

**YONGE  
STREET  
MISSION**



**PRAYER  
FOR THE  
CITY**

November 7, 2011 - February 5, 2012

By: Bill Ryan  
Director of Staff Care



# May the Holy Spirit guide **your prayers**

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.*

– Romans 8:26

**H**ave you ever wondered how difficult it must be to be God?

Our prayers are a flurry of all kinds of requests. We pray very specifically for political situations. We express our wish for God to bestow blessings and gifts upon ourselves and others. We ask for healing of every manner of illness and disease. We pray for wars to cease and governments to rise or fall.

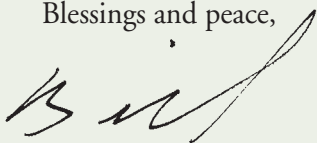
Yet we are so naive in our approach. We pray in our limited capacity. We are bound by our culture, language and social context. Even more, we only have a partial knowledge of God.

The simple fact is that the will of God is a mystery. We cannot fathom the depth of God's wisdom and we cannot discern why God allows some things to happen while rejecting other options. Our requests do not always align with the purposes of God.

Before we lose all confidence about ever praying rightly, remember God's wonderful provision – the Holy Spirit. We may not know how to pray or what to pray for but God sorts it all out. Paul recognizes our weakness before God and gives us hope that in our frailty the Spirit intercedes on our behalf. When words fail to express the language of our heart, trust that the Holy Spirit knows our desires and will do what is best. Submit your will to God and ask for God's will to be done.

As you read through this booklet and pray for the city, may the Holy Spirit guide your petitions and may you look forward with anticipation to see God's purposes for Toronto come to fruition.

Blessings and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. M.', written in a cursive style.

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

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**S**t. James Town Office has had a rewarding year with lots of changes, with new faces in both the office and in the community. We have experienced so much growth and witnessed much joy among the people we are called to serve. In the midst of financial and social challenges faced by the majority in the community, people took time to come and share what they had - be it food, talent or a special skill. We are grateful for our place in the community and the trust and love people show us on a daily basis.

“This is my second home,” many have said. As we approach another season of change, let us pray for continued grace, love, joy and support. We pray to be true witnesses of Christ. May children find a peaceful place in our office and in their community. Let women find in our office a safe haven to share their joys and sorrows.

Bless us, O Lord, with your love, your joy, your wisdom and your compassion so that we become your face, your heart and your body in the community. We pray that our team continues to nourish all who come to us for spiritual and emotional wisdom. We pray for harmony and peace in the community. Let people be united in their efforts to build a better community that will not be divided by so many negative forces. May our team be an example of unity, humility and respect. Amen.

“Faith is the virtue that allows me to feel the warmth of the hearth while I cut the firewood,” writes Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno. As the cold months knock at our doors, we in this country hurry to make sure that we keep warm and prepare ourselves to face the ups and downs of daily life in winter.

Preparation brings a gratifying sense of anticipation. Just as the families of long ago relished the sight of a high and well stocked woodpile, so are we satisfied as we reap the fruits of our labours to provide for the needs of our loved ones. The warmth of the hearth is at hand well before winter takes hold with its piercing touch.

In the past, landless peasants could not seek wood from a forest unless they were ready to meet the fury of a feudal master. Nowadays, there are many in our city who endure a similar fate. We do not call them landless peasants anymore. They go as a group by other names but they are still with us. We at Yonge Street Mission have the blessing of sharing with them the good news of God’s joy and salvation, “even with words, if necessary,” as Francis of Assisi taught us.

Let us pray that in this cold and sometimes bitter time of year, we can come alongside the disadvantaged so that they can also cut their firewood and anticipate the warmth of a much needed hearth.

*Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. – 2 Thessalonians 1:4*

**I**t's dark and cold when dinnertime rolls around at Evergreen. Upwards of 200 street youth line up, impatient, for the hot dinner prepared by a dedicated group of volunteers. Our guests are so young, yet most of us could not imagine the traumas they have faced in their short lives.

“I was homeless and high on drugs pretty much for two years. The only time I ever ate was when I came to Evergreen,” reported Danny. “Now I am in recovery and have housing and a plan for the future. Thank you, Evergreen, for keeping me alive.”

A plan for the future, with the first step taken over a plate of hot stew – that's the kind of deliverance a simple act of hospitality can bring. But it can take many nights and many dinners and many hours with Evergreen's dedicated staff before a resolve for change comes about.

Please pray for Evergreen youth who battle so many demons so soon in their lives. And join us in praying with gratitude for the volunteers who give their time so faithfully to feed our hungry, lonely youth.

*Let the children come to Me.  
Don't stop them! For the Kingdom  
of Heaven belongs to such as these.*

– Matthew 19:14

“It’s our graduation, a day to remember!” said a class valedictorian at the fall computer lab grad. He was one of almost 70 children who worked hard, learned new skills and in doing so was proud to earn a computer to take home. Computer graduations are a blaze of colourful dresses and national costume, but also full of the buzz of new friendships made during the course.

Children from a great diversity of cultural and faith backgrounds are drawn to the clubs, courses and programs at YSM. Our dedicated children’s workers provide an interactive and inspirational environment where kids have strong community, enjoy each other’s company immensely and love learning new things.

The Mission becomes a home away from home where children value the relationships forged with their peers, with mentoring older children and with our nurturing staff. Ultimately YSM staff try to reveal the beauty and joy of God. Children are naturally attracted and want to learn more.

“Teach them the Truth—they are pure and will gravitate towards it. Listen to them to behold God yourself,” reported a staff member.

Please pray for the staff and volunteers who give so much, and for our children growing up in at-risk neighbourhoods.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called Wonderful  
Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace. – Isaiah 9:6*

**T**here is something in the story of Advent and the incarnation of Jesus Christ that fills people with hope. This greatest and seemingly most impossible of mysteries, God becoming a human being, especially a human infant with such fragility and vulnerability, touches and challenges us like nothing else.

Scripture unpacks the ‘why’ for us: Because God loved you and me so much, Jesus was given to us so that we could have everlasting life in the future and abundant life right now when we place our trust in Him.

This profound and life-changing message of hope comes during a season when many Yonge Street Mission community members feel most alone, most reminded of broken relationships and painful yesterdays.

Please pray that the hope of Christmas would penetrate through the hurt of Christmases past for our beloved community members.

Pray that our loving God would use the celebrations and banquets and worship services of this season to heal and to deepen relationships with our loving heavenly Father. And pray that God will use Church at the Mission to bring the joy of the Lord to many this Christmas season.

There is nothing more precious than watching the face of a child as they open their gifts on Christmas morning. What a blessing it is for a parent to provide that joy for their children!

But what if you couldn't afford to buy any gifts at all? Or if you had to decide between gifts or food or even rent. For many families living in the Yonge Street Mission community, that is their reality. They simply cannot afford to buy gifts for their children at Christmas.

For about 25 years, YSM has brought joy to families during the holidays with our Christmas Market. Early in December our storage rooms begin to overflow with donations of new toys, books, gift cards, crafts and stuffed animals from donors like you. These generous donations allow us to set up a market where parents can “shop” for gifts that they think their children would enjoy. It is a sight to be seen, a room filled with toys and parents with huge smiles on their faces, as they select gifts with the anticipation of the smiles on the faces of their children come Christmas morning.

This year we ask you to pray with us for the families who come through the market doors, that they would feel the love of Christ through our love for them. Would you also pray for the donations? That we would have enough for each age group, especially the teens that are often overlooked.

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. – John 15:11*

An elderly woman walks by the front window of the Christian Community Centre most days of the week. She used to pause for a moment, look in - perhaps to check the clock on the wall - and then move on. She had a slightly melancholic expression as she gazed in, somewhat distant and seemingly unaware of the people inside.

Then one day she looked at the receptionist and smiled. And he smiled back.

It would be impossible not to. Contained in a smile is an awful lot of joy.

It's amazing how far a smile and a few kind words can go. We have a lot of these little interactions at the Mission throughout the day. People drop in for a few moments, maybe for some water or to use the phone, and it gives us a chance to catch up. Sometimes we talk about different problems we can help with or other times it's about the weather or last night's ball game. Most important is that each visitor feels welcome here and accepted as a person of value.

Pray this Christmas season that everyone in our community would find joy here and know that they are valued as precious children of God.

*...because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character, hope. – Romans 5:3*

If you listen to some media reports, the youth of Regent Park are destined for failure. Truancy, teen pregnancy, gang violence. The images have discouraged some youth who believe that nothing good can come out of them or the community. A few have become caught up in destructive lifestyles that lead to addiction, crime and sometimes death.

But this is not the only reality for YSM youth. The stories you don't read about in the media are about young men and women who get up every day in the face of great difficulties and are determined to make something of their life.

Jeremy has been in Children and Youth Programs since he was nine years old. He has achieved remarkable success in his chosen sport of basketball. Last summer he was chosen from hundreds across Canada to play on a national team that won bronze in a championship in Mexico.

The youth group is extremely proud of Jeremy. They recognize in him the perseverance and character that many of them share. Staff have seen youth with very tough challenges refuse to give up or be defined by their personal misfortunes. The youth have hope that success is possible if you are determined to work for it.

As we approach a new year, please pray for young people who face obstacles to success that they may persevere and never give up hope. May they realize their full potential as beloved children of God.

*Teach me knowledge and  
good judgment, for I believe in your  
commands.* – Psalm 119:66

**I**n these turbulent economic times, it can be tough even for those with lengthy resumes to find work. Ponder, then, the plight of many tenants at Genesis Place, who lack experience or marketable skills. For people who have experienced crisis - whether homelessness, abuse, poverty or trauma - finding a job can be especially challenging. But there is dignity in work. There is also hope.

The Genesis Place Education Fund helps residents return to school and get training, better positioning them to find employment.

In the past year, this discretionary fund has helped four tenants: two studying to be social service workers, one working toward a mechanical engineering diploma, and one studying to be a registered practical nurse.

Lord, we ask that education provide the students from Genesis Place with the tools for a fresh start. Grant them self-esteem and self-sufficiency. May they inspire others around them, demonstrating to their neighbours that nothing is impossible with God.

We pray also for their teachers, that their leadership offers an education that goes beyond textbooks to include vital life skills.

Finally, we pray that the students find jobs when they graduate, for work can be a beautiful form of prayer. Amen.

There exists a deep spiritual need within each of us to give back to our community. Without giving, we cannot feel complete. Indeed, giving to others gives us the means to grow as spiritual beings. When this is combined with a loving relationship with God, giving becomes a means to become whole and content. How can we achieve this?

Firstly, through the power of quiet contemplation or prayer, we are able to connect to God. We need silence in our mind and a clean heart to be able to catch the pure love of our Spiritual Father. Doubt and negative thinking cause us to wilt and to lose our power.

Secondly, we have to renounce our egos and consider ourselves to be “instruments” for God’s task. Humility not only reveals God; but also creates unity. We are helping our Father with “His” work, so why should we worry? Success is guaranteed.

Maintain the vision that everyone is a child of God. We must allow our thoughts, words, deeds, and intentions to be pure. Purity of intention will always bring peace, hope and power to others. They will be inspired to give what they themselves have received.

As you pray this week for Yonge Street Mission, ask God to bless everyone who tries to be an instrument of His will by serving our community. Pray that humility, love and purity of intention will nourish and inspire others.

*Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

– Matthew 11:28

John was a regular visitor at Evergreen with a troubled past. His mother had struggled her entire adult life with alcoholism, and John had never met his father. When John was accepted into Evergreen's Connecting Youth to Work program, he rose to the challenge. It was a place away from the realities of home and an opportunity for change.

But John struggled to communicate and build relationships with other youth in the program. In group discussions, John took comments that others made as personal attacks, and often reacted swiftly in an angry tone. When staff spoke with John about their concerns, he responded, "My whole life I have had to fight for EVERYTHING I have. I've had to be strong, learn to rely only on myself and make sure I am heard with a loud voice. I must always be on guard or I will be taken advantage of."

What a heavy burden for a young man to carry, believing that if he is not always on the defensive, he will surely be attacked! Jesus invites all who are carrying heavy loads to find rest in Him.

Please pray for our youth who carry too much weight on their young shoulders. Pray that they would experience healing, and in safety be able to offer their burdens to God and find peace.

*Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them. – Psalm 10:17*

If you were to enter the Christian Community Centre child care on any given day, you would be confronted with the sounds of singing, laughter and the noise of childhood exuberance. The daycare could easily be said to be one of the happiest places at the Mission. The staff could regale you for hours with stories of children's antics and the joys that make all the hard work worthwhile.

The stories that are not so quickly shared are the ones of brokenness and heartbreak.

Working in child care has given us the privilege of becoming members of hundreds of families, sharing both their joys and their sorrows. There are times when we are there for the worst day in a family's existence: the day when grandpa died, when immigration denied the request, when the stretched finances failed, when the marriage finally crumbled. So many times we are unable to do anything to remedy the situation other than hear their cries and give comfort, reminding them that they are not going through this journey alone.

Please pray for the daycare staff, that they will continue to be sensitive to the needs of our families and that they may be channels of God's compassion and love when the world seems to be at its bleakest.

January 30 – February 5

*The earth is filled with your love,  
LORD; teach me your decrees.*

– Psalm 119:64

“I live alone with my cat. Thank God for the hot meals at the Mission and for the friends who make me feel welcome here!” So says a man who lives in a downtown rooming house and has been coming to the Mission for 25 years, freely volunteering his time and enjoying the sense of community offered by our New Hope Fellowship and Seniors programs.

In these dark winter days we pray for the continued support of the faithful donors and volunteers who reach out and offer a beacon of warmth and hope to people living with poverty. Your good works reflect God’s love for us all.



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

306 Gerrard Street East, Toronto, ON M5A 2G7

Tel: 416-929-9614 Toll Free: 1-800-416-5111

Fax: 416-929-7204 Web site: [www.ysm.ca](http://www.ysm.ca)

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CHURCH AT THE MISSION

24 hour prayer line: 416-929-9614, ext. 3502

email: [catm@ysm.ca](mailto:catm@ysm.ca)

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