

# Annual Report

2024



**SANCTUARY**  
Mental Health Ministries



## Our Mission

**Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries equips the Church to support mental health and wellbeing.**

We provide resources that meaningfully engage the topics of faith and mental health. Our content is developed in collaboration with theologians, mental health professionals, and people with lived experience of mental health challenges. These resources prepare communities of faith around the world to raise awareness, reduce stigma, support mental health, and promote mental wellbeing.

## Our Vision

**We envision a future where the Church plays a vital role in supporting mental health and wellbeing in every community.**



# Becoming Sanctuaries

As I reflect on 2024, I am deeply moved by the stories of impact emerging from Sanctuary's work. When a student feels seen within their community, a pastor acknowledges mental health from the pulpit, or a small group holds space for both struggle and faith, it affirms the effects of our pioneering work and inspires us to greater effort.

## ENCOUNTERING GOD'S PRESENCE

At Sanctuary, we are committed to equipping churches to become sanctuaries where mental health is deeply integrated into Christian faith and practice, so that everyone can encounter the profound truth of God's presence in the midst of challenges. With that vision in mind, we continue to develop a wide range of educational resources, whilst pursuing artistic endeavours and thought leadership initiatives.

In 2024 we completed *The Sanctuary Youth Series*—our newest resource designed to help youth leaders, parents, and caregivers support young people as they navigate the intersection of faith and mental health. We also hosted our first Artist Retreat, bringing together Christian creators to explore mental health themes through various artistic mediums.

## EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

In the past year, Sanctuary has been presented with exciting thought leadership opportunities. We hosted a mental health expert panel at SXSW, and we partnered with the Flourishing Congregations Institute to conduct groundbreaking research on mental illnesses in Canadian congregations. The findings of this study have given us unprecedented insight into how churches can better support mental health in their communities.

## EXCITING ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We were honoured to receive the Cutting Edge of Mission Award from the Presbyterian Church of Canada. This validation, alongside our selection for the Praxis Labs Accelerator program, affirms the critical importance of our mission at this moment in history.

Thank you so much for partnering with us in this vital mission; together we covet your continued prayers, your advocacy, and your financial support—we simply couldn't do this work without each one of you.

With deepest gratitude,



Daniel

Daniel Whitehead  
CEO

"After working on *Sanctuary Songs* with my husband, Orlando, I went to an artist retreat in Canada, on Keats Island, hosted by Sanctuary. There, I was given so much language for my mental health journey—language to understand and language to pray. I was reminded that it's both; it's not either Jesus or medicine. It's Jesus and therapy. It's Jesus and community. The beauty of community is that God uses people to help people. I'm so thankful for Sanctuary, because you were the beauty of community, and the power of community, for me in that moment. Thank you so much, Sanctuary, for being a part of my story, of my journey."

~ DOE, 2025 GRAMMY® Winner, Best Contemporary Christian Music Album





# Equipping Families

## THE WARNEKES' STORY

In 2014, our family found ourselves in the midst of a mental health crisis without preparation or warning. Our oldest son, Josh, was admitted to the psych ward. We knew that he had been languishing for a while, but we didn't know if it was just typical teenage issues or something bigger. After Josh was admitted, we met with our family doctor and were told that we needed to learn about psychosis. This was not the news we wanted to hear. Thankfully, we received great professional support. However, the help and education that we received was missing an important piece for us. As followers of Jesus, we were left wondering: **"Where was God in all of this?" "How do we talk about this at church?" "Can we even talk about this at church?"** Up until this point we had never actually heard the topic of mental illness addressed in our church. We were left feeling very alone and isolated, but not for long...

A year after our initial crisis, Cal and I accepted a leadership role in a freshly formed, faith-based peer support group. We didn't know what we were doing! While looking for resources to support us in this new endeavour, we found Sanctuary. We can't begin to describe the excitement we experienced as we realized there was an organization working to equip the Church to support those of us on mental health journeys. Sanctuary's resources have provided

invaluable training and encounters over the years, and they continue to help form the culture at our church when it comes to mental health challenges.

Mental health journeys are incredibly difficult—there is no quick fix, particularly when it comes to severe mental illnesses. We have found that while there are similarities to each journey, they are also unique, which can make them feel very isolating and hopeless. However, **we have been able to witness many others discover that they are not alone, finding community and hope** as they learn that Jesus is with us in the flourishing and the languishing.

As we continue to walk this journey as a family, we have experienced God's love and care as we have spent time in community. God has used others to consistently remind us of His unchanging love and presence both in the valleys and on the mountaintops.

**Thank you, Sanctuary, for the work that you do in equipping churches like ours** to care for those walking a mental health journey. We are so grateful!

- The Warneke Family

*Photo by Kelly Warkentin of [Kindred Photography](#).*





## Supporting Wellbeing in the UK

This past year, we prioritized developing in-person and online training to address emerging needs in the UK. Having identified the pressure on those in ministry, especially post-pandemic, we piloted training that addresses stress and burnout in ministry, ensuring that leaders do not navigate these challenges alone. In addition, we offered training on mental health and ministry, support for those experiencing psychological distress, and suicide prevention. It has been a privilege to journey alongside leaders at every stage of their ministry, offering spaces where they can be seen, heard, and strengthened through the gifts of community and the presence of God.

As people across the UK have engaged with *The Sanctuary Course*, we've been encouraged by stories like that of Donald Yates—a participant from earlier this year, who shared his experience with us.

***"The Sanctuary Course had a much wider impact on me than I'd expected. I'd say it's been transformative. I learnt that people's mental health matters to God, therefore it should matter to the Church. Not everyone***

***is able to advocate for themselves... we should make sure that we are non-judgemental, that those we are caring for feel safe in talking to us about any issues they may have...just being there for someone may mean the world to them."***

Donald's response highlights the value of encouraging entire communities to take part in the mental health and faith conversation: "It only became apparent that finding *The Sanctuary Course* was important to me as I realised week by week my own shortfalls."

As Donald's reflections illustrate, *The Sanctuary Course* is not just for people with lived experience and caregivers—it is for everyone. Donald's willingness to listen and learn led to deeper understanding and a greater knowledge of how to offer effective support. The more 'Donalds' we see, the more churches will become communities where lived experiences can be shared and supported, and where everyone is empowered to hold on to God in the midst of life's challenges.

# The Sanctuary Youth Series

## CELEBRATING MILESTONES

### Global survey launched. Youth Advisory Council formed.

"HELP." This was the word most frequently used in response to our survey question, "If you could ask God one question about youth mental health challenges, what would it be?"

2020

### Core content is identified. Writing starts.

"I thought, 'I've been going to church, Bible study, and youth group every week, so why don't I know that [others are experiencing mental health challenges]? Why can't we talk about it? Why is it so silent?'"

~ Nathan, featured lived experience story

2022

2021

### Secondary research starts.

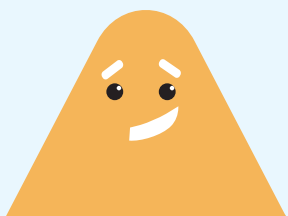
"Mental health, it turns out, is the biggest issue to address in order to do ministry that matters for young people."

~ Springtide Research Institute<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Springtide Research Institute, The State of Religion & Young People 2022: Mental Health—What Faith Leaders Need to Know, (Springtide Research Institute, 2022), 8.





## Lived experience interviews take place. Filming starts.

"[When] the Sanctuary team filmed the youth discussions featured in the youth series... I witnessed honesty, empathy, insights, wisdom, and connection. This experience assured me that through *The Sanctuary Youth Series*, young people will have the space and guidance to talk about mental health and faith with trusted adults."

~ Amy Yeung, series developer and presenter

2023



2024



## Filming and editing wrap. The series preview is released.

"I can't imagine the amount of people out there that are hurting on the inside, and they just need belief. They need someone to be there for them, but they don't have it. And that's why I think this program is so great."

~ Michael, youth series discussion participant



# Changing the Mental Health Narrative

(BY THE NUMBERS)

*Note: These numbers are based on data from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024 inclusive.*

**4,859** Churches and faith communities equipped to accompany individuals experiencing mental health challenges.

**71,010** individuals who have encountered the profound truth of God's presence in the midst of mental health challenges.\*

**127,383** Holy/Hurt podcast streams, educating and engaging thousands of people on the critical topic of spiritual trauma.

**1,900,000** lives impacted by our content in the YouVersion Bible App.

**9,000,000+** streams of the *Sanctuary Songs* worship album.

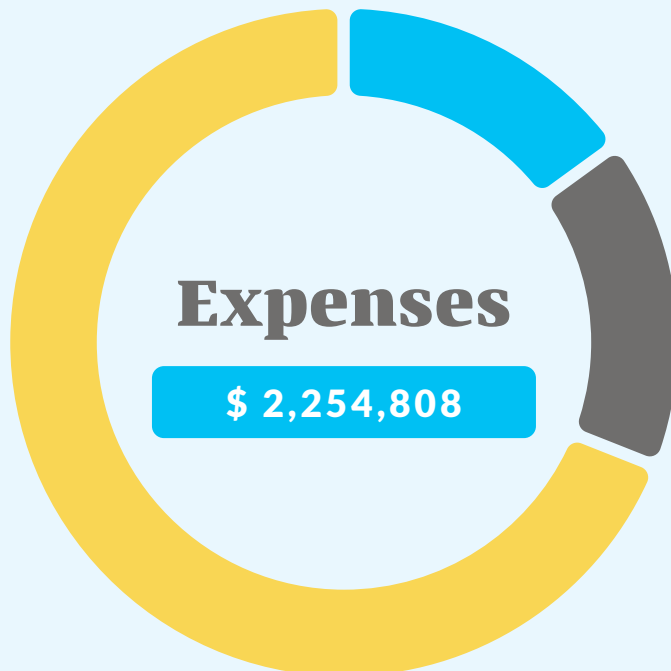
\* Estimated participants in The Sanctuary Course and The Sanctuary Course for Catholics in 2024. To calculate resource participation, we use a multiplier of fifteen participants per account holder, based on unique email addresses. This multiplier is based on historical data indicating a reported average group size of fifteen participants.



# Financial Summary

## TOTAL OPERATIONAL BUDGETS FOR CANADA, US, AND UK

- **53.7%**  
Individuals \$ 1,113,627
- **44.7%**  
Foundations \$ 926,061
- **1.5%**  
Earned Income \$ 31,971
- **0.1%**  
Other \$ 838



- **15.1%**  
Administration \$ 340,426
- **16.1%**  
Fundraising \$ 362,782
- **68.8%**  
Charitable \$ 1,551,600

*Note: These financials represent Sanctuary's operations in Canada, the USA, and the UK combined for the fiscal year of 2024 (January 1-December 31, 2024 for Canada and the USA; June 1, 2023-May 31, 2024 for the UK). Canada and UK financials are audited. All numbers written in Canadian dollars.*



# Our Ambassadors and Advisors

## Ambassadors

Hillary McBride, PhD

Registered Clinical Counsellor, Author, Researcher,  
and Speaker

Rev. Isabelle Hamley, PhD

Principal of Ridley Hall, Cambridge

Rev. John Swinton, PhD

Chair in Divinity and Religious Studies, University of  
Aberdeen

Matt Maher

Nine-time-GRAMMY® nominee and three-time-GMA  
Dove Award® winning artist

Curt Thompson, MD

Psychiatrist, Author, Speaker, and Podcast Host

## Advisors

Cheryl Bear, Nadleh Whut'en First Nation, DMin

Fiona Choi, PhD

Fred Chou, PhD, RPsych

Rev. Christopher C.H. Cook, PhD, MD

Ruth Lawson-McConnell, PhD

Jim McManus, FFPH, CPsychol, CSci

Anne-Marie Mohler, RN

Edward En-Heng Ng, MDiv, RPsych

Sue Nickel

Farayi Nyakubaya, RNMH

Rev. Sharon Smith, PhD

Thomas Wartenweiler, PhD

Rod Wilson, PhD, DD

Amy Yeung, MC, MATS

"Growing up, many in my family (including myself) have struggled with anxiety and depression... I've experienced communities where mental health challenges have been stigmatized, and also where they're embraced as part of the human experience. To me, Sanctuary offers a fresh, new way forward that holds up faith, clinical expertise, and lived experience as a 'three bound cord' that cannot be broken." - **Matt Maher**



# Supporters

**372**

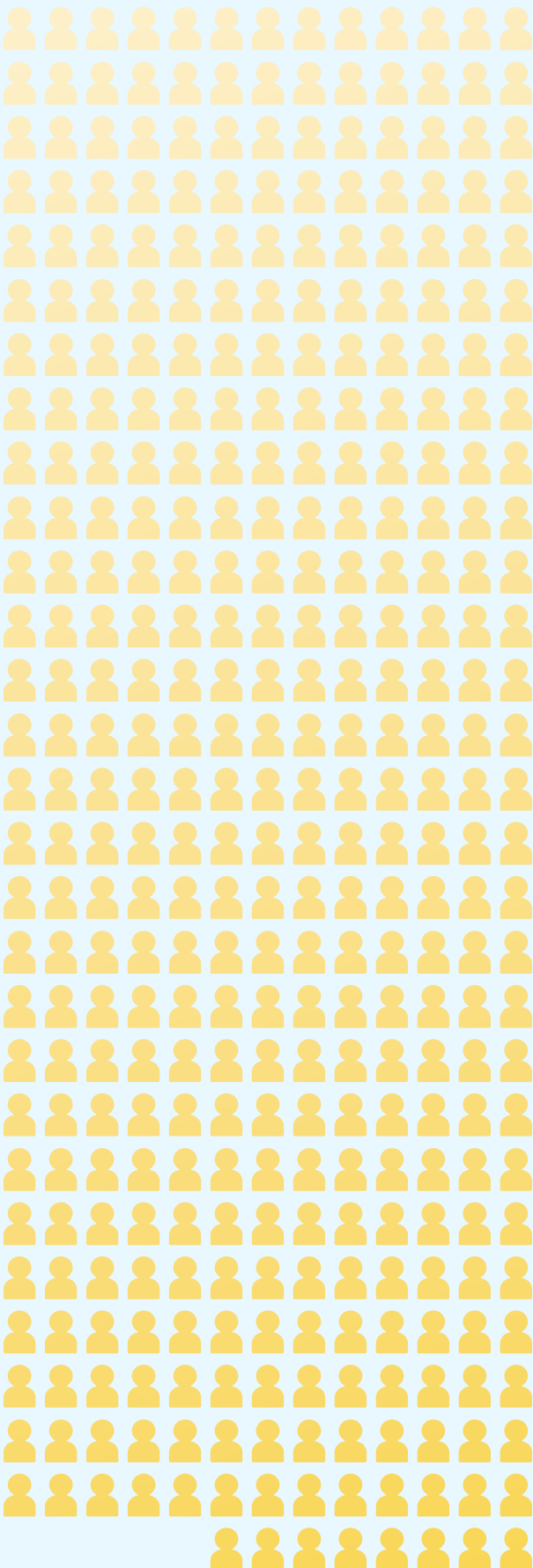
generous givers donated to Sanctuary in 2024.  
We offer our heartfelt thanks.

We would like to recognize the following organizations:

Belcum Foundation  
Benefact Trust  
Charis Foundation  
Crosby Family Fund  
David and Dorothy Lam Foundation  
Ecclesiastical Insurance Canada  
George and Carolyn Tsai Family Fund  
Harold C. Smith Foundation  
Inthallo  
M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust  
Seacliff Foundation  
Szocs Foundation  
Tamara Foundation  
The Bishop Radford Trust  
The Congregational Collective  
The Grant Foundation  
The Hemgrove Trust

"We've been facilitating the films with our Sunday gathering every fourth of the month at our church. It has been a profound experience as we grow in our knowledge of mental health challenges. Our hope is to be a safe and helpful faith community for those among us and those yet to be known to us."

- **Jeff Printy, Lead Pastor, Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Irondequoit, Rochester, NY, USA**



[sanctuarymentalhealth.org](https://sanctuarymentalhealth.org)

