

be the light

Speak out!

in this issue:

**LEARNING
TO TRUST**
TOLU'S STORY

A LIGHT IN MKE
ERICA BREITBARTH

A LIGHT IN INDIA
THE NANDAS

A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS
IN OUR CITY
MICHAEL SUNI

A small light shining in the midst of darkness changes everything.

In the Gospel of John, evil and sin in our world are described as a pervasive darkness that closes in and confuses humanity. In a world like this, Jesus' words become so much more powerful: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"* (John 8:12). Because of Jesus—His life, death, and resurrection—we are led into light instead of being lost in the dark. For individuals, communities, and the entire world, it is now true in Jesus that *"the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* (John 1:5).

In another place, however, Jesus says to His disciples: *"You are the light of the world"* (Matthew 5:14). What a shocking word to hear! How can it be that Jesus is the light and we are the light?

Think about a candle. It shines its light and dispels darkness in a room. But if that candle lights another candle, and another after that, those candles shining together burn even more brightly against the darkness. In a similar way, when Jesus dispels the darkness in us, we are then kindled with the light of His presence to shine forth His light in the world. What is His light if not the *"grace and truth"* found in Him as evidenced both in His words and deeds (John 1:14).

The journey of discipleship, or following Jesus, first calls out of darkness and then sends us back into the darkness to shine Jesus' light.

Where has God placed you as a light? Where is He calling you to plant a candle on the beaches of darkness so that others might be drawn to Him? A famous missionary, C. T. Studd, once said, *"Some wish to stay within the sound of church or chapel bell. I'd rather run a rescue shop within a yard of hell."*

As we proclaim and embody the love of Jesus Christ in the city and the world, let us intentionally choose to let the light of Christ shine through us!

Matt Erickson
Senior Pastor



SUMMER 2017



Matthew 5:16 says *"Let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven"* (CEB). This Summer 2017 issue of SPEAK OUT! is all about being a light for Christ in a dark world. We can think of no better image than this long exposure shot framed against the Milwaukee skyline, captured by longtime Eastbrooker and photographer, Jacob Ngui. You can follow Jacob's work on Instagram @goeey.grams.

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be the
light

This issue of SPEAK OUT! is all about being a light in a dark world in whatever specific way God has gifted you to be His light!

Our next issue (Fall 2017) will center on the ideas of **Adoption** and the **Family of God**. If you have a story to share, or want to get involved in the SPEAK OUT team, contact Liz Carver this summer, lcarver@eastbrook.org, 414.228.5220 x211.

When I was asked to share my God Story, I took a quick mental scan of my walk with God and got teary-eyed. I grew up in a devoted Christian family, so faith has been a part of my life since childhood. God is a household name in my home country Nigeria. Even before Christianity and Islam were introduced to the Nigerian culture, spiritualism and worship of deity had been a part of the African identity.

I was born into a Nigerian family, 6,000 miles away from Milwaukee. I am the youngest of five siblings: four sisters and one brother. My parents grew up in an orphanage that was run by missionaries from the United States. I later found out that the missionary, Kathryn Dick, who came to my father's village has ties with Eastbrook's first Senior Pastor, Pastor Marc Erickson. While growing up, his church used to pray for Kathryn. See how the Lord orchestrates things? He is amazing!

My family is a product of individuals responding to God's call to go on the mission field. God continues to display His sovereignty as He orders events and lives to make a beautiful symphony.

I am grateful for daily family worship and frequent church-going that got me God-conscious at a young age. The choir and Bible quiz team were my favorite church groups. The salvation message was always preached at church and call to salvation was part of the sermons. Around the age of nine, my brother explained the meaning of being saved to me; he pointed out that I needed to believe that a relationship with God started the first time I asked Him to come be my Savior.

Despite being born into a Christian home, my family was not perfect, neither were my experiences as a child. I struggled with fear; I feared death and the unknown. Nightmares and anxiety attacks were part of my daily life. I also had fear of rejection and self-esteem issues. I found it difficult to explain my fears or seek help, those fears became my secrets.

It took a while in my walk with God to realize that God wants to fill every area of my life with His presence. Initially, I had a legalistic mindset about God; I did not understand His grace and mercy. I did not know that I could share my struggles with Him; that He wanted "to do life" with me. It was comforting to discover in God's Word that I could come boldly to the throne of our gracious God to receive His mercy, and find grace to help me when I need it (Hebrews 4:16).

The more I shared my fears with God in prayer and search for promises in the Bible, the more I experienced deliverance from fear. It was liberating to read the Bible and see that many people struggled with fear and anxiety, and read how God always promised protection for those who trust Him. There are still days that I doubt God's promises rather than trust Him. I am grateful that our loving heavenly Father gently guides.

I remember learning to trust God for daily things like a night free of nightmares and big choices such as a career path. I trusted Him when I chose my life partner (Osas) and when we decided to start a family. I trusted him BIG when we decided to relocate to the USA. God has blessed Osas and I with two energetic and sweet boys—Timi and Tohan—and we trust God daily to raise the boys in His ways. We believe that God has planted us at Eastbrook Church in this season of our lives. Eastbrook Church has blessed my family since we moved to the USA and we regard every opportunity to serve at church a privilege from God.

STORY

Tolu Osemwegie

The uncertainties of life have not stopped, so my life of faith keeps on. I must trust God that He has empowered me to lead people into His presence through worship, and trust that He is the one who nudges me to be an encourager and counselor. When doubts arise, I am reminded through God's word that (I am) we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).

I believe that God longs for His children is to receive the fullness of His love and purpose. My prayer is that the body of Christ takes hold of the power to understand, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is (Ephesians 3:18); May the understanding of God's perfect love cast out every fear and liberate us to be bold ambassadors for Christ. May the knowledge of God cover the earth as the waters cover the seas.

May each of us be ready and willing daily so that God may flow through us to be a light to our families, relationships, work place, and schools. May we hold nothing back, give God our all and live out everything that God placed in us. ■



Tolu singing | Inset, the Osemwegie family

Erica Breitbarth is a music educator, choral conductor and vocalist in the Milwaukee area. In addition to her work at Reagan High School, she is a worship leader and Council Member at Eastbrook, and was selected as one of ten finalists from around the country for the 2017 Grammy Music Educator Award. She recently sat down with us to talk about what it means for her to be a light for Christ as she seeks to proclaim and embody the love of Jesus Christ through her work in the city of Milwaukee.

How has God specifically called you to be His light?

The underlying factor of my whole career working in education has been this idea of surrogacy—being a surrogate parent to kids regardless of whether they have great parents, not-so-great parents, or no parents. I believe God has specifically called me to be someone who fills in that space for people. And I know that this calling was placed on me by God because that word, “surrogate,” is such a weird term! I know it’s not something that I came up with on my own, but it is something that has been imprinted on me in my vocation.

Not everyone would qualify what I do as ministry. I’m not a pastor, I work in a public school, and I’m not allowed to talk openly about my faith. But I see my work as ministry. I’m seeking to be a person of faith in a dark environment. Both inside my work and in other areas of my life, I want to be a voice for people who don’t have one. I believe I do this on the [Eastbrook Church] Council, as the only single woman as well as the only millennial. It is a labor of love sometimes, but showing up in that space is a part of my vocation as well.

One of the reasons why I feel a lot of clarity about my vocation is because of Eastbrook. I was a high school kid who lived in the suburbs, but because of the diverse community at Eastbrook, I was friends with a lot of people who went to King, Riverside, and High School of the Arts and I made music with them. I loved it! From the moment I got to Eastbrook, a heart for the city of Milwaukee was ingrained in my DNA as a Christian. Eastbrook has been such a big part of my theological journey and I owe a lot to this church for that. It is an honor to get to be back in the Eastbrook community, serving and being a part of it, living out my vocation, being strengthened in community, and in particular by the way that this community values diversity. Eastbrook looks like the world and I just couldn’t go to a church that didn’t!

How do you go about living out your calling?

Creating safe community space is so important in my work. We don’t have enough spaces, especially in the city, for strong community to happen. For me, I teach music and I love music, but music is a conduit for community. Getting kids from all different parts of the city, with different backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses to come together and make art together is really hard. Sometimes things don’t go well, but I see it as an opportunity to teach my students how to navigate conflict in a safe place where they can have the freedom to make mistakes.



a *light* in Milwaukee

When they go out into the world where the stakes are higher, they've had a chance to test that out. Especially with students who come from impoverished backgrounds, they don't have the same safety nets [I had]. They have to be ready to be an adult when they turn 18. I didn't have to be an adult until I was 22 or later, but they don't have that option. I think showing them how to interact with others, how to advocate for themselves, how to fail gracefully, get back up, and how to be emotionally healthy is the biggest part of what I do. Music is just the way that I do it. We come around something (music) that they buy into and I get to cultivate a safe space where I can empower my students. That's what my role is.

The metaphor of light implies that there is darkness. How does darkness reveal itself in your context?

I've been teaching in MPS for 8 years and I see MPS as a reflection of our city. It has a lot of brokenness built in—not necessarily because of the people who work in MPS, but because of the poverty, racism, and systemic oppression that exist in our city. The more I spend time in that space, the more I come to understand the darkness better. As I get to know my students, I get to know the brokenness in their lives. And as I get to know the brokenness of the system, I get to know how hard it is to change a broken system.

Sometimes someone will ask me how we're going to fix the system and my answer is never that we're going to fix it—evil in the world, systemic racism, poverty—but my job is to be a little bit of light in a broken system. I'm not going to change the whole system, though I would love to! But if I spend my energy and my bandwidth thinking about all the ways in which it doesn't work, I wouldn't get up in the morning!

I've seen that hopelessness crush people before, and I think some of that has to do with a lack of faith. If we look at the system as if it is just about fixing problems for the here and now, it's totally awful. But if we look at it in light of who God is, and the fact that our job as broken people is to bring a bit of the kingdom of God into our space, there is no pressure to fix the whole thing. Instead, I just feel the pressure to be present today, to do the things for my students today that I think Christ would do in my situation. So, rather than get discouraged, I look at my 200 kids. They are the ones I get to serve.

I find that many millennials have this “just add water” mentality about change. They are very aware and woke to the problems that exist in our system but they want credit for the thing that they're going to do that will change the world—they have a superhero mentality. But true change doesn't happen overnight, it requires that we abide and remain. Perseverance is not always a value in our culture, yet I believe that one of the only ways that you can make positive, long-term change is by abiding. You have to be in a system long enough to understand the brokenness to really impact change. You can't just come in for the short-term and make change. This short-term superhero mentality hurts the system—it's disruptive and doesn't help.

In what ways has God equipped you to be His light?

God has given me an enthusiasm for music and kids that I get to use every day. I am excited about the music that we're making, but also about the kids that I'm around. That energy and light can only come from Christ. There is no way that I could get up at 5 am and wave my

pom-poms for 12 hours a day without Christ. I am 100% convinced that if I were not a Christian, I would have quit 3 years in. My friends and coworkers who are not people of faith—I have no idea why they're still here. What motivates them? We have a God who sacrificed and suffered and so we have a different theology. If it was about me and feeling appreciated and cared for, this would not be the job to choose. But I am okay with the sacrifice required in my work because there's a bigger purpose and there's fruit.

I also think that my singleness is a gift. There is so much need for relationship, mentorship and parenting for some of the kids that I work with. My job would change if I had kids or if I were married. The fact that I can go home and recharge and come back the next day ready to pour into my kids—that is a gift.

How do you understand the relationship between proclaiming and embodying the love of Jesus Christ?

By nature, my job is more about embodying than proclaiming. But I also have had opportunities to proclaim who Christ is because I have students who are people of faith and students who have questions. I'm not allowed to pray with my students or prosthetize, but I have had many spiritual conversations with my students because they've initiated it. I've had conversations about what it means to be a Christian and an artist, what it means to be a Christian in a public school, and what my personal theology is on certain tough issues my students are struggling with like sexuality, racism, and gender. I also have colleagues who are people of faith. I work with another Christian and we have the opportunity to speak into each other's lives, to encourage each other, to pray for one another and for our kids.

So there are opportunities, but they are a little more covert, that's just the nature of it. I really wish that more people would see the covert opportunities that we have in secular environments and take them. We often have this perspective that you're not doing ministry unless you're in the church. But we are all called to be Christ-like in spaces that are not Christian. It's really hard sometimes, but I think it's important. We have to share the light of Christ in all spaces.

Christians are often perceived in our culture as proclaiming all the time and we are not seen as embodying our beliefs; we're seen as being only about words and not about actions. I've started to care a lot more about the concept of a lived theology—that my words about who Christ is don't mean anything unless my life is guided by those principles. This is modeled by Jesus in His own life. He lived and abided with people over the long haul—He lived out His theology. I think part of how we counteract the cultural perception of Christians is through a lived theology where we focus more on embodying first and proclaiming second.

I don't mean this as a cop-out for proclamation, but I think that right now, the world sees us as proclaiming all the time and they don't see us embodying Jesus' love. And so many people, especially millennials, are responding to that by emphasizing the embodiment of the love of Jesus Christ in the city and in the world. That's what I hope to do as well, in the space where God has called me. As a musician, I would pick a way cushier job if it wasn't about Christ's call on my life. But I know that I am supposed to abide here and I can do that because of Christ in me—I'm not a superhero. ■

a *light*

to the nations in Milwaukee

Michael and Anna Sun serve in a unique way, opening up their home to host Bible Studies specifically geared for a growing community of visiting scholars from China. We recently sat down with Michael to talk about this unique ministry.

"I am not a light, I am more like a servant." These are the first words out of Michael's mouth as we sat down in the Sun family's Shorewood apartment to talk about how God is using their family and their home in mighty ways.

The Suns' journey to their apartment in Shorewood was a roundabout one. It began many years ago when Michael was a young believer in his 20s, serving as a military officer. He knew from the beginning of his faith journey that he was called to serve, and so any time he was able to, he would find a church near his military barracks and serve in whatever way was possible. God was faithful during his 23 years in the Taiwanese military, allowing him to get two PhDs and three Masters' degrees, all in the field of International Politics. But after more than two decades in the military, their family was struggling. Michael was suffering from depression, their children were young, and extended family pressures led Michael to ask for early retirement. He says, "I think I made the right choice because I began to see God more closely. I feel that I had problems, my family had problems, and it was a lot of pressure. I wanted to retire early so that I could put my family back together."

For the next 7 years, while their two sons, Michael and James, were still young, Michael taught in the university and their family was growing stronger, but there were still problems. "I decided then to go to the United States to do research and I have very close friends who were professors in the Political Science department here at UWM and so I applied for a grant from the government and I got it. Previously, we only tried to stay here for 7 months but our whole family came and we liked it. Particularly we liked the worship at Eastbrook, which is very similar to the worship in Taiwan, in our Assembly of God church."

They quickly got connected at a few local churches, including Eastbrook, as well as in their kids' school, Atwater. When they first arrived, in 2015, there were quite a few visiting scholars from China whose children went to Atwater. They found that the visiting scholar community had unique needs that they often found met in the church. In particular, they would come to churches such as Lutheran Memorial Chapel in Shorewood and Eastbrook for language help and for community. As they began to feel comfortable, they would begin to ask questions and wanted to go deeper in learning about Christianity. After only being connected with the visiting scholar community for two months, Michael saw that the need was much greater than what they could do on their own. He reached out to Dan Zimmerman, a member of Eastbrook, and asked him to organize a Bible Study in the Suns' home, which he agreed to. Soon the need became greater and they opened up another Bible Study on Tuesday nights led by another Eastbrooker, Derek Olsen.

In addition to the Bible Studies, the Suns also coordinate marriage and parenting classes once a month. As Michael describes it, "In China, because families

only have one kid, their kids become like a prince or princess, and so parenting is a huge issue." In general, Michael has seen the great need to equip visiting scholars with the resources they need to strengthen their families and marriages, which can often run into problems since their spouses stay in China. He says that his hope is for visiting scholars to see that family is more important than career and money, and that God honors family.

As he builds up this community, Michael is very clear that the main focus is for the visiting scholars to know that they are loved. They come on assignment and generally are in Milwaukee for no more than 6 months, so the window of opportunity is small. The community is also very academic and elite, which is why he places so much emphasis on systematic teaching, but also on showing love, always asking, "If Jesus was here, how would He treat us visiting scholars?"

The Suns have seen the fruit of their ministry, as they stay connected with old friends on WeChat. Some scholars have returned to China and set up their own versions of the Suns' Bible Study because they can't find a church or place to go and connect with others and study God's Word.

When asked what Eastbrook can do to support their ministry, Michael is clear that they need prayer. He says, "Pray for them. China is the most populous nation, and they are growing in power. There are more and more people like scholars and students, who are studying here. Quite a few people become believers because they feel loved." Always a servant, Michael ends our interview with these wise words, "The reason we care for people is because we love them and want to give them the best gift. We just want to invite them and give them the good news." ■



DATES TO KNOW



(Summer 2017)

Family Worship Weekend

July 1/2
eastbrook.org/familyworshipweekend

Fireworks Outreach

Monday, July 3 | Dusk @ the Lakefront

Noah's Ark Trip [Students + Kaleo]

Thursday, July 6 | all day!
eastbrook.org/noahsark

Life Group Connect Picnic

Sunday, July 9 | 12-3 pm | Kletsch Park (#1)
eastbrook.org/lifegroups

An Evening of Worship & Prayer (2nd Tuesdays)

Tuesdays July 11 & August 8 | 7 pm

Young Professionals Picnic

Sunday, July 16 | 6 pm
eastbrook.org/yopro

Artist Showcase Deadline [Self Portraits]

Friday, July 21 Deadline
eastbrook.org/showcase

Family Camp

July 21-23 | Green Lake Conference Center
Sign Up at eastbrook.org/familycamp

Mexico Missions Project [for Students]

July 22-30 | Playa del Carmen

FAST (Foster/Adoption) Family Gathering

Friday, July 28 | 6 pm | Lake Park
eastbrook.org/FAST

Leader Launch

Saturday, August 12 | 9-11 am
eastbrook.org/leaderlaunch

Boomers & Beyond Fireside Outing

Wednesday, August 23 | Fireside Theater
eastbrook.org/boomersandbeyond

Tour of Milwaukee

Saturday, August 26 | 1 pm
eastbrook.org/tourofmilwaukee

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Starts

The Week of August 28



John and Terri Nanda are longtime Eastbrook-supported field workers to Visakhapatnam, India. They currently serve as leaders of SERVE India, a ministry which serves pastors of churches in mostly rural and tribal areas and through those churches sustains impoverished widows, children, and those suffering with the effects of leprosy. They train pastors and through local churches, they also support several children's homes and 2 leprosy colonies. They were gracious enough to conduct this interview with us over email:

At this point in your Christian journey, how do you envision your call to God's mission in the world?

From the very beginning, we felt that what God has called us to has been to bring His truth, love and salvation to those who have never heard. To reach the unreached. And that is what we have committed our lives to.

How do you see the fruit of your ministry? How is God's light in you lighting others around you?

India is a very spiritually dark place and there are so many in the deep darkness who have never heard of Jesus and have no one to tell them. We have felt overwhelmed at times with the need that we see daily, and there are times that we have wondered what difference our very small lights could make in such a dark place. But in those times, the Lord has always reminded us that the big job is His and our job is to do what He puts before us to do. What that means on a practical level is that we are to pray, love, and obey the next step He leads us to.

When we started SERVE India there were only a few men standing with John. They prayed, and went to work, sharing their light with others.

Over the years the Lord has brought us many men with the same heart and desire to reach the lost. They have needed the same encouragement the Lord gave us. We have come alongside many of them (about 250) and we help in whatever ways we can with prayer, encouragement, counsel, and training. Each of these men is a light shining to others, bringing hope, life, and freedom from the darkness by the truth of the True Light.

Anything else you want to say to Eastbrook?

Each of the men, our Pastors, along with their families, are a light to their communities and usually the neighboring communities, too. They provide a place for those who are lost in darkness to find truth and life, freedom and love, and many times help for their practical needs. They need your help through prayer. The darkness does not overcome the light, but it is a battle and your prayer is what helps! These Pastors go to places that are very difficult, places that would not welcome someone from the outside. If these men did not go there would be no light. They need us to be praying for them every day.

Eastbrook—we are so grateful for all the years that you have been a part of the work that the Lord is doing in India through your giving, through sharing your good people to help us here with medical camps and teaching, and especially through your constant prayer. We love you, Eastbrook! ■

If you would like to get more involved with praying for our international workers like the Nandas, consider attending the Missions Engagement Class at 9:30 every Sunday in Fellowship Hall.