In March of 2017, we will be celebrating our 25th anniversary here at Sanctuary! Seems incredible that so much time has passed since this great adventure got started.

As we have been reflecting on this anniversary, our thoughts have turned to this building that we call home. It goes without saying that Sanctuary is about so much more than just this facility at 25 Charles Street East. But the facility matters too. It is important to our community that we have been able to call this place home for 25 years.

For many in our community, housing may never have been stable. Maybe there wasn’t a sense of permanence or belonging in the places that we lived. Tragically for all-too-many in our world, there are negative emotions associated with the homes in which they were raised – places that should bring to mind images of love, hope and refuge can instead conjure up pain and heartache.

Those of us, however, who were fortunate enough to have a more positive experience of home can likely speak to the warm feelings that arise when we drive past the home in which we were raised. Or a beloved grandparent’s house. Or a friend’s house where precious memories were made. It’s not about the structure itself but there is something to be cherished about that place where birthday candles were blown out, holidays were celebrated, joys were full, and sorrows were shared.

As we have dug around looking for information about 25 Charles Street East, this place we now call home, we have learned some fascinating details about it:

- Built in 1916 as a new home for Beulah Hall, a Christian congregation that was relocating from nearby Buchanan Street. The building itself just celebrated its 100th birthday!
- It was the temporary home for a brief period in 1928 for the church that went on to become Calvary Church, currently situated at Danforth and Pape.
- Emmaus Bible College, an accredited, 4-year private college in Dubuque, Iowa with enrollment of nearly 200 students, has its origins right here in this storied building.
- The building itself was designed by the influential Toronto Arts & Crafts architect, Eden Smith, who designed two of the Toronto Housing Company’s first projects – the Bain and Spruce Court Co-ops. He designed some 2,500 projects in Toronto including many homes in Rosedale and Forest Hill, several churches, libraries, buildings for the University of Toronto, and the prestigious Upper Canada College.

In reflecting on those historical details, it’s hard not to feel grateful for the heritage that this building represents and that we are privileged today to carry on. We have inherited a legacy of excellence, of social responsibility, and Christian faithfulness that is worthy of celebration. And we do that gladly.

In this issue of City of Refuge, we celebrate the privilege that we have been given to be stewards of this grand old building in Toronto’s bustling downtown core. It is a delight to see how these doors continue, in the name of Jesus, to welcome and provide a place of redemptive home for so many within this beautiful and diverse community of Sanctuary. And it is a privilege to stand in the ongoing story of God at work on Charles Street.
Shortly after Sanctuary purchased the building at 25 Charles Street East, near the close of 1999, I sat down with architect Ian MacDonald and his associate, Olga Pushkar, to talk about the changes we wanted to make to a very simple old place that hadn’t seen a significant renovation since it was first constructed.

“So,” Ian said, “I guess you want to make the place more efficient for delivering your services.”

I laughed. “No, we’re not really interested in efficiency at all. We want to create a home.”

Ian’s company designed the Boulevard Club, Sidney Smith Hall at University of Toronto, and like Eden Smith before him, some truly innovative homes in Wychwood Park and elsewhere. Olga, while working for another firm, was a creative and trouble-shooting force in the brilliant design of the National Ballet School on Jarvis Street. They were clearly out of our league – at that time, four street outreach workers and a wild crew of mostly homeless people. Working with us would do nothing to enhance their portfolios; they did it for love.

Within minutes of establishing that the concept of home was what we were aiming for, somebody had come up with the idea of finding a way to squeeze a fireplace into the renovations. What better way than a warm hearth to say “you’re home now” to a homeless person on a cold winter day? The fireplace in the drop in remains both a powerful symbol and a very practical piece of equipment.

It was beautiful to see how people from our community began to own the place in a new way, starting with the renovations themselves. We replaced the roof, gutted the kitchen jack-hammered an old, unused reinforced concrete baptismal tank, and dismantled a series of dungeon-like brick rooms to make way for a new kitchen, washrooms with showers, and the sitting area in front of the new fireplace.

Olga and I discussed what kind of backdrop we’d want for the fireplace. A fan of Bauhaus design, she suggested a nice, clean painted concrete block wall. “Not a chance,” I said. “Every jail I’ve ever been in has nice, clean painted concrete block walls.” Apparently that wasn’t a consideration for most of Olga’s clients.

Instead we decided to use the warm yellow clay bricks we had culled from the dungeons. Mortar had to be chipped off and the bricks wire-brushed clean. It was a big job, but our people pitched in with such enthusiasm that, a few days later, we had to insist that one particular man, who was then homeless, stop. He had literally scrubbed those bricks until his fingers bled.

As it turned out, we had many more bricks than we needed. We stamped them with a message in black ink: “I helped build Sanctuary!” And we gave them to donors of both time and money in lieu of the usual plaques and bits of sculpted acrylic.

A home is not merely the place you sleep. For many in our community, including the homeless and those who live in rooming houses or illegal basement “apartments”, the place they sleep is not home at all. It’s not been uncommon, through the years, for someone returning from their travels, or hospital, or jail, to stick his or her head through Sanctuary’s door and announce, “I’m home!” And even for me, living as I do in a beautiful house with a wonderful wife, the old building on Charles Street is in some strange fashion home.

It’s the people, of course, who make a home. Knowing that this old “house” with its battered doors, lumpy couches and smelly carpets is where I’ll find so many of the people I’ve come to love, and who, wonder of wonders, have come to love me, is what draws me back to this home. As in most families, conflict abounds – and this is one huge, sprawling, enormously dysfunctional family! – but so does grace. Mercy. Tenderness. Loyalty.

God himself is the true home for which our souls yearn. As the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews says, “We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” (13:14) The imperfect rest, the embrace, the affirmation and comfort we turn toward here is a whiff of what is to come; at times it makes us fairly quiver like a gun dog catching a scent on the breeze. Jesus said that the poor in spirit will inherit the kingdom of heaven. That’s my “family” for sure, so I’m confident that one day we’ll find the true home we’re longing for.

In the meantime, here we are.

Home is where the heart is.

This board is hung at the entrance to Sanctuary and show the names and messages of folks who helped us claim this beautiful building as our own.
You’re Invited!

Our 8th Annual WALK is happening July 10th

And we will meet at Sanctuary by 1pm, walk south then end our journey at Harbour Square Park with a picnic provided by the Longo’s family!

We are hoping to raise $60,000 again this year to support health care, arts, meals and outreach at Sanctuary.

You can help us reach this goal by walking, donating, or raising awareness.

To sign-up and for more information, email info@sanctuarytoronto.ca or call 416-922-0628.

Join us and bring your friends!
When Janice Towndrow, author of the lovely poem you see here, saw this flowering tree in our alley, her breath caught in her throat and she exclaimed, ‘talk about God in the alley!’

Beneath the city’s lofty shafts  
Steel glazed with darkling panes  
Sits a hallowed house of God  
A place where goodness reigns.

A refuge and a haven  
A shelter, a retreat  
A place of caring friendships  
The blessed place we meet.

A ragtag bunch assembles there  
All part of one great host  
But none are favoured, none ignored  
Each one is loved the most.

And there disguised among them  
Hark! Can you hear him speak?  
The Son of God stands waiting  
To sup with poor and meek.

And when the great doors open  
With wings that stretch out wide  
Embracing those who enter in  
Receiving all outside

The hungering bodies rustle in  
And hasten to the meal  
Where simple fare prepared with care  
Is served with love and zeal.

Now I’ve heard tell of wonders  
Of red rain from above  
That falls and covers everyone  
and bathes with joy and love.

The walking wounded dance and sing  
The place erupts in song  
Assuring all without a doubt  
“This is where I belong.”

-Janice Towndrow

On April 22nd we opened our doors for a Spring Art Show like none other at Sanctuary. Art lovers and artists alike enjoyed the aesthetic experience accompanied by the sweet sounds of live music and delectable nibbles. To see more images from this event and others, check out our Sanctuary Facebook page!
We are delighted to celebrate with four of our staff who all welcomed new little people into their lives and families! We’re so excited to introduce the four babies to you; the cuteness is truly exponential! Here are the moms and their little ones: Rachel with Ashlyn, Rebecca with Emmanuelle, Tanja with Jakob, and Aylish with Moriah. Congratulations moms and welcome, babies!

You are invited to join us for...

Open Mic w/ Sam Sundar-Singh

The first Wednesday of every month @ 7:30pm

25 Charles St. E, Toronto
Financial Update

The great news is that our donations for 2016 are on pace with our donations to the end of May last year! Unfortunately, as we keep growing, so do our budgetary needs. As a result, we find ourselves sitting about 10% behind where we had hoped to be by this point in the year. We realize that this is far from a crisis but feel that it’s important to communicate with you, our extended family. And even as we let you know about this need, we recognize that God is faithful and ultimately the one who provides through friends like you.

To our many faithful donors, we thank you. To those of you who are wondering if this is a good time to begin supporting Sanctuary financially or even to increase a regular donation amount, please give that prayerful consideration. God is faithful!

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it...

Ways to Help

Pray, pray, pray!

Donate:

- **By credit card** via www.sanctuarytoronto.ca/donate/financial.php
- **Monthly** by electronic funds transfer use the form at www.sanctuarytoronto.ca/forms/PAGform.pdf
- **By cheque or money order** payable to Sanctuary Ministries of Toronto Mail to 25 Charles Street East, Toronto, ON M4Y 1R9

For US Donors, by cheque or money order payable to First Church of the Nazarene Mail to Sanctuary c/o Radical Mission, 150 Richview Road, Clarksville, TN 37043 Attn: Leighanne Guthrie

Tax receipts will be issued at year end. Funds given in excess of an approved or discontinued program will be applied at the discretion of the Board. Charitable #89037 9340 RR 0001

Donate A Car Canada! Sanctuary can benefit from your donation of any kind of vehicle (cars, trucks, vans, SUVs, motorcycles, boats, RVs) to be recycled in an environmentally friendly manner! Not only that, but also, if you have a newer or estate vehicle that you would like to donate, they have selling agents to assist in maximizing your donation. Simply go to www.donatecar.ca or call them at 1-877-250-4904.

Other Ideas:
- **Raise awareness** by showing this newsletter to your friends and family.
- **Commemorate** special people and occasions by donating to Sanctuary ‘in honour of...’
- **Sign-up** to receive newsletters and invitations via email by contacting info@sanctuarytoronto.ca
- **Invite** Sanctuary to speak at your church, school or group meeting.

Board of Directors

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