

YONGE STREET MISSION



PRAYER  
FOR THE  
CITY

MAY 16  
20

AUG. 14  
11

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MISSION MINISTRY OFFICER



# THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVING WITH GOD'S BELOVED

*For everything created by God is good,  
and nothing is to be rejected, provided  
it is received with gratitude for it is  
sanctified by God's word and by prayer.*

1 Timothy 4:4

*Y*ou've no doubt heard the expression, "I couldn't see the forest for the trees." Sometimes things are so close to us that we don't even identify them. For staff at Yonge Street Mission 'gratitude' was one of these, almost missing out as a core value because, for the staff, being grateful daily is just part of who we are. No one thought to include it when we were attempting to determine what our core values might be. Fortunately, one insightful individual mentioned gratitude at the last minute and it became inculcated into the values by which we guide our programs.

Gratitude is a basic element of the unfolding of life at YSM. As our core value states, 'We

radiate joy and appreciation for all of God's gifts and celebrate the privilege of serving.' With grateful hearts, staff engage with community members, no matter how challenging or annoying one might find the other. We know that whatever current issues people may struggle with, all are created in God's image, have the very spirit/breath of God within them, and have been drawn to the Mission by God so that we might minister to them or be ministered to by them.

We know that everything created by God is good and we are grateful that God has called us into ministry with God's beloved. We are thankful that we have been blessed with the capacity to see the face of Christ within the men, women, and children whom we encounter. We give thanks for the opportunities that we have to see transformation occur regularly in their lives.

We are grateful also for all the volunteers whose presence enables us to extend our program capacity; for the donors who provide us with the necessary financial resources to continue; and for you, reader of this Prayer for the City. For without your prayers our ministry would be in vain. Please accept our deepest gratitude.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'K'.

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

Many people's connections with the Mission go back years and even decades. In the New Hope Fellowship adult drop-in, three generations of some families participate regularly.

We play ball hockey Thursdays. Chris, a trim man in his 40s, helps set a positive tone and keep tempers calm. Cleaning up one evening, he told a staff member he was thankful the game had helped him get back on course fifteen years ago.

"I was living in a crack house," he recounted. "My wife and child had left me. I weighed 200 pounds, and had been in and out of jail. I knew the next time I could be in a long time. I went into anger management courses for several years, which helped. And I played hockey here at YSM."

Chris explained how hockey had helped. "Good guys play here, and they're people whose lives are broken in some way – you know, single parent families, or no money, or what have you. We understand each other." He pointed out a younger player. "He gets angry easily. He doesn't think anger management can help him, but I bet it can."

Chris looks forward to bringing his son to play this spring when he turns 16. Thanks be to God that Chris could regain his inner compass, rejoin his family, and lovingly nurture his son.

Please pray that the men and women who play ball hockey or attend other drop-in activities find an outlet for their body and spirit that helps them face their challenges.

Every May the Teddy Bear Picnic marks a small connection that has grown to bring much joy to the Christian Community Centre. This special event brings our Lively Seniors and the Children's Homework Club together to celebrate their unique relationship as pen pals. Bonds of friendship have formed and grown through their Pen Pal Club, and over the past few years more and more children have asked to have their own special senior friend to write to.

“My grandmother lives so far away, I never see her,” said a little girl. “I’m looking forward to seeing my pen pal at the picnic. It’s really cool to do projects with her and have these parties.”

Our Children's Coordinator reports that the Pen Pal Club keeps on growing because it's popular with our children, who really respect their elders in the cultures they come from. For most, however, their grandparents are not here in Canada with them. There are so many requests for pen pals that some seniors write regularly to three children throughout the year.

“I enjoy children a lot!” says one senior who has her own grandchildren here and room in her heart for a few more special young friends.

We offer a prayer of gratitude for our elders who reach out with such open hearts. Bless all who stand in as family for others.

*David thought, “I will show kindness to Hanun son of Nahash, just as his father showed kindness to me.”*

2 Samuel 10:2

Each day at Evergreen brings new youth with addictions, mental health issues and more problems of every shape and variety. With two hundred youth visiting every day, where do you even start? Do your efforts make a difference?

These are the questions that run through our minds. Doubt creeps in and we get tired, maybe even cynical. We lack the energy to do the job we are called to. But then, if we pay attention, we'll see movement – flowers blooming in the desert.

Ricky was a regular at Evergreen for years. Addictions, abuse, crime, bad relationships, jail and immigration issues – you name it, he struggled with it. The staff at Evergreen tried hard to get him to see he was worth so much more than his worst moments. Then he stopped coming for a long time. Recently Ricky stopped by to say he had found a job and had been working for over a year. He doesn't need Evergreen anymore; he pays his own rent, buys his own food and lives a life away from the street. He thanked us for how we had helped him and kept him going when things weren't looking so good. He also wanted us to know that he had received a promotion.

Please pray for Evergreen staff to have energy and faith when challenges seem overwhelming. Pray that staff hold tightly to this promise:

*I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.*

Philippians 4:13

Building community is contagious. In our children's programming everyone works together and thinks communally.

Young children from the Homework Club grow up into teenagers and want to stay involved. Our youth training program for Grade 9 students keeps them engaged and invested in their neighbourhood.

The children's clubs and camps are organic and alive because they are run by local youth full of ideas and energy. Youth work with a large group of children of many ages and backgrounds and learn to run gym, art, science, homework and breakfast club programs. They learn skills that will help them in the work force like interviews, writing resumes, conflict management and team building.

This summer 20 local youth will be in our Counsellor in Training program, attending an overnight orientation for leadership training, working all summer with the children and camp counsellors, providing input at our daily meetings and giving insight and guidance to the children. They are the consultants and experts because most of them have been to the clubs and camps since they were young. They know how to encourage a 9-year-old to hold a frog for the first time or roast a halal marshmallow over a blazing fire.

We don't want to turn away a single child or youth who is eager to learn! Pray we will be able to accommodate the ever-growing demands for children and youth programming.

Pray for the youth CITs that they may grow in wisdom and know God's love.

*Remember in the desert, where God carried you, as one carries a child, all through our travels until we came to this place.*

Deuteronomy 1: 31

Gracious God, in the busy-ness of our day we sometimes forget to stop and to thank you for all the awesome volunteers we are blessed to cross paths with.

Our blessings are many and our hearts are filled with gratefulness: for the opportunity to serve and make the world a better place, for the volunteers who help make YSM a compassionate and safe haven, for the ability to smile and receive a smile in return.

Thank you for your grace and parental guidance, loving God. As we remember the upcoming Father's Day, we thank you for all those human fathers who volunteer with us, wanting to share their fatherly love with our community.

In the silence of our souls, as your beloved children, we thank you most of all for your unconditional love. Amen.

*As tenderly as parents treat their children, that's how tenderly you treat your worshippers God!*

Psalm 103: 13

In the Women and Family Department, we are witnesses to the beautiful transformation of women, who come first for support, friendship and belonging, then gain confidence and become leaders in their families and communities.

Jenny came as a recently single mother of two, seeking support, resources, new learning opportunities and community. The hope of starting a new chapter in her life was exciting yet scary.

Jenny enrolled in our computer and parenting classes and our weekly knitting circle. She also found support with our on-site counsellor to help her and her children cope with the changes to their family. Jenny changed from being a woman alone and isolated, to a woman sharing her story of transformation at our annual International Women's Day event. She is looking forward to continuing her studies in the hopes of one day becoming a pharmacist.

We ask that you pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten us to seek opportunities for more engagement with women in the Regent Park, Moss Park and St. James Town communities. Please pray for ways in which we can deepen our connection by providing a safe place for women to share the realities of their lives. Pray that we design creative, relevant programs that enable women to reflect, share, and open their eyes to new possibilities for growth.

*This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit...*

John 15:8

*“With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.”*

Philippians 4:6

We, at Church at the Mission (CATM), are filled with gratitude that we have YOU to journey alongside us in prayer!

O God, look down graciously upon us from Your holy dwelling place and pour forth Your abundant mercies and blessings upon CATM. As Your most holy Son walked here on earth so let Him ever be present in CATM. May we see Jesus walking in our midst.

We especially lift up the hearts of all the women who are seeking a respite this summer away from the inner city. We pray for funding for the Women’s Outreach Camps this July and August; that each woman seeking refuge, love, forgiveness and reconciliation may hear your voice, Lord God, and turn to You.

O God of Truth and Love, sustain, inspire, and enlighten Your servants. Grant us wisdom and courage to proclaim Your good news with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Continually renew missionary zeal in us and in the church, and raise up new missionaries who will follow You to the ends of the world. Make us witnesses to Your goodness, for Your glory in the entire world. In the name of Jesus, we pray for Your will to be done on earth it is in heaven. Amen.

Matthew started coming to Evergreen six months ago. When he comes in the door, he typically stands in the corner, keeping to himself completely. He stands very still, facing straight ahead, often for an hour or more at a time. As staff, we try to approach him with a gentle and friendly greeting, but he usually shrinks back from us and appears to be quite uncomfortable. A worker from another agency told us he might have an autism spectrum disorder, but no one is really sure.

Danny has been coming into Evergreen for three years. Sometimes he is pleasant to talk to, and on a really good day, we can play chess with him. But not on most days. More often than not, Danny is talking – not to himself, but to the voices he hears. He is often very distressed and angry. He has been treated by psychiatrists from time to time, but he has not been able to manage his schizophrenia very well. He has been in and out of jail and is currently sleeping in Nathan Phillips Square. He has a very hard time trusting those of us who want to help him.

Many of the youth at Evergreen live with mental illness in its various forms. Danny and Matthew are just two.

Pray that God will bring healing and hope to our youth who are living with mental illness.

*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psalm 34:18

As we are engulfed with warm weather, we realize this is a most precious time in Genesis Place housing, when tenants get to know each other again after months of staying indoors and weathering the snow and rain.

This time of the year could be called a ‘refresher’ season. It is a refresher of our understanding of one another, a refresher of appreciating one another and a refresher of becoming a good neighbor showing God’s love.

A refresher season can allow GP staff to have fresh ideas and innovative ways of handling and dealing with tenant issues like excessive noise, ongoing use of the courtyard, ever-extending time usage of the outdoor sitting area and even the cleanliness of the front of the building. A new season of refreshment energizes Genesis Place to strive for an environment of love and respect, with God’s wisdom and grace supporting tenants and staff.

Please pray for refreshment of spirit for everyone at Genesis Place.

Pray that tenants may see that transformation is possible and that help is available.

May the warmth of God’s love be clearly seen and felt at GP this summer.

*Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6: 2

The men who work in the Property Services Department (PSD) serve God faithfully every day as they maintain the YSM buildings, transport food to the Food Bank, take seniors home after lunch, pick up large donations of clothing, computers or furniture and respond to urgent requests to fix, clean, come, go – and everything needs to be done right away!

Sometimes there are not enough hours in the day or dollars in the budget to answer all the calls for help. When your prayers combine with the resourcefulness, skill and ingenuity of the men in PSD, the miraculous happens. Our cheerful property manager greets everyone with a smile and always finds a solution to keep Mission buildings in good repair. His entire staff balances many conflicting needs with available resources.

In the midst of YSM summer camps, PSD is responsible for the safe transport of our community, from children to seniors, on rare trips away from the congested city. We pray for safe journeys on these voyages of discovery.

Mission programs are growing to serve more youth at Evergreen and the CCC, families in high-density St. James Town, plus an increasing range of courses and activities at our Centre for Urban Education. PSD strives to keep up with these changes with little increase to their funding. Please pray in gratitude for the little miracles our property workers accomplish every day.

*In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not obvious cannot remain hidden forever.*

Timothy 5:25

The dynamic and diverse team of individuals who make up the Women's Council in St. James Town is rich with leadership and experience. As they share stories, gifts and life with one another, they choose to stand together to bring change, resources and support to their neighbourhood.

Recently, when a Women's Council member found her husband in critical care in the hospital, she looked for people around her who would provide support and comfort at this hard time. Women from the community brought food, provided care for her children, and helped in any way they could.

When we asked, "What can we do?" our friend asked that we pray for her husband and their family. As a staff team, we were committed to praying and grateful for the opportunity to join in her experience in this important way.

Thank God for the growing camaraderie with the women from this community and for His goodness in faithfully sustaining leaders, providing hope and granting wisdom in St. James Town programs.

Give Him the glory for the great things He is doing in St. James Town today.

Pray for the continued building of meaningful friendships within the community.

*Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."*

Psalm 126:2

“Hi. Do you know who this is?”

I recognized the voice on the other end of the phone, but I could not place it. “I’m not sure,” I said.

“I was in the program a few years ago. Loud. Obnoxious. Gave you a hard time...”

I connected the voice and the humorous description.

“Mark!” I said, with surprise. “How are you?”

He was living out East, working in the trades, and was engaged. He seemed happy and proud to report his life being stable and his future bright. We talked for a few minutes and said goodbye. He did not leave his phone number.

Many times when youth finally exit Evergreen, we do not hear from them again, or at least not for awhile. And then, an email or a phone call. Sometimes the updates are not as happy as Mark’s, but other times, it is as if the days of being street-involved are really in the past. Enrolled in post-secondary school, working full-time, living independently for a number of years.

It can be difficult to journey alongside youth and have to say goodbye without knowing what will happen to them. We might worry that they are not ready to leave a program or be without regular staff support. However, we are brought together “for such a time as this.” We thank God for His transforming work in each of our lives during that sacred time. Please pray for youth leaving Evergreen, for stability and bright futures.

*Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.*

Philippians 4:14

**AUGUST 8 – 14**

*Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard planted by the water; it was fruitful and full of branches because of abundant water.*

Ezekiel 19:10

Of the youth attending the Christian Community Centre, 80% live in single parent households. Of those single parents, a staggering 90% are mothers.

When youth grow up without good male role models, they carry this throughout their lives. The female youth may fail to have healthy romantic relationships and the males struggle to be responsible and committed in their relationships as adults.

Please pray for the youth of this community, to develop healthy images of themselves as God's children, to embrace the light that shines within them and to develop healthy relationships with others.

Pray for mentors, especially healthy male role models for youth to emulate in their own lives. Pray for the mothers who struggle to get by day to day, financially, emotionally and spiritually. Thank you for mothers, who are created in God's image, for their resiliency, creativity and the life that flows through them each day.



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