



**“For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’” Deuteronomy 15:11**



This past April I (Andrew Twiton) chaperoned a group of youth from my church for the annual event: **A Night on the Street**. It’s a fundraiser for the youth homeless shelter in our area. The day before the event brought a half-foot of snow, and a record low of 21 degrees was set before the sun came up on Saturday. That night, we joined 268 youth and adults from 22 faith communities to sleep in cardboard boxes in the church’s parking lot in downtown Minneapolis. Nathaniel, a high school senior from our group,

reflected on his experience, saying, “You don’t realize how cold it actually is until you’re out there. It felt like I could never get completely warm.”

Just before we set up our boxes for the night, everyone gathered for prayers representing the different traditions participating in the event. One of the prayers offered was Martin Luther’s evening prayer, and it became a prayer for youth experiencing homelessness. **“I give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected me today,”** a teenager from Elk River began to read from her *Small Catechism*.

Lutherans may know this prayer, but it sounds different standing out in the cold air preparing to sleep on pavement. The words also mean something new after hearing the stories of youth who have experienced homelessness themselves. And we might pray it differently knowing that on any given night there are 2,500 youth facing homelessness in Minnesota.

Luther’s prayer continues: **“I ask you to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously protect me tonight. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine.”**

Gracious God, the need for protection of body, soul, and possessions weighed heavily in the stories shared. One person spoke of walking all night and sleeping during the day when he was homeless for fear of being attacked or robbed while he slept. Hear our prayers.

The next line begins: ***“Let your holy angels be with me...”***

Heavenly Parent, I'm not in charge of distributing angels, but it sounds like we need them to accompany youth staying warm on all-night bus lines, to dwell with those squatting in foreclosed houses, and to defend minors from exploitative adults. I give you thanks for the angelic work of organizations who accompany, dwell with, and defend these young people. Hear our prayers.

***“... so that the wicked foe may have no power over me.”***

Maybe we need a category like wickedness to name what happens to some of these youth. We learned about the reality of human trafficking in Minnesota and how homeless youth are particularly vulnerable. One outreach worker reported that within 36 hours of being homeless most youth are approached by an adult for sex. The foes of drugs and violence are also near. Hear our prayers.

***“Amen.”*** Amen.

### *Luther's Evening Prayer*

*I give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected me today, I ask you to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously protect me tonight. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angels be with me so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.*



Covenant House Michigan offers unconditional love, respect and hope to youth ages 18-24. The kids and young adults we serve feel unloved and unwanted. They have been abused, neglected and abandoned. We find them on the streets, living in abandoned houses, cars, sleeping on friends' couches, among other places. They come from all over Michigan searching for a way out of their desperate situations. Their stories are heart-breaking yet admirable. They are survivors.

## Six of the most common reasons for youth homelessness are...

1. Aging out of Foster Care
2. Mental Health
3. Minimum vs Living wage
4. Abuse and Neglect
5. Human Trafficking Survivors
6. Family Dynamics/ Instability

Our goal at Covenant House Michigan is to provide a better life for the youth who come through our doors. We not only offer food and shelter, we offer a package for independence and overall success. Whether they are brought here by our Outreach Team or walk through our doors, every child is embraced with open arms. Helping young people embrace the great promise of their lives, Covenant House Michigan offers a combination of support strategies, including- educational programs, job training and placement, medical services, mental health and substance abuse counseling.

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED NOW:**

#### **Clothing Closet Volunteer:**

Volunteers are needed in our clothing closet to help sort and organize donated clothing and hygiene items. Volunteers will also assist our residents in picking out items they need. We are currently looking for volunteers for Tuesday, Thursday or Fridays between 9:30 AM and 4 PM. This can be an individual or group volunteer experience.

**Please contact Patricia Wojtowicz - 313.463.2014**

**Email [pwojtowicz@covenanthouse.org](mailto:pwojtowicz@covenanthouse.org)**

Check this volunteer link often for current needs.

<https://covenanthousemi.org/get-involved/#volunteering-program>

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