

YONGE STREET MISSION



PRAYER  
FOR THE  
CITY

**AUG. 15**

**20**

**Nov. 6**

**11**

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# WHAT IS OUR PRAYER FOR THE CITY?

*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

Jeremiah 29:7

**P**ray for the city indeed! Easier said than done.

The city is a living organism, constantly changing, growing, bursting with vitality. Every day sees new stories – stories of failure and joy, of solemnity and hope. Politicians and civil servants continually make decisions affecting quality of life. Business transactions, large and small, are arranged. New ideas formulated. Goals are attained or thwarted. Crimes committed. Love and life are celebrated. Media outlets keep us current by the hour.

We are overwhelmed with weighty issues to pray for.

How do we prioritize our prayer for the city? If we attempted to pray for everything we would be too busy praying to keep up with

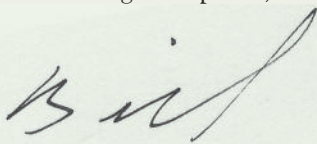
what was happening around us. It can seem that God has called us to an impossible task. Our spirituality is not capable of keeping up with the rapid pace.

Almost 100 years ago, Harry Emerson Fosdick observed in his little book, *The Meaning of Prayer*, "...the discipline of our souls and the deepening of our acquaintance with God are not proving sufficiently thorough to enable us to meet the unprecedented expansion of opportunity and responsibility of our generation." How much truer this is today!

How then do we pray for the city? Keep it simple. Remember, God knows the city's needs before we even ask. Pray for peace – *shalom*. Some English translations use the word 'welfare' while others translate it as 'peace and prosperity.' Wherever you see injustice or inequality, pray for peace. If you hear of strife and violence, pray for peace. If a story causes you to shudder deep in your soul, pray for peace. Ask God to cause our city to prosper – neighbourhoods and institutions as well as individuals.

May we see God's will, God's *shalom*, be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Blessings and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill", written on a light-colored, slightly textured paper background.

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

*God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.*

1 Kings 4:29

One of the parents in the Women & Family Program shared with us some challenges she was going through with her son. She said, “When I come to the Mission, I find comfort.” She is so thankful for the support, the staff and the resources she is given.

We are thankful for the fun, excitement and creativity of our summer camps with the children and parents. Pray for safety on our trips and for energetic volunteers and students as they graciously help us during this wonderful time.

Pray for wisdom and understanding as we work with members of the community to help them develop a small business. Pray for the 13 women who are so excited and passionate about taking ownership and leadership of this project.

Pray for the School Readiness Program this fall as we welcome new children into our program. Pray that we will provide a creative, engaging and enriching program for the little ones.

Pray for parents who will be attending the Parenting class, that they learn the skills and confidence they need to be better parents. Pray that parents will understand the different expectations of parenting in Canada while honouring their own cultural heritage.

Pray that we continue to develop innovative and creative computer literacy classes that meet the personal and professional development needs of the women and men in the community.

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.*

Psalm 19:1-2

“When are we going to camp? Pleeese make sure I’m on the list. I’ve got friends who want to come, too!”

Early last spring, women served by Church at the Mission’s Community Outreach Pastor began pleading with her for a chance of a brief respite from the downtown streets.

With anticipation and excitement, dozens of street-oriented women participated in Church at the Mission’s Outreach Camps this summer. The camps are specifically created to serve the needs of the women. Camp meals are made co-operatively, and conversation, Bible Studies and prayer times are featured throughout the camp.

As in previous years, women made professions of faith, and some who were ready were baptized – always a highlight of the camps. Please pray in gratitude for the one donor whose remarkable generosity has made these camps a reality.

Pray also for the women, each of whom is known personally by Pastor Jan and cared for throughout the year by her. Pray for the ones who have made or are making life-changing decisions – renewing their commitments to Christ or becoming Christians, choosing to move away from the street and beginning to dream again about better tomorrows. And pray for the many whose hearts are still very much in process, who continue to struggle to simply stay alive in the city.

*In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone,  
LORD, make me dwell in safety.*

Psalm 4:8

Stan is a lanky young gentleman who is cloaked in a long sweeping trench coat and can often be found planted at the end computer, keeping to himself. Today, he is slumped across the computer bench, fast asleep amidst the din of people looking for housing and work at Evergreen Employment Services.

Despite the hubbub, he finds peace and rest.

Wendy has just given birth to her first child, a baby girl. This new mom has her arms crossed on a table, head nestled in the fold of her elbow. She is oblivious to the chatter and busyness of the employment centre.

Despite others rushing about all around her, she, too, finds peace and rest.

It is the ability of homeless youth to sleep in the noise of Evergreen Employment Services that reveals the deep sense of peace the employment centre holds. It's a surprising place to find people in slumber, yet it shows how God has made all of Evergreen a peaceful refuge for youth who have few safe places to rest.

Pray that God will wash all of Evergreen with a stilling peace that calms the stormy turmoil that many youth face in life. Pray that God's comforting presence will be felt during each person's stay. Pray that each will be able lie down and sleep in the Lord's safety.

People pour into the streets as if to reclaim them. Traffic is diverted. The smell of BBQs, the rhythm of bands playing cheerful music and the artwork decorating every child's cheek warm the soul. Clowns, street performers and the noise of celebration pervade our space outside the Christian Community Centre.

It's the annual Cabbagetown Festival at the end of the summer. This is a street party that turns the Parliament Street corridor into a meeting point for our community members to take a breath and highlight the beauty of life in the midst of daily sorrows and concerns.

God's revelation as it is recorded in the Bible gives joy a central place. Out of the many promises of celebration, there is one that resonates with our community, volunteers and staff: *"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace"* (Isaiah 55:12). However, the hard reality of life pushes joy to the farthest corners of the daily routines of our community members. Most of the time, joy is a complete stranger and its place is taken up by unhealthy and life-destroying substitutes.

But still, God is present in their midst and ours. Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal reminds us that "we are mirrors of God created to reflect God. Even when the water is disturbed it still reflects the sky."

Pray with us that this street celebration and many other moments in our ministry will be an opportunity for the poor and downtrodden to go out in joy and be led forth in peace.

YSM Volunteers have and share PEACE in many forms:

**P** Patience, Passion, Promptness, Panache!

**E** Energy, Empathy, Efficiency, Enrichment, Extra-ordinary!

**A** Action, Acceptance, Altruism, Abundance!

**C** Compassion, Concern, Consideration, Care, Challenge, Commitment!

**E** Enthusiasm, Expertise, Everywhere, Effervescence!

All of the above and more is expressed and actualized in our volunteers.

Loving God, you give us volunteers, you welcome us to challenge people to look inside themselves, come alongside our values, our vision, and our work with our community and blossom in the process. Lives are touched, changed and transformed through your healing works.

As we foster relationships, we move into harmony with you, dear God, and through the many expressions of peace and love we move into health for our city. The more people who join together in tangible expressions of love, the more we overflow with abundance and thanks. This is your good work!

Thank you for all the opportunities to engage your people, bring them together for healing, mutual support, enjoyment, deep connection and peace. Thank you for our volunteers.

Amen.

So much anger was bubbling within Arlene: anger at the injustices and hurt she had faced, at the lies she'd been told throughout her life, at the men who had preyed on her, gaining her trust and then manipulating her and turning her out into the sex trade.

Her anger was so raw, so fresh, and so all-consuming. But she agreed to join the Evergreen STAND program for sex workers seeking new directions.

In our first case management meeting, we bowed our heads and prayed together, praying for peace. Over the next four months we met weekly, and this prayer for peace started to be fulfilled in her life.

Arlene moved to a new apartment in a safer neighbourhood. She got a job, applied for school, set boundaries with friends and family and sought to make healthy choices for her life. Slowly, she started sowing seeds of peace in the lives of people around her, becoming a rock in her family and a positive role model for her younger sister.

The anger was channelled into a commitment to work against injustice and a renewed sense of peace followed.

Sower of Seeds,

Sow seeds of peace in our lives,

Sow seeds of peace in our community,

Sow seeds of peace across our city.

Inspire in us the willingness to help these seeds to grow,

Inspire in us the willingness to sow seeds of peace ourselves,

In the name of him who is the Prince of Peace.

Amen.

The goal of our Genesis Place (GP) housing is to provide safe, affordable housing to tenants who are homeless, hard-to-house or in crisis, and then to offer support as they transition to a stable situation. This process may take months or even two or three years.

Yet how is it that it took one tenant 13 years to move from GP to another home?

Unfortunately, our tenants struggle to find appropriate housing that is available, affordable and can meet their needs.

How can the wait for good-quality, affordable housing be so long?

How can GP housing workers achieve their goals of helping people move to permanent homes? How can they overcome all the roadblocks thrown in their way?

What can we do when all around us people are living in inadequate housing or units that cost more than they can afford?

It is only by the grace of God that patience and understanding will be engrained into the process.

Please pray for all who seek a safe, permanent home that they can afford. Pray for all who advocate for the housing rights of others.

Pray for the tenants and staff at GP that they will achieve their goals and dreams.

*O Lord, you have always been our home. Before you created the hills or brought the world into being, you were eternally God, and will be God forever.*

Psalm 90: 1-2

“A community is like a small continent where different people, places, services, and organizations work together.”

This is the definition of community that the 16 youth from our new leadership program, Youth United in Visionary Action (YUVA) created after a lively brainstorming session. This eclectic and enthusiastic group of grade 7 and 8 students have committed their time twice a week for five months to explore their emerging leadership skills and understand how they can become active participants in positive change in their community. Their energy, ideas, and surprising passion for politics never cease to amaze and inspire our staff team.

As the summer turns to fall, this first group of YUVA grads, freshly back from Ottawa with the experience of leading their own community action plans, will have the opportunity to continue to grow as community leaders. Our hope is to engage these alumni to support new community action projects, mentor peers, and be mentored themselves. Our hope is that the youth will be an integral part of a positive future for this small, diverse continent they call home.

This season, we ask you to join us in prayer for the many emerging young community leaders we have the opportunity to work with. May God protect their dreams for peace, safety, higher education, job security, healthy families, and so much more. May God provide the resources to see dreams become reality. May this community become a place truly known as one where everyone works together.

Many of our youth must journey through life without a father's presence. We should always remember to keep their courageous mothers in our prayers. We pray for mothers who carry an extra burden day in and day out, who play two roles at home, who work tirelessly to provide for their families.

We pray for youth who are missing the love and guidance of a father in the home. We pray that relatives and family friends will fill this void and become much needed caretakers for our young generation.

Without the outstretched arms of caring adults around them, our youth will soon stumble and fall. We ask God to heal emotionally scarred young people, steering them away from the evils and temptations of crime, violence and drugs, and alleviating the bitterness and anger in their hearts. Pray that our fatherless young men will defy the statistics and not become absentee dads themselves.

We pray that future generations will follow a harmonious, peaceful way of life. May YSM mentoring programs create solid support systems and a legacy of young professionals who can give back as they have been given.

Most of all we pray that God's omnipresent love opens young hearts and releases the beauty and greatness inside of each soul. God, help us remember that even during times of trial and hardship, we are never alone.

*Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help,  
as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place.*

Psalm 28: 2

“Have you seen Sadie? She hasn't been around lately and I'm worried about her,” says one senior in the Lively Seniors program to another.

It is common for our seniors to be without biological family members and even when family does exist at times relationships are strained or distant. However, in the Lively Seniors program, people take risks where they have been hurt before and open like a blossoming flower, sometimes over years, to create close friendships that are, in a way, family.

“Friends are the family we choose for ourselves” Edna Buchanan writes. If we are lucky we know what she means. We have friends that we can count on in hard times, that we can be real with, that challenge us, and love us for just who we are.

Pray that the Lively Seniors community – volunteers, donors, staff and seniors – will open up to the possibility of family-style friendship, and find and be that friend to one another. May they walk together in peace!

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.*

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10

Building a bridge out of poverty is a daunting task for a young person who has known nothing else. Education is the foundation, but the cost is steep. Yonge Street Mission's Student Awards Program is the first step for the group of young people starting post-secondary education this year – our 'Bright Lights.'

Bright Lights is the name of the Mission's primary fundraising event on Thursday, October 27; an evening to welcome guests and honour our student award recipients. This is a huge step for the students. All have faced extra challenges on their path to higher education.

Our program gives extra support by matching each student with an adult mentor to give advice and guide them through the transition to post-secondary learning.

*"My mentor and the staff from Yonge Street Mission gave me the strength and courage to face the obstacles. They believed in me at times when I had lost all hope for myself,"* testified Ameena, a second-year student at University of Toronto.

Please pray for a successful fundraising event, for our bright young students and their wise mentors who guide our bright lights onto the bridge to their futures.

*Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.*

Proverbs 1:5

It was one of the coldest nights of the year and the outreach team from Evergreen was bundled up, walking through some of the darkest of downtown streets. We were equipped with outreach bags, chocolates and hand-warmers. Few people were out on this cold night and any who were out needed to stay warm.

We circled around the block offering hand-warmers, offering to buy coffee and sharing a little hope. We encouraged the women we met and they encouraged us to stay warm on this bitter night.

Further ahead of us was a shadowy figure wearing a thin parka, hood up, arms pulled into the chest in an attempt to stay warm. This was not one of the women working on high-track; this individual did not appear to be a “trick.”

We walked up to Lexie to offer her hand-warmers when she said, “I know your outreach supplies are for us working girls but I already have some hand-warmers. That guy who just passed me in the hood looks so cold. Would you take those hand-warmers you were going to give to me and make sure he gets some?”

Here we were all united by the coldness of this night, united with compassion for one another, united in a hope for warmth and peace.

Giver of Peace,

May Your Peace which passes all understanding,  
Warm our hearts and unite us to you and to each other.

Amen.

## PRAYER FOR PEACE

Please join the Mission in a prayer for peace in our communities and in our city.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love.*

*Where there is injury, pardon.*

*Where there is doubt, faith.*

*Where there is despair, hope.*

*Where there is darkness, light.*

*Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,*

*grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;*

*to be understood, as to understand;*

*to be loved, as to love.*

*For it is in giving that we receive.*

*It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to  
Eternal Life.*

*Amen.*

(attributed to St. Francis of Assisi)



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