

# East Balsam Beacon

Jan, Feb, Mar 2024

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Thanks to Cheryl Volgren, &  
John Larson, for the  
pictures

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## PASTOR'S CORNER

I've been thinking a lot about my health lately. Last Sunday (January 14) I referenced the promise in Psalm 103:3 that God heals all our diseases, and I mentioned that I am still waiting for healing in some ways. I didn't share details on Sunday, but I will in this article, even though it might be "TMI" (too much information) for some readers.

For the most part, I'm a healthy guy, and I thank God for that. I don't like to talk about my problems, because I'm aware that many people suffer from ailments that are much more serious than mine, and what I deal with is easy in comparison. But I do know what it's like to have chronic health issues, and I have often wondered if healing will ever come in this life. I've suffered from chronic pain since 2005 and depression since 2002. Both are usually mild and don't prevent me from living life and serving God. But there have been many days when I have pleaded with God for healing.

Will God heal me in this life? I don't know. But what I do know, beyond a doubt, is that God is sovereign over sickness. I don't know why God has allowed me to suffer from chronic pain and depression, but I know that He's good, that He loves me, and that He has a purpose in it. Perhaps that sounds cliché, but I really do believe those things. There is a little garden sign stuck in the ground by the front door of church that says, "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." I believe that with all my heart. Sometimes God shows us the reasons why He allows suffering, and sometimes He doesn't. But even when God doesn't show us His reasons, it doesn't change the fact that He is always good.

Let me tell you a story. I was under a lot of stress in 2018 and 2019, and it seemed to affect my health. After experiencing frequent stomach pains for a while, my doctor put me down for a colonoscopy and upper endoscopy to see what was going on. The surgeon's report stated that I had Barrett's esophagus, which is when the lining of the esophagus is damaged by acid reflux. I had to begin taking antacids every day and make changes to my eating habits. Because of that diagnosis, I needed to have another endoscopy in 2021. The surgeon who performed that follow-up procedure said my esophagus looked perfect and that I would not need another procedure in two years, which is standard for people with Barrett's esophagus. Apparently, the acid reflux that was damaging my esophagus was mostly caused by the stress I was under, because after moving to Balsam Lake, the stomach pains stopped, and my esophagus was healed.

Maybe this seems normal to you, but I consider it a miracle. God is sovereign over sickness.

Next week, I am having a follow-up colonoscopy because a polyp was discovered and removed in 2019. Could it be that God's purpose in allowing me to get sick in 2019 was so that polyp could be removed? I don't know. But I'm sure glad it was discovered then and not many years later when I would normally have a colonoscopy at age 45 or 50. Maybe that has nothing to do with it. Maybe God's purpose in letting me get sick was to demonstrate His healing power, so that I would learn that He is sovereign over sickness. I can only speculate.

God healed my esophagus. I believe that. But He hasn't healed my chronic pain or my depression. At least not yet, or not fully. I know He will someday because He promised that there won't be any pain in heaven (Revelation 21:4). I don't know why God has allowed me to face these things. Again, I can only speculate. But I do know one thing. Because of my sicknesses, I am better able to sympathize with others, especially those who suffer from mental anguish.

I recently listened to a podcast with David Kinnaman, the CEO of Barna, who described the results from a study they did. They asked church-going moms what they liked most, and liked least, about their churches. The number one criticism was that their churches did not support their mental or emotional health. I hope that's not the biggest criticism that people have about EBBC, but if God can use my experience with depression to help EBBC become a place where people find support for their mental anguish, then my suffering would be worth it.

Enough about me. We are all sick in one way or another, and I don't know why God allows you to suffer from different diseases of the mind and body. Only He knows. But I do know this: God is sovereign over sickness. He has a purpose. He always does. And He works all things together for good for those who love him.

Maybe my story encouraged you. Maybe it challenged you. If you'd like more encouragement, or if you'd like to wrestle more with what the Bible says about sickness, here are a few Scriptures that come to my mind: Job 1:21; Romans 8:18-30; 14:8; James 1:2-4; Psalm 23:4; 90:12; 103:1-5; 147:3; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; 12:8-10; Luke 4:40; 5:12-13; John 11:4, 6, 21-26; Proverbs 3:5-8; Philippians 2:25-30; Matthew 9:1-8; Isaiah 40:6-8; Revelation 21:4.  
Pastor Jonathon

## **COMING UP**

### **Women's Ministry**

Any ladies available Feb 13, 1:00 pm, we are invited to help make freezer meals for shut ins at Trade Lake Baptist Church. Contact Cheryl Volgren

Spring Rally date: April 9th, 6:00 pm. Webster Baptist Church

Submitted by Cheryl Volgren

### **VBS**

Vacation Bible School is being planned for the first week in June. If you are willing to help or have questions, contact Victoria Heichel.

## **CHURCH HAPPENINGS**

### **Operation Christmas Child (OCC)**

2023 will be a year we won't forget at East Balsam for two reasons. (1) We became a Drop Off Center. (2) We sent a record number of 867 boxes out!

When I watch videos of kids opening their shoe box, I see the look in their eyes and it melts my heart to think we changed 867 kids' lives with a simple shoe box filled with essentials, WOW gifts and God's Blessing.

Our boxes so far have been sent to Colombia, Paraguay, Philippines, and some to Hard Reached areas.

THANK YOU to:

- ...all of you have prayed endlessly and donated to this ministry
- ...all those who sorted and helped pack the boxes
- ...The Youth Group, for the many times you handled the boxes
- ...Andy Zylstra for getting the trailer to transport cartons to Spooner
- ...Amy Zylstra for her help all year long
- ...Christine Spading for taking charge of the Drop Off Center, and to all those who helped with it.

Looking forward to see what God does in 2024!

Submitted by Cheryl Volgren



Sorting



Ready to pack



Adelyn Spading & Kamry Richter



Audrey Mattson



Murry Johnson



Trailer

## Guatemala update

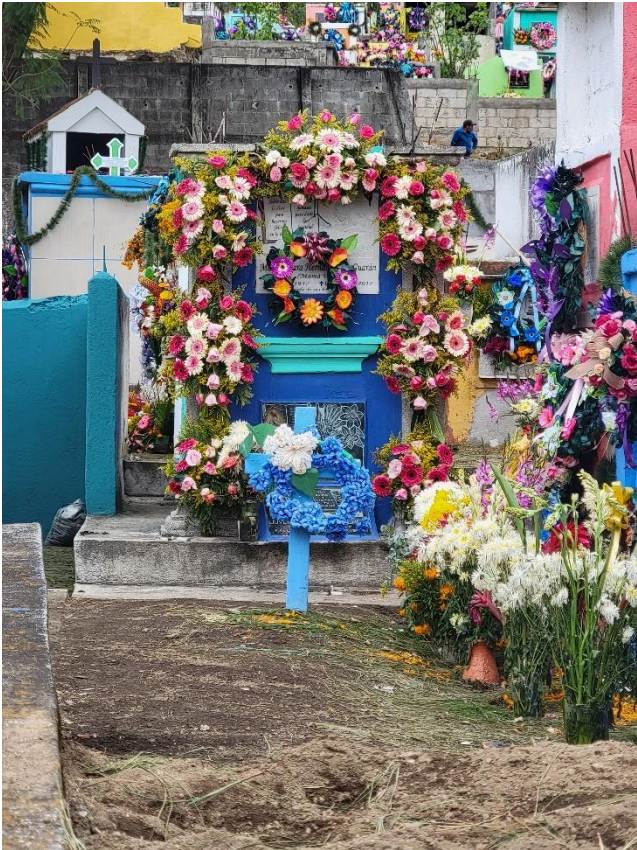
Jackie and I made our trip on October 28th through Nov 4th. We would have never thought we would be involved in 2 children's funerals and would get to pray over a 30 year old mother and wife who would not make it either. This would prove to be one of our hardest trips yet. I believe God had us there simply to be support to the full time missionaries down there. We got to spend time with the children from home I did some rural work on Tuesday. Wednesday was November 1st also known as day of the dead or all saints day. Deryl, Jackie and I went to a local village where we were surrounded with people flying kites and celebrating the lives of their deceased family members. After we spent some time there we were off to the city to pick up medication. On our way back to the village where we were staying Deryl received a call from a member of his Church telling Deryl that his sister had 4 grand mal seizures the night before and now was unresponsive. Deryl asked Jackie and I if we wanted him to drop us off or if we wanted to go with. Of course, we both wanted to go with to support in any way we could. Deryl talked to the brother and got all the information he could get. Then we went into her little bedroom. There were 9 of us in this tiny room, Deryl performed a few tests to see if there was any response at all and he got just a little. Deryl gave her husband a few medications to possibly help and then we laid hands on and prayed. This lady's mother held Jackie's hand the whole time we were in the room not letting go once. This young lady passed away just 2 days later with her family by her side. Thursday we prepared for another funeral and Friday we went to the feeding program and spent time in the village and playing with the children there. I wish I could open my heart and show you what love we have for these people. I am writing this the day before our next trip.

Romans [26](#)

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Submitted by John Larson

Pictures from John Larson



## **Celebrating Jesus and Snowflakes Women's Event**

"Celebrating Jesus and Snowflakes" on January 21, 2024, was yet, another wonderful women's/teen girls/little girls event. We had 26 in attendance that enjoyed their choice of 7 soups, salad with all the fixins', fresh bread braids and Nicole's famous beer bread with dip, hot out of the oven. (A now requested favorite!) Thanks to Anika---we enjoyed "squeaky fresh" cheese curds! There were so many other yummy things and lovely desserts were the excellent finale'.

We welcomed several new friends to EBBC this year. Thank you, ladies and teen girls and even little's for reaching out to friends and co-workers, as it is wonderful to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our little circles. We truly enjoyed each other's company as we got to know each other just a little bit better. Kim shared some words of encouragement after our lunch---reminding all the ladies that Life *is* hard, *BUT GOD* is good and we're "only passing thru". That like Jesus---we need to keep our sights on heaven when the going gets tough. He gets it---He gets us---Because He's lived it. She reminded us that the Lord said---"For I, the Lord your God, will hold your right hand, saying to us, "Fear not, I will help you." (Isaiah 41:13) We all have stuff.... *BUT GOD*.

We shared many laughs during our White Elephant gift exchange (dice game). It brings us all together, in a big circle---and we love it, even if it's for just a snip-it of time. It was especially funny when Holly went to exchange her 500 piece puzzle with Maureen's coveted gift. Maureen in no way---was going to give it up and it literally became a laughing "tug of war". In the scuffle---the puzzle box busted open and "yep---you guessed it", 500 piece pick-up ensued as the pieces danced all over the floor. LAUGHTER IS GOOD MEDICINE FOR THE SOUL! (Thank you, Lord Jesus, for creating that emotion! We need the laughs!) With all of the wonderful feedback and the many comments of "I look forward to this all year", this will be ---the Lord willing--- repeated once again next year!

Submitted by Kim Hillesheim

## **Youth Group Update for Newsletter**

Almost half of our youth group just returned from the Passion Conference in Atlanta, GA, as we celebrated our seniors. It was a time of teaching, worship, and fellowship. The highlights of the trip were the times of powerful worship with 60,000 other young adults.

The rest of our time is spent on Wednesdays in large group worship and teaching, followed by small group discussions. Here are some highlights from our small group leaders:

- Middle School Girls - We are excited that one of our girls has invited her friend to youth group, and she has been consistently joining us! Prayer requests include continual questioning from the girls that will lead to deeper and more authentic faith in Jesus and knowing Him more.
- High School Girls/Spading Group - It's been neat meeting in small groups so that we can have deeper conversations. We have had many people open up about how they tend to view their Christianity just another thing "to do", but they want to grow deeper and make it more about a genuine relationship. We have talked many times about how the busyness of their lives distracts them from time with Jesus.
- High School Boys/Bowers Group - The older boys have done a great job overall of 'self-leading' the small group time- I typically don't have to say a lot, which is the goal! The guys have shared honesty about struggles with school, culture, doubts they have around their faith, connection with God, etc.
- High School Boys/Enger Group -It's been fun and encouraging to watch the boys grow in their ability to lead discussion and take initiative. They ask good follow-up questions of each other and press in. The boys have become more open and transparent as the year has gone on. They are more willing to share

personal struggles. The boys have shown a lot of care and support for each other. They show a genuine interest in wanting to help each other reach their goals.

We are looking forward to the coming spring full of seeking Jesus and encouraging each other in our faith.

Submitted by

**Sarah M. Bowers**

*Youth Group Leader*

*East Balsam Baptist Church*

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651-324-3108

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Would someone like to contribute articles for the “Getting to Know You” section of the Beacon? Lynda Hall’s schedule has gotten too full to continue submitting articles now. Let me know if you are interested.

Joan Michaelson, [dgm@lakeland.ws](mailto:dgm@lakeland.ws) or 715-405-4055

## MISSIONS

**Bruce & Candice Beatham**—Wycliffe Bible Translators in Mexico

No current update, but keep upholding them in prayer.

**John & Lori De Cleene**—Mobilization Associates, Converge

Beginning on a personal note, the middle of December allowed us to take a 10 day trip to the Philippines. Our first time back since we left almost 8 years ago. The purpose was to introduce our daughter-in-law to where/how our youngest grew up. God, of course, was exceptionally gracious, and, we saw most of the important people in his life: the church, friends and ‘extended family.’ The day we returned to the States our daughter-in-law led worship at their church. I spoke on the 24<sup>th</sup>, then, got Bronchitis for Christmas! Lori was down with something as well, so, we had a full week to regain our strength before the new year began.

Ministry is already strong in 2024. Andrea Kidder (<https://www.converge.org/global-worker/andrea-kidder>) deployed Dec 30, and, Joyce Fleck (<https://www.converge.org/global-worker/joyce-fleck>) deployed Jan 7 – both to Thailand. There are 5 global workers preparing to go to a closed country. They’re praying to be there by the end of the year. They may even be able to visit for a month to help on farms and deal with grief in the area. Three more global workers based in the States have reached 100% of their partnership, and, are completing paperwork to be deployed. Three more could reach their goals by the end of the year. Four “Residents” are preparing to leave for Poland, Japan, as well as the Japanese Diaspora in the South and NW parts of the United States. New Mobilization staff have onboarded and are creating better and more effective missions ministry.

One of the main highlights of 2023 Converge International Ministries was the first two deaf believers on the island of Mauritius ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u\\_utdbipg-U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_utdbipg-U)). Please watch Christopher’s story!

Serving together with you,

John De Cleene

Mobilization Specialist, Deployment Advisor

Mobile: 920-241-5917

<https://converge.org/missionary/john-ori-decleene>

## **Steve & Carol Jean Gallagher**—Wycliffe Bible Translators-Florida

### **Update January 2024**

We're making plans to be in New Jersey for a couple of weeks in February to touch base with our partners, both churches and individuals.

**Steve and the Etulo translation team from Nigeria completed the quality-assurance consultation of their book of Genesis** on December 21st. The team did excellent work with Steve to make this a high-quality translation.

**Steve has resumed working on *Translator's Notes* for the book of Exodus.** This is a translation guidebook in simple English to help teams all over the world to translate the book accurately, clearly, and naturally.

**Carol Jean continues to work as administrative assistant for Wycliffe's Talent Acquisition team,** which seeks people to fill roles in the ministry of Bible translation. She enjoys assisting her team in practical ways, usually on the computer, to help them be successful in their responsibilities.

We will continue these roles part time while in New Jersey.

**Steve's hoping to go to PNG in late April** to do the quality check of the book of Exodus for the Malei team.

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- Keep up with us on our website ([gallaghers.life](http://gallaghers.life))
  - View our ministry video (<https://vimeo.com/864041173>).
  - Read our 2023-in-review newsletter at <https://bit.ly/gallaghers202>.
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### **Praise God...**

- That the consultant check of the Etulo book of Genesis was completed before Christmas.
- For the many people who support us in the ministry of Bible translation with their prayers and giving and for the extra ministry donations we received in December.

### **Please pray...**

- For our preparations to speak in New Jersey churches and for the logistics of the trip.
- For increases in regular donations to meet our ministry budget.
- For good progress on the *Translator's Notes* series.
- For translation work to begin in all languages that need the Bible, and for completion of translations that are in progress.
- For people who have the Bible in their languages to engage with it and be transformed.



**Gil & Norene Zinke**—Training Leaders International (TLI)

“We appreciate your faithful prayers and financial support throughout this past year. In 2023 Gil was blessed to complete 4 trainings in Sierra Leone in addition to his 9 in Ethiopia. Thank you for your partnership in this ministry. Gratefully, Gil & Norene Zinke, serving with Training Leaders International”

Gil and his co-workers are on a training trip at this time. Please pray for health and safety of all involved: Trainers, Trainees, Mentors, and Hosts.

East Balsam Baptist Church  
1816 – 108th Street  
Balsam Lake, WI 54810

Sunday Worship – 9:00 A.M.  
9:30 A.M. – Children's Church  
Tuesday – 9:30 A.M. - Women's Bible Study  
Wednesday – 6:00 P.M. Youth Group  
Saturday, 7:00 A.M. – Men's Bible Study  
Other meetings and activities announced in the bulletin & on web site

[www.eastbalsam.org](http://www.eastbalsam.org)

To get to livestreaming,  
our YouTube address is [youtube.com/eastbalsambaptist](https://www.youtube.com/eastbalsambaptist)

OR

on the church website,  
scroll down to SERVICES, move your cursor right and click on YouTube.

Send Prayer Chain requests to [east.balsam.baptist.church@gmail.com](mailto:east.balsam.baptist.church@gmail.com),  
or contact Val Rowe at 715-268-7424 or  
Joan Michaelson at 715-405-4055