

City of Refuge

A Voice from the Street

Summer 2009 • Vol. 8- Issue 2

Double Advocacy by Doug Johnson Hatlem



“Advocacy work is like exercising as a middle-ager,” says Greg deGroot-Maggeti. “It almost always seems as if it isn’t doing any good, but you know everything is going to pot if you don’t do it.” Three and a half years ago, I was hired by the Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCC) and placed to work at Sanctuary. Greg is the poverty advocate for MCC at Queen’s Park and a veteran of more than a dozen years of advocacy work.

Early in February, I heard from Keren and Thea (our parish nurses) that Cliff Hussin, a long time community member at Sanctuary, was in hospital with badly broken ribs and a punctured lung and that Donna, baptized this past year, wanted to get a hold of me. They wanted me to visit them; their wounds had been received at the hands and feet of security guards at a different hospital. As I entered their room the next day, they immediately wanted to know if I would help them speak to media and file complaints with the authorities. Donna and Cliff were aware that I had somehow become the go-to guy at Sanctuary when it came to advocacy around maltreatment from police and security guards. Their story was heard around the greater Toronto area and far beyond, and it seems as if local advocacy has made a genuine difference for Cliff and Donna and for troubled patients generally.

Our advocacy says a whole lot about our spiritual and political sensibilities, and whom we advocate to says as much about us as is said by those for whom we advocate. When you hear the word "advocacy", do you think primarily of lobbyists at City Hall or Queen’s Park, perhaps on Parliament or Capitol Hill, maybe at the United Nations in New York? If so, then perhaps you are a pragmatic realist who understands that decisions made in the intoxicating air of governmental buildings has a direct impact on the lives of those like Cliff and Donna who have very few monetary resources and a daily dose of tough characters and situations to confront. But perhaps such a view also witnesses to an often unconscious serving of two masters, one who is the titular Master of the Universe, and another who claims our citizenships here on earth and actually controls the purse strings.

Maybe, then, when you hear the word "advocacy", you think primarily of beseeching God on your own or somebody else’s behalf? God really is in control, and you spend or think you should spend your advocacy time accordingly. However, if we are to pray at all times then Christians from a seventh century theologian named Maximus to twentieth century musician Rich Mullins have suggested that we pray with our very lives. Our very real efforts to alleviate human suffering and our speaking out to the powers that be on behalf of those suffering injustice can double as prayers of advocacy to the One who suffered with us.

There are other forms that advocacy can take as well. Most of us at Sanctuary spend a significant amount of time hosting youth groups or speaking in churches. That, too, is advocacy. When we speak to church people, we are speaking out of our community’s needs and on the basis of their perspective on the world. The church is a powerful political body, whether or not it is always recognized as such. "The church is called to live now according to the model of the future reign of God. Thus, we are given a foretaste of the kingdom that God will one day establish in full."¹ In other words, the church is to show forth an entirely different political reality. The people of God are to be the first-fruits of a kingdom of justice and jubilee; faithfulness and friendship. These are values that we not only preach, but also embody: by sharing

...continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

A View from Here.....	2
The Drawer Boy postscript....	3
Housing Developments	3
Staff Updates.....	4
Baby News.....	4
Faces or Our Community	5
Sanctuary 5K Walk.....	5

A View From Here...



Greg Paul

Allison* is trapped by locked interior doors, stranded in Sanctuary's entrance stairwell.

"Hey," I say brightly, when I find her there. "I'm glad to see you! This is a big day for you - we have your keys!"

She would, I guess, be in her mid-thirties, and she's been homeless a long time. For the last few years, she's been hooked up with Jack*, a hardcore street bad boy if ever there was one. They haunt the street and camp in doorways together; since I see them only when they're recovering from their latest adventure, they appear to spend most of their waking hours sprawled on a couch in the drop-in, muttering at each other, with occasional eruptions into robust invective. She is tall and straight and endearing cheerful with everybody else. Jack moves like a hound on the hunt.

I have learned through the years that, although I can generally roll with the nonsense, there are a few people who are able to bug me deeply and almost instantly, for no apparent reason. By the same token, there are people whose behaviours ought to be irritating, disappointing, whose actions should by all normal standards be notably bug-worthy - but there's something about them I just really like. Allison and Jack are like that. I find them charming in a strange sort of way, and I admire their resilience, their humour, their unwillingness to make any excuses for themselves. They're my friends.

So I'm more than usually delighted that they have found a way to work through the long, tedious process to get housing through the city's Street To Homes program - well, Allison has; Jack's focus is never long away from the endless round of get money-score drugs-do drugs (repeat until exhausted) - and are now about to move in. It's been a long haul, and a nervous afternoon. They were supposed to go with their social worker this morning to get the keys themselves from the landlord, but they got distracted on the way and didn't show up. The social worker got the keys and left them with Alan, knowing that Allison and Jack would surface at Sanctuary before long.

And here she is, finally. Immaculately dressed in fresh, conservative clothing. If you passed her on the street, you'd assume she was working in one of the office towers nearby, and had just stepped out for a coffee. But her eyes are swollen, red, and she is shaking and hugging herself as if she'd just been rescued from an icy lake. When I mention keys, she bursts into tears.

She's afraid, she says. Of what? Failure, she wails. Afraid that they'll screw up this apartment somehow and lose it. I, genius, point out that if that happens, they'll be no worse off than they are now. She sobs. Shakes. She can't face ending up back on the street, won't be able to survive it. They'd be letting us down (letting Sanctuary staff down!), the disappointment, failure... it would be easier, maybe safer, not to try...

She follows me back to the office. I give her the keys; she shoves them quickly in a pocket without looking at them. Lyf and I offer to pray with her. She gladly accepts, and clutches my thumb throughout as if she wants to squeeze the marrow from it. When we are done, she launches herself to her feet, brushes her tears away with both hands and announces through her last hiccupping sobs that she feels better already. This, to me, seems unlikely. She is still trembling.

The next morning, Mike plonks himself down in a chair in my office and announces with a quivering jaw that he is struggling. Things are going too good, he says. He's afraid he'll screw it up. He too weeps and shakes, although not as dramatically as Allison; we also pray together. As always, he hugs me as he leaves.

Mike has as hard a street story as anyone I know. He's used one substance or another to kill the pain since he was only a child; he's been and done all the nasty, sordid, soul-destroying things an addict and a homeless man must do to survive. But I use his real name (with permission) not only because, for fifteen years, he has been my friend and brother, but because he has also

....continued on Page 6

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Andy Burgess - Chairman
Merv Mercer - President
Bruce Gooding - Treasurer
Ted Smith - Director
Cindy Gladstone - Director
John Anderson - Director

"THE DRAWER BOY" *postscript...*

Undertaking any theatre production here, no matter how small, is always more about the journey than the destination. We were feeling the "destination" end of things a bit more in this production than in the past though. It was probably one of our most ambitious plays to date. *The Passages of Everett Manning* was ambitious in its scope - 8 actors and a full length original play that was intimately about our community. *The Drawer Boy*, however, found 3 of us working through an already published and polished full length play (one that has even won awards!). This was huge, especially for the individuals involved. Richard, Tony and Lyf shared the stage for close to 2 hours. Significantly more time on stage than Richard and Tony had spent before. Shannon Blake (who wrote *Passages...* for us) directed us, something she hadn't done since she was 5'7" (a joke in her play bio) - so in a very long time. This was new to all of us and really drew us together as a group in some very solid and challenging ways.

Shannon really caught something of the magic of the experience in her thank you letter to Michael Healey,

"The play was extremely well-received by our street-involved community. Men and women who struggle with everything from addiction to poverty to mental health issues to abuse to disability to homelessness were able to leave their struggles for a few hours and immerse themselves in the world of Miles, Angus and Morgan. We had a number of community members who became groupies, coming three, four, five or six times to see the show. A particularly raucous and joyous moment happened on our opening night when the street community audience members began to moo in appreciation at our actors.

.... Please know that your words have been enriching to us as theatre folks, and a respite to a community of people who sometimes bear very difficult burdens."

Michael Healey's play truly was a gift to our community!

Housing Developments

Since we opened our first Sanctuary house nearly four years ago, we have talked often about our desire to share our learnings and experience with other church groups who might catch a vision for offering similar housing within their communities of faith. In describing our houses, we speak about planting "surrogate families" - groups of men or women who aren't simply co-existing within the same house but who are rather working to nurture healthy interdependent relationships within the context of a broader community.

And we have finally met a group who are taking us up on our offer. The Agincourt Interfaith Housing Committee represents a number of churches in the east part of Toronto who are involved in Out of the Cold programs in the Winter as well as supporting other programs for street-involved men and women throughout the year. They have met with us on a couple of occasions and are taking steps now towards purchasing and opening a community house for street-involved friends whom they have come to know through their work. This is really exciting news for us as we are firm believers that it's essential for local churches to be involved in frontline work of this sort as, with some appropriate guidance, they can actually be in a better position to offer this kind of care than we are.

If you have questions about Sanctuary's housing model or if we can speak with a group from your congregation about how you can take something like this on in your own neighbourhood, please call Alan at 416-922-0628 x.211 or e-mail him at alanb@sanctuarytoronto.ca to get the conversation started.



PLEASE HELP US SAVE MONEY BY ... adding your name to the email list.

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

"Double Advocacy"... continued from page 1



food, by celebrating together, by making the last first, by placing those who mourn at the centre of our activity.

When a Christian Peacemaker Team led by my neighbour Jim Loney was kidnapped in Iraq three and a half years ago, Palestinian resistance leaders sent out a plea for their captors to release them. Christian Peacemaker teams had worked faithfully toward peace in Palestine and now those whom many in the West would consider as enemies were advocating on behalf of their advocates. At Sanctuary we often witness something similar on a much smaller scale when people we've spent significant time with vouch for us on the street. When spoken by someone from the street, the words 'these are good people' can go a long way toward easing suspicions held by their companions. In fact, a few years ago it was words of advocacy like this, spoken about us by Donna a good bit more colourfully, that first encouraged Cliff to begin trusting our community as a place of refuge.

[1] From *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, 1995

Staff Updates



After some 15 years on staff here at Sanctuary, **Steve Martin** has moved on to Huron County where he will be working with a number of the churches there as they seek to embrace folks who are poor and excluded in their communities. Steve moved into the area last November to help run their Out of the Cold-type program through the Winter months. And he was obviously impressive enough to be offered a more long-term role within that community. Steve will be missed here at Sanctuary as he had developed many great friendships within our community and been a pastor to many. We wish him God's blessings in his new endeavours and know that we will stay in touch.



Many thanks and best wishes are due to **Sharon Tiessen** who, after more than 6 years on staff as our Arts Program Coordinator as well as Artist-in-Residence, is leaving us to pursue some artistic ventures on her own. Check out her work at <http://www.sharontiessen.com>. Sharon has raised the bar tremendously for our community with her incredible gifts in visual arts as well as music. She laid the groundwork for us in the development of our regular Arts eXtravaganzas and started us on the path of selling our Art Cards which feature paintings from our Sanctuary community. On a personal level, it's been an honour for us to share in Sharon's journey as she met and married Nevin and then together celebrated the birth of their son, Jeremy. Thank you, Sharon, for all you have given of yourself to our community. And thank you to Sharon's supporters for their partnership with her in this journey!



We're excited to announce the addition of a new staff member to our team here! On July 6th, **Greg Cook** will be joining us as part of our core pastoral team and we're thrilled to be welcoming him on board!

We have enjoyed beginning to get to know Greg as he has been hanging out with us over the last few months and feel like he will be a really solid fit with us. Here's what he has to say about his own sense of calling "I am passionate about living and working in a way that expresses the gospel, so that our society, my friends and my own life more fully reflect God's love and peace."

Greg will be looking, like the rest of us, to build a team of financial and prayer supporters to journey alongside him in his work here so if you are able and willing to join with him in that way, please be in touch with him at gregc@sanctuarytoronto.ca. Welcome, Greg!!

Baby News



Hearty congratulations go to Lyf Stolte, our actor-in-residence, and his wife, Jenn on the birth of their second son, Levi Paul, on May 18. Levi will be the adoring little brother to his big brother, Deyen, 2½ years his senior. We are particularly indebted to young Levi since we were a little concerned that he might have made his grand entrance a few weeks' earlier thereby complicating Lyf's involvement in our play, *The Drawer Boy*. Congratulations Lyf, Jenn and Deyen! And welcome, Levi!

Faces of Our Community

- Bruce Gooding -

Bruce is the most recent addition to Sanctuary's Board of Directors, having just joined earlier this year. He was introduced to Sanctuary by Erica Brewster, a long-time friend of Sanctuary's and a former member of our Board of Directors.

Bruce was Treasurer and a Director of Ronald McDonald House Charities from 2000 to 2004 and has had a general interest in social justice issues for the past 10 years. During that time, he was worked with the Mission and Outreach Committee at his local church to support missions like Sanctuary. He is a Certified Management Accountant and has his own financial consultancy working mainly with small and mid-size public companies.

Bruce has been married to his wife Carol for 30 years this September and they have two sons: Andrew, 22 and Ian, 18. Andrew attends OCAD University and is majoring in illustration design while Ian is completing Grade 12. Bruce is an avid reader and to get some fresh air, attempts to play golf. He's pretty sure, however, that the club pro will be asking him any day now to consider changing sports!



Bruce

- David Fujs -

Dave first started hanging around Sanctuary nearly 10 years ago, looking for some Christian fellowship and also needing help making ends meet. He took a break from us for a few years in there but has steady with us again over the last three years. During that time, Dave has found a great home within our worshipping community on Sundays (especially loving the worship music!) and also at our Mustard Tree woodworking program where he is learning all about woodworking - a field in which he had limited experience before.

Dave was born in Hamilton, moved to Toronto when he was two and did his growing up years in mid-Toronto neighbourhoods. During his adult years, he tried his hand at a number of jobs including construction work, rough carpentry and forklift operation but has been out of the work force for most of the last 6 years. He came to faith in 1989 when he was at the lowest point of his life and his journey since then has been challenging and full of many highs and lows. We're sure grateful to have Dave around Sanctuary nowadays and he's really grateful to be a part of our community too!



David



Saturday July 18th

5K WALK
2:00-4:00pm

BAR-B-QUE
4:00-6:00pm

If you are interested in participating or for more information,

Please Contact:

Nada Thomson

416-922-0628 ext. 225

nadat@sanctuarytoronto.ca

....continued from Page 2

during that time taught me more about the nature of faith than anybody else I know.

He lives happily now (mostly) in one of Sanctuary's houses, creating a home with three other men from the community. He has been crack and alcohol free for six months - an astonishing feat for someone who has used drugs for more than forty years. He's healthier, more centred, than at any other time during the years I've known him. But Mike knows he must actively put his trust in God every day, just to survive. And he does so, with a deep, visceral sense of his need that I, much as I admire it, can only rarely and briefly summon.

In the days after their visits, I wondered about the nature of the fear that plagues my two friends. What is there in my life that I fear so much that it would cause me to weep and shake? I have wept, as anyone who lives must surely do, over loss; even, during one horrible, interminable period, over the fear of losing. They were extraordinary times in my experience, and the memory of that enervating desolation helps me get a faint picture of the enormity of the hurdles, otherwise invisible to me, that Allison and Mike face daily. And when I think of them like this, I find their courage and faith heroic. They begin to embody to me these words of the Apostle Paul:

We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body... Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:7-10; 16)

CANADIAN TIRE MONEY



Help Sanctuary purchase building maintenance supplies and tools for the shop by collecting your Canadian Tire Money. Collect them through your church, study group, workplace, or as an individual.

Mail them to:

SANCTUARY MINISTRIES
25 Charles St. E., Toronto, Ont.
M4Y 1R9

Any questions please call :

Linda at 416-922-0628 ext.210
lindar@sanctuarytoronto.ca



SANCTUARY WEST
Phone: 416-778-0694



CHECK OUT "Mustard Tree's" NEW WEBSITE

www.mustardtree.ca

Purchase beautiful furniture
made by the Sanctuary community.



Yes, I want to partner with you...

- I want to **financially support** your ministry:
 - Arts & Drama
 - Employment Training
 - General Fund
 - Housing
 - Drop-In Meals
 - Staff Name _____
 - Street Outreach
 - Where most needed
- I would like to support Sanctuary on a **monthly basis.**
- My **church/workplace** should hear about Sanctuary.
- I would like to learn more about **volunteering.**
- I commit to **pray** for the Sanctuary community.

**DONATE BY CREDIT CARD
at www.canadahelps.org**

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

04-09

SANCTUARY

25 Charles Street East
Toronto, Ontario
M4Y 1R9

Tel.: 416-922-0628
Fax: 416-922-4961

Sanctuary West
186 St. Helens Avenue
Toronto, Ontario
M6H 4A1

Tel.: 416-778-0694
Fax: 416-778-7432

www.sanctuarytoronto.ca
info@sanctuarytoronto.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.