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CITY OF REFUGE

We use a lot of words to describe ourselves at Sanctuary: we are a community, we are an oasis, we are a church, we are a home, we are a charity, we are a refuge. In a given week, you could encounter Sanctuary in the form of:

- a hearty family-style meal;
- a space for artistic creation;
- a medical clinic where you can receive non-judgemental, accessible care;
- folks showing up when you're in the hospital, bringing your favourite snacks and a book of cross-word puzzles;
- a helping hand with your broken bike at Switchback Cyclery;
- a couple of folks meeting you on the street, chatting with you, and offering socks, water, and healthcare supplies;
- a worship space;
- a friend who stops to chat while you're panhandling in front of Tim Horton's;
- a venue for music, performance, and community events;
- or a quiet conversation in front of the fireplace with someone who cares about you and sincerely wants to know how your day has been.

All of those encounters capture some of what we are, and some of the life and work that takes place within our four brick walls and beyond. But the best way to really understand what Sanctuary is, is to learn what Sanctuary means to each one of the people who are part of our community.

In this "My Sanctuary" edition of City of Refuge, we are sharing stories from our community members about what Sanctuary means to them. You'll hear from Greg Paul in "The View From Here" about what it's been like to be a part of Sanctuary from the very beginning. In the following pages, you'll read some responses from our community members to the questions: what is your Sanctuary, and what does Sanctuary mean to you? The collectively written poem, "My Sanctuary," strives to combine the ways that several community members describe Sanctuary into a unified picture of our community. As always, we've concluded this newsletter with an update on our finances and a word of gratitude for the gifts that enable us to continue living out our mission.

As you read through this edition of City of Refuge, we invite you to consider: what does Sanctuary mean to you? Maybe it is a place you have visited for a meal. Maybe it is your worshipping community. Maybe it is a community that you strap on your running shoes to support once a year. Maybe you have friends or family who are part of our community life. Maybe it's a place where you've come to support community arts. Maybe you became a donor out of concern for justice and the effects of poverty. Regardless of the way that you came to learn about us, take an interest in us, and support us, please know that we consider you to be a part of our community. We would love for you to take a moment to think about what Sanctuary means to you, and, if you'd like, to tell us!

Sanctuary





The View From Here

My Sanctuary has changed a lot in twenty-seven years. Back in the day, the group that anchored the community that was still more concept than reality was made up of the members of Red Rain, their spouses and kids, Alan and Colleen Beattie and Kate Jones. Perhaps one or two others. I spent my days and some nights mostly wandering the streets of the neighbourhood, getting to know it in a different way than I ever had before. (On other nights, I played with the band in local joints.) Although I'd hung out and even done a lot of "outreach" in the downtown core before, being in a place day after day after day changes your perspective.

It's also one of the surest ways to make a place your own. The neighbourhood was as much "my Sanctuary" as the old building, even before we put up the sign naming it as such. Come to think of it, I built and painted that sign in the front yard. Through the years, I've mopped floors (still do, sometimes), repaired broken door hardware, patched plaster and fished and fixed plugged or faulty toilets literally hundreds of times. That's another way you make a place your own – you accept the responsibility for it and do the work.

But more than anything else, what makes a place your own is your connection to the people within it. There's simply no question that this is what makes Sanctuary mine: not the building, not the activities, not the successes and failures, but the people. The others who hung out and hung on, who worked and trusted and failed and got up again and worked and trusted some more – many of whom still do. People I love, and who love me. Far, far too many are gone now, and that's absolutely the worst thing about my Sanctuary: too many of my friends die far too young and usually in circumstances that are heartbreaking. I'd have to say that this is another way that this place is mine – my heart has been broken here, over and over.

And strangely, although scars and even wounds remain, my heart has also been healed here. Is being healed. The sweetness of all that is, quite literally, beyond any words I could summon.

If you asked most people who know anything about it to describe Sanctuary, they would rightly talk about the poor and excluded people who are at the centre of the community here. They would say that's who Sanctuary belongs to, and it would all be true. But how sweet is it that it's also mine? A white, relatively wealthy man who might be the poster boy for the world's most secure pocket of privilege? Jesus taught that it's hard for rich people to get into the kingdom, but also that all things are possible with God. I'm proof of that. He's made a place for me in this wonderful, tragic corner of his kingdom.

There's a younger woman in our community who, like many, is plagued with enormous struggles. During a particularly difficult patch a couple of years ago, I would sometimes hug her and whisper to her what I told her was a word from God himself: she was precious. Precious to God, precious to me, precious to our strange and wildly dysfunctional Sanctuary family. It didn't seem like she could hear it then, and after a short while, I stopped.

Life in the interim has not been kind to her. Her struggles, if anything, have gotten worse, deeper, more entrenched. There are some days when she's okay, and others when she's spinning, racing, not making much sense at all. Lately when she's been in that awful space, she'll occasionally walk past me, look me right in the eyes, and say under her breath so that only she and I can hear, "Precious."

It's her Sanctuary, after all. She still knows that, here, she has a value beyond estimation.

I'm also aware, whether she is or not, that she is not only speaking about herself. She's the voice of God to me, too. The word she claims for herself is a gift also to me, a reminder that I'm not just a service provider, or a minister or whatever other construct society might apply.

I'm precious, and this is my Sanctuary.

My Sanctuary

*My Sanctuary is...
a family environment
community
my safe place
serenity and peacefulness
comfort
tranquillity
a place of friendship
solitude for the soul
show up when I need it
my home
my hiding place
a friendly place
a comfort for the soul
where I can be myself
a sense of belonging for me
love and belonging for each and every one.*



*A collective poem by Richard, Jonathan, Traci, JR, Darcy, Froggie,
Murray, James Smith, Donald, Donna O., Donna R., Yurni, Mel, Tanja and Maggie*

My Sanctuary



“At Sanctuary we consider everyone inherently valuable. That is a really healing thing to hear for people who have been rejected by the world, but it is also healing for people (like me) who have been striving to be considered “valuable” or “important” on the world’s terms. At Sanctuary, I feel free to just be myself and not worry about status, or accomplishments, or performance, or keeping up. I’m loved for just showing up.”

- Kathleen -

“All the years I spent here... These are my friends here. That’s all that matters. But, I don’t like Lyf. Just kidding! He’s a great friend of mine.”

- Mikey -

“Sanctuary is a place where people with unique perspectives come together in mutual support of one another. It is a community that strives to accept everyone no matter their situation in life. We share meals, trade stories, laughs, and tears. Sanctuary is a place many people call home.”

- Kirk -

“Sanctuary and Switchback Cyclery is my resilient family. It is a space that dignifies, respects and values us; a space overflowing with love and patience where we discover our potential.”

- Tanya -



“[When I think of Switchback Cyclery and Sanctuary] I think of togetherness.

I think of friendship and working. I’m kind of happy with how they try to help people out who actually really need the help, and people who I think don’t need the help they help out as well. I personally have struggles with that. But they seem to set me with a right role model so I can see the brighter things in the world.

I just like the good things that they do for people that really need it, like giving me a job for instance, and helping me get training and things like that.

It’s all good stuff.”

- Joe - (employee at Switchback Cyclery)



My Sanctuary

“As a nurse in the community at Sanctuary, I have a very privileged role of being welcomed into someone’s life, often in a time of need. We see folks from the community for a variety of reasons: coughs, frostbite, addictions, intimate partner violence, and everything in between. My personal favourite is foot care, where we are able to care for people’s feet including assessing skin conditions, trimming nails, and doing treatments.

Often it takes 30 minutes or more to complete, and I find it to be a very special time where I’m able to have a relaxed conversation with someone and always seem to learn something about their lives. Being a nurse in our community has opened my eyes to the gift that being in relationship with someone offers to providing better, more holistic care.”

- Tanja -



“Sanctuary is a place that is permeated by the love of Christ. That love is rooted in and at the core of everything - from the smallest interchange to the largest scale endeavor. That love is shown to all and it brings hope, encouragement, and enlivening to those touched by it. I love Sanctuary. I have never encountered any place like it before. It’s magnificent!”

- Janice -

“My Sanctuary is...it’s my home away from home. People welcome me there, and the staff are awesome because they understand me. And I really appreciate everything they do for me. That’s my opinion.”

- Al -



“My Sanctuary was about discovery. Now it is about recovery. In the early years of being part of Sanctuary I discovered the large gaps between the healthy and the hurting. I went to discover the gap I had perceived was a misnomer and that I was not so healthy and many of my choices were actually hurting others. Now, years later I see Sanctuary as a place where I can begin to recover from my unhealthy and hurtful ways in a safe and understanding community that is pointing in the same direction. My friends who have come from deeply marginalized situations have so much to share and teach me. Together we are learning how to live toward our Creator’s intended design.”

- Steve -

Financial Update

We cannot adequately express our gratitude to God and to you, our friends and financial supporters, for a tremendously strong financial year for us in 2018. By no means do we do this work for the money!

Not at all! But financial stability allows us to plan for the future, dream together as a community, and meet practical needs for one another in ways that would otherwise simply not be possible.

Thank you for the gifts that you have given to our Sanctuary community. We commit to being careful, wise and prayerful as we use what you have entrusted to us.

Board Members

Alison Marthinsen

Bruce Gooding

Janice Towndrow

Cindy Quinton

Joanna Moon

Michael Blair

Simon Beck

Sylvia Keesmaat

Ways to Help *Pray, pray, pray!*

DONATE

By credit card: donate.sanctuarytoronto.ca/

Monthly by electronic funds transfer use the form at www.sanctuarytoronto.ca/forms/PAGform.pdf

*By cheque or money order payable to Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto
Mail to 25 Charles Street East, Toronto, ON M4Y 1R9*

For US Donors, by cheque or money order payable to First Church of the Nazarene
Mail to Sanctuary c/o Radical Mission, 150 Richview Road, Clarksville, TN 37043
Attn: Leighanne Guthrie

Tax receipts will be issued at year end. Funds given in excess of an approved or discontinued program will be applied at the discretion of the Board.
Charitable #89037 9340 RR 0001

Donate A Car Canada! Sanctuary can benefit from your donation of any kind of vehicle (cars, trucks, vans, SUVs, motorcycles, boats, RVs) to be recycled in an environmentally friendly manner! Not only that, but also, if you have a newer or estate vehicle that you would like to donate, they have selling agents to assist in maximizing your donation. Simply go to www.donatecar.ca or call them at 1-877-250-4904.

Other Ideas: **Raise awareness** by showing this newsletter to your friends and family.
Commemorate special people and occasions by donating to Sanctuary 'in honour of...'
Sign-up to receive newsletters and invitations via email by contacting info@sanctuarytoronto.ca
Invite Sanctuary to speak at your church, school or group meeting.

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