY

MAY 17
20

AUG. 15
10

BY: KAREN BACH,
MISSION MINISTRY OFFICER



CREATIVITY:

We embrace the creative spark in the expression of our calling.

*Y*ou might not think of serving food or providing foot care as creative endeavours. Yet, at YSM, creativity is one of our core values. So how do these disparate realities connect?

The intersection between creativity and service, it seems to me, comes when the individuals providing the service embrace the creative spark with which they have been blessed to enhance their ministry and assure the excellence of their expressions of care.

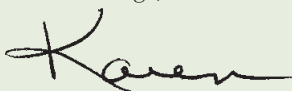
Whether serving meals to seniors or socially isolated adults or working on the feet of street-involved youth, staff use all the resources available to them to ensure that their programs meet the need in the very best way possible. The meals are nutritious, delicious and attractively presented, and are served in a warm, welcoming communal atmosphere where people are made to feel they belong. The foot clinic is efficient, clean and accommodating to the needs of the youth, and staff and volunteers

offer a compassionate, listening ear in addition to good health care.

Throughout the Mission, staff are encouraged to utilize their creative resources to stretch their budgets, to meet unusual needs, and to give hope to individuals who have lost hope. In the face of tough economic times, they use their creative energies to ensure that programming is engaging, exciting, and appealing to community members without costing a lot of money. When individuals share their needs with staff, they often receive suggested solutions that are out of the ordinary, yet appropriate for the situation. Similarly, to people for whom life appears perpetually overshadowed by hopelessness, staff bring words of encouragement and comfort that help to push aside the grayness of despair so that the light of hope can shine through.

As you read through these Prayers for the City you will see various instances where staff have utilized their creativity to bring care, compassion and the love of Christ to individuals with whom they are journeying. Please pray for all YSM staff as they endeavour to live out God's call on their lives. Pray for staff as they assist community members to find their own creative sparks with which to experience the abundance of life that Christ came to bring.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Karen

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

The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the body.

Proverbs 15:30

What is “good news”? At Yonge Street Mission there is a different answer given every hour every day we are open.

- To a hungry youth living on the streets waiting for Evergreen to open, good news is that there is a delicious hot meal being prepared for him to enjoy.
- To a senior who has had all her family move away from the city, good news is that she has friends waiting to see her at the Seniors Luncheon.
- To a child who needs help with computer skills, good news is that there are enrichment classes after school with great teachers and volunteers to guide him in the learning process.
- To a newcomer to Canada struggling with learning English, good news is that she can practice her conversational skills in our Women & Family programs.
- For a person who has lost hope, good news is that God loves and cares deeply about him.

Good news is often related to an impending change for the better in quality of life. Good news gives hope. It lifts the spirit and gives meaning to living. It influences physical, social, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing.

Pray that the staff and volunteers of Yonge Street Mission will continue to share good news with everyone they meet this week.

From a very early age, Tim struggled with a stuttering problem. While in elementary school Tim was ridiculed and bullied because of his speech impediment. As Tim got older and stronger he learned that he could fight back against the bullies. His fighting increased and ultimately led to problems both at school and with the law.

His life spiralled downwards to the point where he came to Evergreen to get help with the basic necessities of life. Over time the staff befriended him and eventually he was invited to participate in Street Vents, a program that trains youth in martial arts as a way to learn discipline and channel aggression.

Street Vents has not only given him a safe outlet for his anger but it has also done amazing things for his self esteem. Just recently Tim was asked to speak in public about what the program has meant to him and he did it.

Tim has returned to school and rarely comes to Evergreen anymore. While the stutter still exists, it is no longer a source of frustration and it certainly isn't keeping him from moving forward with his life.

God cares about our smallest insecurities and our biggest problems. A stutter might not seem like much to some but to Tim it defined who he was. We offer prayers of thanks for his newfound confidence.

Please pray for staff to see the God-given potential in all the youth at Evergreen. Pray that youth will come to know that God loves them and cares about them – stutters and all.

...your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven...

As the children in the Saturday Breakfast Club reflect and debate about a perfect world *on earth as it is in heaven*, staff, youth in training and volunteers are struck silent by their profundity. Here are some of the children's descriptions of what heaven is like: opening gates, freedom, no earthquakes, family, peaceful, a garden, kindness and honesty. Here is their advice on what it takes to bring heaven to earth: imagination, participation, cooperation, respect, friendship, happiness, spirit, nature, health, fun, celebration, our hearts and love!

There is no better place to start the quest for paradise than in children's hearts. Our juniors (grade 1-4) in the Breakfast Club are journeying on an adventure to discover the Kingdom of God. The children come from a diversity of backgrounds and faiths but hold a common vision. They have assembled a large cardboard castle, and painted and festooned it with jewels and animal stickers to represent artistically what God's Kingdom looks like to them. A young child's vision of earth and creation is beautifully and creatively expressed in art and words. It is an inspiration for us as adults.

Pray the children will be able to hold fast to the truth and purity of their dreams. Pray that our lives and our community would reflect the reality of a God who loves, protects, and cares for children and meets their needs.

Genesis Place – the Mission’s community within the community – provides housing, but also so much more. “I walked in this door and it saved my life – *‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in’* – exactly like Matthew 25:35,” said Moira, a GP resident. “Here at the Mission I found a home and friends.”

Please pray for our work at Genesis Place that offers healing and hope to many. As a safe and supportive place to live, GP does so much to restore the dignity of people living on the edge, gives single mothers and others alone in the world an extended family, and provides a toehold in a new life for refugee families.

Genesis Place residents freely give their time and talents back to the Mission, as volunteers and program participants, giving a voice to the concerns of the poor.

“*I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me’* – exactly like Matthew 25:36,” continued Moira. “It was a prison of my own making, but GP helped me find my way out. Being here is like being held in the hand of God!”

Please pray that all residents may experience God’s loving embrace through our work at Genesis Place.

Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

Hebrews 13:1-3

At Church at the Mission, a lot of our folks have some experience of prison. For many, jail was a horrible place but it was also where they drew close to the Lord. Having God's people visit them regularly helped them through the hard days and dark nights. Learning the Bible was integral to growing spiritually.

After prison, having a church that welcomes them into the community and does not judge is a huge relief. Loneliness and shame are enemies, and having a place to belong and feel accepted makes all the difference. It is crucial for people to be able to share their gifts and be valued for who they are – that is where transformation occurs.

Please pray for people who have found a home at Church at the Mission and for all yet to experience community life and God's healing love. We also ask for prayer for all the discipleship courses we offer, for summer outreach camps, and for our outreach into the neighbourhood, in prisons, and into the places where the lost are.

May we be a blessing to people among us as well as around us. May the love of Jesus flow through us!

In our modern world, where we often communicate electronically, we need to intentionally take time in person to say, “You’ve worked very hard – well done!”

Each June at YSM we celebrate the milestone achievements of our community members. Recognitions include our Connecting Youth to Work participants completing their external job placements, children and youth completing another grade at school and members in our Women and Family Program completing their skills building classes and their young ones graduating from the Kindergarten Readiness program.

At a recent TD Securities Computer Lab graduation, one ten-year-old valedictorian shared that the Introductory program would prepare him “to be a law practitioner. This computer knowledge will help me to keep and gather all the information that I need!” Ending his speech with gratitude for the opportunities provided, he noted, “With love, true friendship, forgiveness and compassion, we will build a modern Canada. This is our commitment.”

We give praise and thanks for the achievements of our community members past and present. Please pray for all who have made it past barriers that posed challenges in their lives and who have worked hard to prepare themselves for the future.

“I’m not worth it.”

At Evergreen we hear this statement often, and see it lived out daily in the lives of our youth. John, the 23-year-old homeless youth who comes in for coffee, doesn’t feel his worth. He doesn’t think he deserves a place to call home. Trina, a bright 18-year-old girl with a giving heart, feels she is better off with an abusive partner than no partner at all. And Steve, a 20-year-old from rural Ontario, wonders about his mother who is an addict. He has so much anger at her, yet he yearns for her love and acceptance. Worst of all, Steve predicts he will become the same way in time because that is the curse of the family he was born to.

God, help us to remember John, Trina, Steve, and all the youth who experience brokenness every day of their lives.

No matter what they have suffered or endured, we know that You see love and hope in each person. May staff and volunteers embody this hope at Evergreen, in conversations, thoughts and actions. Let youth see You through a smile, a hug, a listening ear. Grant young people a glimpse of your love; in a day that might be filled with darkness, let Evergreen be your light. We pray for all who strive to be the face and hands of Christ to street-affected youth.

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

1 John 4:16

Our work in urban ministry has only one constant and that is God. The rest is a picture that is daily changing. When God calls us to ministry work, He invites us to keep our hearts open to possibilities and dreams.

When He calls, He doesn't just put an open invitation out there and expect people to follow after Him. He gives us minds and hearts that are creative. He puts people in leadership, in our teams and in our community with lots of gifts that are unique and special so that we can co- create with Him.

As a Christian community, we are called to be a sign of hope and to create a wholesome society. We should be a community that is ready to face the day to day challenges with a long term vision that will fit the needs of today and tomorrow.

For this we need the gift of creativity. Let us pray that the ministry teams across the city will have the grace and wisdom required to creatively build His kingdom on earth.

As a "Mission in Motion" we are moving towards new initiatives and projects. Let us hold hands together to pray for the gift of creativity so that the strategies developed for our community development initiatives in St. James Town and elsewhere will be ones that meet the changing needs of the communities.

It wasn't the first time that, upon checking her cupboards, Karen saw nothing beyond two cans of tuna, one can of vegetables and an almost empty bottle of soya sauce. It wasn't the first time that the hunger pinch, growing heavy in the pit of her tummy, clouded her mind. It wasn't the first time that her heart filled with distress and sadness.

Hunger has this knack of kicking you right there where it really hurts, at the very centre of your sense of worth. Not being able to fend for herself was for Karen the heaviest piece of her baggage.

There was no escape. The battering rain and wind outside made driving her wheelchair impossible. Forget about calling the food bank: the week before, the telephone company decided to wait no longer for her to come up with a nasty outstanding balance.

Three cans and a bottle. As tears ran down her cheeks, Karen looked again at her empty fridge and discovered that she could add a half-used jar of mayonnaise to her cooking invention. She chuckled at the thought that people do this all the time: they create satisfying meals out of “nothing.” Just like Jesus did when, without a shopping list and with no notice, he fed more than 5,000 people!

“Oh God!” Karen prayed. “Let me not forget that all I may need is good humored creativity.” Please pray for all who will visit the YSM Food Bank this week.

*The field of the poor may produce abundant food,
but injustice sweeps it away.*

Proverbs 13:23

Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

The Christian Community Centre is a vibrant place where youth from different races, religions and cultures gather every week for after school programs.

What makes the youth program a success? We believe that success is seen in small things that are often difficult to measure: the hugs the staff receive every week, the young woman who runs in to show off her report card, the teen who shares his dinner with another who arrived too late.

This spring one of our youth unexpectedly lost her mother. Her peers rallied together and immediately went to give her their condolences. Since only her mother was living here and the father was stationed in a different country, the young woman had to move back to her country of origin, after only ten months in Canada.

On her last day at our Friday Night Drop In, all the youth spent time with her, laughing, encouraging and consoling her. When it was time to say goodbye, one by one the youth embraced her with hugs and kisses that seemed to last a life time...That's a picture of success at our Community Centre!

Please pray for all our youth who get up every day to face the unexpected turns of life.

Many times when you ask people if they are creative, they claim they are not. When we interview potential YSM volunteers, they often claim they are not creative either. They do have the desire to give back, to get involved, to work with our community and to serve. However, they claim that creativity is not one of their attributes. We see it differently.

Creativity is one of YSM's Core Values: "*Creativity: we embrace the creative spark in the expression of our calling.*" This includes our staff and our volunteers.

We want to thank our many volunteers for their countless gifts including creativity. They come up with creative ways to engage our community, solve problems, answer complex questions, decorate, entertain, cook, plan, inspire, sing, dance, strategize, conduct research, spruce up.... The list can go on and on. Our volunteers embrace the creative spark in their calling. They tirelessly share their time, talents and treasures and for that we are most grateful.

Creative God, help us to see the creativity in all that we do. Help us to appreciate the gifts you give to all of us; the gifts we bring to work amongst the broken, the lonely, the developing, the young and old, the disheartened, the hopeful.

Thank you for our volunteers who work alongside us; creativity abounds in all that they do. Help us to appreciate the gifts we all share for the betterment of our communities and remember that they all come from you, our Creator.

He was a quiet kid – came in for food, spoke when spoken to, didn't get into trouble, minded his own business. In fact, if more of the kids we see at Evergreen were like him, our job would seem so much easier.

Then, unexpectedly, he died. He was swimming in Lake Ontario, got caught in a current and drowned. It took the police two days to find his only living relative in a nearby city – his father. But his father didn't care that his son had died; he wanted nothing to do with the body. So the government cremated his body and disposed of it. There was no funeral. In both life and death he was alone: unwanted, unloved, unmourned.

He lived and slept on the street, and had health problems that brought him into the Health Centre. We bathed and cared for his feet on a number of occasions. They were raw, bleeding, blistered, ulcerated and diseased. Apart from those times, he rarely removed his shoes for fear they would be stolen.

Now we ask ourselves: During the times our lives touched, did we do for him all we should have and could have? Did he feel God's touch through us? Did he know more about a loving God and a friend named Jesus because he came to Evergreen?

Pray for youth at Evergreen that they will experience God's love through the loving touch of our staff. Pray that youth will know Jesus as a friend through the hand of friendship that we reach out.

AUGUST 9 – 15

*Who carries out the words of his servants
and fulfills the predictions of his messengers,
who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,'
of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be built,'
and of their ruins, 'I will restore them.'*

Isaiah 44:26

Community building is at the core of all the Mission reaches out to do! We inhabit each program area with dedicated staff and volunteers who work with people who thirst to build a better future. We help to build on strengths many people may not realize they have. We work to restore the newness of life for people whose lives have been broken.

Your prayers mean so much to us!



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