

SANCTUARY LONDON

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Come! Celebrate the Arts With us!
May 10th at 7pm - Details on Page 4

UPDATE SPRING 2013

The Wedding Dance: Gil Clelland

On the streets of London live many people trying to escape their past. Sometimes, the past sneaks back in. Sometimes, the past is invited back. Hear how the past crept back into the life of a friend and how God was found right in the middle of it...

Miriam closed her eyes, raised her hands to heaven, and the water washed over her. Four friends, each with a bucket of warm water, poured the water as I asked her the questions that people following Jesus have been asked for two thousand years.

"Do you Miriam, accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to follow Him in the waters of baptism?"

"Yes."

"Then, I baptize you Miriam, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."



Holy hugs followed. We greeted and shared prayers and hugged some more. This, Miriam's wedding day, was also her baptism day. She had wanted to take this day, of all days, to honour where God had taken her, how God had shaped her, and share that amazing grace with her friends and family. She wanted to be "pure" for her husband. So, both Miriam and her future husband were baptized...and a half hour later, were married! A great beaming smile grew across Miriam's face. And somewhere in the back of the sanctuary, a warmth came over Ken and Joan that they had not experienced in years.

Ken found me later. A man of great warmth and joy – but from one look at his face, he also knew great pain. Ken and his wife Joan walked over smiling. They knew something I didn't and were about to share...

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"We adopted Miriam as a young girl. We raised her to follow God and love the church. But it wasn't easy. She rebelled. We tried. We loved...and by her sixteenth birthday, she was gone. To the streets... We heard rumours and none of them were good. We had to let her go..." This obviously hurt Ken the most. I think he recalled all those sleepless nights. Waiting. Wondering. Insides being ripped in two. All those seemingly unanswered prayers. He remembered crying out to God - *Hold onto my daughter, please*. So, he stopped to compose himself. He looked Joan in the eye like they had done so many times in their marriage. He received strength in her love...and he continued.

"But God never let her go." Here, the love for his daughter met the reality of the moment and he stopped again. "God led her to you guys, this community, and you. Miriam speaks very highly of you. She loves this place. She feels accepted here. And she has learned to walk with God again." He looked Joan in the eyes again. "We just wanted to say 'Thank-you'."

Miriam wandered over to our conversation. She addressed Ken directly. "Papa, the band is ready. Can you come and dance with me?" And Ken was whisked away.

We don't get that much at Sanctuary. We rarely meet the 'past.' We hear all about it. Our friends on the streets share a lot of their past with us. Sometimes, their stories are full of pain from home. And sometimes, like Miriam, home was great, but choices led them down a different path for a while.

Later that night, Ken's words resounded with me. His words echoed. They were a life lesson for me. For each of the friends I meet and never hear from again. For each person I wanted to love more, teach more, learn from, and welcome...but they left. I have to let them go...but God never lets them go.

Praying for the "Seeds" in Our Community
Darryl Reckman

Ever since I was a young child, I have always loved gardening. This is a gift that has been passed down from my mother. Growing up in Sarnia, I loved helping my mom around the garden. It was a beautiful way to connect, and I often bugged her to have my own little piece of the garden to care for.

She eventually said I could have the whole north side of our house (the house faced west with the driveway on the south). I was disappointed at first because there was very little sunlight. But Mom took the time to teach me about certain plants that loved to grow in the shade. We divided some of the 'hostas' she had in the backyard, my favourite ones, with the forest green leaves that have a white stripe down the middle and have little purple flowers, and put four or five of them along the wall. Then we purchased some 'impatiens' and filled the entire rest of the garden in a blanket of the little red, pink and white flowers.

The focal point of the garden was an old broken birdbath that I found in someone's garbage. It was cracked and would not hold water any longer, but it would hold soil. I turned it into a planter. In it, the most beautiful orange begonias bloomed all summer long.

I still love gardening to this day, and although it has not felt like it quite yet (it was snowing this morning), spring is just around the corner. I love this time of year because it is a wonderful reminder of resurrection. All things appear to be made new again. Every flower garden, every farmer's field is plowed under and given a fresh new start.... And it feels like a fresh new start for *me* too.

This summer, at Sanctuary, we are trying to put together a community garden. It will be wonderful to have a sandwich at drop-in with tomatoes on it that we all helped to grow! We also believe that in a society that is so full of disconnection (from one another, from our food, from God, from ourselves), it is so important for all of us to find ways that we can be connected to the rest of creation.

My close friend Mike came over this week to help plant the seeds that will hopefully grow into the plants that we will care for in our community garden.

We picked out seeds together – beans, carrots, lettuce, beets, peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes (Mike's favorite kind... Beefsteak!), then sat down at the kitchen table and began to plant them.

I would dig a tiny little hole in the soil, and as Mike picked up each seed, he would take it in his hand, and say a short prayer for each and every seed before he placed it in the soil. Can you believe that? Hundreds of seeds we planted that day, and hundreds of little prayers were lifted up; "Father God in heaven, we pray your blessing over this seed. Would you cause it to grow up strong and healthy. Help it to yield a good crop that will be used to feed your children. Thank you Lord. Amen."

At first I couldn't believe it. I wanted to roll my eyes... at this pace we were going to be here all week! This was ridiculous and I was getting very impatient. Couldn't we just pray over them all at one time once they were all planted? But God was quietly and persistently knocking on the door of my heart. He wanted to teach me a lesson. And slowly my heart melted until finally, with tears in my eyes, I joined in; "Father bless this seed..."



*"The Lord God took
the man and put him in
the garden to work it
and take care of it"
Genesis 2:15*

GO AND DO LIKEWISE...

Darryl Reckman

"Do you think that any of your people would appreciate having their feet cleaned up and properly taken care of?"

A gentle soft spoken lady named Ilsa greeted Gil at the door of her church one Sunday morning with that question. He had just finished his sermon where he challenged the congregation to find ways to get involved in the Kingdom of God right here on earth as it is in heaven... right here and right now! We are the guest speaker/preacher regularly at churches, schools, and other events. Wherever we speak, we like to challenge that there are 'homeless' broken people everywhere we go – school, workplaces, church, the gym, in our own circles of friends - and that it is our responsibility to seek out those people where God has *already* placed us. We use the gifts and talents that God has given us to BE a sanctuary for one another.

Ilsa went on to explain that she was a nurse, but that she just loved to take care of people's feet. She was experienced in doing so and wondered if there was a way that God could use her gift within our community. Gil responded with his typical response. "Sure," Gil said, "But much more important than the service you are going to provide is yourself... we want you to come and offer yourself in friendship to our people. That's what we really need!"

"Do you think that will happen over a 30 minute foot care appointment?" she smiled back.

And so Ilsa joined us on Wednesday with all her stuff ready to care for people's feet if needed, but also to just sit with people and get to know them.

"Darryl, I just don't know what to do with myself, anymore" Rebecca shared with me through muffled sobs. "Now that I have this infection, I can't even bend down to put my own socks on! I couldn't reach my feet if I tried for all the pain! And what's worse is that I need to get my toenails cut. I'm afraid I might have some ingrown toenails. They're starting to hurt so bad I can hardly walk, but I haven't any extra money to go and get them taken care of. Foot care is expensive you know!"

Rebecca, an elderly member of our community, has been coming to our drop-ins for a number of years now. She is such a warm spirit, often cheering everyone up with a silly little joke, or by playing the piano for us. It hurt to see her like this. She clearly felt the hopelessness of life.

And as I sat there, holding her and patiently listening, a smile slowly stretched across my face. I couldn't believe what God was doing right in front of me! At that moment Ilsa approached the table where we were sitting. So I said to her, "Rebecca, I'd like you to meet our new friend Ilsa... its her first time here and she is wondering if there is anyone who could use some helping taking care of their feet!"

Rebecca turned to look at Ilsa, and then turned towards me. She buried her face in my open arms and, half crying, half laughing, began to thank the Lord.



Running for a Cure: Gil is Running to Alaska? Not quite. But something like that.

Last September, in an effort to get into shape, I began to work out at the gym. I did cardio, weights, and began to eat better. And in October, I began to run. Every week, I ran 3 or 4 times and I ran longer times and more miles. By Christmas, I could run 10 miles at one time. Wanting a lofty goal, I signed up for a marathon in May. As I worked out, I kept "running" into my friend Boyd. We exchanged pleasantries, talked hockey, and recovery. Boyd has Leukemia. Two years ago, he was given a 10% chance of survival. Now, after a blood marrow transplant and much prayer, Boyd has a cleaner bill of health. He has a long way to go still but it looks better today. Shortly after we began to hang out, an opportunity crossed my path to run a marathon in Alaska to raise money and awareness for Leukemia Research and Treatment (as part of Team in Training – and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. I asked Boyd if I could run in his honour and he was thrilled.

But more than that, I began to identify with Boyd. He is about my age. He is married, like me. He has 3 children, like me. Weekly, we meet to run and walk (I run, he walks). We shoot the breeze and talk about hopes, pains, children, and love. We talk about recovery and fears. And we talk about God - His faithfulness in the midst of great pain and trials. And I began to share this story with friends. Many people know someone with leukemia - a friend with a child who died from leukemia, another friend who lost a brother, a young family still coping with their daughters diagnosis...This disease has a grip on so many people I thought I knew. Now I know better.



Please support Gil as he raises funds for Leukemia Research and treatment. Read here to find out how!

I have a t-shirt from Team in Training that I will be wearing in Alaska as I run. On the back, I am going to write the names of all the people I am running for, all the people I am starting to identify with, all the people I am beginning to love a bit better. The run in Alaska is June 22. I need to raise \$6000 before that. **On Friday April 26th at 7pm, Boyd and I are hosting a Dessert and Coffee Evening at Talbot St Church - 513 Talbot St. We are going to share our stories and ask for people to join us financially. Come join us that night! Sign a name to my shirt. Share your story. May we the people of God share our collective stories so we grow in love, understanding, and identification - not just with each other, but with our God.**

If you cannot make it to that evening and wish to support this run, please send a cheque to Sanctuary's mailing address BUT make the cheque out to Leukemia and Lymphoma Society with my name (Gil Clelland) in the memo section.

SANCTUARY LONDON'S UPCOMING EVENTS:

TOURNAMENT



Friday April 12th at 7pm

513 Talbot St, London ON

\$20 entry fee – funds for Sanctuary!

Prizes, food, fellowship and a chance to hang out in our community for the evening!



Friday May 10th, 7pm

513 Talbot St, London ON

Free entry!

Music, Fine arts, Writing – by
Members of Sanctuary's Community
Cakes and Goodies for Sale!