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## UPDATE SPRING 2011



**Under the Bridge:** There is a stark cold unmistakeable reality to the fact that a person lives under a bridge. Two weeks ago, we took a walk with a group of 11 year old boys from a local church.

That week had started to feel warmer in London but by Friday night, the time of the walk, it was again cold and windy. We met near a laser tag facility downtown (the event for the boys after our walk). Within a few minutes, we had opened up some great topics with these engaging young men. Why – for example – does the city provide comfortable outdoor seating (between two office buildings) for those who have a job BUT just around the corner, spikes cover the concrete on the outdoor planters to ensure that our friends from the streets do not sit there?

But the question that struck my young friends that night was 'why do my friends sleep outside when they could sleep inside at a shelter?' We talked about pride, a sense of control, and feeling safe. If you had all your stuff in one bag, could you sleep comfortably in a room with 5 strangers? We talked as we walked towards the river. The walking path was muddy in some places from a spring thaw and icy in other spots. We had to be careful. Darkness was falling and we didn't want anyone to slip. We stopped and gathered together. Under a bridge by the river, I pointed out the blankets on the other side...a home for one of our friends. Silence overtook us. The boys and their leaders stared at this spot. The wind picked up...my companions tried to keep warm by pulling their hats over their ears. 'Do you know the person who sleeps there?' someone courageously asked. 'Yes,' I replied. Somebody's son lives there, a mother's 'little boy' curls up with an old blanket (my mom still calls me her 'baby boy' and I'm 39), someboy's son tries to stay warm and get comfortable on those rocks every night. And I think it struck some of the boys...they too were somebody's son.

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## Summer Concert: Steve Green in London

**WHERE:** West Park Church, 955 Gainsborough Rd

**WHEN:** Wednesday July 6<sup>th</sup> at 7pm (doors open at 6pm)

**COST:** \$15 in advance (call or email us) \$20 at door

**All proceeds to support Sanctuary London:**

A generous donor offered to bring Steve Green to London to help raise funds for Sanctuary London. Come join us for a night of great memories and music! Opening act is the "Upside of Maybe"





# FINDING HOME

At Sanctuary London, we are often asked the question, what causes homelessness? Whenever I hear this question, I like to respond with a question of my own, what makes 'home' for you? The person asking the question is usually taken aback, but after a few moments of pondering, will usually come up with a pretty good response. Home is a place where I feel safe. Home is the place where I can just be... be myself, without any masks... where I can be a mess and not feel self-conscious. Home is where I feel wanted and needed. In the words of a young boy who recently joined me on a walk-about downtown, "home is the place where mom bakes me fresh, home-made cookies, just because she loves me."



Very rarely do we hear anyone defining home as a building with four walls and a roof. According to Bono of the rock band U2, in their song entitled 'Sometimes You Can't Make It on Your Own', "a house does not make a home." If our definition of home is accurate, then most of our friends who are currently living at street level were 'homeless', for a variety of reasons, long before they ever became 'house-less'. At least in Canada, poverty is almost never primarily an issue of not having enough 'stuff', but rather an issue of broken relationship and a lack of positive relationships. That is why everything we do at Sanctuary revolves around building healthy relationships. Relatively speaking, it is quite easy to hand someone a sandwich, or to drop a loonie in someone's open hand. These things are important, but if they are done outside of relationship, it is simply a short-term solution to a very long-term issue. Sometimes the ways in which we try to help another person can actually end up hurting that person in ways we never even imagined.



One of the greatest things I have learned from my time hanging out with people on the streets is that the more I spend time with people whose hurts and brokenness are so obvious, the easier it is for me to start opening up and sharing the pain in my own life. My friends on the street help me to open up, and together we all begin to feel a little more safe, a little more wanted and a little more needed. Together we begin to find home.





# UPDATE

**The Clelland's:** When we started considering this move to start Sanctuary London last year at this time, I sat down with my family and we talked. After all the "why?" questions were answered, we began to discuss implications for us as a family. It would be a huge risk. Financially, we did not know at all if this would happen. And after prayer, I received the blessing of my family. "Go for it, pa!" Darryl and I went for it...and the first few months have been a joy for my family. At least once a month, we have people from our community at our home (for darts, coffee, watch a football/hockey game, or enjoying a meal together). Regularly, Bonnie and the boys visit our programs. One night at our Wednesday drop in, Isaiah's whole hockey team came to be part of our community! All three boys continue to grow and do well academically and in hockey. Both Joseph (11) and Isaiah (9) had amazing years for their respective teams. Jacob (5) just learned to play this winter! Bonnie made a wonderful decision this past year as well. Due to administrative changes at her work, she was told that she would no longer be able to take summers off from teaching English as a Second Language to new immigrants. This time off had been a blessing for her first two summers as she could be home every day with the boys. With the changes, Bonnie decided to put her name up for a transfer to a different site (further away, less hours/pay, and a new schedule) so that she could continue to stay home with our children during the summer. The boys were overwhelmed. "Why did you do that, mama?" They asked knowing the 'cost' of less money, and greater inconvenience daily... "I did it for you!"...We enjoyed the outdoor rink in our backyard and the winter that lasted until mid-April! Now, we anticipate a great summer of camping and relaxing around the house.

**The Reckman's:** This coming June, Sarah and I will have been married for one whole year! It has been an exciting time for us with so many major changes going on in our lives. Married life continues to have it's challenges, and we are continuing to learn and grow both as a couple and as individuals. Since our wedding, Sarah has been working for the Canadian Mental Health Association as a community/crisis worker in Oxford County. Just recently she was given the news that her request for a 'leave of absence' has been approved so that she can go back to school in September to complete her Masters in Social Work. Sarah loves school and is excited about going back. Together we feel very blessed with receiving the leave of absence, knowing she will be guaranteed her job back when the school year is complete. As you might know, I enjoy school, you might say, considerably less than Sarah. I am still working to complete my undergraduate degree in Sociology, and I am continuing to study part time at UWO. I think I would much prefer to concentrate my time on the work of Sanctuary, and perhaps a little time on puttering around the house and garden. A little bit of water damage from earlier this spring promises to keep me on my toes in the summer months, working to fix the problem in the basement. So you can imagine that life tends to feel a little busy at times. But, together with Bonnie and Gil, Sarah and I feel a deep sense of shalom, knowing, at least for the time being, that this is where God has placed them. This is where we are supposed to be. This is our sanctuary.



# WHAT'S GOING ON?

So, where are we going? What are we thinking? And how are we going to get there? Let's first remind you of the Mission Statement through which we filter all those decisions...

AT Sanctuary London, we are becoming a healthy, welcoming community where people who are poor or excluded are particularly valued. This community is an expression of the good news embodied in Jesus Christ.

Sanctuary London Mission Statement

**Health Care:** Last week, one of our friends, Chrissy, gave birth to a 6lbs baby girl. Karima, a volunteer with us (and nursing student) was there with Chrissy throughout the night in the hospital...What if our friends from our community had someone in health care who they knew first as a friend? Someone they could trust? Someone who they knew loved them no matter what? As seen on the streets in Toronto, that role is immeasurable...SO, we are pursuing this dream of having a nurse on staff with us. We have continued discussions with local health care professionals, Sanctuary in Toronto, and our friends from the streets to bring a street nurse to London!

**Partners:** It gives me great joy to admit that we (like many of the people we are friends with) need others to survive. Long term partnerships continue with First CRC (our partners in ministry and location!), Vision ministries (our partners in some administration), Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto (our mentors and umbrella organization), London YFC, U of Western Nursing, and First Baptist. Other churches send their people, their finances, and pray for us. Schools, youth groups and small Bible study groups have joined us on a walk downtown. We visited 25 different congregations in the last year. We have an advisory council around us and are working towards creating and implementing a board of directors.

**Financial Update:** We knew from the start, this would be a risk. Sanctuary London was brand new, had very few people in our community who could help financially, and we would need to rely on others like you to keep us going. Even if every one of our supporters from YFC came with us, we would have enough about 60% of the budget for our first year...but as of last week, we are at 83% of this year's budget. Darryl and Gil have not missed a pay period yet...and all our programs have been fully funded so far! That's the good news! Praise God, hey? It's been so exciting to see how people have responded to the vision of Sanctuary London. People we did not even know a year ago have begun to support us. Some local churches (and some congregations out of town) have added us to their annual giving budget. And some wonderfully faithful supporters continued to walk with us. THANK-YOU!

BUT, we are not there yet. We still need people to partner with us financially. As we dream and vision, our financial need grows with it. See the information below if you would like to support us.

## What can you do to get involved?

1. We feel the best way you can support Sanctuary London is to begin loving those right in your community. For ideas on how to do this, come to one of our programs for a day, come take a walk with us, read *God in the Alley* by Greg Paul...or just live out Jesus' words to "Love your neighbour as yourself." Begin today!

2. Donate items that would help us weekly and directly: socks, soaps, coffee, hot chocolate, grocery cards (for our friends and to help purchase food items for our programs), Tim Horton's cards, and homemade treats (can never have enough!)

3. Financially: **One time donation:** send a cheque made out to *Sanctuary Ministries* with *Sanctuary London* written in the memo section to the address below.

**Become a monthly donor:** Send a VOID cheque along with your mailing address and desired monthly donation amount to the address listed below.

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