

Ministry Serves Up God's Love to New York's Hungry

By [Katherine T. Phan](#) Christian Post Reporter

NEW YORK – At Bowery Mission in [New York](#) City, Thanksgiving is commemorated every two hours as a new crowd lines up in front of the ministry's headquarters to join one of the meal times.



Volunteers at Bowery Mission, a Christian-based rescue mission in New York City, serve Thanksgiving meals to awaiting guests on Nov. 25, 2010.



While many New Yorkers were still in bed or attending the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade Thursday morning, volunteers were preparing to welcome the first group to the rescue mission's Thanksgiving event by 8 a.m. And by the time many Americans may sit down to enjoy their holiday meals this evening, the ministry would have already served around 4,000 people.

The need was so great this year that the ministry had to add an extra meal time in the morning. More meal times could also be added throughout the day if the demand continues grow, according to officials at the rescue mission.

"This is one of the biggest crowds I can remember," said Ed Morgan, president and CEO of Bowery Mission, which is celebrating its 131st Thanksgiving this year.

The Christian-based rescue mission reaches out to the city's hungry and homeless every day of the year but the fourth Thursday of every November provides them a special opportunity to share God's love to new visitors.

"We're witnessing up as well as witnessing down today. We're witnessing to the people as well as to the volunteers that we are serving," said Morgan. "We tell the volunteers that they will be part of our staff and for them to greet these folks in God's name and if they get a chance tell people that God loves you."

Over 700 volunteers are assisting Bowery Mission to prepare and serve the meals throughout one of the meal times.

"It allows people that are unfortunate, that don't have families or aren't close to their families to come have a family here," said Jason Horwitz, a long-time volunteer.

His father first brought him and his younger brother, Justin, to the event seven years ago and now the family makes it a tradition to volunteer their time during Thanksgiving.

In addition to receiving a [turkey](#) dinner, guests each receive a new coat and a "blessing bag" of winter clothes and hygiene items.

For many of the guests, the items were something they wouldn't be able to afford if not for Bowery Mission's help.

Elwood Mercer, 45, said he used to have an apartment and a job loading trucks three years ago. But now he's homeless and unemployed, just getting by with temporary government housing and benefits.

"I needed a new coat and I had nowhere to eat for Thanksgiving," said Mercer, a first-timer to the event.

As volunteers in the chapel served desserts following each meal, a prayer team, meanwhile, was upstairs catering to the spiritual needs of the crowd.

Prayer requests ranged from finding jobs and places to live, to finding reconciliation and receiving salvation.

Curt Blattman, a staff member who led the prayer team, said each prayer request is individually prayed for.

"We believe in the power of prayer," said Blattman.

"Not only do we give them a good meal but we want them to know that their prayer request is being taken to God and that God will answer in His sovereign time."