

*Wow, all of us together in one place...this is rare!*

January 2014, Volume 17, Number 1

Dear Balm Benefactors,

First I want to thank all of you. We have been blessed in many ways this year, and always in ways that you each have a part in. Most of you remembered (even though I left it out of the December newsletter) that our bookkeeping ends January 15<sup>th</sup>, and everything we receive by then is posted in last year's giving. Several of you sent generous donations dated in December. The donations are always very humbling to me. They remind me what a great cloud of witnesses I belong to and how much we are loved and held in prayer, as well. There were lots of handwritten notes in there too – wow, lost art, isn't it? But it's very sweet and appreciated.

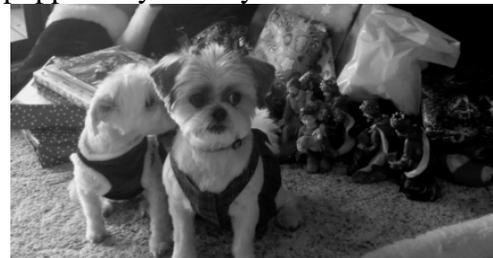
I got to sing on Christmas Eve with a friend from my nursing job. I love singing with people and was praying about whom to ask to sing with me when I remembered that Brian sings in a gay men's chorus. It was SO great. He was excited to be asked (which made me feel great), and a little disbelieving that there was really a welcoming church so nearby. We had a world class accompanist in Dale Williams, who takes my breath away when she just pops over to play a little something. She did a stunning arrangement of "Oh Holy Night" in just the key we needed. And my church didn't let me down – they made Brian feel perfectly appreciated and embraced. Plus the guy can sing.

On Christmas Day Cindy made a fabulous dinner for the three of us. We got to add two more to that

with a newly-out couple who had been rejected by their church and most family members. They were a delightful addition to Christmas, and made Cindy and I feel very old and maternal ☺.

I usually wrap up the year in the January newsletter. I sang 32 times in 2013, but we reached a lot of people in different venues. Over half the concerts and ministry opportunities were in churches which are not primarily GLBT. It's been enlightening to me to continue to realize how many people feel left out of the Gospel for such different reasons. But one of those reasons is that lots of loving Christian people don't want to go to churches where their friends, or kids, or grandkids, or brothers and sisters are not welcome. And sometimes that means they settle for a church where there's less music or less outreach or less fervency about Jesus. So when we get to bring that central message back to them, it's a lot of fun. The other thing, of course, is that pastors are often moving along in the Body of Christ, serving the "meat instead of the milk" (Hebrews 5:12-14) or going on with building and not "laying the foundations again" (going on into Hebrews 6:1) so that people in their congregations can mature as believers. That means that I get to come in and sort of say the stuff that does lay the foundations and help people start out on solid ground. Clearly something I LOVE to do!

We got to 5 states in 2013 and I got a couple hundred book pages done. I am getting to that age when time really does pass faster. I'm on new treatments for some of the symptoms of my polymyositis. You could definitely be praying for that. And Cindy will be going on the missions trip to Nicaragua, too – thank you so much for helping her out with that...and helping out the kids who will benefit from the school. Bri Joy is still getting straight A's and now she's reading the Scripture at church this month. I think that's it for wrapping up the year – oh and the puppies say thank you too!



*Love & Gratitude, Marsha & Cindy*

**Please consider ways to support**

**BALM online**

1. Please continue to consider using [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) as your search engine. Choose BalmMinistries in the "who do you goodsearch for" box. Just 100 of you using it once or twice a day would raise hundreds of dollars for Balm this year. Every little bit helps & you only have to go through the registration once. After that, it's automatic!

**2. Anytime you're online shopping, 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](http://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](http://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.**

- † *Gratitude for your prayers for my health. Please pray for the new treatments. I will be home for a bit getting them.*
- † *Pray for more concerts-starting with YOUR church (starting in mid-February)!*
- † *Prayers for work on the book. It's moving along now*
- † *Prayers for upBeat! artists. Special prayers for Justin Ryan who is starting on a new recording project. Some of the songs are breathtaking. Watch his progress [www.JustinRyanOnline.com](http://www.JustinRyanOnline.com)*
- † *Prayers for the wonderful people we have been able to minister to this year. Pray for the Holy Spirit's*

*continued work in each heart. Especially for Brian, my friend from work who sang with me.*

- † *Prayers for granddaughter, Bri Joy & wisdom on raising a teenager.*
- † *Praises for the songs I finished writing and prayers for finances and time to record them ☺*
- † *Praises for fundraising Cindy's missionary trip in January. It is paid for.*

**What You Have to Say There were so many...**

(I always feel like you should share the blessings you each make possible)

*"Marsha...years ago, before I worked with you - that song spoke to my heart. I am so grateful for the many artists that share the gift God has given them. Like so many, when there are no words that can get through - somehow, music can reach the soul. I know that you'll keep doing what you're doing because that is God's purpose for your life and you are blessing many - no matter what their sexual orientation! Thank you - and God bless you!"*

*"Drop it from the history??? So they want to make history a work of fiction? The song is too important to lose. The song says so well what so many need to hear. Jesus knew how to love us...and it is all in that song."*

*"I learned this song at a Baptist church and they know who sings it and don't care. It is from God so it is an inspired word from God and has continued to be sung to this very day. I especially enjoy singing at church as a solo!"*

*"We love you Marsha, the only lifestyle you chose was honesty... thank God for you"*

*"This song has very special place in my heart...it was being sang the night Jesus knocked at my door. The song is beautiful. whether or not you 'agree' with Marsha Stevens-Pino sexual orientation or not...doesn't change the beautiful meaning of the song. Lets leave the judging for God.."*

*"Marsha, As you sang the Savior opened the door for you. You just walked thru it to the ministry he destined for you. Good thing Jesus opened that door or many of us would not be walking through"*

*"In the end all we have is our personal testimony, and I can whole-heartedly testify that your music and your life have made a profound difference in MY life, Marsha. Thank you."*

*"Are they kidding... That would be like saying that we should just get rid of all historical references because someone disagrees with something about everything in history. You were one of the most influential people in Christian music and your music has made such and impact in the lives of others before, and especially after you came out. You are an example of a person who truly knows what it is to be a Christian and braces all that is good about Christianity. Thank you for your music. Even if they decide to take you out of a book, we will still all know what you have done for all of us."*

*"And to quote another great Marsha Stevens song...."When the enemy's upon me, I will NOT behave like prey.""*

**Schedule**

**Watch the website for updates in February.**  
**[www.BalmMinistries.net](http://www.BalmMinistries.net)**

**ChristianGays.com** handles BALM Ministries sales outside the US. They are an online community offering Articles, a Social Group, Chat Rooms, Shopping & more. Check out their website. I get great feedback from those who have! **If you live outside the US, PLEASE go to [ChristianGays.com](http://ChristianGays.com) for your orders. The handle all international distribution.**

**Thanks!**

Christian Gays also has lots of online support for seekers who are coming out or have family members coming out. Great Resource!