

City of Refuge

SUMMER 2006

A Voice from the Street

Vol. 5- Issue 2

So Many Friends... by Alan Beattie

A few months ago, I was visiting a church and talking with the folks there about the work that we're involved with at Sanctuary. This is a church that has been developing a relationship with us and been organizing mini-campaigns in the church to collect socks, underwear, toothpaste, shampoo and other personal care items for us. They have done this a few times and their packages are always a welcome sight!

In explaining to them why these packages are of such value, the following occurred to me: It's a fairly natural thing, I think, for any of us to want to share what we have with our friends. We like to have friends over for dinner, take each other out on our birthdays, share a coffee and a donut...all that kind of good stuff. And if you've left your wallet behind, we offer to "cover" this one if we can. And I've been grateful for friends who have passed along clothes to our kids when they were through with them. All of that stuff seems quite natural, doesn't it?

What do you do, though, when your life becomes full of friends whose lives are full of simple and everyday needs? When clean underwear is a treat, even if it's a couple of sizes too big. When the same pair of threadbare socks can see several days' wear – even through the slush and snow of winter. When the thought of walking a mile or more to find the next unappealing meal of over-cooked pasta with tasteless tomato sauce – when that thought is just too much to bear.

For better or worse, this is where I find myself pretty much daily now. To help my name-specific amnesia, I try to write down the names of the friends that I meet and talk with here at Sanctuary. As I look over the list now, after two and a half years on staff, it's well over 100 names long. And there are still many others whose names aren't on the list simply because I've forgotten to write them in. For the staff who have been here much longer, I can only imagine how long their lists are.

Hundreds of friends. And most of them experiencing many of the basic needs that I've described above. And I, their friend, find myself wishing that I could do for my friend what I think you would do for yours – give her a pair of dry socks, give him some clean underwear, give him some toothpaste, give her a half-decent meal...

This is why I am grateful for the folks who equip me and all of



Essential personal hygiene supplies.

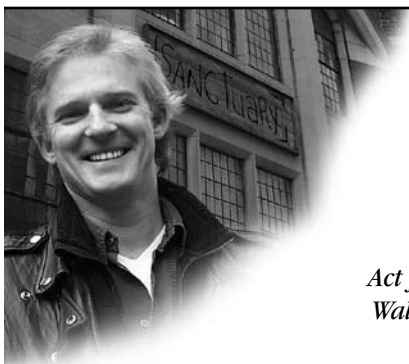
our staff with simple practical gifts to share with our friends. People who fill our cupboards with socks, soap, shampoo, sleeping bags and more so that I can "pretend" that they're mine and pass them along to some of my friends. So that we can do for our friends just what friends normally do for each other. So that we can, by doing this, incarnate the generous love and care of our God Who regularly extends to us the wonderfully generous gifts of His grace and mercy.

As I write this, however, I am reminded again of what seems to be the most treasured gift that we get to give and the one which precedes and underscores all of the practical care items: the gift of our

time, our friendship, our love. It's not a gift that you can box up and send to us so that we can pass it along like a pair of clean underwear. But in the work that we do and the lives that we touch, it's still the most fundamental gift of all.

It's fundamental because, for one reason or another, many of our friends have hardly ever received it. Governments can feed or clothe or house...but they can't embrace. Social service institutions can measure and evaluate and quantify their ability to meet many needs...but not the need for dignity, respect or love. So where do my friends go to receive the gift for which their souls most profoundly hunger? Who will provide for that deepest need?

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A View From Here

by Greg Paul

*Act justly, Love mercy ... and
Walk humbly with your God.*

Micah 6:8

I had the opportunity recently to be part of a group making a deputation to the mayor and the Policy and Finance Committee of the City of Toronto regarding a proposed strategy for moving chronically homeless people into housing. Many other groups deputed as well, and the general consensus was that, although the “Streets to Homes” strategy had some serious flaws, its overall direction and intent were laudable. There was, however, a widely and passionately expressed objection to the proposed bylaw, forming part of the strategy, that would make it illegal for people to sleep at City Hall. Every deputation expressed the fear that this bylaw would result in homeless people being harassed, driven into hiding (and therefore away from the relative safety of City Hall), or even jailed. At the eleventh hour, changes were made to the bylaw prior to its passing such that sleeping on any city-owned property became illegal. I’m happy to report that the Streets to Homes initiative has been more successful at housing our people than many of us (myself included) expected; it saddens me that, in many other cases, our fears regarding the further victimization of some who are already excluded and desperate have come to pass.

And now at least one city councillor wants to make panhandling of any kind a criminal offense. It hardly seems just to criminalize the last option many profoundly poor people have to eke out a minimal existence without stealing, hurting someone, or prostituting themselves. (A number of my friends have already received several summons under existing bylaws, for behaviours that would pass completely unnoticed in anyone not visibly homeless. If past experience proves out, their unpaid fines will provide the leverage to place them behind bars for a few days the next time the streets are deemed in need of cleansing.) But neither does it seem merciful to merely accept the status quo, and allow them to continue to *beg*, with all the humiliation and self-abnegation that word infers. To confuse the matter further, I know the councillor in question, and although I disagree with her “J40” bylaw proposal, I believe that she cares deeply about the plight of the poor in our city.

The requirements of justice and mercy seem often to be at cross-purposes – mercy is precisely *not* about the kind of fairness, redress or measured vengeance that we often call justice. Even if one accepts the definition of biblical justice as a bias in favour of people who are poor, disenfranchised, disadvantaged or otherwise behind-the-eight-ball-of-life, this is still not really mercy. It’s simply a re-balancing (a justifying) of systemic inequities. Mercy, on the other hand, comes into play when someone has already benefited from the rectifying effect of justice - and spits in its face. Mercy, by definition, is only for the guilty.

These values, then, can only be held in a creative tension: mercy needs the balancing effect of justice, and justice needs to be personalized by mercy. God is telling me, in other words, that I can’t really act justly without loving mercy, and vice versa. This tension is evident everywhere in my life.

Where I am in positions of power, I am charged with the responsibility of acting in ways that will balance the inequities that abound in my world. I am called to do this in personal relationships, in the places where I have “executive” power (by virtue of my position as a business or ministry leader), and in society at large, where my power is a result primarily of being a western, white, middle-class (or higher) male. I am also called to behave in these same venues in a manner that’s consistent with God’s extravagant mercy – which means, generally, paying the cost of someone else’s mistakes myself. That’s essentially what mercy in application is: being willing to absorb the cost of another’s fault.

For me, as for many of my peers, it takes some doing even to recognize the extent of the privilege my place in society affords me. (Owning a house, regardless of the size of the mortgage, places me in the top 5% of the world in terms of wealth.) What the Bible describes as justice seems often to be a profligate favouritism toward those who won’t do for themselves. To start at that point, and then be told to “love mercy” on top of it, can seem, at times, to be just plain wrong – or, at the very least, unfair. Until I consider how different justice and mercy look when I am looking at them from a place of weakness or brokenness in my own life. Then, I am eager for the balancing of inequities I am unable to address by my own strength. And if I’m eager for justice, I positively crave mercy – even (or especially) when I don’t think I deserve it, or can’t bring myself to ask for it. Mercy, after all, is by definition only of value to one who is guilty.

As a person who lives in society’s “power bracket”, I don’t often think of myself as someone who needs these values applied to me. Not until I try walking with God. Really, it’s simply not possible to “walk with God” other than humbly. Even on those rare occasions when God works His incredible power through me, and accomplishes something of true value, the reaction it creates in me is humility, not pride (at least, not until I have enough distance from the event that I begin to take credit for it myself!). Striving for fairness on my own only underscores my suspicion that I don’t really deserve it; mercy without God leaves me feeling patronized or patronizing. But His mere presence, dimly sensed, is enough to remind me of just how small I really am – how helpless to rectify the deeper inequities of my life and relationships, and how much in need of mercy for my behaviours and motives.

Strangely, this humbling is not at all humiliating. Nowhere am I more convinced of my true, inherent value than in that presence. The light that illuminates the dark corners of my soul reveals also its source, and shows that source to be immutably just and merciful.

I want to live this way because it’s addictive, intoxicating – and so entirely contrary to the prevailing dogmas of vengeance and condescension that masquerade as justice and mercy. This quickening, to use an old term, is the effect of God’s justice and mercy on me, and that effect is why I’m willing to try to live out these values. I want to do the right thing, and seek the right things for others. I want to do so out of a passionately merciful heart.

“Do the right thing”, He says, “but *go crazy* for mercy! It’s the only way you’ll be able to walk beside me, secure in the knowledge of who you really are.”

Faces of Our Community



Charlie Neil

Charlie is a great example of someone who has a real sense of ownership around Sanctuary and who loves to pitch in wherever he can. He was born and raised in Collingwood where he worked in the shipyards until he was 20 at which point it closed. At that time, he came to Toronto where he has lived ever since, working off

and on. He has been part of our Sanctuary family almost since the very beginning and can often be found in the kitchen getting a meal ready, washing dishes or just helping out wherever needed. As well, he has done a number of odd jobs for us over the years including, most recently, painting our drop-in area. Apart from his time at Sanctuary, Charlie volunteers with Operation Springboard, enjoys working on puzzles and doing glass painting. His happy and smiling face is always a welcome gift to all of us!



With the many pairs of socks and underwear that we give out at Sanctuary each year, we are extremely grateful for the relationship we enjoy with Jody Steinhauer and The Bargains Group. Jody is a great friend to and advocate for organizations like ours who work with the less-fortunate and she works hard to get great prices on all kinds of products so that we can share

them with our friends. As well as providing us with many of the basics year-round, The Bargains Group also co-ordinates Hockey for the Homeless in the winter months through which she is able to provide many agencies, including ourselves, with care packages and sleeping bags – at no charge to us! Donations of personal care items can be made through The Bargains Group directly to Sanctuary – for information, see their website at www.bargainsgroup.com or call Jody at 416-785-5655 or 877-868-5655.

John Anderson

We were glad to have John Anderson join Sanctuary's Board of Directors earlier this year as he brings with him a real depth of experience working with friends from our community. Before a dramatic conversion in 1986, John had personal experience with drug addiction, trafficking, organized crime and virtually all of the negative things that go with them. He doesn't hesitate to affirm that it is strictly by the grace of God that he finds himself where he does today. He now lives with his wife, Landy, in Durham region, is the proud father of 4 children ranging in age from 11 to 26 and works as the Duty Chaplain at the Toronto Jail (formerly the Don Jail) – a position which gives him lots of overlap with our Sanctuary friends! Prior to that, he was the chaplain at the Salvation Army Gateway Men's Shelter here in downtown Toronto. We look forward to having John's perspective represented in the years to come as he participates in a leadership role on our Board.



Staff News – Lots of great gossip to pass along at this time in our history

First of all, our hearty congratulations to **Paul Baetz** who married his sweetie, Kelly on Saturday, May 27th. Kelly graduated from Wycliffe College, was ordained in May and together, Paul and Kelly are moving to Sault Ste. Marie in July where Kelly will begin her life as a Minister of the Anglican Church.

While we are excited for Paul and Kelly, it is hard to see Paul go after a dozen years within the Sanctuary community including 4 years on staff. Paul's love for playing games, watching movies, taking in sporting events or just simply hanging out with friends have made him a cherished member of our community and we are sad to see him go. We will miss his tender heart, his great laugh and his steadfastness. But we wish him and Kelly God's rich blessings in this new phase of their lives. Thanks, Paul!

And secondly come baby congratulations to both **Lyf Stolte** and his wife Jennifer as well as to **Sharon Tiessen** and her husband Nevin. Both couples are expecting their first children later this year, Lyf and Jenn in October, and Sharon and Nevin in November. Along with Tania and Nabil, who are expecting their first child any day now, this brings our baby count to

three this year! Makes us think that Paul and Kelly are probably glad to be moving away from here for the time being at least! We wish all three of these couples the very best as they prepare to welcome their new arrivals in the days and months to come.



Finally, we are preparing to welcome our newest staff member, **Steve Hunter**, to our team in July. Steve will be moving to Toronto from Smith Falls in July along with his wife, Beth, and son, Darryl. Steve and Beth are long-time friends of Wayne and Linda Rumsby. Steve will be joining us with a specific focus on working with Wayne to help us grow and expand the capacity of the Mustard Tree shop. Steve and Beth's journey towards Sanctuary began quite by accident last summer and it has been fascinating to see how they have been almost irresistibly drawn here ever since. We look forward to their joining our community and to seeing what lies in store for all of us as a result. If you are interested in becoming part of Steve's support team, whether through financial or prayer support, please contact him by email at steveh@sanctuaryministries.on.ca or by phone at 416-778-0694 (the Mustard Tree phone number).

THANK YOU INTER-VARSITY GROUP for the Beautiful New Backyard!

You've got to see
the new look in
our backyard!
A small but
eager group of
students from
Inter-Varsity

Christian Fellowship at the University of Toronto spent
two weeks with us at Sanctuary learning about inner-city
ministry and also making our backyard beautiful! Our
heartfelt thanks to each of them for the creativity and
sweat equity they poured into their work! **Well done!**



PLEASE HELP US SAVE MONEY BY... ADDING YOUR NAME TO THE EMAIL LIST.

Send an email to info@sanctuaryministries.on.ca
stating that you would like to receive our newsletter
and any announcements by email. Thanks!

Yes, I want to partner with you.

- ☐ I would like to order _____ copies of
"God in the Alley" (Retail price \$15.00).
Enclosed please find a cheque for \$_____.
- ☐ My **church/workplace** should hear about Sanctuary.
- ☐ I would like to learn more about **volunteering**.
- ☐ I commit to **pray** for the Sanctuary community.
- ☐ I would like to support Sanctuary on a **monthly basis**.
- ☐ I want to **financially support** your ministry:
 - ☐ Where most needed
 - ☐ Staff Name _____
 - ☐ Street Outreach
 - ☐ Meal Programs ☐ Arts/Music/Drama
 - ☐ Health Care ☐ Other _____
 - ☐ Mustard Tree Employment Program

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Tel.: _____

Email.: _____

Please make donations payable to: **Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto**

Tax receipts will be issued at year end. Designated funds will be applied as directed
by the donor. Funds given in excess of an approved or discontinued program will be
applied at the discretion of the Board. Charitable #89037 9340 RR 0001 06-06

Financial Update – We are grateful to see that we are on
budget again this year with respect to both donations as well
as expenses. That's a great start.

The unfortunate news is that, with the lean summer months
upon us, we find ourselves in a cash-flow crunch similar to
the one we experienced around this time last year. Simply put,
to meet our cash-flow requirements through these months, we
need a significant infusion of dollars. In spite of substantial
measures that we have taken both to expand our circle of
donors as well as to control our expenses, we continue to
struggle in this area. If you require more information about this
situation, please get in touch with us.

Many of you who receive this newsletter are already partners
with us financially and we are deeply grateful to you for this.
May we encourage you to share the work of Sanctuary with
someone else who you feel might benefit from becoming
engaged with our work? That would be a tremendous help,
especially as we look to the crunch time of these next few
months. Thanks!

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Here at Sanctuary, the need is met by people like Kelly,
a University of Toronto student, who planned her Fall classes
specifically so that she could join us every Wednesday for
lunch to connect with some of the friends she began to get
to know at our drop-ins both last year and throughout the
summer months. People like Nancy, a speech therapist who
has taken a two-year sabbatical during which time she has
spent two days a week here building friendships particularly
among some of the women within our community. People
like Aileen or Anne who have been coming to Sanctuary
weekly for four or five years and who have become precious
friends to many of our regulars. People like Steve and Dana,
each of whom are regularly in touch by phone or over coffee
with several of our guys.

Each of these people has offered to our community the gift of
themselves. And that gift has been received with open arms.
Not everyone has either time in their schedule or space in
their souls to share that gift – but they do... and they have...
and we are grateful.

And I am grateful for each of you who give – however you
do it. Some send socks, some come in person, some send
prayers, and some send money which makes it possible for us
on staff to devote the greater part of our lives to offering the
gift of God's love. I think I can speak for all of us in saying that
we are glad to have the opportunity to pass your gifts along.
So thank you each for making this all possible!

[SANCTUARY]

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www.sanctuaryministries.on.ca

email: info@sanctuaryministries.on.ca

*Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto is committed to protecting the privacy of our friends and
supporters. We do not share or sell any of the information that we collect but rather use it solely for
the purpose of communicating with you regarding the work in which we are engaged.*