

A person is silhouetted against a dark background, standing in a room filled with vibrant, colorful stage lights. The lights include a bright yellow light on the left, a red light in the center, and a blue light on the right. The person appears to be holding a small object, possibly a camera or a light, which is illuminated by the blue light. The overall atmosphere is dramatic and artistic.

# SANCTUARY LONDON

FINDING HOME. TOGETHER.

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FINDING HOME NEWSLETTER  
WINTER 2024

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# Walking Together

FINDING HOME, WINTER 2024

BY TESSA BUCKLEY

On my way home from Sanctuary's art drop-in, I caught up with one of our community members, \*Helen, and asked if I could join her as we were heading the same direction. She was surprised, but said that would be fine.

We walked together mostly in silence, enjoying the warmth of the sun on our faces.

A week earlier, I had had a very different interaction with Helen. It was very late on a Wednesday night after our dinner drop-in, and the coldest of the season so far, with temperatures as low as -30°C. Helen was standing in the door frame of a business closed for the night, visibly exhausted and upset. I asked her if there was anything I could do for her, and with her consent, called every emergency shelter I could think of. Surely one of them had room for her, an aging, vulnerable woman at such a late hour in these bitter temperatures. Every place we called was full or unavailable.

I offered Helen hand-warmers, bus tickets, and my coat. I thought about calling my husband to see if bringing her back to our house was even something we could consider, or if I was imposing my own guilt on what I thought was best for Helen.

I asked what more I could do, and Helen thanked me for the bus ticket and said she would plan to ride as long as she could and then walk the rest of the night to stay warm. I offered for her to come to my office when we opened the next morning so she could rest as long as she needed. We said goodbye, and it took everything in me to turn around and walk away, feeling like I had utterly failed her. Even so, her last words to me were kind.

Now, on this sunny day a week later as we walk together, Helen heading to find a place to rest her feet, myself heading home to greet my family and make dinner, we are in comfortable silence.

"I'm surprised you have time to walk with me." She remarked before we went our separate ways.

"Not always, but today I do. Thank you for letting me!" I responded.

In my mind I think of how I must always make time to walk with people. That sometimes, the most important thing we can do in the face of such overwhelming need and seasons of hopelessness is to walk with and be with one other on our journeys.





## We Want to Grow!

Sanctuary has so many **exciting opportunities** coming up for us in 2024 and beyond. Significant work continues to be done towards **building a micro-homes community** of belonging with people who are most excluded in the city of London. We are continuing to explore what increased medical care could look like for our community members. We are also looking for a **new office facility**, in order to maintain and continue the community work that we are already doing, as our current office building has been sold to a developer and is slated to be demolished in the next year.

In order for any of this to be possible, **we are in urgent need of your continued support**. Please hold Sanctuary close in your prayers. Pray for the provision of a new place for us as a community to call 'home'. Pray for increased capacity so that our community can continue to grow in these new ways. And please consider partnering with us financially in order to help us reach our goals! Please visit our website, [www.sanctuarylondon.ca](http://www.sanctuarylondon.ca) for more information on how to give, or send an e-transfer to [giving@sanctuarylondon.ca](mailto:giving@sanctuarylondon.ca). Even better, reach out to us. We would love to have a conversation with you! Thanks so much.

### Upcoming Fundraiser!

Please stay tuned for Sanctuary's next fundraiser event coming to you in May, 2024. More info will be coming to you in the next couple of weeks!



## Remembering Jim

A day after attending our Christmas party, on December 21, our friend Jim was found dead in Victoria Park. Jim was a brilliant man; well-educated, an engineer in his earlier years, before hard times struck. He was fiercely independent, and lived and died on his own terms.

Jim was one of approximately 70 people who passed away from among the London community who live rough in 2023, over a dozen of whom were core members of the Sanctuary community. At least 9 have passed away so far in 2024...

When Sanctuary first opened over 13 years ago, I remember how often people would share with us that it was their birthday.

Birthdays were a big deal for our community members, and we had all kinds of discussions about how to celebrate people's birthdays well, and how to make sure we didn't allow anyone to feel left out or forgotten. Should we celebrate with cake and singing once a month? That didn't feel very personal. But how do we decide who gets cake and who doesn't? It was a real issue at that time!

This conversation has not come up for years. What I do remember recently is how many times we have had the conversation about who we should host a memorial service for, and who we shouldn't.

We don't hold a memorial service for everyone. But we needed to for Jim, largely because no other arrangements had been made for him, and because the community asked us to. For me, it was hard to understand why many of his closest friends didn't show up. When asked about this, many of them responded by saying that they felt it was really important that something be done to honour their friend, but that it was just too painful for them to attend yet *another* memorial service. This is why it is so critical to us to host our quarterly Community Celebrations. We need to find every opportunity, every excuse to celebrate together, as we try to balance the pain and grief of life with a little taste of joy and goodness.

*By Darryl Reckman*



## 13 Years!!!

Speaking of excuses to celebrate..... what better way to celebrate life together than by hosting a Karaoke Party??? (Hint: there isn't a better way!)

So that's exactly what we did. On Feb 2 we built the stage, bought some fancy used lights, made some chicken wings and fries, and cranked up the speakers! It was truly a great way to be together, and, as I think about it, I feel so grateful for the way that this community has taught me to loosen up a little, and to allow myself the freedom to participate in the joy of life a little more freely.

Thank you Sanctuary for 13 years of personal growth and development. -D.R.



FROM OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

# Dealing with our Dark Side

BY ERIC STOLTE

It's well known that the Pharisees in the New Testament had an inner "dark side." Luke 11:37-41 records a lunch Jesus had with a Pharisee. Jesus didn't happen to wash prior to the meal. The Pharisee was surprised at this because along with hygiene, it was an act of purity. Jesus didn't respond as a gracious guest. Instead, He says, "Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness."

How might the Pharisees rid themselves of their inner darkness? Find a good therapist? Practice mindfulness? Pray and repent, seeking God's forgiveness and cleansing? Jesus gives a rather unexpected answer, "But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you." How does being generous to the poor clean a person of greed and wickedness?



**"We don't go to the margins to make a difference. We go to the margins so that the folks at the margins make us different." -Greg Boyle**

It's important to understand that in Jesus' day, being generous to the poor was not like it is today, where we can donate to charities that help people in poverty. "Almsgiving, then, does not correspond well to modern-day notions of charity; rather, for Luke, almsgiving was an expression of genuine social solidarity, of embracing those in need as if they were member of one's own kin-group."<sup>1</sup> Jesus' words are echoed by Father Gregroy Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, the largest gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world. "We don't go to the margins to make a difference. We go to the margins so that the folks at the margins make us different."<sup>2</sup>

My time with Sanctuary London, along with other times I've been able to be among those who have been marginalized by forces beyond themselves, has changed me. I'm humbled by the resilience, courage, fortitude, and sheer tenacity of those who every night have to sleep rough through our winter months. I'm sure I would never survive what 600 people here in London experience every night as they go back to their tents, or other makeshift shelters, their only home. I feel humbled and honoured to be working with Sanctuary to, at least in some way, stand in social solidarity with these by giving time, energy and finances towards "Creating a Micro-Home community of belonging with people who are most excluded." Something, I think, Jesus would firmly endorse!

So, if you find yourself with some dark side issues, feel free to follow the path that Jesus laid out – stand in social solidarity with people in poverty as though they are members of your own kin-group!

<sup>1</sup> Joel B Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, [Eerdmans, 1997], p.471

<sup>2</sup> From the commencement address to graduates of Pepperdine University in 2018 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AC5c7VQoARc>)



# Thank You!

We know that none of what we do would be possible without the support of our greater Sanctuary community. And that means you! So thank you so much for your love and support.

We would love to have you pop by sometime for a chance to connect (or reconnect) in a meaningful way!



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