

Justice Prayer Walk

“In the Old Testament, the litmus test for mishpat (justice) is whether people in these four groups (widow, orphans, poor and immigrants) are worried about who's going to take advantage of them tomorrow? Are they worrying for their safety or their well being? If so, that's not a just society according to the prophets.”

- Bible Project

As you walk through the neighborhood, please read through the information about the individual areas of injustice in our community and ways that our church and para-church organizations are working together to address these issues and the policies that influence the injustice. After you have read through the information, pray together with your group the provided group prayers or read through the Scripture provided. May your prayers bring justice and shalom to our community.

1. Housing – PRAYER LOCATION: Inwood Library 4790 Broadway (Site of Proposed New Housing Development)

“As the city’s population continues to grow, increased demand is putting pressure on Inwood’s housing supply. A lack of housing development – especially new affordable housing – coupled with slow growth in wages, is making Inwood less affordable. In the past two decades, rents are rising faster in CD12 than in the city as a whole, with a 38% increase from 2002 to 2014 compared to 24% citywide. These trends could lead to more harassment by landlords looking to capitalize on market changes.”

- Inwood Housing Plan, 2018

40 percent of all renters devoted more than 30 percent of their household income to rent (the level at which rent is considered a burden). Moreover, the NYU Furman Center reports that the area had the second highest rate of serious housing code violations in the City in 2014 (123.9 per 1,000 rental units) and that it ranked first in each of the three previous years.”

- Economic Snapshot of Washington Heights/ Inwood, 2016

November 15th at 11am at the Everyday Church Zoom Gathering, Jimmy Charite will be interviewing public policy leader at City Hall, George Sarkissian. George also spearheads policy advocacy work and works closely with Viva Uptown. Please join us for this important time of learning and challenge.

Prayer

Reader: Let us speak to the injustices in our world. Let us move the mountains of fear and intimidation. Let us shout down the walls that separate and divide. Let us fill the earth with the fragrance of Love.

All: Let us be people who Love.

Reader: Let us listen for those who have been silenced. Let us honour those who have been devalued. Let us say, Enough! with abuse, abandonment, diminishing and hiding. Let us not rest until every person is free and equal.

All: Let us be people who Love.

Reader: Let us be people who are savvy, smart and wise. Let us be people who shine with the light of God in us. Let us be people who take courage and sing the song in our hearts. Let us be people who say, Yes to the beautiful, unique purpose seeded in our souls. Let us be people who call out the song in another’s heart. Let us be people who teach our children to do the same.

All: Let us be people who Love.

Reader: Let us be people who Love, in spite of fear. Let us be people who Love, in spite of our stories. Let us be people who Love loudly, beautifully, Divinely.

All: Let us be people who Love.

All: Amen

- By Idelette McVicker

2. Physical and Mental Health Access – PRAYER LOCATION: 651 Academy St (Site of Inwood Community Services which offers Alicia M. Ferrer Mental Health Clinic as part of their services)

“In Inwood and Washington Heights, 31% of residents live below the poverty level, compared to an average of 21% for New York City as a whole. Further, 32% of residents consider their health to be fair or poor, compared to 21% of all New Yorkers. Residents of these neighborhoods are more likely to be uninsured than those in Manhattan overall. Some of the major health problems in these neighborhoods are related to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. More than 1 out of 5 adults in I/WH are obese and more than 1 in 10 have diabetes. Perhaps an over-arching factor in these health problems is the fact that about one third of adults in these neighborhoods do not have a regular doctor. Residents born outside of the United States are even less likely to have a regular health care provider, as they may experience greater barriers in access to health services. Residents of Inwood and Washington Heights also showed greater symptoms of psychological distress and mental illness in the 2006 Community Health Survey than residents of other New York City neighborhoods.”

- *New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2006*

Prayer

Reader: Bless those who are peacemakers. From all creeds and cultures. All who bring no other agenda than to see neighbor and stranger live together as one community.

All: Bless the peacemakers. Strengthen and bless them.

Reader: Bless those who are comforters. Shoulders to cry upon, willing ear to listen, a present help in times of despair and hopelessness.

All: Bless the comforters. Strengthen and bless them.

Reader: Bless those who are healers of physical injury and deeper hurts. Whose touch brings relief from trauma and pain, who bring compassion.

All: Bless the healers. Strengthen and bless them.

Amen

- *by John Birch*

3. Education – PRAYER LOCATION: 4862 Broadway (Site of Muscota New School and Amistad Dual Language School)

“Washington Heights and Inwood are served by District 6, which includes 27 elementary schools, 14 middle schools and 6 charter schools. Nearly one-third of the schools in the district are overcrowded, and many students are not meeting State standards. In 2014, only 17 percent of elementary and middle-school students met the proficiency standard for English, and only 22 percent met the standard for mathematics (significantly lower than the citywide averages). The district had the highest share of “English language learners” in the City (nearly 29 percent).”

- *An Economic Snapshot of Inwood/Washington Heights, 2016*

Scripture

“It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don’t use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that’s how freedom grows. For everything we know about God’s Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself. That’s an act of true freedom.” *Galatians 5:13-14, The Message*

“The LORD has shown you what is good.

He has told you what he requires of you.

You must act with justice.

You must love to show mercy.

And you must be humble as you live in the sight of your God.” *Micah 6:8*

4. Food Insecurity – PRAYER LOCATION: Corner of Isham and Cooper (Site of Farmer's Market)

“Food security means having consistent access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food. The use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, or food stamps, is an indicator of food insecurity; the majority of households that receive SNAP are food insecure. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 12.8% of all households in the United States received SNAP benefits at some point in 2015. In Washington Heights/ Inwood, more than one third of households receive SNAP benefits, higher than citywide (21%).”
- *Foodscape: Washington Heights/ Inwood, 2017*

NYC Love Kitchen located on the corner of 204th and 9th Ave has been a part of our community for over 30 years distributing food to individuals and families who are food insecure. Everyday Church has financially supported their work along with providing volunteers to help serve and distribute food.

Scripture

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?” *James 2:14-16*

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ *Matthew 25:37-40*

5. The Impact of Police Violence – PRAYER LOCATION: Corner of Seaman and Dyckman (Site of George Floyd Mural)

“In remembrance of the shooting of José “Kiko” García, a 22 year old Dominican immigrant and Washington Heights resident, by a police officer, we reflect on the impact and experience of police violence in our neighborhood. Over the last five years, there were 28 officially recorded allegations of police violence and intimidation in Washington Heights and Inwood. Many others go unacknowledged because of fear of retaliation. The trauma that our community feels in response to police violence goes beyond the immediate individuals and families harmed. Students in our neighborhood struggle academically and experience more troubling emotions. The black and brown members of our community face tolls on their mental health. More effective and just community policing is inhibited by lack of trust.

“The Response of Uptown Churches...

“On June 30th, leaders of 11 churches based in Upper Manhattan and the Bronx, and nearly one hundred protesters, came together for a prayerful and peaceful protest of racism and violence toward Black and Brown bodies. We marched, we chanted, sang songs, and lifted up prayers in English and Spanish. We declared that Black Lives Matter to God, and that the Latinx community are “Partners in Pain” with Black men and women, and all those suffering from the systemic racism and power structures that have allowed the murders of countless men and women at the hands of police, without accountability or repercussion.

“Following the protest march we began to do some listening around police relations in our community. One thing that has become abundantly clear from conversations with local community leaders and leaders in law enforcement is that there is a broad based interest and need for cultivating a long-term dialogue between the youth and the police in Uptown. Believing in the power and grace that exists when the local church is present and leading in these movements, we are organizing to:

- Establish a youth driven round table, ages 14-24, to engage with the police on accountability and transparency issues related to police conduct and issues related to youth in need of supportive services.
- Disciple youth leaders in social justice.
- Partner with a broad coalition of community partners to problem-solve issues of public safety and community well-being, especially related to youth and their families, with the police.

“We have faith and pray that the Holy Spirit will prompt and ready the hearts of community leaders, young people, and the police to engage in the difficult work of repairing the relationship between our community and the police.”

- *Jimmy Charite*

Prayer

Reader: Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart; that the barriers dividing us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace.

All: Holy God, Heal our Hearts so that we may Live Your Love.

Reader: O God of all, with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures you created all people in your image. Free us from prejudice and fear, that we may see your face in the faces of people around the world. By your Spirit move us to affirm the dignity of all people and to work for just laws that protect the most vulnerable in society.

All: Holy Spirit, Stir our Hearts to Love.

Reader: Gracious and holy God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

All: Amen

- *The Evangelical Lutheran Worship Book*