

The Marshan Chronicles



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I hope you had a wonderful Valentine's Day and Black History Month. Valentine's Day at our church centered on taking the love from our churches and relationships and sharing it more effectively with the world outside our walls. Therefore, of course, they had Cindy speak at the dinner. I sang the song from our wedding, "Wherever You Go" before she shared and then I sang "The Miracle That's Needed" afterward. My church is especially gracious with my singing, as I've shared before. But people were really taken up with Cindy and her journey – which included several years of living on the streets. Our associate minister, Collis Laton, got right to work planning a time for all of us to assemble bag lunches to share with people who have so much less to eat than we do. Collis is the "Minister of Connections" at Church of the Trinity MCC in Sarasota, but we often call her varieties of that title: Minister of Corrections or Collections or Concoctions 😊. But she has been super at getting thoughts into actions in our community.

As I shared with you last month, she has assisted in getting some Florida concerts set up so that we have a chance to do some more personal music ministry here this year. For one Sunday morning this month, I dusted off a song I wrote with Chris Lobdell in the 90s called "Light of the World". We wrote it for a tour I had scheduled back then in Australia and the idea was to sing it with an Abo Band (Aborigine band – think didgeridoo and clapstick). But when I got to the first church to rehearse with a local Abo Band, the church did not allow Aborigines in the building. Shattering! Couldn't sing it there, so I thought trying it in a new way in our own country's Black History month might redeem it a little bit.

For regular supporters of BALM Ministries.

The story with that song continued when I got back to the states. I often send songs I write to a company that does anonymous critiques of songs for a fee. I've had really thoughtful and helpful feedback from them over the years, so I sent this one in. Now, there's no back and forth – just a critique by "reviewer #348 for Contemporary Christian Music (CCM)" or by "reviewer #22 for Country Music". There have been times the critiques stung me a bit, but I usually felt it was great input. And sometimes they really nailed me; like the time I sent in a song for which my son, Johnny, had written the lyrics and I the music. Sure enough, the critique included, "Great lyrics. The music is a little dated..." Busted!

But this time, the critique said, "Great song, but it won't work for the CCM genre since they don't believe 'you' are the light of the world. They believe Jesus is." Now, I am as judgmental and snarky as I can be at times. So my first thought was actually something like, "Ooops. Guess they haven't even gotten as far as Matthew chapter 5 (insert eyeroll). Guess the Sermon on the Mount doesn't count."

But over the years I've come to think that this one message has caused an enormous division in the church – whether it's fundies vs progressives, or evangelicals vs mainline, or Catholics vs Protestants. This one thing can SO define our way of living as Christians in this world. Is it even my job to be the light of the world? The healers, workers, feeders of the world? The defenders of the poor, the "alien", the outcast, the "unclean?" Or is all that just not in our pay grade? It is kind of hard to say, "I am the light of the world," isn't it? I had a wonderful pastor who used to remind us that our job is not to try to "drive the darkness out." It is simply to turn on the light. The tiniest match can light a corner of the world. Even a shadow only proves that there is light nearby somewhere. So, there you are. Matthew 5:14. **You** are the light of the world. Pack a meal for someone. Find out the name of the guy who stands on the corner. Take an elderly neighbor out for a walk. Be the light.

Please do make note of our upcoming concerts. I am so happy that we'll be seeing more of you in the months to come. You make all we do possible.

With great thanks, Marsha & Cindy

Cindy's Mission Work

Many thanks for those of you who have chosen to support Cindy on her mission trips. Once we learn more about the political problems in Peru I'll be able to update you.

Please be assured that all of the donations you sent are in savings for her opportunities to travel!

We will let you know when she schedules more trips.

(Cindy will also be a keynote speaker at Evangelicals Concerned later this year – more on that later)

You can support BALM when you shop online

You can go through Amazon Smile and support Balm from there through your amazon orders. It's very easy. No charge to you, but every Amazon order will donate a small portion to Balm Ministries

<https://Smile.amazon.com>

Amazon Smile is changing soon, so watch for new instructions on this.

ALSO, You can read the instructions for igive.com, 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.

and we have SO much to give away.

- † *Prayers for our health – esp Marsha who had surgery again in December.*
- † *Praises for our safety and for the safety of those with whom we minister. God please keep us in the palm of Your hand.*
- † *Prayers for Cindy who will have special ministry opportunities this year.*

What You Have to Say

"Wow. This was one of the best songs I was introduced to in 1981 at MCC Long Beach. I was new to being born again, and this song just spoke to what was happening inside of me. I hadn't heard it in years, so it was a treasure to find you singing it online."

"Amazing. I learned to play this song on my guitar in 1971. Still speaks to my heart."

"Hello. I just found out that you are the writer of For Those Tears I Died. As a transman who was raised Christian, turned atheist, became spiritual and now made my way back to Jesus, I just wanted you to know that your music has carried with me. For Those Tears was a song that I heard when I was 5 years old and felt God. I still feel that when I hear it today. Thank you, Marsha, for bringing your gift to the world. I just listened to I've Been There. Beautiful!"

"I know everyone talks about your wonderful voice. I just want to add that you are a gifted songwriter, bringing so many things I think and feel into music I can share."

Upcoming ministry opportunities

Mar 17 Church of the Trinity

MCC in Sarasota FL 6:30pm concert www.TrinityMCC.com
(Please note that we welcome requests for songs or stories at these "artist in residence" concerts)

April 28 Suncoast MCC Venice FL 6:30 pm concert
www.suncoastmcc.com

May 5 Church of the Trinity MCC in Sarasota FL 6:30pm concert www.TrinityMCC.com

June 16 Church of the Trinity MCC in Sarasota FL 6:30pm concert www.TrinityMCC.com

June 30 Pride concert 6:30pm at Suncoast MCC Venice FL
www.suncoastmcc.com

August 12-13 MCC Gainesville's 40th anniversary celebration. Times to be determined.
www.mccgainesville.org

Aug 31-Sept 3 The Evangelical Network conference in Louisville, KY www.TEN.lgbt

Oct 26-28 Reconcile and Reform in Nashville, TN
www.reformationproject.org
(watch the website for updates)

Please consider reaching me at ssbalm@aol.com to book something for your church! We have no fees required at this time!!

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 at www.ChristianGays.com

Prayer List & Ministry Opportunities

- † *Prayers for Justin's husband, Scott, who is having health problems*
- † *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*