

The Marshan Chronicles

For regular supporters of BALM Ministries.



We had a quiet Christmas. Marsha, Nonie, George (hiding), Rags and Cindy – and all the destroyed ornaments 😊

January 2020, Volume 24, Number 1

I love Christmas and Christmas music, so I was especially happy to be invited to do a Christmas concert and fundraiser at Saint John the Apostle MCC in Fort Myers, Florida. I always love Florida since I'm warm AND in Florida, I'm sort of considered middle-aged still – not that anyone lives to be 134, but you get the idea. They were so gracious to me, flew me in to Fort Myers, and offered lovely accommodations for me with a member. Myers, I left work sick and stopped at the doc to find I had influenza B. I got my flu shot early this year and apparently after the first batch of vaccine went out, they added a common strain of influenza B before the next batch went out. I started on all the right meds, but I was absolutely miserably congested.

Fortunately, if there's anyplace that it is okay to be human, it is MCC! I knew I couldn't stay in someone's home, because no matter how many times someone says, "Sure, it's fine to get up at 3 in the morning and turn on the lights to make hot tea," you just know you're never going to do it. To my great relief, one of you regular donors provided a hotel room with a microwave, so I really was up all night and day drinking tea until concert time. The concert was wonderful. I got to work with their new music director, Timothy, and the choir. John and Don did my sound perfectly and – as I said, humanly – I just put a box of Kleenex up there and had half of them in a pile next to me by the end of the concert. But, my prayer team got me through and I think I hit every note. I got to catch up with so many people I hadn't see in years and some local-ish friends came to help me with CD and book sales. It was a wonderful feeling of visiting home.

On Sunday morning I got the chance to work with their music director and the choir again. Timothy was great – a perfect balance between including as many people as

possible and making sure everyone felt welcomed and appreciated in the choir, and bringing the best sounds out of all of us. Pastor Steve gave me the sermon time and I felt like the Holy Spirit touched all of our hearts.



Beautiful setting at Saint Paul the Apostle MCC in Fort Myers

When I flew back to Nashville, our own church, Brentwood United Methodist Church (BUMC), said they were looking for a song about Christmas from Joseph's perspective. Hurray! Some of you will remember the Christmas album that Rev. Glenna Shepherd produced for me with about 17 other LGBT+ Christian artists, "*The Gift is on the Inside.*" We recorded a song by my old friend Bob Ayala called Song of Joseph. SO, I tried to dust off my guitar and get the chords in order. But my playing is rustier than ever with arthritic hands. So I hit upon the idea of asking one of the dozens and dozens of kids in the BUMC high school choir. I hadn't found any takers when I went up to Andrew Byers and said, "It really only has 4 chords in it. But maybe we could do it another time." He was a sport; listened to the song; played it right immediately which reminded me of Pete Jacobs in my old old group, Children of the Day, and sang it with me for all four services at our church on December 21st and 22nd. I was excited. Our church is not generally a "special music" kind of place AND not necessarily a folksy song kind of place. But it went so perfectly with the pastor's sermon, and Andrew was SO good that it was a hit. I had to laugh when Cindy listened to him play it and said, "It sounds so different when *he* play it, honey." Yup. That's my honest wife.



Sadly, age has caught with me yet again this week. I have dislocated my right shoulder and torn my rotator cuff, so travel (and baggage handling) are off the table at present. Pray for physical therapy good enough that I can avoid surgery!! Donation letter go out later this month, but if you need it soon, but email me at ssbalm@aol.com

Love and Gratitude, Marsha & Cindy

BALM Ministries P.O. Box 609, Nolensville, TN 37135-0609 www.BalmMinistries.net

IMPORTANT!! YEAR END info

We date your year-end giving by the date YOU put on your check, NOT by the date we receive your donation!

Statements go out by the end of January

Cindy's Mission Work

Many thanks for those of you who have chosen to support Cindy on her mission trips. She is also working on ways to make the computer programs she uses available to all the missions she travels to, particularly to those our church runs in South Africa. The programs track everything from school attendance and performance to health and vaccination status to who is sponsoring that child or teacher and whether they are up to date on their donations. Next she'll be in Vietnam and Cambodia in February!

You can support BALM when you shop online

(You can read the instructions online but the simple thing is this: when you want to shop online at a major store, you go first to www.igive.com/BALM. You put your info in & then it gives you a list of most stores you've ever heard of.

So, for instance, you go to igive.com/BALM & pick BestBuy, it takes you to that site & you order whatever you want to online. All your coupons & 'special deals' still apply. There's no extra charge to you at all, but that way, they automatically donate part of their profit to BALM Ministries.)

(I forget myself sometimes, but it makes a big difference if you can remember.)

Prayer List & Ministry Opportunities

- ✦ *Gratitude for your prayers for Cindy on all her mission trips & the teaching she does to help them. Special prayers of protection in VietNam and Cambodia*
- ✦ *Praises for our church home in Brentwood United*

Methodist, & prayers for the changes that need to be made. Special prayers for guidance for us and our role/s here.

- ✦ *Prayers that we may all keep on sharing the Good News with the least, the lost and the hungry – to give as we've been given to; to love because Jesus first loved us and we have SO much to give away.*
- ✦ *Prayers for wisdom as Cindy heads into – well, her retirement years. Whatever the plans are, we say, "yes."*
- ✦ *Four songs are posted FREE on the website: <https://balmministries.net/store>*
- ✦ *Prayers for me to be able to set up more concerts for the 50th anniversary of "For Those Tears I Died" Consider YOUR church. Please contact me. We have supporters helping with travel. Pray about it & write me at ssbalm@aol.com*

What You Have to Say

"It's hard for me to believe what you and CJ (that's what they call Cindy) have done for our church – well, for your church. I know that from your perspective you've been fighting this fight for decades now. But your strength and fail in the struggle for LGBTQ+ people here means so much. I didn't know there was any purpose in me coming out even as an ally until you explained it. And I see by your actions that you live out the things you talk about. Your faith and strength are a rock for all of us."

"I still think a gift like yours was never given to be used in a corner. But the danger of coming out was clear. Somehow I get the feeling that your mentors (like Freda Smith) understood that mentoring someone with gifts and a calling like yours was

a pretty important responsibility. The anointing (one your ministry) is just so present, so powerful, for freeing people - yet it seems like your story, and your anointing, stand so at the crossroads of all that is going on today and this disrupts so many formerly comfortable narrative. You've had wonderful mentors. I don't know what encountering you and your gifts the first time did to Freda's or Troy's or Jeri Ann's or Chuck Smith's narratives about "church" - but I'd pretty much bet it was both exhilarating and a bit frightening."
**From Marsha: I don't feel like I am in a battle against anyone. In fact we know that we "battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers in high place." I do think that standing one's ground in faith can be threatening to some people and THEY feel like they're in a battle against us. That is not my perspective. I like Galatians 5:1 "Stand fast in the liberty in which Christ has made you free and do NOT be entangled again in a yoke of bondage." That's all we're doing and inviting others to do.)*

Upcoming travel

Jan 4-6 Q Christian conference in Fort Lauderdale FL (sadly cancelled while I attempt to heal)

I will be in Portland OR March 5-9 if anyone wants a concert near there.

Pending is a concert at a UCC at Lake Fort Worth in Florida. Dates to be determined.

Please consider reaching me at ssbalm@aol.com to book something for your church!

A word from a longtime supporter of Balm ministries: ChristianGays.com is a community for ALL LGBT people to meet & develop friendships based on faith & other common interests. We offer Chat Rooms & Forums, & all information is private, accessible to members only. Join us now at <https://ChristianGays.com>