

The Marshan Chronicles

For regular supporters of BALM Ministries.



Rev. Emily Bel with
Marsha and Justin
Ryan at Forgiving
Heart UCC

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April was so much fun. Thank you for all your prayers. After a wonderful Easter, I got ready to travel a bit. I started out going to Florida, which pretty much still feels like home. I stayed with my duet partner and fellow nurse, Brian Feist. Since he's almost my age we both made the mistake of having a bunch of fun together and forgot to take pictures of it! I walked on the beach, then we got together with my nursing crew from the VA hospital in Saint Petersburg. Then I walked on the beach and met up with Jeanne, the youth pastor from Passagrille Church where we belonged when we lived there.

Then I walked on the beach and got together with some really sweet old ministry friends (well, they're not as old as I am, but getting there), Pauline and Sherry. Then I walked on the beach and went to rehearse with Brian and our wonderful music director from Passagrille UCC, Dale. We practiced a duet and a song with the choir and had an amazing service. The choir was beautiful and enthusiastic and singing with Brian always makes me cry. I saw too many friends to name and got to share with many of them. Then I walked on the beach.

For those of you who have read the book I wrote, you'll recognize Dar and Hannah from the introduction. They're doing well and growing in the Lord and we had some new stories of God's work in our lives to share. Then I walked on the beach before I got together with some of the sweet neighbors we had to leave behind when we moved to Nashville.

By now, you know that I spent every moment I could on the beach. I may have mentioned that the ocean is conspicuously missing in Nashville, so I tried to soak up

every moment I could ☺. But honestly, the fellowship and ministry were so great. I got special kudos from the church leadership for "recruiting" Brian when I lived there. Now he's part of the church leadership himself and a huge blessing to their community.

That reminded me of a quote from the days when I was on the road full time. I was scheduled to sing at a United Methodist facility where an MCC congregation was meeting. At the last minute, the Methodist Bishop cancelled my concert. The local newspaper interviewed the bishop and reported that he was concerned I was "recruiting" for the gay community. This, happily, instigated another newspaper article. The reported came to the concert I did, which ended up being at a Lutheran church. In a very dry reporting style, the article on the front page of the local paper said, "As far as this reporter could tell, Stevens was not recruiting straight people to become gay. She was recruiting gay people to become Christian." I *loved* that quote!!!

I got back to Tennessee just long enough to do laundry and re-pack. Then Justin Ryan and I drove to Columbus, Georgia to sing for the 30th anniversary of Forgiving Heart Community Church. The long drive gave us time to catch up and rehearse. Justin has only gotten better over the years we've known him. We did the anniversary concert together and he brought the house down. I have known Pastor Emily Bel for almost as long as I have known Justin, but she was hoping to reach out to a broader crowd and Justin was just the person to do that.

The 30th anniversary service on Sunday was led by the United Church of Christ Southeast Conference minister, Rev. Marie Bacchiocchi. She preached and also brought with her the good news that Forgiving Heart Community Church will soon be welcomed as a part of the United Church of Christ, so there was a lot of celebration for the day. Additionally, a representative from their congressperson's office came with a plaque from that office, and a member of the Columbus, GA City Council came. The council member, Mimi Woodson, was especially in tune with the church mission of welcoming the marginalized. Plus, anyone who can raise their hands and say "amen" in church is someone with whom I feel a kindred spirit! She was such a refreshing politician. She's humble and especially aware that she is doing something God has called her to do. She says she tried to argue with God about that at first, reminding God that she was from Puerto Rico and had only lived in Columbus for 2 years. God had other plans and she has been blessed to serve this community. Breath of fresh air. Here's to more politicians with humble hearts!!

Love and Gratitude, Marsha & Cindy

Cindy's Mission Work

Many thanks for those of you who have chosen to support Cindy on her mission trips. Next is Uganda in June/July. Keep her in prayer. Any gifts to BALM noted to Cindy (continue to be tax deductible) will be used for her mission trips.

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

- † *Pray for more concerts- starting with YOUR church! And for all the concerts that are in the works right now.*
- † *Gratitude for your prayers Prayers for Cindy on all her mission trips & the computer work she does to help them.*
- † *Praises for our church home in Brentwood United Methodist, & MANY prayers for the Methodist Council of Bishops who are currently meeting to help prepare a suggested "way forward" for the United Methodist church and the LGBTQ community.*
- † *Thank you for your prayers for Reza's father in Syria. He did pass away and Reza*

cannot leave the country to go to his memorial..

- † *Praises for all of you!!*
- † *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.*
- † *Please pray for the book reviews that are being pitched in larger markets.*
- † *Prayers for upBeat! artists*
- † *Please keep sweet Mark Moseley & his wife Donna K in your prayers for God's healing from his stroke. I cannot tell if he will be able to help on a new recording. He wants so badly to be included!*
- † *Praises for the songs I finished writing & the ones in progress. Prayers that I tune in on writing the things God wants to say today.*

What You Have to Say

"Marsha I am really enjoying your book. What helps me greatly is your chronicling of the times. During your early ministry I was a toddler (*sheesh I'm old – a toddler?*) but as a child I remember bits and pieces of that time period, the innocence, and simplicity that encompassed it. In addition I remember the firm dress codes and other social norms of church attendance that seem so ridiculously legalistic by today's standards. By reading your book at this time in history, it is amazing to see you reference an experience and then be able to go immediately to Youtube and see a video of the event. I was familiar with some of the events about which you write and had seen some of the videos before I started reading. Your autobiography provides even greater context."

"It's hard for me to imagine how the rest of the Christian church can look

at the two of you and still not see the light of Christ. Of course, that's the whole deal, Right? That light came into the world and some people loved darkness more than the light. Still, I'm trying to picture the person that would look at all you've done, at all that Cindy has done in her mission work, and say, "well, if they were real Christians they would get a divorce from each other and each marry a guy." (*I had to ask my pastor if he ever thought that. He was appropriately horrified.*)

Upcoming travel

June 21-23 Sandy Cove Ministries North East, MD. Cindy & I will do a concert and special music for the camp. Info@SandyCove.org

June 24 The Green Church, Glen Mills, PA 11am mini-concert with Cindy. 610-459-5050

June 29-July 10 Cindy at Raise the Roof ministry in Uganda

Aug 9-12 The Evangelical Network ministry conference in Chicago. Get more details at www.TheEvangelicalNetwork.net

(I would love to see you. You can reach us through the website or at ssbalm@aol.com – I know, I'm old, I still use aol!) Check the website for booking openings. www.BalmMinistries.net and re-check the website for updates!

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>