



GRATITUDE FOR ANOTHER YEAR

Can you believe Sanctuary is already in our 10th year? It's hard for us to imagine. But here we are, and we are so thankful to have you sharing in our journey.

As we take some time to reflect on where we have come from, and as we look ahead to the coming year, we are reminded of the importance and inherent goodness of simplicity. There is nothing terribly exciting about what Sanctuary does. We're not trying to blow anyone's socks off with our amazing meals. And we don't have new things happening all the time. We don't even have programming every day of the week.

It's the simple things that make Sanctuary what it is: consistency, a warm hug, a shoulder to cry on, coffee (or tea!), walking with people for the long haul. We desire to be a place of peace for all. We want to continue to stretch ourselves and learn new things.

We hope you'll join us, and enjoy reading a bit about what we're learning.

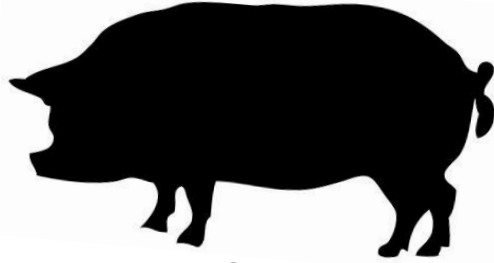
MORE THAN ANYTHING, SANCTUARY DESIRES TO BE A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN COME TOGETHER AND BELONG.

A place to call 'HOME'.

SAVE THE DATE

Come Pig Out

at Sanctuary's Upcoming Fundraiser...



Pig Roast

APRIL 24, 2020



HOLDING BALANCE

Tessa Buckley



One of the most challenging things about working in the Sanctuary community this past year has been trying to hold the balance between feeling loss and defeat, with the excitement of growth and accomplishment. On any given day, things can feel like Heaven touching earth in one moment, and in the next, like the darkness of hell is overshadowing everything. I can be celebrating the victories and joy with one person and my next conversation can be that of heartbreak, pain, and hopelessness. I read about new housing and advocacy opening up for our friends at street level one day, only to hear about a door closing firmly the next. How do I hold these things in tension? How can we walk together in the hope of a better way? I think of Jesus' time during his ministry on earth. At moments there is joy and victory as the dead are raised and the blind see. In other moments, we see Christ watching a loved one walk away from the joy of the Kingdom, or hearing news of the death of a friend, or weeping in a garden alone. Absolutely alone. Still, it gives me hope reading the gospels, the ways in which Jesus finds rest, and even in those quiet moments, he speaks life and hope to the stranger walking by. He leaves his solitary times of peace and rest to walk into the storm to give his disciples that same peace. Somehow, Jesus walked the tension, never losing sight of the promise of the Kingdom to come. He poured out love, compassion, and justice to every person he interacted with, even when he knew they may not have the ears to hear, or the eyes to see.

I want more for our friends. I want Amanda to have a secure place to call home after another long and hard shift at work. I want justice for Mandy who is turned out regularly by her own family and struggles to be heard or understood by social workers and other health care professionals. I am discouraged to see the increasing number of people sleeping on the street as I bike downtown. How do we even begin to heal such a broken system? Where is the Kingdom in all of this? Jesus said it was for the 'least among us', and most days, there doesn't seem to be a lot to celebrate. What lens am I looking through that defines 'success' for our folks? Is it someone moving into an apartment? Holding down a job? Staying clean for several months? Are these the markers of the Kingdom? I think of the words of Jesus, the parables he told, the mysteries and actions that baffled his own disciples, I start to see glimpses of the true Kingdom of God...

I see Carter sharing the portion of dinner he was saving for tomorrow with a stranger who came in late. I see Marsha speaking up with love and forgiveness for someone who offended her, while the rest of us continue to build up anger and resentment for this person. Josh fights back tears as he plays a song for me that speaks against injustice and discrimination for people in another country. I can only think of the horrible wrongs that have been committed to Josh over the years, and yet Josh hurts for others. These are the tears of Christ. I hear of a friend who spends many of his evenings visiting those sick in the hospital to bring hope and encouragement. I taste the goodness of fresh fruits and vegetables shared in the sun, after hours of weeding and working together in our community garden. I feel the embrace of someone who knows too deeply the heartache of loss as they hold me in my own pain of losing a beloved aunt.

So much is left undone. So many setbacks, still so much hatred and misunderstandings and quarrelling. Yet we continue to walk between the joy and the pain, tasting and seeing and hearing the Kingdom on earth, while simultaneously feeling the hopelessness and hurt and the draining of life of those I've come to love. To walk this tension is to walk with Jesus. And in these small things, steady and sure, unnoticed by most, we begin to understand what Jesus was expressing when he talked about mustard seeds, lost coins, and runaway sheep.

-T.B.

JUST BE THERE. SIMPLE AND CONSISTENT.

Darryl Reckman

Marsha is new to the Sanctuary community. She has only been coming for about two weeks. It is obvious to us that she has lived a very hard life. Her first time here was a Wednesday, and she came looking for food. However, she felt obligated to do something to earn or at least 'deserve' the food that she received. We never require anyone to do anything here at Sanctuary. Love, at it's core HAS to be a free gift, and people need to be free to respond as they choose. So we constantly invite people into deeper relationship with us, and one of the ways we do this is by asking for people to help. Help with set-up, dishes, and other clean-up. But we never require it. People are always released to say "no". But Marsha really wanted to contribute. So we welcomed her into the kitchen to help out. We had a ton of fun preparing dinner that day, and she did a really great job, jumping in wherever she could. After dinner was served, I briefly ran back to the kitchen to grab clean dishes for someone who had walked in a little late. I could hear Mechele and Marsha chatting in the dish room. There was a bit of crying, so I listened in for just a moment, just to make sure everything was ok. I could hear Marsha saying, "You guys keep telling me what a great job I am doing here in the kitchen, but all I've ever heard my entire life is that everything I do is wrong, that I'm garbage, and how could I possibly screw up such a simple thing so badly... I don't deserve to be eating out there with those people. You have no idea of the horrible things I've done in my life." Mechele responds gently and beautifully: 'We've all made mistakes, we've all done horrible things. Every single one of us. That's what makes this place so amazing.

Everyone in that room knows they don't deserve anything. And it is for that reason we are able to welcome others, who share the same struggles, to be part of our family."

I've only ever met Brady once. He came in to one of our special events like a whirlwind. We were having one of our Community Celebration Nights. **Life is hard for most of us, and we feel it is so important to party every once in a while, even if there is no good reason, other than we need to celebrate together.** We often bring in a band to dance to, or play silly, meaningless games with prizes, and there are always some pretty good snacks and appetizers. But that's not what Brady heard on the street. He heard that there would be a big meal down at this church that he had never been to before. It was a Friday night, and there weren't any other free meals that night for some reason, so he decided to come out. When he got here things were just getting started. There were lots of people, and everything was buzzing. As he came down the stairs from the front doors on Talbot Street, I noticed him, and didn't think I had seen him before. It's very important for us to make sure new-comers are especially welcomed when they get here. We know how hard it can be to walk into an unfamiliar space, where everyone else seems to know each other. The feeling can be overwhelmingly vulnerable. So, as any other time, I walked out of my way to greet him and introduce myself. He asked what time the dinner was being served. Not thinking much of it, or realizing what he had been told, I briefly explained that there wouldn't be a dinner tonight, but that appetizers would be coming out soon. This was not the response he was looking for. "I was told there would be a full dinner here, this is bull....." And he continued to escalate in his aggression. So I apologized for the misunderstanding, and explained that we would be around with the food we had as soon as possible and hoped he would get enough to satisfy him for the night. He really wasn't happy with my answer, but with food in the ovens that needed to be checked, and a hundred other people in the room who also deserved some attention, I dismissed myself, and carried on. Brady left pretty angry that day, and we haven't seen him since.....

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When talking with people around the idea of home, people rarely speak about home being about a roof and walls. People have the notion that relationship and emotions are a big part of what makes home. They talk about being accepted and loved, a safe place to explore new ideas, a place of non-judgement, a place to rant and rave and still be cared for at the end of the day. Marsha and Brady are both new to our community. Both people are hurting as so many of us are. Both people hold tension with who we are as community, and the ways in which they are used to experiencing community. Both have unmet expectations. For me, this is a reminder of how important it is for us to continue doing the simple, little things. We definitely want to continue to explore and learn more about the idea of home as a physical space to live. And as we do, we'll continue to do the simple things. Just being there. Encouraging one another. Loving one another. We'll be misunderstood and accused of all sorts of things along the way. But we'll continue to be there, ready to welcome anyone who happens to come our way. -D.R.



*Please remember
to pray for Gil
who is on a
sabbatical until
the end of June!*

SANCTUARY ROCKS!

Mechele teBrake

As I look back at 2019, from a 2020 perspective, I am struck by how much Sanctuary rocks!

I've been on staff here for almost exactly a year now! Before I started here I was working my way through a difficult time of what the pros call "burnout". When I look back at the last twelve months, I can see that I am in many ways in a better place. Sanctuary has been a place of strength for me. Sanctuary has been one of my rocks. A rock for me to lean on, a rock that holds me up when I don't have the strength within, a rock that has been a resting place. That is one of the wonders in belonging to a community that strives and struggles to be life giving.

We try as a community to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, who is our rock. We intentionally attempt to live out life as the early church did in the book of Acts. We strive to be a "blessing to the nations" through our actions and words. Some days this is easier said than done. In the past year, I've experienced that it is in the challenging moments that we especially have the opportunity to witness God's presence in our friends and in ourselves. It is easier to walk in Jesus' footsteps when everyone is having a good day. The real challenge for all of us is to do this well when life is messy. To walk in the footsteps of Jesus in spite of the mess that life brings.

Our community is really good at accepting people where they are at. I'm grateful for experiencing this first hand. I am honoured to witness this kind of mutual respect and love every day. Sometimes folks come to various drop ins worn out and exhausted because life is hard for a lot our community. Sometimes people don't always "behave" the way others would expect or consider "social norms". We hold space for those of us who are experiencing tough circumstances. In this way, Sanctuary rocks!

Sometimes, well almost always, people who experience Sanctuary for the first time are surprised. Surprise comes in the presence of welcome, sharing, laughter, mutual respect, kindness, caring conversations, warm hugs and safety. Surprise comes in the absence as well. Some people are surprised by the absence of violence, yelling or verbal abuse, posturing (with the purpose of being threatening), surveillance, fear and feeling/being unsafe. It doesn't mean that fights or disagreements don't happen from time to time, but they are not the norm. When a fight or disagreement does happen our response isn't about kicking people out. Our response is about drawing people closer into community and taking the time to listen and work through the issue together. This is one of the reasons Sanctuary rocks!
-M.tB.



*If you haven't been by,
or if it has been a while,
please drop in and
discover for yourself
some of the reasons why
Sanctuary rocks!*

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