

## ***Feeding Both Body and Soul***

*Marion Kane, Marion Kane Dish  
Toronto Star  
December 15, 2002*

It's a sad irony.

Here at Sanctuary, within the shadow of the posh Manulife Centre and a stone's throw from chi-chi emporiums like Holt Renfrew, Chanel and Prada is a refuge- both physical and spiritual- for our city's dispossessed.

Located in a church formerly called Central Gospel Hall at 25 Charles St. E., a few steps from Yonge just south of Bloor, this humble haven is a busy downtown drop-in for Toronto's homeless.

And on the subzero morning I arrive, the welcome is as warm as the room.

The latter is thanks to an electric fireplace glowing gently at one end where assorted visitors are sitting- or, in one case, sleeping- on three slightly tattered, overstuffed couches.

Others gather at long wooden tables. Some drink coffee from a couple of urns, others sit in small groups talking while one elderly man, still wearing his hat and coat, reads a book.

When I ask to speak to Greg Paul, who founded this place 11 years ago, his wife Karen has to point him out. Dressed in a checked wool jacket and jeans, he's chatting with two young men as he hands them pairs of socks. Along with sleeping bags, these are Sanctuary's most requested items.

Greg invites me to sit down near the fire where he is having one of the many relaxed conversations I notice him engaged in during my two-hour visit.

He introduces me to Andre Durant, who found himself on the street after coming here from Guyana, as "my friend." Durant calls his "a rough life- survival of the fittest" and is one of many who know they can drop by here for the Wednesday lunch, Thursday dinner and Saturday breakfast.

Greg is a minister of the Brethren Church. "People here call me a pastor," he says, speaking softly. "But Sanctuary is a non-denominational community of faith."

He also tells me he's the singer and keyboard player for rhythm and blues band Red Rain and a "suburban Toronto boy" who used to work as a carpenter doing historical renovations.

These days, he and Karen, who has been on staff for three years, devote their time to Sanctuary's charitable mission. It includes offering food, clothes and drop-in services on-site as well as outreach for people on the street.

"We want to create a dignified environment," Greg explains, "that holds out hope for marginalized people that they can have meaningful and respectful relationships in their lives."

He sees those who come to Sanctuary as "a cross-section of the street and at-risk population." He reckons half have no home; the rest live in rooming houses or hostels. "Most of those are actually homeless," he adds. "We argue that is not a home." Greg traces ever-worsening problems "back to the election of (ex-premier Mike) Harris seven-plus years ago." Health care, he notes, is harder to access, "all the agencies are badly under-funded, dignified housing is almost impossible to find and there are way fewer resources for rehabilitation."

This mild-mannered man admits it makes him angry. "As a society, we've traded economics for justice. Philosophically, we've criminalized poverty." As for my main reason for being here- to check out lunch- Greg points out that meals here "are not about feeding the most people as efficiently as possible." He sees food as the perfect way to share: "There's no more potent symbol of community and fellowship than sitting around a table eating."

When our chat ends and I walk into the spacious, sunny kitchen, I see a hub of harmonious activity. Karen explains that the excellent equipment- a large convection oven, six-burner commercial gas stove and big industrial dishwasher- was recently purchased with a single \$27,000 donation.

It is almost noon and, as the crowd in the main room grows, lunch is coming together.

Overseeing the group of half a dozen volunteers is burly, shy Donald Sturrock, a former regular who was hired last month as kitchen manager. He uses tongs to transfer Italian sausages from stockpots in which they were boiled to roasting pans for finishing in the oven.

Meanwhile, two helpers mound washed lettuce in giant bowls, then top them with chopped green onion and tomatoes while another empties frozen mixed veggies into steaming saucepans.

Once ready, they are wheeled out on trolleys with bottles of salad dressing and more oversized bowls filled with crisp chunks of roasted potatoes.

As the group of about 80 appreciative diners pass platters, Sturrock and I sit down with them and tuck in.

"I cooked my first Christmas dinner when I was 11," he begins, explaining that he grew up in Etobicoke with a single mother and four siblings. "Everything was good," he adds, "but there were lumps in the gravy."

Stints at McDonald's, in the kitchen at summer camp and making pizzas and subs for a year honed his cooking skills.

A few years ago, Sturrock's wife died and he "fell on hard times." While living at Seaton House, a friend brought him to Sanctuary "to be the fourth hand at bridge."

The place lived up to its name. "I felt really comfortable," he says, smiling. "You can sit down, relax, talk. There's a feeling of warmth and sharing." The following week, he met Greg. "Our friendship bloomed from that moment," he adds. "He just listened."

One Saturday, he offered to help cook. "I gradually did it more and more," he says with enthusiasm. "Karen gave me more and more responsibility. Now, she has complete trust in my judgment in the kitchen."

Sturrock feels his key skill is "taking nothing to make something out of it," and is especially proud of his soups.

He credits Sanctuary with bringing him out of his shell. "A year ago, I couldn't have talked to you like this. I had no communication skills," he notes. "It's love. Once you're part of this church, it's family."

Here's the recipe for the delicious devilled eggs he made at Sanctuary that day. For more info, call: 416-922-0628 and/or check out: [www.sanctuaryministries.on.ca](http://www.sanctuaryministries.on.ca).

### **Devilled Eggs**

Sturrock made seven dozen of these for lunch and, like many good cooks, doesn't use a recipe. I followed Julia Child's method in *The Way To Cook* (Knopf) and kept his special touches: Thousand Island dressing and a little sugar. Child's method of hard-boiling eggs is worth the effort to ensure non-rubbery whites that don't discolour.

24 large eggs

1/3 cup each: mayonnaise, Thousand Island dressing

1 to 2 tsp granulated sugar

1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

1/8 tsp cayenne pepper, or to taste

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

## GARNISH:

24 stuffed olives, halved

Paprika

Prick hole in large end of each egg with push-pin. Place eggs in large saucepan; add cold water to cover by 1 inch. Bring to boil; remove from heat. Cover; let sit exactly 17 minutes. With slotted spoon, transfer eggs to large bowl of cold water containing ice cubes. (Do not discard cooking water.) Let sit 2 minutes. Return cooking water to boil. Add eggs; boil 10 seconds. With slotted spoon, return to iced water, cracking shells in several places. Let sit 15 to 20 minutes. Crack eggs all over by gently tapping. Peel under thin stream of cold water, starting at large end.

Slice each egg in half horizontally. Scoop out yolks. Add to food processor with remaining ingredients except garnish; puree until smooth. Using pastry bag or spoon, fill whites with yolk mixture. Garnish with olives; dust with paprika.

Makes 48.