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Come! Celebrate the Arts With us!
May 5th at 7pm - Details on Page 6!

UPDATE SPRING 2012

The word of the day is **AND!**

Recently, we've been doing a lot of reflecting about how we can be two things at the same time – loved **and** messed up. Too often we feel we can be loved as long as we don't admit our mistakes...or we can be a mess but know that we won't be accepted. In Jesus, we sense we can be both – Messy **and** Loved! So we're trying to live that out in our community. It's obviously not the whole walk of faith BUT it's a good start...read on to see how we're working it out!

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Looking for Blue Skies

His calm demeanour betrayed the story that lay beneath his weather worn skin. Sitting outside on the sidewalk, we began to talk. The bicycle wheel from his recently dismantled ride was still spinning as he sat beside me. Norman greeted me with a knuckle punch and called me 'brother.'

We talked a while about meaningless stuff - the warm spring, the swooning Maple Leafs, and before long, we were done with idle chatter. He offered, "I don't know why, but I feel comfortable with you. I haven't had that with anyone since..." He stopped, turned his face away. His cold blue eyes stared over the roof tops at the bright blue sky.

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In Baptism (above Gil baptizes one of our friends in a hot tub), we acknowledge we are not worthy...**and...** we are God's beloved

AND: a Biblical reflection

For too long we've kept apart two Biblical themes that need to come together. "We are not worthy" AND "We are God's beloved." John the Baptizer said one...and God the Father said the other. Let me set the scene:

Somewhere between 20 and 30 CE, John the Baptizer went out to the Jordan River to show God's response to the events of the day. Roman presence had infiltrated the capital city of Jerusalem but Herod Antipas had brought that pressure north to Galilee. In 20 CE, Antipas began to build a city of honour to Emperor Tiberius. Aptly named Tiberias and built on the sea of Galilee, this city would force the Jews of the northern province to pay tribute to Herod's leadership and Rome's rightful domination.

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Save the date – May 5th -2012
Celebrate the Arts with us!
7pm at 513 Talbot St
Music, Art, Writing, and Dancing!
More Details on Page 6!



Looking for Blue Skies

Continued from page one:

He continued, "Mom died nearly twenty years ago...I was there in the hospital just before she went. We sat together for a while...held hands...and I told her 'I love you mom.' 'I know Jimmie' – she always called me Jimmie, it's my middle name. 'Mom,' I continued, 'you remember when I was really young...and you were always missing the change in your drawer in your bedroom. You blamed my older brothers...but that was me.' She looked at me with the warmth that only my mother has ever had for me. 'I know Jimmie...but you are here with me now...and you just shared the truth.' She smiled and looked me in the eye, 'Now go live it!' My heart was racing. I had let her down so often. I hated letting her down. The drinking...I hated myself when I would drink. The fights. I was a nasty son of a..." - he looked at my face, caught my eyes and changed his words. "Well, I wasn't very nice, let's just say that. But I'm fifty years old...I remember sitting on the back porch as a kid. And he came over – older, bigger guy in our neighbourhood – always pushing me around. 'That's my spot!' and he lifted me and threw me...So, in my twenties, I worked out. And I found him at a bar...and I let him have it...'Remember me now?' I yelled at him. 'I'm no kid no more!' Lost a lot of blood that night." Nervously, he stopped a while from his narrative and looked at me again. I think he thought he had crossed some line in our friendship...a line of trust. "I don't share much with people...they use it against me."

His eyes were searching my face, looking for a response, and then with a smile, he added, "But you're different. Remember in the old building when we first met...You didn't know but I was testing you when I shared my stories...and you still came to me. Asked how I was...Didn't run from me..." These words struck a place in his memories that was too raw. Norman needed to look away again. Silence, a holy sacred silence fell between us.

Keeping his gaze away, he continued, "I want to belong..."

Norman asked about our Sunday worship service and other programs. But it didn't seem to quench his search. "Would you mind if we just met every now and then for coffee? We could keep chatting. Try to encourage one another in this?" I offered.

"Yeah, I'd like that..." and he smiled again, "I'd like that a lot."



ART AND ARTISTS



'AND' – A REFLECTION

Continued from page 1.

So, the question for the Jews was, "How long, oh God?" They longed for YHWH to step back into their lives, establish His reign, and kick out the bad guys (Rome and all her puppets – including Herod and tax collectors). They knew things had to change. The Temple system was in shambles. The Kingship was a joke. A new Exodus HAD to happen. Some Jews tightened Torah regulation. Some attacked the Romans. Some withdrew to form a new society. And John went to the Jordan to walk people through the same river of the first exodus and preached "repentance." Turn to the new fresh Way of being Israel that was about to be unveiled. This new Way would be initiated by One anointed by God's own Spirit...and John knew he would not be worthy to tie that One's sandal straps. John believed that he was not worthy...

"I'm not worthy" is a good place to get to. We need to understand our own mess...our sin – in light of God. Most people we meet on the streets of London admit this openly. They know without much coaxing how much they've screwed up. Most have been told their whole lives that they are not worthy. Some people we meet blame others. But a lot of our friends hate themselves. We hear that too frequently. Why? Well, if all we know about ourselves is we're not worthy, it leads quickly down the road of self-hatred. "I'm not worthy" is a good place to get to but it is not the place to stay...we need the word "AND." And to the words of God the Father we go to hear the rest of how we should see ourselves.

Continuing with John's narrative: One day, that One came to him...the One who he was unworthy to tie his sandal straps...that One came to be baptized.

Jesus found his cousin nervous about continuing with what had become a regular event for John.

John saw this moment as the New Exodus! He was nervous. Jesus convinced John to do it anyway...and they walked to the middle of the river. The sky *ripped open* and God's voice echoed, "This is my child. This is my beloved." Reading onwards through the Gospels we get surprised again and again that those words were not just for Jesus. Jesus lived as though those words were true for all of us. And I would affirm that we hear those words from God at our own baptism and throughout the rest of our lives. "You are my child. You are my beloved." You are God's beloved. Do you know that? It was Paul's desire above all that his congregations would know this... "and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

So, we are a mess AND we are loved. But if we have places where we sense 'love' but not free to admit we are a mess, we try to appear like everything is good. We want that feeling of love to continue. So, we wear masks of "having it all together" in order that we can hold onto some sense of love. We feel we need to earn that love. It is somehow dependent on us...It is not. God loves His children. In the mess and in the sin. He loves. Can we find ways in our communities of faith to live out both? Can we feel safe to mess up...AND still be loved? It is not easy. In fact, it is quite risky. We'll need to learn to forgive other people's messes – big and small. We'll need to find healthy ways to admit we don't have it all together. And trust that Love is Stronger! God loves like that. His Kingdom is shaped by that...can we follow Him?

"Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat."

Mother Teresa

BELOVED AND MESSY

SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE

Shorty just started hanging out with our community a few weeks ago. She was invited by one of our regulars, and something about her personality immediately drew me to her. She wanted to talk, so it wasn't difficult to get a conversation started with her. Her first night she stayed for our art program, and although she wasn't interested in learning about cartooning (which was the lesson for that evening), she brought her own scrapbook and materials. When I asked if she minded if I take a look, I was quite surprised by her response... "Really? You want to take a look at my work? Nobody has ever been interested in my books! My friends always get annoyed with me and every time I try to share it with someone they tell me to 'shut up', and 'put that waste-of-time-stuff away'". I really *did* want to see it, so for the next half hour she showed me her work and shared much of her life's story. It was a story of great pain...the bruises on her face indicated that the pain had yet to stop. Every time I'd ask a follow up question, she gave me the same surprised response. Why would anyone care about her? Why would anyone give her love? She believed that she did not deserve love at all...

The next morning we received a call that one of our friends spent the night sleeping beside the church building. Gil and I met at the building to find Shorty still sleeping after a long night of working. We asked if we could take her out for breakfast, but she asked if she could have her breakfast "to go" as she had another appointment on Dundas Street at the east end of town. I can't say for sure what her 'appointment' was, but it hurt to see her go as we pondered the possibilities. Beautiful and broken.



"I've noticed that a few of the people in our community will be very committed, and attend all of our programs for months in a row, and then without warning they disappear for weeks on end. But eventually they usually come back... why is that?" This is a situation that happens quite regularly within the Sanctuary community, and I've heard the question before. In this particular situation, I reminded James, who asked the question, of the time he disappeared for three or four months only a year ago and asked, "Why did you do it?"

After some deep thought, he responded, "I think it's because I knew how much you guys loved me, and after some of the mistakes I made, I was too embarrassed.... Or maybe too afraid to disappoint you, knowing that I had screwed up *again*".

I think this is the reason why so many of us are constantly on the run. After experiencing the joy of being accepted, we're afraid that we might not meet up to expectations. Without ever saying it, we're afraid that the love we were accepted with might run out, and we need to do something to continue to earn it.

I find it fascinating that it is often during these moments of recognizing our own ugliness, when we need to be uplifted by an accepting and loving community the most, that those are the moments that we choose to run and alienate ourselves from those desire to love us... And it's conversations like these that beg us to question whether we are providing that safe place for people to be broken and messy and ugly AND beautiful all at the same time.

BELOVED AND MESSY

SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE



First, we cheered on our Karaoke contestants



Fred has been coming quite regularly to many of our programs, but Mondays seem to be his favourite. He just loves playing euchre, and he's pretty good at it too! Fred is one of the most friendly people you could hope to meet, but anyone who knows him knows he has a temper. He is also extremely hard on himself, perhaps, as a result of many years of pain growing up with the words "you're not good enough" constantly being pounded into his brain.

Fred has been working on coping with his anger - knowing when he needs to walk away from situations that are frustrating for him. But, after a play which cost him the euchre game, Fred got up and marched away. We knew he was upset with himself and just needed some time to cool off. I didn't know it at the time, but his anger once again got the best of him, and he punched through the drywall on his way out the door.

A half hour later I got a tap on the shoulder, "Can we talk for a sec?" "Of course," and we walked together to find some privacy. "I messed up big time Darryl...and I don't know what to do about it,"

Fred shared. He was visibly shaken. He pointed to the hole in the wall and continued, "Is there any way you can help me fix this? I really want to make things right."

So Fred and I went together to pick up some drywall compound, and for the next five days we spend an hour or two at the church carefully patching up the hole. It was an incredible way for the two of us to connect on a whole deeper level as we spent that time together sharing some deep common hurt. The church wall was not the only hole that received a patch that week.

Sanctuary's First Anniversary Celebration Night



Then, our karaoke winner, Benjamin, sang with the band!

...and we danced the night away to some great rock favourites



WHAT'S GOING ON?

So, where are we going? What are we thinking? And how are we going to get there?



Financial Update

Move to London: As you know, Sanctuary London was planted under the 'umbrella' of Sanctuary Ministries in Toronto. They offered to help us (for as long as it would take) to process donations, guide us through getting charitable status, and process payroll. You also know that as of last December, we received our charitable status and are officially a church. The final thing to happen was payroll and donations to be processed in London – AND as of July 1 – that will be happening. All donations will be processed by our staff (and volunteers) right here in London. Payroll will be handled locally. It is scary and wonderful step as we move forward. If you donate monthly, this will not affect you. If you send in donations regularly, make sure you send them to “Sanctuary Ministries” 736 Glasgow Street, London, ON N5Y 1V7! Thanks so much!

Budget: As of March of this year, we have received enough donations to stay on budget. We currently fund 2 salaries and all of our program costs. We have not missed a paycheque yet! This is amazing and due to to God's provision and your response to God's challenge to help us along! Thanks so much...

Dreams: But, we're not done dreaming. It has become evident that need more people on staff – specifically in the area of women's ministries – moms living in poverty, women living in challenging relationships, and women who sell their bodies either to survive or to make a living. We are looking at raising the salary of another staff member who will be hired to give special care to the women in our community. **Alongside your regular donation, will you consider a special one-time donation towards funding this new staff member?**

How you can help:

1. You can donate to us monthly OR through a one-time donation.
2. You can host a Sanctuary coffee/dessert night – where you introduce your friends who may be interested in supporting us (prayerfully or financially). This is a time where Darryl or Gil could present a little about our ministry and ask others to be involved. Contact us if this is something you would be interested in.

Come! Celebrate the Arts!
With our community of *SANCTUARY LONDON*

Saturday May 5th 7pm – doors open
at 513 Talbot St London ON
Free Admission

A night of celebration of the arts in our community – see paintings, sculptures, drawings, hear poetry, and writings...as well as dance the night away with our “house band” - 17 Watts!

