

The Marshan Chronicles

For regular supporters of BALM Ministries.



Bishop Karen Oliveto and songleader Marcia McFee encouraging all of us at RMN conference not to get hurt by United Methodist homophobia, just Shake it Off

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I'm incredibly happy to start some traveling again this week. In the meantime, things have been moving along in Nashville.

To start with, Cindy did not go to Cambodia and VietNam. The trip was canceled due to the new coronavirus. She is now already packed to go to South Africa in June. (I would SO love to go and see you friends of mine there.) Since Cindy was here, she reached out to Justin Lee for some copies of his book, Talking Across the Divide and some input for getting together with some of the people at our own church who (strongly) disagree with us about the full participation of LGBTQ+ folks in the life and ministry of the United Methodist Church (UMC). After reading his book, she talked with Justin for quite a while, then scheduled a meeting with the leaders of that group. The good news was that the couple who lead that group, did agree to meet with her.

In the meantime, I went to the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) conference at another local UMC where the congregation is reconciling. (I have to say, as much as I love the movement of so many main line Christian denominations to include the LGBTQ+ community, I get confused with all the euphemisms for "we like queers at this church;" reconciling, open and affirming, more light, etc.) Cindy's meeting with the non-affirming group was happening the first night, so there were a LOT of people praying for that meeting. When I told one of the women who leads the RMN for our area where Cindy was, she said, "of COURSE she is. Where else

would she be?" It was one of those "didn't you know I would be about my Father's business" moments.

The more difficult thing was how many people said, "Why are you going to Brentwood United Methodist? Why don't you just go to another church?" After 36 years in MCC, it feels weird to be so far back along that path. But of course, we are exactly where Jesus has called us to be, and thanking God for all the experience that Troy Perry and Nancy Wilson led us through. It's coming in handy here.

The rest of the conference was made more wonderful by the fact that Cindy was with me. There was a lot of politics. I do not like being called progressive or liberal or calling other people conservative or fundamentalists, even though one group of people does consider themselves "Bible literalists," which I find completely ridiculous. Even if we "limit" it to the New Testament, I have yet to see even one of them walking around without their right eye or their right hand, so I'm pretty sure that "literal" is tempered by some creative self-preservation. Anyway, there was an awful lot of politics – who is voting for what on which committee and so on. But the services were wonderful. At one of them, the pastor doing the Scripture reading said, "The word of God today is among us, so I will call you out and you give me the verse that comes to your mind." Then she went around pointing to people and everyone, right on the spur of the moment, came up with a wonderful favorite. It really made the Word feel "living."

At the final service, the first out gay (lesbian) bishop in the UMC, Karen Oliveto, preached the roof off. After a lot of stories of what people have been through and put one another through, she said, "And when someone says things like that to me, I smile and thank them for their honesty, then I get in my car and scream as loud as I can, and I have this ready to play at full volume." Then she started Shake it Off. I know secular music doesn't speak to everyone, but it was such a perfect ending to all the tension of the weekend.

SO, I'm back on the road on Thursday to see family and sing in Portland at the Gresham United Methodist Church. And then off to the other side of the country for a good time with some UCC church friends in Lake Worth Florida. Come say hi!!

Love and Gratitude, Marsha & Cindy

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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. Unfortunately, as you might guess, the trips for this year have been canceled so far because of the concerns over COVID 19 (the new corona virus). Cindy is sad about this since she feels that people need the mission teams more than ever. But she also respects the concerns of the mission leaders. So for now, she is working on the computer programs for each of them, and writing to the kids we sponsor to keep in touch with them.

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 with "Draw the Circle Wide."**
- † **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 after my time off in February. 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

"Hi Marsha. I know you've heard comments thousands of times about the song, *For Those Tears I Died*," but I wanted to ask you; do you have any regret for "coming out?" Do you feel rejected by (other believers)? No matter what, remember that we are saved by grace, not by works lest anyone should boast (Eph. 2:8) and not only boast, but discredit the grace of God (since it is not grace if you deserve it). Well I am thankful for the anointing on your life. You and I are loved...He left the 99 to seek us out. Such love, so rich...is beyond our deepest understanding. This is not something new to you. I'm just

sending you're a reminder. He loves you so much. Blessings!"

(I always answer these "do you regret" questions. Some of you will remember when I was left out of something years ago, that a close family member told me that "there was a price to pay for the choices I paid." At first I was so upset by that. Then the Jesus just whispered in my ear, and I realized; you know what? That person was right. And there is a price for EVERY person who has decided to follow Jesus, to walk in truth and light. And I am no different. ALL of us are called to lay down our lives, take up our cross, and follow wherever Christ leads us. So, no. I have no regrets about telling the truth.)

"I was reading your book...I've been going through a tough time lately, and I was singing my way through hymnals and songbooks from my youth, and I was once again struck by For Those Tears I Died, so I ordered the book. Thank you so much. I just wanted to let you know."

Upcoming travel

Mar 8 – Gresham United Methodist Church, Gresham Oregon

Mar 19 – First Congregational United Church of Christ, Lake Worth FL 7pm
www.LakeWorthUCC.org

Apr 12 Sunrise Service at Brentwood United Methodist Church, Brentwood TN

Aug 6-9 TEN (The Evangelical Network) Conference Elk Grove, IL
I will also be in the Providence RI area
May 1-5 – let me know!

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>