

YONGE STREET MISSION



PRAYER
FOR THE
CITY

FEB. 7
20

MAY 15
11

BY: KAREN BACH,
MISSION MINISTRY OFFICER



JUSTICE:

We recognize the rights of all for inclusion and advocate for and with those living with injustice.

*I*n God's reign, everyone is included; the poor have access to sufficient means; the disenfranchised are empowered; the marginalized are invited into community and made to feel they belong.

In the world, life is not so pleasant. People living with poverty, addictions or mental illness often experience great injustices that exclude them from all that Canadian society has to offer. People without means or financial resources often find themselves rendered invisible by their poverty. Ones suffering from addictions or mental illness are often blamed for their afflictions and shunned by mainstream society. All suffer incredible injustices regularly.

According to the prophet Micah (Micah 6: 8), the Lord requires us, *"To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God."* Doing justice is the first and foremost requirement of the Lord of all Christians. Doing justice is not an optional

addition to loving, being kind, or walking humbly, it is essential in each and every case.

That is why, at Yonge Street Mission, we do all that we can to ensure that community members feel included and receive fair and just treatment. That is why we are expanding our efforts beyond relief to include community development. Through community development, we do more than just focus on their needs, we help community members to identify their assets so that they will feel confident in their own abilities and competent to act on their own behalf.

In addition to speaking up on behalf of people in our programs, we assist them in finding their own voices so that they can speak to people in power in ways that will ensure they are heard, acknowledged, and effective. Besides offering them safe and pleasant places to gather, we invite them to take an interest in and ownership of the spaces that we occupy so that they will not just feel included, but will know that they are an integral part of our community.

In the prayers that follow, we invite you to pray for justice in the lives of all who come to YSM so that they may experience a glimpse of the reign of God.

Many blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping tail.

*Prayer for the City is written by
Mission directors and staff.
Names have been changed for privacy.*

Ron has been coming to Evergreen for a long time. He is funny and likeable but his story feels bleak, distressing, even hopeless.

Ron was born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. He lived in one foster care home after another. Ron struggled with making friends, felt insecure at school. By the time he was in grade nine, he rejected both school and foster care, and decided to make his way on the streets of Toronto.

The streets weren't much kinder and Ron developed a serious substance abuse problem. His addictions have had grave consequences, leading him into a world of abuse and crime.

Over time some things have improved. He is housed, is no longer in an abusive relationship, and volunteers on a regular basis. Ron's volunteering is a source of pride and keeps him motivated to make better decisions.

However, the addictions remain. It is not that hard to look at Ron and wonder what if ... what if school had gone better, what if his mom had never been an addict, what if he had had more of a chance?

At Evergreen our calling is not to success, but to relationship – both with God and humankind. We are not called to 'fix' Ron, but to journey with him. We wish, hope and pray that one day Ron will find an answer to his addictions. But that day hasn't come yet.

Please pray for Ron, for a miracle. Pray for patience and endurance for Evergreen staff.

Winter – cold... isolating... unpredictable... slippery... dark... dreaded.

Winter is more than a challenge when your coat and hat are wearing thin, when your strength is sapped from eating low-nutrient, cheap food, when your neighbours stay inside to avoid the cold and you are alone, when you walk or ride your scooter everywhere and the snow is deep, when you have nothing to do.

One evening, two older women huddled together arm in arm in the lobby of the Christian Community Centre. They struggled up the stairs with their eyes focused on the lounge where a warm New Hope Fellowship dinner was being prepared. One of the friends turned to the other and said, “Just hope we can find seats together.”

Our community members are loyal and resilient and depend on us to consistently be there. Pray that all of our programs will remain available and relevant with abundant resources to share in these tough economic times.

Winter is a time when the CCC is especially useful for the community we serve. Our staff requests prayer for community members and neighbours who are isolated and vulnerable. Pray that new coats and winter wear provided by generous donors will be plentiful to meet the need. Pray that the Food Bank selection will be bounteous and nutritious, especially for people with dietary restrictions. Pray that all will feel welcome and part of God’s loving community here.

Winter at the Christian Community Centre – warm... accepting... reliable... welcoming... bright... hopeful... celebratory.

“Listen to me”

“I am human just like you”

“Take time to understand us and our situation before rushing to make choices for us”

“We want justice”

The fire on Wellesley Ave. in St. James Town last fall made a lot of community people shout in frustration. It has been a difficult time, not just for the community members but for agencies trying to figure out the best way to be useful to people in need.

Learning to listen well and trying to find solutions to the multitude of issues that have cropped up after this massive fire has made us think of justice in a new way.

It is a difficult place to be at times, when issues are so layered and different players are involved. Keeping our focus on Him and reflecting on the question, “What Jesus would do, and how do we respond like Him?” grants wisdom. Wisdom to be that listening ear to Sara who cries out in frustration because she doesn’t know when she will get back to her apartment, to Hussain who feels powerless in the face of rigid bureaucracy, to Devi who has no toys to play with.

Being Christ in the face of struggle and pain – that is what we pray for in this season. By following His example, we hope to be good stewards of His justice. This is the justice that creates Shalom.

Blessed are they who maintain justice, who constantly do what is right.

Psalm 106: 3

...may the Lord grant all your requests.

Psalm 20: 5

Recently a parent in the community shared with us some of the challenges she has had with one of her children. One of her comments was that “YSM is the only place he wants to come to.” She is grateful to the staff for the care they give her kids.

This winter, 200 children and a growing group of adults will come to our weekly computer classes. What they learn will help them gain confidence as well as computer skills. For the adults the goal is getting a job, or learning to navigate the internet while improving their English.

For the children it is about discovery and creativity! Whether it's developing their own webpage for the first time, or working together as a team to make their own movie, these experiences can be transformational.

Please pray for us this winter, as we seek to provide excellent computer classes to the families in our community. Our desire is to be thoughtful, relational and innovative in our approach to computer education.

Pray also for our children's camp being held over the March Break week. What an exciting time for 30 children to be together with a wonderful group of high school volunteers, as well as our computer lab staff team. Our week is packed with computer activities, crafts, games, a special field trip, plus all the group fun that can fit into one week. Pray for significant moments of relationship building.

My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

Isaiah 32: 18

On disability support, Joanne had lived in decrepit rooming houses for years, never secure in a place to live or with her finances. There were times in her life when she also had to use the shelter system, and that made her depressed and scared. Her ties to family were not strong, and so she also lacked emotional support. She had no peace and certainly no “quiet resting place.”

Through a friend who volunteers at the Mission, she heard about the transitional housing offered by Genesis Place. Eager for a new start but also seized by distrust and bitterness because of her struggles, she decided to try one more time and met with Genesis Place staff.

Eventually, Joanne was welcomed into Genesis Place with her own bachelor apartment. Although she did not have much to “move in” with, her moving day was a joyful experience. As she got to know her neighbours, she started to tentatively develop new friendships which made her feel part of something she had rarely experienced – an inclusive community.

Pray for Joanne and all the residents and staff at Genesis Place; that they may continue to create a just, inclusive community where God’s promise of a peaceful and secure home will be fulfilled.

Seek good, not evil, that you may live.

Amos 5: 14

In the space of a few weeks last fall, four young men from our youth program were gunned down. Lou was 19, a former participant in our program who chose a path with potential for a violent end.

Wade was active in our program. He was a bright funny young person with many friends, confirmed by attendance at his memorial service. He dabbled in trouble in the way of many 15-year-old boys. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Shot dead, he leaves behind a younger sister and his single mom.

The next loss was Bryce, 24 years old, a shining light in our youth program. A college graduate, he worked in our community and hoped to become a police officer. He walked down a neighbourhood street after work into a bad scene. Shot dead.

Finally Nat, a friend of Wade, who had been laughing with us one day and was shot the next afternoon.

How do we live out justice, create peace and honour their memory?

We work harder to advocate for safety and meaningful opportunities for our youth. We think more creatively about how to engage youth in their own community. We seek more mentors for young men who so often grow up without the presence of an engaged father. We listen patiently day after day. We seek good and not evil that we may all live and come to know a time when justice rolls down like waters.

Please hold our youth and youth staff team in prayer and consider how you might make a difference in their lives.

First you get laid off.

Your Employment Insurance runs out while you're still looking for work.

Then you sell your car and use up your small savings.

You apply for welfare and move into a rooming house.

Your relatives won't lend you any more cash.

What's next?

The YSM Food Bank.

There, you finally find someone who cares.

Someone who asks how you are doing and listens for the answer. Someone who treats you with dignity and not like a worthless drain on society. Someone who talks with you just like Jesus might have done if he hung out at the Food Bank.

Maybe Jesus *is* at the Food Bank. Is he the Coordinator? Is he that friendly volunteer? Is he the next client waiting for an appointment?

Pray for the Food Bank, for all who visit and all who serve.

But Jesus wasn't finished with them. He called his disciples and said, "I hurt for these people. For three days now they've been with me, and now they have nothing to eat. I can't send them away without a meal—they'd probably collapse on the road."

Matthew 15: 32

"When we honestly ask ourselves which persons in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares."

Henri J.M. Nouwen

The Road to Daybreak:

A Spiritual Journey

A husband of twenty years gone forever, children who die as adults before their parents, and grandchildren lost to violence.

As some people in the community wait for spring during what feels like the winter of their lives, we pray for peace and healing from grief and despair. We pray for good memories to be treasured, for hope for the future and for strength to continue each minute, each hour, each day.

We thank You for seniors in the Seniors Program and adults in the New Hope Fellowship Program whose resilience, despite personal tragedy, inspires others and who have the courage to build new relationships and leadership skills. We pray for the seeds of life and hope to take root in broken lives and to grow in Your love, where before there was despair and grief. We pray for staff to be the friend who cares. Amen.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

Psalm 139:14

YSM staff members who work with marginalized community members have a natural desire to teach and help. But sometimes the ones called to serve can fail to see the greatness already present in God's children living with poverty, addiction or abandonment.

Open our eyes, Lord, to the greatness in all Your children. All are fearfully and wonderfully made by You.

Your children at Evergreen have greatness within that allows them to defy the odds and accomplish their dreams. Anoint our eyes, that we may see past hopelessness to promise, that we may see not as the world sees, but as You see.

Heavenly Father, may we acknowledge that you are calling us to speak life and call forth the greatness existent in youth at Evergreen. You have promised abundant life. May we rejoice with the knowledge that you have fearfully and wonderfully made all of us and that your works are marvellous.

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

John 10:10

Comfort, O comfort my people.

Isaiah 40:1

One night yellow tape appeared around the corner from the Mission. Yellow tape is used by the police to cordon off a section of the community, signifying the scene of a crime. Yellow tape for this community has come to be the symbol of an act of violence.

A murder had taken place just a few hours earlier. A family, their neighbours and friends had just lost someone who they loved.

“Comfort, O comfort my people.”

No community should have to experience the sight of yellow tape. Children should not have to walk around it on their way to school. Mothers should not have to drag their grocery buggies onto the grass to avoid it. Grandparents should not have to change the route of their morning walk. Sisters and brothers should not have to close their bedroom curtains so that they will not have to look at it.

Pray for the neighbourhoods in our city that are at risk. Pray for *shalom* – peace and security – to fill the homes, sidewalks, parks and parking lots. Pray that yellow tape will be seen no more.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' Then they remembered his words.

Luke 24: 5b-8

Resurrection. Death to life. An end becomes a new beginning. The worst possible crucifixion scenario imaginable, 'the Death of God', becomes, through the resurrection of God-in-the-Flesh, Jesus Christ, the ultimate sign of hope for humanity, the ultimate reason for gratitude, the ultimate reason to live.

It is the reason Yonge Street Mission leadership focuses its energies on the ever-challenging task of discerning the Mind of Christ and why all YSM staff are called to be an incarnational presence in the communities we serve. We want to en flesh the gospel, to be messengers of hope, to be used by God in the transformation of the lives of individual people and communities.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is why the world has hope for transformation. It is why the church exists. It is why YSM exists. It's why the message of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ must always be proclaimed in word and deed at Yonge Street Mission.

Please pray that we might always be effective witnesses to Jesus' love and power, and that our hearts will ever join with the poor, who are rich in faith, in celebration of Jesus' resurrection.

Katie joined the Connecting Youth to Work (CYTW) program at Evergreen with optimism and hope. On welfare for the past few years, Katie fully embraced the chance for change.

But just as she began to experience the success of working full time and planning for a better future, things began to crumble. Relationship breakdown. Homelessness. Violence. Katie's words in response: "I knew it. When my life starts getting better, something bad always happens to bring me down."

Many Evergreen youth have low expectations of life. In the CYTW program, youth are encouraged to believe they deserve better. They are encouraged to pursue their dreams in the safe, welcoming environment of YSM through work placement opportunities and supportive relationships. Our hopes for the youth include obtaining a successful job or moving into a great career, but more importantly to begin fully realizing their identity. Discovering their unique God-given gifts and abilities brings a new sense of confidence and self-esteem which allows youth to move beyond oppressive forces in their lives.

Katie goes on pushing past the obstacles that seem to continually arise in front of her. She has developed a deeper strength and determination, but still needs our prayers.

Please pray for the youth of the CYTW program who, despite their successes in employment, continue to face the pressures of their past and present lives.

Pray for continued support, encouragement, and opportunities in their lives, that they might more fully realize their identity as God's loved and deserving ones.

MAY 9 – 15

Here in the Yonge Street Mission's Volunteer Resources Department, we are truly blessed and grateful to receive calls from people from all walks of life who want to volunteer. Some are retired community members who want to help a place they are invested in, some are people in the broader community that want to make a difference, and others may be people who need to complete volunteer hours for some reason or another.

Because we recognize the rights of all for inclusion, we find a way for people who might be in trouble in our society to get involved. It's a way for us to let them know that they are still needed, accepted and loved. We see volunteering as a leveler- it creates an equal playing field. Everyone involved is just as needed as the next, and we are all working towards a greater good.

Please pray for our volunteers, whatever the circumstances that bring them to us. May God help the Volunteer Resources Department to have the strength to guide and support our local community.

For we are partners working together for God...

I Corinthians 3: 9



**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**