

# Pray for Englewood

Isaiah 62:4 For the Lord delights in you...

Issue 5

## Something Is Different

Englewood is not the same place it was a few years ago. People are moving in, buying boarded-up houses at bargain prices, and rehabbing them into family homes—a construction contractor here, an attorney there, a Whole Foods Market employee over there, a bank employee in the area, millennials who can't afford to live in other Chicago neighborhoods. Yes,



The new owner gutted this house and completely rebuilt it inside.

it's only a nibble at the community's stock of abandoned houses, but it's a promising beginning.

Some new residents are coming to take jobs at new businesses starting up in the community. Aldi and Walmart with their ample fresh produce sections invaded the South Side "food desert" not too long ago. But the big news surrounds the arrival of upscale Whole Foods Market, Chipotle, and Starbucks



Shoppers explore what Whole Foods Market has to offer.

in Englewood Square at 63rd and Halstead. Not only do the stores bring healthful food options, but they have committed to long-term leases and to training and hiring from the community. Of the 200 jobs Whole Foods brought to the community, 85 went to South Side residents. Englewood Square will soon have a total of 10 new stores, including Villa, a footwear and apparel retailer that opened in July.

Whole Foods gives grants through its Whole Cities Foundation to local groups that create plans for access to healthy food. The store also gives small garden plots to local groups and contracts to purchase from local vendors, such as produce from community "farms."

Farms in Englewood? Oh, yes. Growing Home Urban Farm is one



of several single-acre gardens in the area. It sells organic produce to high-end retailers in the city and places 93 percent of its local trainees in good-paying, full-time jobs.

On another front there is also good news. In this community noted for violence, some of its schools are experiencing greater peace and safety. Three years ago Harper High School,



Moody Bible Institute student Katie Fugget leads a discussion in the Christian Club.

for example, lost more than 20 students during the school year, killed in mostly gang-related shootings. Police cars would line up to offer protection when school let out. The number of deaths has decreased each year, until last year only one student died in a shooting. Now usually only one police car parks in the school lot, belonging to the officer assigned to the reception desk. Worth noting also, several crack houses near the school have closed.

According to Principal Lyonna Sanders, gang-related conflicts during school hours have decreased. A few years ago unruly students clogged the hallways between classes, starting fights, heckling passing classmates, getting to class late or not at all. The administration laid down clear rules, and the staff firmly enforced them until now students go directly to the

next classes. Sanders notes a different atmosphere in the school, with some students more serious about learning and attendance improving.

A Christian club has formed at Harper. Each school year the club invites Christian athletes or converted drug lords or gang members to tell their stories at rallies outside school hours. Many students have invited Christ into their lives as a result, including a couple of gang members. Through the year the club helps disciple these new believers. Lives have been redirected from destructive paths leading nowhere to the Jesus way of life with eternal purpose.

On the streets themselves some high-crime hot spots have turned into zero-crime zones. Crime rates began to drop in other areas, although more recently rates have risen again due

to increased tension with the police. Some gang leaders used to keep people doing Christian ministry, like Kurt Williams of Kingdom Lifeline, off their turf. Today those gang leaders welcome him and are willing to have conversations with him. They even helped him unload a truck at a food pantry when ministry workers were unable to do it.

Kurt comes to Englewood to work with organizations seeking to stop gun violence—Shepherd's Hope, Christ Or Nothing, and others. The believers in these groups maintain prayer altars and do street ministry. Some of these efforts began only in the last several years.

All these changes in Englewood did not just happen. There's a story behind the story. Christians from inside the community joined with

concerned believers from outside it to raise up “prayer altars,” for God had promised them He would visit Englewood if they built altars of worship to Him. These prayer meetings follow the pattern laid out in John Mulinde’s book *Prayer Altars: A Strategy That Is Changing Nations*. At God’s direction Mulinde had engaged pastors and leaders throughout his nation of Uganda to spread prayer altars throughout that country. The result of all this prayer is a transformed nation.

Prayer rises from altars at other points in this community--the Seventh District Police Station, Callahan Funeral Home, two food pantries operated by Shepherd’s Hope, TEAM Englewood High School, and Harper High School. At all of these places intercessors have worshipped, drawn God’s presence, and stood against the spiritual darkness there. They have taken the authority God gives believers (Luke 10:19) and held up the victory of the cross in specific situations. As prayers ascended to God’s throne, His

This fall the teachers in the Chicago Public Schools threatened to strike. The weekend before the October 10 midnight strike deadline, 50 teachers, administrators, and education advocates from Chicago gathered for a retreat. During that weekend they spent much time praying fervently for the schools—and against the strike. The walk-out that had seemed so inevitable never happened. The two sides agreed at the last minute. Fervent prayer changes things.

Marilyn Rhames, founder of Teachers Who Pray, which co-sponsored the retreat, posted a blog for the *Huffington Post*: “Teachers Prayed to Stop a Chicago Schools Strike. God Listened.” Marilyn said, “I’m more convinced than ever that prayer, faith, love, and collaboration are the missing yet key ingredients to achieving what we often call ‘education reform.’”

Local churches have also initiated effective prayer efforts. Charles Moodie, pastor of Chicago City Life Center, became concerned about violence in the community. He and members of his church prayed in their parking lot from midnight to 5 a.m. one night. The crime rate in the area went down.

Chicago Embassy Church stands a few blocks away from what was a crime hot spot at 55th and Halstead. Every Friday night through last summer pastor of the church, Bishop Edward Peecher, and as many as 50 other believers prayed at this and other hot spots from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. When they started summer prayer in 2009, Commander Pete Calloway of the Ninth District Police Station told them they had created a zero-crime pocket on Halstead. In January 2010 Englewood crime statistics showed a 17 percent reduction. Peecher believes that the zero-crime pocket contributed to this decrease (God’s invisible hand moved by prayer).

Bishop Peecher relates that for years he and his church members were



From Latin King gang member to a follower of Jesus--Anthony Acevedo told his story to students at an after-school rally in August. Here he leads them in prayer.

Intercessors at Englewood’s prayer altars are seeking God for a transformed community. They worship, draw God’s presence, and reclaim the area for Christ’s Kingdom. At the Family Focus Christian Center’s prayer altar, Pastor Louis and Johnetta Reeves and their church members prayed for years that believers would buy the boarded-up houses and turn them into family homes. They prayed for jobs for the residents, and “we prayed that the store owners would see Englewood residents as worthy of healthful food,” says Johnetta. No doubt many other believers in the “food desert” prayed similar prayers. Today we see the results. Persistent prayer changes things.

invisible hand has been rearranging Englewood. Often it is prayer that moves that mighty, invisible hand.

At Harper High School, which has seen such dramatic changes, God’s people have been praying once a week for three years. They took authority over violence and drug trafficking. They prayed for peace, protection, increased attendance, and a higher graduation rate. Their prayers for Englewood joined the prayers of intercessors in the suburbs who care about the city, of intercessors in other states, and even of prayer warriors at Prayer Mountain in Uganda. And as those who prayed at Harper drove through the streets to the school, they prayed for families to move into the abandoned houses.



Dr. John Fuder, Founder and Director of Heart for the City, interviews Bishop Peecher for TLN at a prayer vigil on Faith and Action Day.

content to come to church on Sunday and feel good about themselves and their relationship with God. But when his son was murdered, he faced the fact that his church was doing little to address the problems and darkness in their community. That's when they started their Peace Campaign. He challenges: What would happen to Englewood if the majority of its churches would pray in the streets and make peace?

All this is but a brief glimpse of what the power of prayer can do in a needy community. Believing prayer changes things. The Lord says, "I work and who can turn it back?" (Isaiah 43:13). He hears and His invisible hand creates visible results. But the task, of course, is not finished. We've barely begun to see what God is willing to do. So, watchmen on the walls, keep praying. Pray persistently; pray fervently; pray believingly. Brothers and sisters, pray!

+++

**Family Focus Christian Center**  
 Chicago IL 60636 / (773) 298-1224  
 familyfocuscc@gmail.com  
 familyfocuscc.org

**O**ur Creator God works not only at repairing broken communities, but also at restoring wholeness to people who live there. Lives may be broken morally, emotionally, and spiritually, and they may also be broken physically. How does God see diabetes, cancer, heart disease, fractured legs, migraines, and all the sickness that prevents us from living full lives and serving Him? When Jesus looked on these illnesses in people He met, He said:

### “Be well.”

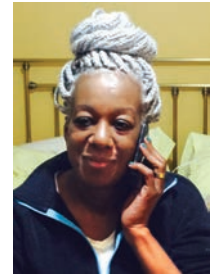
**Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.**

(3 John 2 NKJV)

This Scripture verse is one of the most overlooked in the body of Christ. We seem to know that God wants us prosperous in our finances, in our relationships, and in other areas of our lives. But let us not ignore the truth that God wants us also to live in physical health. Let us take hold of this benefit. God wants us well. So you may ask: if God wants me well, why does He not make me well? I have news for you. He HAS made us

well. Before the religious leaders in Jerusalem crucified Jesus, they beat Him with whips, leaving many wounds (stripes) on His body. God's Word says that by these "stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). God also said, "I am the LORD who heals you," (Exodus 15:26) and "the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up" (James 5:15).

God has already done His part. So we must do our part. We must take God's Word and put it inside our minds and hearts and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us what He wants us to know and what we need to know. When we do that, God will reveal to us that He has already paved the way for us to walk in divine health. +++



By Johnetta Reeves

### Pray

*In God I will always stay  
 If only I take the time to pray.  
 Prayer is my heart reaching up  
 That power may come down to us.  
 I don't have to be perfect to pray  
 Or memorize some words to say.  
 I talk to the Father above.  
 Who has given me so much love?  
 He never leaves me; He's always there  
 To hear and answer my prayer.  
 I believe in the power of prayer  
 To change a life that's in despair.  
 Prayer is so full of power  
 It can be released at any hour.  
 The time don't have to be right  
 To pray a prayer day or night.  
 To keep the evil at bay  
 We should all take the time to pray.*

Shirley M. Copeland

A resident of Englewood for 26 years, Shirley Copeland has helped maintain the Harper High School prayer altar from its beginning. Her heart for children led her into foster-parenting for 22 years, at the same time raising three youngsters of her own.