

Prayer Mailbox to Connect with Neighbors

An Anglican church in St. Barnabas on the Danforth sits in the middle of a busy shopping street in a diverse Toronto (Canada) neighborhood. It's a beautiful old building, but that's not what makes people stop to take a look. Outside the church, there's an old-fashioned mailbox, with a sign saying:

Like us to pray for someone? Please put the name in this mailbox and it will be added to our prayers on Sunday morning.

Rev. Jeanette Lewis says the mailbox was put up just prior to the pandemic and was getting as many as 12 requests a week after it launched. Things have slowed down, but it still receives new requests every month. Lewis says many people in the neighborhood have thanked the church for this ministry.

"When something happens in the neighborhood, folks now think to let us know and pray about it, which is wonderful. It is helping to make the church an active part of the community and a place that they think of when something happens," Rev. Lewis says.

That's especially impressive, considering Toronto is a largely secular city.

Many times, the church never gets an update on the effect their prayers have had. But some people leave a name and phone number with their request, which Rev. Lewis always follows up on. One person, who did not leave a name, even left an unsolicited cash donation in the mailbox after the prayer request was answered and the person had been healed!

Rev. Lewis explains the key is to check the mailbox at least once a week so that the prayers can be gathered and prayed over during the service or passed on to a prayer group.

It's also important to make sure the signage is clear. At one point the mailbox simply said "Prayers," and did not garner many requests. Once that was replaced with a more detailed sign, people better understood the concept and felt more encouraged to submit their requests.

Rev. Lewis recommends securing the mailbox. Theirs is now affixed to a metal fence after two theft attempts. It's also worth reaching out to your post office to let them know this is not a traditional mailbox.

"We all feel it is a wonderful ministry and outreach and that the community has responded well to it," says Rev. Lewis. The church has even gotten calls from strangers across the province and in the U.S. requesting prayer because word has spread that they are a prayerful community.

A prayer mailbox can be a great way to connect with the neighborhood surrounding your church, especially with those who may not have anyone else to pray for them. One can only imagine the seeds that St. Barnabas on the Danforth is planting!

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