

Sanctuary London

FINDING HOME

Trying to find rest in the midst.

Sometimes... ok, most of the time, being part of a community like Sanctuary is really hard. Just this morning I talked with a close friend and asked how he was doing. Truthfully, I was just happy to hear that this friend was still alive after a long and cold night of being on the streets. Last night was our first night this year to drop below -10C, and I really didn't know what else to say. His response to my question was angry and aggressive: "Don't ever ask me that again, Darryl! I have not been able to get a shelter bed anywhere in this city for two weeks now. So, I am outside in the cold. I haven't had a bath or shower this entire time, and I barely get one meal a day. Look at my hands! They are swelled up as ****! How do you think I am doing?"

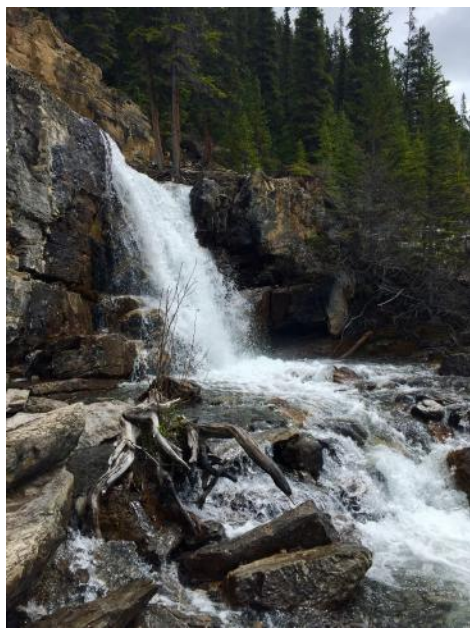


“It is in these moments of chaos and feelings of being overwhelmed that God gently calls us to rest.”

This is just one example of the many interactions of deep brokenness and hurt that our people experience every day. These are the stories of our people with which we get to engage. Their stories become our stories. It's both painful and heavy. But, it is also a joy and honour. I'd love to say that we handle these things well. The truth is that it weighs down on me all the time. It is in these moments of chaos and feelings of being overwhelmed that God gently calls us to rest. Yet, there's no doubt that we are called to engage with people and share in their hurts and burdens.

Trying cont'd

When we hear stories like this, we need to allow them to affect us deeply and to be shaped by them as we dig deeper into the root causes of injustice. Hopefully, we will all begin to find appropriate responses to the poverty and hopelessness of our world. At the same time, we sense that God meets us where we are at and calls us into his restful presence.



We find this rest in all sorts of different places and ways. Sometimes it's in the presence of a close friend or the eyes of the broken. Other times it's in the quiet moments of solitude or in the beauty of nature around us. I picture myself sitting in the crevice of rock behind a huge waterfall. The river above is rushing like crazy, pummeling anything and everything in its path as it continues its destruction down below. With the water pounding all around, it's so loud that it's hard to think, let alone hear anything else. There is a sense of being completely surrounded with no way out. And yet, after a few deep breaths, there is a calm and a peace that overwhelms as I rise up to more fully take in the power and beauty around me.

What about you? Where do you find rest? How is God calling you into deeper engagement with the justice issues of our world, and how do you stay grounded in the chaos of it all?

Staffing news! We are excited to share with you that starting in January, our teaching pastor, Gil will be taking a 6 month sabbatical. I'll allow Gil to share more of the details (see page 6) on this from his perspective. But for me, this is an amazing opportunity for both Gil and for the Sanctuary community. Gil has cared well for many people in this capacity for many years and he deserves a break. It is our prayer that Gil will come back to us feeling refreshed and renewed in his calling to follow God's leading in ministry. As for Sanctuary, we are trusting that God will use this time to continue shaping us into the community that we are called to be. It is healthy for us to be reminded that God is our provider and is always present, even when those we love are unable to be with us.

As with any good challenge we anticipate being stretched towards growth. Much of the structure and schedule of Sanctuary will continue for the duration of Gil's time away, but some things will inevitably look different. We believe this is a good thing. We continue to be thankful for those people who step up from the community to support us in all sorts of different ways. We have people in our own community who dedicate countless hours to help us prepare food and wash dishes and other clean up after drop-ins, as well as facilitating worship services and so many other things. This is what our community is all about, and we know that these sorts of things will be taken care of.

Our need and how you can help: One reality that we do face is that we are required to have a certain amount of paid staff during any particular drop-in. We are already blessed with two absolutely amazing part-time staff. I hope each of you have had the opportunity to interact with both Tessa and Mechele. If you haven't, do so! They really are a joy and you will be blessed by meeting them. **In order to maintain the programming that we currently have, we will need to increase weekly paid hours for both Tessa and Mechele. Unfortunately we are not in a financial position to be able to do this as of right now. Would you consider partnering with us financially to help make this happen?** We are able to take monthly automatic withdrawals directly from your bank account, and honestly, this is the most helpful way to give. It allows us the freedom of planning and budgeting according to finances we know will be there. We are also able to accept one time donations and are very thankful for that too. As always, all donations will be issued a charitable tax receipt. Go to <https://www.sanctuarylondon.ca/getting-involved/donations/>. If you have any specific questions about how many more hours we hope to pay Tessa and Mechele for, or how to give, please contact me and I would love the opportunity to talk further with you about this. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and as always, thanks for your prayers. **D.R.**

What have we been up to?



Near the end of the summer, we spent the afternoon at the Ysselstein's, just south of Woodstock. John and Helen have invited this community to join them at their property every summer since 2007! We swim in the pool, enjoy a BarBQ supper, and relax. Rest. Get away from the city for a while. And breathe. A true blessing every year!

A few weeks before the Federal election, Sanctuary hosted a debate for the candidates for M.P. for our local riding of London North Centre. Each candidate answered questions from our community about housing, homelessness, poverty, and what their government would do if elected. Former London Mayor Anne Marie Decicco-Best and Medical Officer of Health Dr. Chris Mackie moderated the event. It was an amazing evening for community members to share their voices, concerns, and suggestions.



In October, we partied. We got dressed up as hippies, had an outdoor BarBQ, then went inside to dance the night away to the music of our favourite band, 17 Watts! It's always great for an evening to allow music, food, and fun to draw us closer to one another in community!

Rest. A musical experience.

As I reflect on the notion of rest, I feel anxious. I'm not sure I know what rest is or what it means.

In classical music you find rests woven into musical masterpieces. Pieces are demanding, loud and lively, or peaceful and quietly moving like a gentle whisper. In classical music the listener takes it all in. You hear the different instruments playing their parts and then there is a moment you hear absolute silence. It's a rest. In that moment you pause and reflect on what you've just heard and savour every note. At the same time you wait with great anticipation for what comes next.



Every now and then at Sanctuary, someone grabs a guitar and an impromptu jam session begins! Just one way to find rest together.

I think life is like that too. Perhaps that's part of what makes music so special, the way it relates with real life.

The experiences I have encountered in my own life are that rest is required after I've been through something strenuous. A space that is needed to gain my strength

back and remember who I am and how I've changed by what I've just come through. I think rest isn't a thing you do to get back to where you were, but intentional space you take to help grow your capacity of who you are and stretch you. Rest is also required to begin something challenging. It can help give strength, discernment and direction in the new task ahead.

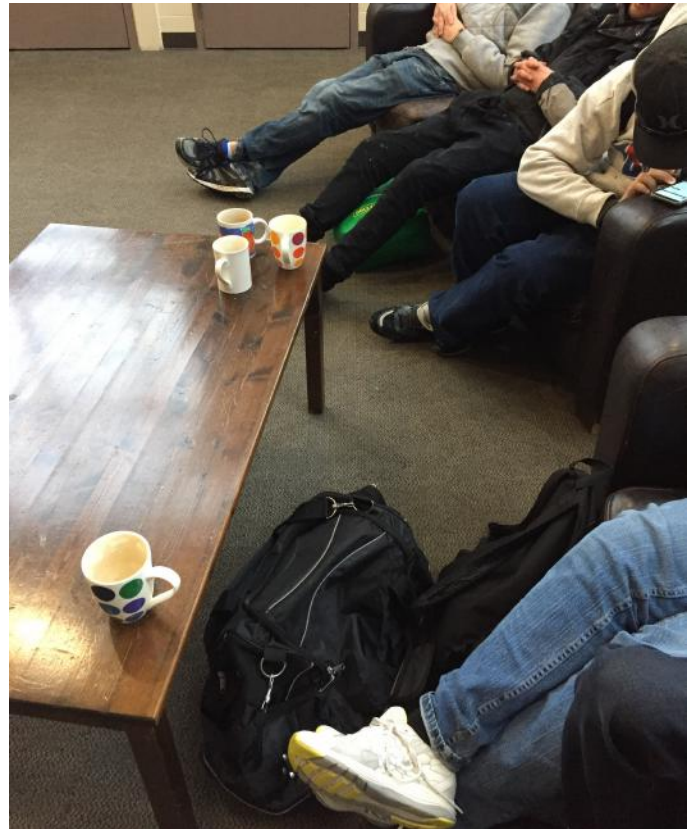
At Bible study on Mondays we're currently studying the book of Mark. There is a beautiful scene where life was so hectic that the disciples can't find time to eat. Jesus says, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." Doesn't that just sound like an invitation to breathe? It's so easy in life to be in it and overwhelmed by life that we forget why we do what we do and who we are or strive to be in it. I think rest is meant to be an intentional pause in our song to reflect, remember and prepare! May you find peace and rest in this season! **M.T.**

Please join us for our annual Christmas Party!

On Wednesday December 18th we will be having our annual Christmas Party. As the year comes to an end, this is a highlight moment for us to remember and celebrate with one another all the good God has done. At the same time, we recognize that for many, it has been a very difficult year, filled with challenges and heartbreak. For these people, the holidays can serve as a reminder of all the relationships that are lacking in their lives. Acknowledging this, we celebrate with the hope of lifting one another up. We usually find that the Christmas Party becomes one of those little tastes of heaven here on earth, even in the midst of the chaos and brokenness of our lives. We invite you to come and be part of our family for the night. Doors open at 2pm with a full turkey dinner served at 5:30, and a Christmas talents and games show to follow. Bring a friend and some dessert to share!

Finding Rest

There is rarely a time as we open the doors to one of our drop-ins where there is no one at the door waiting. Sometimes our folks have been there for over an hour! As they trickle in down the ramp into the atrium, it becomes clear the different kinds of community each person is seeking. Some jump in to help set up right away. A few stand around chatting and catching up. One may head straight to a staff member with a pressing need for a one-on-one chat. People who are new to the community may sit on the couches or by themselves at a table. Some venture to the kitchen to see how long until the coffee is ready or offer a hand to start prepping our meal.



What strikes me the most is the odd time someone will come in, get their coffee, say a few hellos, and then simply seek rest. We only have two couches in the atrium where we meet but often in one corner someone will be curled up fast asleep. To me, this is an amazing symbol of accomplishing a place of safety that someone can call home. In safety, our friends can truly rest.

“Home! It is my place where I can be vulnerable and belong.”

Resting can be hard on the streets. Discomfort, worrying about your things being stolen, changes in the weather, not being bothered by others for loitering, even just finding a quiet and safe place to rest are all a “normal” part of life for folks we know. It is hard for them to find home. To find rest.

When I think of home, it means a place where I can rest, even in the chaos. Even with laundry piled up, kids and neighbour kids running around screaming, dinner being made, and the hamster rolling around in his ball, there is rest in this because it is Home! It is my place where I can be vulnerable and belong.

At the very end of the day, I sip a cup of tea in the silence and safety and appreciate the chance to rest my body and mind. When I see this happening at Sanctuary, whether by someone feeling safe enough to sleep or finding rest through conversation or working side by side in the kitchen, I know that we are accomplishing one of our core needs as a place to call 'Home'; a place where the weary can find rest. **T.B.**

Rest. Stopping. Breathing. And a Sabbatical.



I (Gil) roll my car to a stop in the parking lot just outside of Sanctuary's office. 8:37am. Put the car in park. Turn off the radio. I look out the window but don't see. I try to catch my breath. My thoughts:

- First - family inventory. I have dropped off Bonnie at work. I saw Jacob leave for school at 7:30am. Isaiah is away at Brock University. Joe will get up soon for his work shift. I hope they are doing well today. I hope my love has helped shape each one.

- Second - my day ahead. Drop-in at 11. Staff

meeting at 9. Coffee needs to go on. I should reply to those emails. What about that event? Speaking this Sunday...on what? What about the dozen conversations that are on pause? Jim needs housing. David wants a doctor that will look at him even if he's had "drug issues." Denise is looking for advice after another person tried to come too close, she got vulnerable, and now it's done...

- Third - trying to breathe. My heart has been racing since 5:14am when I awoke suddenly. An hour later, Bon got up for coffee and conversation. A temporary balm for my spirit. Now, I sit in the car. Everyone is dropped off and I should really put on the coffee. I need to breathe. Calm down. Let go of the details. And here I sit in my car. Alone. I hate being alone. But I need to catch myself. Before I lose myself.

I see him coming towards the car. He's too early. Who is it? What does he want? Jim stands there. Waiting. He still needs housing. I turn off the car and step out into the snow covered parking lot.

I came to London thirteen years ago with a dream of being a pastor on the streets. Much has changed but some things remain. I feel called here. These are my friends. This is where I try to live out the love of a god who calls the oppressed towards freedom. And I'm learning more all the time. But, some days I lose myself in this vocation. Some days I think I *have* to be here at Sanctuary. Some days I can't let go of it all. And those days are coming closer to one another.

I've realized (with the help of others who love me) that I should rest for a while. With the guidance of our board, with the blessing of staff and community members, I will be taking a Sabbatical. Starting in January and lasting six months, I will be away from Sanctuary activities and responsibilities. I will be seeking solitude at times. I will be going to counselling. I have an idea for a book. Rest comes first. Rest so that I can keep going. Rest so I can come back to be part of the community. Rest so I can learn to love myself. Rest so that I can find better ways to cope. Rest so I can breathe.

Feel free to contact me before December 31 to talk about this, offer good "resting" advice, or clarify any questions you may have. 519-902-9774 or clellandgil@hotmail.com