

## 2016 Arts and Inspiration Report

The vision for Sanctuary's Arts and Inspiration is to offer a public, weekly program designed to create community and connect people to their souls through a shared experience of the arts. Sanctuary UCC uses her space at 458 High Street in West Medford Square to create an art gallery, theatre and a small music performance space in which artists, musicians, writers and theologians display their art, perform music, lead community singing and community conversation about the experience of spirituality through film, art, poetry, and music.

Arts and Inspiration offers a unique opportunity to deliberately create connection and build community through the shared experience of art, film and music. The dialogue and discovery process built into each of event deepens the impact of the 'art' on the individual, broadens the influence of the many ideas expressed in the 'art' and consistently creates a vital experience of our shared humanity—with all of it's messiness and beauty. People connect and community is formed.

### The Gallery at Sanctuary Report

Current Gallery Committee Members include: Ose Manheim, Julie Roberts, Charlene Carle, Carol Chapman, Joe Luongo, Joanna Begin, Susan D'arcy Fuller, Linda Malik, Wendy Miller Olapade

The Artists who have installed shows at the Gallery include: West Medford Open Studios with Carol Chapman, Charlene Carle, Julie Roberts, Joe Luongo, Susan D'Arcy Fuller, Ose Manheim, Lynwode Paquette, and Brenda Briggs (06/15); Cambia Davis (08/15); Parishioners of the Outdoor Church with City Mission's Public Voice Project (09/15); Paige Wallis (10/15); Kathleen Connors (11/15); Susan D'Arcy Fuller's Scenes from Pine Ridge reservation and Lakota Star Quilt (12/15); Sharon Santillo Family Stories (01/16); Malden High School Endangered Species Series (02/16); Lisa Sears (03/16); Sophie Glikson-Cahen (04/16); West Medford Open Studios with Carol Chapman, Paul Roberts, Julie Roberts, Linda Malik, Susan D'Arcy Fuller, Ose Manheim, Lynwode Paquette, Charlene Carle (05/16); Bala Muthukaruppan (06/16); Giselle Gill (07/16); Luke Volpe (08/16); Marjorie Kaye & George Shaw (09/16); Laurie Mass (10/16 – 12/16).

Gallery at Sanctuary has been up and running since May 2015. No report was made for 2015, so info here will include the 19 months since it has been opened to the public.

Ose Manheim, as chairperson, took the lead at the gallery as one of the major components to the Arts & Inspiration pillar of Sanctuary. We are sad that she has needed to step back from her leadership position this past autumn, but are indebted to her service and unflagging vigilance to get us to the proud place known as Gallery at Sanctuary. Her reflections, along with other committee members are as follows.

Soon after we opened, we realized we needed to schedule artists further in advance and meet more regularly—we meet monthly and review art on a rolling basis. Most artists exhibiting, except one, have come from surrounding communities to Medford. We realize that culling artists directly from Medford is likely limited. However, that affords us a greater opportunity to bring visitors who would not normally

know about Sanctuary into the space. While numbers vary, reception totals have brought in up to 50 people; averaging 20-30 in the past few months. From the onset, Ose sent out invitations to an average of 60 people to attend openings. Additionally, Sanctuary supplements that outreach through the Arts and Inspiration newsletter, Facebook friends and other media outlets to reach 300-500+, and has an established protocol for that marketing. Most art opening guests seemed to have an association with the artist; unfortunately, fewer locals know about the gallery. We have a goal to increase the foot traffic locally and beyond. We must become better in collecting contact info from first time visitors, following up directly after so that they become regular attendees, and hopefully ambassadors for Sanctuary. We have learned from querying the artists that ArtChurch provides a deeply unique, powerful and moving experience for the artist. Attendees seem to feel the same way. That, in and of itself, is a huge success!

The committee realizes that we have not been able to get the word out sufficiently that Sanctuary is both a church and gallery. We had a press release to the Transcript, and Wendy has been tirelessly putting out social media to get the word out regularly. Charlene and Linda worked to get a flag that states "Art Gallery" and proudly hung it on our facade in December, however the wind quickly pulled it down. We do think that there needs to be more signage that clearly states the Gallery's existence and can be seen by drivers rather than just by pedestrians. There is still work to be done.

When Grady was administrator, he did a great job hanging the installations with the artists. However, communications were halted at times, delaying advertising in advance. Sales were few, mostly happening through West Medford Open Studios (WMOS). After that event, Ose, as chairperson, started by asking artist friends to exhibit, where we operated with "a gentleman's agreement." (no contract or written requirements). By September, Linda, along with committee input, created an informational cover letter and an art requirements/contract which is now in use and calls for a 20% commission to Sanctuary. Therefore, those interested in displaying know that the art must conform to the mission of Sanctuary and ArtChurch. This has already proven to be a better communication vehicle with artists, providing an effective and unifying voice, while also enhancing our outreach capabilities.

It is exciting that Gallery at Sanctuary exhibits change [usually] every month. It seems everyone who stops in the Gallery are "wowed" by the beautiful space and the art. We have created a vibrant place that invites repeat attendance to see what's new. Also notable is the diversity and variety, both in medium and cultures represented. Recently, Laurie Mass, a ceramic artist was able to hang her creations on the wall, producing a unique display beyond 2D art. We've showcased artists from India, Trinidad, and unsheltered photographers from Cambridge. Three Chinese artists will display in 2017 and Dick Simons' upcoming show photographs people throughout the world asking us to "KnowTHEM." The committee continues to think about how we can showcase work that is further aligned with Sanctuary's mission and associated social justice themes. These include those disaffected by race, economic disparities, culture, faith, and other "separations" that create disunity and inequality. Other ideas are already in place, and we know there is an opportunity to collaborate with others in Medford to help us build powerful and empowering statements through art. The committee challenges itself to continually go out and meet various artists who fit our vision.

The Gallery provided \$650 in revenue to Sanctuary in 2016 and credit card payments can be made via Flipcause. Approximately 50% of sales have been made through that portal and we envision increasing

that use through online purchases. We have learned that when the price points are lower, the willingness to purchase art rises dramatically. Laurie sold more than 20 pieces, and her sales comprised 70% of Sanctuary's income--average per item cost \$100 (\$60-\$175).

In addition to the possibility of online art sales - we are brainstorming ways to increase revenue such as Gallery/Art Sale "pop ups" where we plan one day/short term shows, similar to WMOS, in order to sell items that are less expensive around various "buying" holidays. We may also supplement monthly shows with high end art (\$300 per and up) with less expensive items so sales may be bolstered on a regular basis. We hope one day Sanctuary can become a "go-to" place in Medford to find those unique and constantly changing art as gift items – seeing the benefit in our revenue stream.

Since the Gallery, like any new business, is still fairly new, we don't have enough data to clearly measure success, nor has a benchmark been established. However, it is evident that growth has occurred, however small. Due to named improvements, the gallery is running smoother; established consistent marketing and supporting documents are in place, and there is a clear vision for the future. We are excited about the path we are on!

### **Testimony about the Gallery and ARTChurch**

Medford Transcript Article about the Gallery at Sanctuary, including the following testimony artists: <http://medford.wickedlocal.com/news/20160912/medfords-newest-art-gallery-now-open>

As one of the only art galleries in Medford with a new installation each month the greater Medford community is given an opportunity to drop in to experience a wide variety of art showcasing local artists. For those inclined to delve deeper using the artwork as a lens on the greater world, Sanctuary provides an inclusive experience of ArtChurch which is open to persons of all faiths and no faith. As well, a monthly open house provide a time to get to learn more about the artist, their motivations and inspirations, in a fun and easygoing atmosphere. Here is what some of the artists and participants have said about their experience:

"I was moved to tears hearing the many heart-felt messages from the viewers after they were skillfully asked by Rev. Wendy to share a story about their spiritual journey in resonance with an artwork of their choice. It was an inspiring and precious gift to my artist's soul." — Sophie Glikson, artist

"Displaying my oil paintings was moving and enriching. I found the perceptive responses to my work thought-provoking and inspiring. The unique opportunities The Gallery provides for interaction between artist and viewers adds a very special dimension to the experience." — Carol Chapman, artist

"I am always surprised by how a question posed can change how I view art! While I might be drawn to a piece for aesthetic reasons, I tend to see things I never would have without a prompting to look at something deep within myself. Hearing others responses just heightens

the experience. I eagerly look forward to discovering something hidden in myself, and creating an opening for art to resonate in surprising ways." --anonymous

"I love the Art-spiritual connection. I am attracted to it as a source to open the doors to our interior landscapes. It seems to be the best tool to get to know people deeper.—Ose Manheim, artist and participant

"I have been to nearly all of Sanctuary's Art Church Sundays, and they have been such moving experiences. Looking at the artwork within the framework of a spiritual theme or sometimes biblical scripture, I have seen the art in such a deeper and meaningful way. The experience sometimes becomes like fitting together pieces of a puzzle. Often the piece I choose is not the one that would necessarily be my "favorite" of the group, but I'm forced to take a second look at all the works and end up gaining a greater appreciation of the artist's overall work. It's always fun to see what different interpretations all in the group have and particularly exciting to see how the artists react to everyone's sharing. A really powerful sharing from artist to group and vice versa seems to be valuable for all of us, more in depth and personal than the typical exchange at a conventional art reception. The Art Church experience seems to be a real gift to the artist as well as the participants." --Julie Roberts, artist and participant

"We are beings in need of fellowship, benedictions and expression – ways to connect with the great spirit. Art church is a circle of welcoming, well humored pilgrims who turn their collective attention towards another's vision as a way to explore the whole. I am grateful to grow and mend from the insights and reflections that came my way." – Laurie Mass, artist

### **Faith and Film at Sanctuary Report**

One of our most successful and enriching ministries has been Faith and Film at Sanctuary—which began in early 2015. Led by the Rev. Anastasia Kidd and the Rev. Chad Kidd – film buffs and UCC theologians extraordinaire -- we have screened and discussed the following popular and contemporary film.

*2015: The Theory of Everything, Beasts of the Southern Wild, Gravity, Selma, Life Itself, St. Vincent, Birdman, Chocolat, Elf.*

*2016: Love and Mercy, Bernie, The Truman Show, Inside Out, Babette's Feast, The Summer Celluloid Saints Series (The Man on the Moon, Philomena, and Romero), w/ CACHE's Arts Across Medford - TransAmerica, Spotlight, and Saving Mr. Banks*

Averaging 15 – 25 people in attendance each month, our film choices and the ensuing discussions have been rich, reflective, formative and consistent with our objective to use pop culture to deepen our understanding of life, faith and the human experience and find the connections with spirituality and religion within that.

## **Testimony about Faith and Film**

Two Minute Video from the Faith and Film Leaders:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhtur2dp6xg>

"I look forward to Faith and Film each month. Some films I enjoy very much and others I do not. However, I always enjoy the discussions afterward. I find myself enriched through the respectful observations shared about the character development and moral issues implicit in each movie. I come away with a deeper understanding of the film and of myself." – Annamarie Ross Shu

I enjoy both the film and art events...the conversations are always interesting and the films thought provoking. I like the facilitators and their spiritual perspectives. ...I like the integration of art work especially when the Trinidadian painter was there and we...[had] conversation about the racist shootings of black men... the personal sharing of participants is powerful... --Dyanne London, participant.

"What Sanctuary is doing is building a community which has been lost. It is a community that is built on love and mutual respect for one another. Sanctuary helps bring people together to help make Medford a better place. With its work, we are on our way! I love Rev. Wendy." – Jim Silva

## **Music for the Soul at Sanctuary**

Recognizing music as a vital center of human spirituality, we have invited local musicians to perform a live show at Sanctuary. As an aspect of the show, engage with the artist(s) and invite them to speak to their inspirations and the spiritual dimensions of their music.

Beginning with Jodi Heights and Laura Vecchione, *The Awestruck Jezebels* in May of 2015 (with the help of Medford musician and teacher, Laura Brereton) we hosted almost monthly singer songwriters in a BYOB coffeehouse atmosphere. Artists have represented many genres such as: Jazz/Folk artists Nona Boehm and Raleigh Green; modern songwriter Jenee Halstead and guitarist Hugh McGowen; International Folk Music with the Voci Angelica Trio; Medford's own Georgia Browder-Newton and Ryan Alvanos; Jason Sibi-Okumu who hails originally from Africa; and this past September, 2016 a "Back to School Boogie" with a middle-school pop band, a teen classical guitar duo, a pair of hip-hop performers from Boston and Sanctuary's own pop/r&b duo Tatiana Lyne and Alexander Olapade.

Comparing these small experiences with the impact and financial viability of our other Arts and Inspiration programs we found that while wonderful experiences, we were not getting as deep or formative an experience as with ArtChurch or Faith and Film. We also considered the impact of the small venue and compared the coffeehouses to our October 2016 Butterfly Music Transgender Chorus Concert held at NPU. Therein we connected music with the soul and with social justice and were able to raise funds for both the Chorus and our congregation's ministry. We have made the decision to focus our Music for the Soul ministry on a few larger ticketed events that would highlight our mission and justice interests and find ways to build more 'music for the soul' faith formation into our worship life by

applying the ARTChurch model of reflection on the work of sacred music and composers who are doing sacred and justice oriented writing and performing.

### **2016/2017 Medford Arts Council Grants**

*In 2016 Sanctuary was awarded and received a Medford Arts Council grant for \$1250 for her Arts and Inspiration program. This was applied directly to the costs associated with the Gallery and Faith and Film.*

In the fall of 2016, we applied for and were awarded the following three grants for \$2650.00 in 2017:

- \$1000 for Sanctuary's Arts and Inspiration Program
- \$1200 for a new proposal for Sanctuary to bring arts into the West Medford Halloween Block Party (make your own costume from recycled material, make your own mask on the day of party, call for seasonal art show in the windows of the West Medford Storefronts and "Dance-Lessons" During the Block Party)
- \$ 450 for a justice oriented arts program entitled, "Black American Music and the Black American Journey". The grant would cover the costs of leadership for a Concert/Workshop/Mass Choir – this would be a program supported by medford Conversations project but would be a sanctuary event for which we would do fundraising and ticketing.