

Sanctuary London, October 2014



# *Finding Home*

**RECAP - "100 miles for HOME"**- September 20, 2014. The long months of training were behind us. Darryl and I biked away from Courtright (south of Sarnia) at 7:31am. 100 miles before us. My father, Eldon, and Catherine (our nurse) were in the support van ahead of us. Eithne was on her scooter behind us – keeping us safe on the roads. The biking went fine. Two blown tires within five minutes of each other were a challenge mentally. But, with the wind at our back, we made good time. We arrived at our change over spot at Cliff and Karen Knip's farm on Adare Road by 12:30pm – 73.8 miles done and a marathon still to run. A quick change to running gear, lunch, and prayer and we were off. Darryl's sister in law Emma joined in for the marathon. Others joined in as we ran/walked. Five and a half hours and a few rather large blisters later, we joined about 50 people for the final 5k – a walk along the river towards the church! Pictured above is our friend Mike who waited ahead of the crowd to greet us. We all arrived at 513 Talbot St for a party with Jeremy and the Sanctuary band – 12 hours after we started.

We finished. It was tough. The wind that aided our biking was facing us as we ran. But when it got hard, Darryl and I recited names of our friends. People we loved and perhaps those who were harder to love – and kept declaring, "We're doing this for them!" So, we kept going. And then, our hearts were warmed as we saw those people and so many more welcome us home. We celebrated. We found home. Along the way, we raised over \$25 000 for Sanctuary!

I didn't sleep well that night. I was too excited for what we had just accomplished. My body took a few days to recover and within a week, I was running again. And thinking as I ran, "What do we do next year...for Home?"



### **It takes a child...**

A few years ago Gene, a dear friend of ours had a baby boy. A day after David was born his mother left the hospital... without him. David immediately became a ward of the crown because Gene was deemed incapable of caring for him. This didn't come as a surprise to any of us. Gene was homeless at the time, transient for as long as we have known her. Her mental capacity is quite low and she struggles to take care of herself. She lost all contact with any family and had little to no support from anyone other than emergency room nurses. The night she came to drop-in to share with us what had happened she was sobbing uncontrollably. Her heart, all our hearts were ripped in half. We all knew that she was not capable of raising a child, but capable or not, she was a mother with a deep love for her son. Her pain was real. This is not the way it was meant to be. Capability...

What makes a parent capable?

Sarah and I just had our first child. If you haven't already, meet Naomi Elizabeth Judith Reckman, born June 9th, 2014. The experience has been an absolute whirlwind for us. It seems like one thing after the other has happened with her. A run to the hospital for Mommy immediately after delivery, baby's hips that were

too loose and needed to be looked into, feeding struggles, infected toes and acid reflux. Not to mention all my training for "100 Miles for Home," weddings, going back to school, and all of the other normal commitments in life. This has contributed to a couple of exhausted parents.

But I have to tell you that we have been absolutely overwhelmed by support from our community. We have two sets of parents, two sets of grandparents, brothers, sisters and friends who have spent countless hours at our place. Each one holding and rocking our crying baby while we were able to have a few minutes to take a shower, or at least, a deep breath. Dozens of people have brought us meals and others have helped to clean the house and do other errands for us. Perhaps most importantly we have had warm and understanding ears to talk to. The community at Sanctuary has embraced us as a family and helped remind us of the gift of children. Every time we walk through the doors of the church many hands are eager to take Naomi from us. Men and women, hardened by years of rough life on the streets, turn to mush, making the most bizarre faces and cooing noises with her. It is a beautiful sight to behold.

And I must honestly say that without our community constantly lifting us up I truly have no idea how we could have made it this far. And I know that at only four months in, the journey is far from over. Are Sarah and I capable parents? As I come to this humbling realization, I am overcome by a deep sense of respect and compassion for the many parents we run into downtown regularly who somehow manage to survive without much of the love and support we have experienced. And my heart continues to break for Gene and others who for whatever reason are not allowed to care for their own children.

A couple of weeks ago, Naomi and three other babies in our community were dedicated. These new additions are making a profound change within our community. Recently one of our friends, Uncle Mike, expressed how important it was for him to stay clean from his addiction and use less offensive language because he wants to be a positive influence for Naomi and her cousin Alivia. While it is very true that it takes a village to raise a child, I am learning also that, as someone once said, it also takes children to raise a community.

Darryl Reckman



**Sanctuary London Baby Dedications – October 5, 2014**

**Naomi Reckman (daughter of Sarah and Darryl Reckman), Alivia Reckman (daughter of Sara and Kyle Reckman), Grace Ridley (daughter of Arlene and Arlen Ridley), and Toby Beasley (son of Rachel and Colin Beasley)**



## **Gil's involvement in a Research Project.**

Since Sanctuary's inception, we have realized that we need to not only exist with and for our community in London, but share with other communities as well. For the 8 years that I worked on the streets in London, I have had many amazing opportunities to serve outside our community. I speak at 3 SERVE's most summers (SERVE is a week long service project for young people that includes worship, speaking, reflecting on God's heart, and formation of community). I share about Sanctuary and God's Kingdom that includes His heart for the poor at church worship services, schools, and other community organizations. Last year, I was asked to write the curriculum for SERVE 2015 – to be used by all the SERVE sites across North America. This book, entitled "The Other 51," challenges the youth and leaders who attend the week long service project to not see Christian service as simply one week of SERVE, but the other 51 weeks as well.

This October, I begin another exciting opportunity. Working alongside Mission Services of London, I will be leading a research project for the 3 major shelters in London. The scope of the project is to find out who is staying in shelters long term, why they continue to reside in shelters, and what barriers exist in finding housing in London. The results of this research project will offer recommendations towards better access to housing for some of our most vulnerable friends. During this project, I will come alongside those who stay in shelters and hear their stories. The biggest part of this project is to spend time with our friends in conversation, questions, and seeking solutions together. This will give me an opportunity to meet with folks I have not met as of yet.

Working with our friends in the shelters, we will create a response to the system – what works, how they can work better together to serve our friends, and how they can participate in not only finding housing but home. It will help us at Sanctuary further understand the shelter system and why people stay there. It will create deep partnerships with other community organizations. And it is part of the reason we exist as Sanctuary.

As always, I will share what I'm learning along the way with you! I will let you in on the stories of pain and triumph over some of the roughest backgrounds you will come across. This project is very exciting for us at Sanctuary. We will form deeper friendships and trust. And somehow, in the midst of this, we will find home together.

Gil Clelland



Sunday worship service – Oct 5, 2014 – children dedication Sunday



**Just the Beginning:** A few nights ago in a torrential downpour, while dropping off a few friends, Mike said: "Hey!, I love that song! Don't drop me off yet!". So we pulled the car over into an empty lot and cranked up 'Africa' by Toto. All four of us sang at the top of our lungs. Some of us were homeless, some of us were not, for a few minutes there was no difference between us.

Heaven and earth overlapped.

But, it doesn't always feel like it.

After one of the first street walks I went on with Gil, I drove home feeling totally inadequate. The people, their pains, their past – I was not equipped to handle any of this! I communicated this to Gil a day later. His response to me was surprising. He said that it did not have as much to do with my ability, but rather, humility. Our friends will shut down if our approach sounds like this - 'I have got things figured out and I know what is wrong with you and you will be in a better place if you would just listen to what I say and do what I do.' Our goal at Sanctuary is not primarily to 'fix' people, but to be a community where we all are humble enough to say that we are all broken and need fixing.

To update you on our family and house situation: We are still in Goderich and I am commuting to and from London now that I am full time at Sanctuary. We had hoped that our house would have sold by this time, but we have made adjustments for the short term until our property sells in order to relocate to London. Even though we spend considerable time apart during the week, and we face many uncertainties, God has been faithful to supply our needs on a day to day basis. And living out this calling has been an amazing encouragement.



In my first week of full time work, over a cup of ordinary coffee while sitting at a plastic table at Sanctuary London, a young man poured his heart out to me. He said: 'I wake up everyday afraid of where I will go when I die'. As we continued to converse among the low rumble of many distant conversations, we discussed how John 3:16 says : "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life". He shared that although he tries to be a good person, he does not feel as though he does enough for God to love him. Over a half hour or so, we then conversed about how through the grace of God and by believing in Jesus we are saved, not by what we do. He said: 'I want to live with that in my heart! We proceeded to a quiet corner where we prayed and He gave his whole life to Christ!

Since coming on staff on August 1st of this year, God has affirmed that I am in a place where I can live out my calling, something I have yearned for most of my life. I have been encouraged to do my best to walk on the waters of uncertainty. There are many things we are continuing to trust God for, even on a day to day basis. Our journey together is just beginning...

Jeremy Jongejan

## Getting involved with Sanctuary London:

### Financially

As we plan for next coming year, we are looking to raise the number of monthly donors. Will you consider donating to Sanctuary once a month? If so, please go to our website at

<http://www.sanctuarylondon.ca/getting-involved/donations/>

Or for one time donations, send a cheque to Sanctuary London, 147 Walnut Street London ON N6H 1A5

### Invite us to join you!

If you would like to experience Sanctuary at your own gathering on a Sunday morning, youth group, or special event, contact Gil - [gil@sanctuarylondon.ca](mailto:gil@sanctuarylondon.ca) or Jeremy - [jeremy@sanctuarylondon.ca](mailto:jeremy@sanctuarylondon.ca) to book soon! We can bring the Praise team (pictured above), and Gil or Darryl to speak. You can hear stories from the streets, be encouraged by God's great love for all humanity, and challenged to find ways to live out that love in your own communities!