

The Marshan Chronicles

For regular supporters of BALM Ministries.

My son's family quarantined for two weeks so I could visit. One of his lyrics is in this month's newsletter.



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I'll be sending this newsletter out just as we are physically moving from Tennessee back to Florida. We'll be in a trailer for a couple months while we look for our new home, probably in Bradenton.

Just so everyone is clear, we are keeping our current address at the PO Box and we will have mail forwarded from there.

I was able to participate in Rev. Jane Carl's memorial service in early January. Everything about this seems so different, and yet it was really nice to see faces and hear voices I have not heard in a long time. It's also weird to be in a time of so much loss and so little comforting of one another. I know that comfort is a little like manna in the desert. They missed seasoning and variety in their food, but they had what they needed. I see that continuing to be true in this time when hugs are so difficult to find.

There were a few things that I have been thinking about as our time here in Tennessee ends. I retired from nursing at Vanderbilt on Friday January 15th. That was weird; to be old enough to just say, "I'm retiring," and not have anyone ask what I'd be doing next. Nursing has always been my tentmaking job for music ministry – one that I had to promise Rev. Jeri Ann Harvey and Rev. Freda Smith I would keep so that, as they put it, I would never have an ulterior motive to keep ministering – or fleece the flock. SO I kept that promise to them.

I am trusting, of course, that music ministry is just part of breathing in and out for me; something I would never think of "retiring from." This past year and the ability to release the CD during the pandemic has been a reassurance that God is still moving in my music.

In my women's Bible study group last week, they

always start with a question that each woman answers. This week was, "Where do you most experience the presence of God in your life? What ushers you into really feeling the Holy Spirit alive in your heart?" Women talked about the outdoors; walks in the park, hikes in the wilderness, sitting by a pond, and how that brings them a quiet moment with the Lord. Some said their quiet time in the morning before the rest of the household is awake. A few said that the Bible and their daily readings really cemented their day in the paths of God's calling for them.

For me, of course, it was a song. I read the psalms and I hear it, but I think that I have "studied" the Bible so much, that I sometimes miss the poetry and feeling of the words. And playing some nice music in the background does not count. But when I really want to draw into God's presence I sit and listen to the songs of my friends. "Who here among us has not been broken, who here among us is without guilt or pain? Some are abandoned, some disenchanted, if such a thing as grace exists, then grace exists for lives like this..." or "You are the song of my life and You heal the wrong of my life. You chase the sorrow out of the rain, and nothing You've touched is the same." Or even, "Why should the devil have all the good music?" 😊

The one I thought of during the women's Zoom Bible study this week was one written by my son, Johnny. Most of you know at least the short version of his broken youth – addiction, stealing, setting fires, vandalizing peoples' things, ditching school. In fact when he was in his teens a social worker gave me a page long list of things that kids get in trouble for. I told her it would be easier if I just checked the one thing he did not do. That social worker, along with numerous teachers, therapists and doctors told me he was a sociopath without a conscience and he would never have one. So when I remember one of his lines, "God enough to fling the stars, but man enough to bear my scars," it just brings me to my knees.

If you have a song request you'd like me to record or if you want a facebook live concert for your church, let me know on the BalmMinistries site or by emailing me at ssbalm@aol.com.

With Gratitude, Marsha & Cindy

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 the past year have been canceled so far because of the concerns over COVID 19. 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. Right now, we are writing to the kids we support in Africa, and Cindy is on Habitat Builds, working the polls and other fundraisers when they come up. We will let you know when we can travel again.

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

Special prayers for all of us mourning the loss of upBeat! artist and amazing musician, Vilia Corvison – especially her surviving spouse, Rev. Phyllis Hunt

- ✦ *First of all, prayers for our family of color. For the lives taken and anger unabated, for justice to finally come.*
- ✦ *Praises for all of our churches to remember that the News is GOOD!*
- ✦ *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 our move over the next few weeks – safety, health, hearing God's voice*
- ✦ *Prayers for me to be able to set up more concerts and special music online.*
- ✦ *Prayers for our country & for all of us to find a way forward together.*

What You Have to Say

“Hi Marsha! Sorry I haven't written in a while. Like most people just a lot on my mind. But after yesterday I needed some music that would shower me in peace and peace and grace of our God. So this morning I've got Apple Music playing your music. Thank you again for that special gift. Thank you for sharing it with me and happy new year to you.”

“Just a quick reminder to tell you how much I love you! ::with tears in my eyes because I am feeling so overwhelmed with emotion right now::I was just out walking the dog in the park in the snow, listening to your new CD with my earpods, and Free To Be took me back to those days when I first got your cassette, and how much I wanted to be all things you say in the song,

and I wondered if those words could ever be mine.

I wore that tape out back then, listening to it with my headphones so nobody else knew, desperately wanting to be free to be me, but not knowing how when I believed that Scripture said I was an abomination to God. And then you came into my life for real (via email) and changed it forever. I was so amazed that you wrote back to me. And even more amazed that you listened to my story, and you cared enough to write all those very long letters of explanation with such compassion.

Now, over 20 years later, I am free to be me - to live my authentic self - and YOU are the reason, so thank you from the bottom of my heart. I love you more than you could possibly imagine for this life-changing gift you have given, and continue to give me.

May God continue to use you, and may you and your family be blessed beyond belief in this coming year, and always.”

“It was so nice to hear the new CD. I like the new recordings of some of the oldies – there are more I would love to hear you re-do.”

Upcoming ministry

Feb 4th we should be settled in the RV park near Bradenton, FL

Please consider reaching me at ssbalm@aol.com to book something online for your church! A concert or a single song or two.

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. WE need this now more than ever! Join us now at <https://ChristianGays.com>