



Fabulous Kathy & Laurie who booked our mini-tour in eastern Florida & Doug who sang with me...oh, and Cindy!! ☺

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Dear Balm Benefactors,

Well, once again, your prayers and support have meant a lot. We had a wonderful tour over on the east coast of Florida. Kathy Church (yep, that's her real name!) and Lori Schenone are long-time Balm supporters who also traveled with us to Israel last year. (We had so much fun with them on that trip. It seemed so surreal to be passing green highway signs for Bethlehem. We would look at each other and say, "Hey, I'm not busy this afternoon. Wanna catch a cup of coffee in Jerusalem or get a bit to eat in Capernaum?" Then we'd shake our heads in disbelief all over again.) Well, they put together a wonderful little mini-tour of some UCC's near their home.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a denomination that has come out boldly in recent years to include the GLBTQ community in every aspect of their churches. Not all of their individual churches have decided to be "O and A" or "Open and Affirming," which is their euphemism for "we treat the gay community just like everyone else." They've done some advertising that has actually been banned on the major TV networks. The first ad had a church door with a bouncer motioning the mainstream churchgoers in, but keeping out the mixed race couples, the gay guys and the lesbian family. Then it says that everyone is welcome at their church – something like, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are all welcome here." The next ad had much the same message, but instead of a bouncer, it had ejector seats in the pews. So the nice little family with three kids sits down just fine, but the

homeless guy tries to come in and the ejector seat sends him flying back out the door. You get the picture – I love those ads. You can see them on their website at www.UCC.org.

We started at West Palm Congregational Church. What was really great was that the whole church really participated in these concerts. Here Pastor Brad made us feel right at home and they filled the house. This church is already "Open and Affirming", but there were still some folks who said, "You know, I never really got it till I came to this concert. It's actually IMPORTANT that people know we're here for them." They had a fabulous dessert party after the concert...Did you know that *women bake??* ☺

The next stop was the First Congregational Church of Fort Lauderdale. Jeff was our contact there and he just outdid himself with advertising. They had more people fit into their church for the Saturday night concert than they usually have on Sunday mornings. I'm always a little worried when people say that they did advertising so they expect a big crowd. I'm fine with whoever shows up – always preferring, of course, that they LIKE my music and laugh at my jokes and respond to God's calling! But I worry that those who worked so hard will be disappointed. Well, no problem here – they had folks from all over. Once again, the whole church participated. I point this out because I have been to mainstream churches where the pastor will come up to me after the concert and say something like, "Gosh, if I'd known it would be like this, I would have invited everyone!" And I always think, "Like what?? Good? Christian? Loving? Inclusive?" I think sometimes they expect someone who is bitter or ready to chastise them for all they've done wrong in the past. At any rate, these people were all about being there and responding to the call. Jeff and Pastor Thom did a great job.

Our last stop was Kathy and Lori's church in Jensen Beach. This church is still considering whether to become "O and A." I think that most folks just think, "Oh what's the big deal? People know they're welcome here." So we got to share a lot about the wounds inflicted by the church – and STILL being inflicted and why it's so important that Christians take an open stand to say *specifically* that in their church the gospel of Jesus Christ is for EVERYONE! But you knew that, didn't you?

Much love and prayers, Marsha & Cindy

**Free Ways to Help BALM Ministries
Raise Much-Needed Funds.**

(Below you can read their advertising blurb, 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 and then it gives you a list of most stores you've ever heard of. So, for instance, you pick BestBuy, it takes you to that site and you order whatever you want to online. That way, they automatically donate part of their profit to BALM Ministries.) Every time you shop at any of 700+ online stores in the iGive network, a portion of the money you spend benefits BALM Ministries. It's a free service, and you'll never pay more when you reach a store through iGive. In fact, shoppers will enjoy iGive's repository of coupons, free shipping deals, and sales. To get started, just create your free iGive account.

> Start iGiving at:

www.igive.com/BALM

(PS from Marsha: I tried this for my online shopping and after the first time, it was very easy and Balm did get the percentage they promise.)

Prayer List

- ✓ *Prayers for everyone's finances. Special prayers for upBeat! artist Justin Ryan who has been looking for work for several months now in Louisville. (His music & booking info is available at www.justinryanonline.com)*
- ✓ *Praises for my nursing job & for time to care for Cindy's Mom after her stroke.*
- ✓ *When we are not traveling we offer extra support to some of the upBeat! artists & other ministries. You make that possible, so thanks to God for you.*
- ✓ *Prayers for all the upBeat! artists as they struggle to*

find "tentmaking" jobs to support their ministries.

- ✓ *upBeat! artists Carolyn Marshall & Pat Grant are booking summer '09. See their videos on YouTube! www.MarshallGrantMinistries.org*
- ✓ *Prayers for new songs I'm working on ☺ & for our health.*
- ✓ *Prayers for Cindy. She's in school, working for health insurance and caring for her Mom after the stroke.*
- ✓ *Prayers for wisdom for the dozens of emails I answer each week & for the still-closeted Christians who are hoping for answers!*

What You Have to Say

"Thank you for your music. You have been blessed with a gift to communicate a God of love to all...especially those who have been told God does not approve of them."

"We have experienced a devastating loss in our family, & I was trying to locate my favorite song online, as your "For Those Tears I Died" always brings comfort to my Spirit. Our Loving Heavenly Creator is indeed always there to offer His Love & Comfort. Your site impacted me immensely. Do you realize what an instrument your Love of our Lord is in bringing others to know Him? To know a Creator who is a Loving Kind One, not a vengeful one as some have taught. You have truly been Touched upon to bring this needed message of Love -- Love for us just as we are, but also to Become the Person the Holy Spirit intended us to be. No wonder you have suffered so much heartache & adversity in Life. Satan does not want you to be able to Testify to the Love & forgiveness our Creator Holds for us. Your Strong, Faithful Testimony & Gift of Songwriting are indeed a Testimony that is Spirit Filled & Compelling & can reach out to touch so many Lives. Our Loving

Heavenly Creator is always with you Marsha, this I sense strongly & will continue to use you as His Instrument in bringing so many into His Loving Light, some whose hearts would not be touched opened to receive this Message without you as his emissary"
"You and Cindy are often in my prayers. Times are hard and that makes me think of you for two reasons. First, of course, I know that giving is down for most all Christian organizations, and second, I know that you are a rock in the storm to many people and that you must be very busy these days as our economy has so many folks feeling that storm as well as personal storms. I am one person who is grateful that you are out there. I know that you do a lot of networking that puts people in touch with other people. You do so much good work in addition to singing beautifully and giving great concerts!"

Marsha's Schedule

Apr 5 Joy MCC Orlando, FL, 2 Sun am services at 9:30 and 11:30, then a 6pm concert. www.joymcc.com 407-894-1081

(BIG BONUS TO THE ABOVE CONCERTS!! Cindy will be there!)

June 6 1st Congregational Church of Wakefield (UCC) in Northwood, NH 6:30pm concert (603)522-3189 www.FCCWakefieldNH.org

June 7 1st Congregational Church of Wakefield (UCC) in Northwood, NH 9:30 am special music (603)522-3189 www.FCCWakefieldNH.org

In July I will be in Pittsburg. More on those concerts later.

What Date Would You Like??

PLEASE!! As always, check the phone numbers for updated

times & info. Go to www.BalmMinistries.net

for current listings.

ChristianGays.com handles BALM Ministries sales outside the US. Also check out 5,000 pages of Resources, Education, Chat Rooms, List Serve, Prison Ministry, Blogging, Books & Music For Sale & much more