

beauty from brokenness

Speak Out!



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AND FINDING
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SUFFERING
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FOR ADVERSITY
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BREAKING PLATES
UP NORTH

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IN FOCUS

About two weeks ago, I was sitting in a small church building on the outskirts of Vishakhapatnam, India, with our friend, John Nanda, my son, Isaiah, and a group of about fifteen believers. The sun had set and we gathered in the fluorescent lights common in most church buildings I've visited in that area.

What was different about this setting was that we were gathered at a vibrant church fellowship within a leper colony tucked away from the road and the surrounding neighborhood by a long walking path up a hill. The brothers and sisters ranged across the age spectrum from old to young. They sang a few vigorous worship songs, prayed, and then invited me to share a word from the Scripture with them.

Sitting there, I was reminded of the time that Jesus and His disciples encountered a blind man while walking along the road (John 9). In response to the disciples' theological question about whose sin caused the man's blindness, Jesus takes the conversation a different direction. In fact, Jesus steps away from the disciples and engages the blind man in a conversation. In a culture that saw such physical ailments as a result of sin, Jesus sees the man as made in God's image and worthy of love. The act of restoring the man's dignity may have been the primary miracle, with the physical restoration of sight coming as the proverbial icing on the cake.

There I was, sitting with these people whose leprosy had marginalized them from society and left them with little value in many peoples' eyes. Yet in Jesus Christ, there was a joy and glory that outshone the electric lights of that church building. This glorious church—these lovely brothers and sisters in Christ—showed the power of our God who brings beauty from brokenness.

Matt Erickson
Senior Pastor



The church outside of Vishakhapatnam, India
Pastor Matt and John Nanda (inset)



SPRING 2016



Every issue of Speak Out! starts with a plan and a theme...and without fail, every issue ends up having a life of its own! A few weeks before this issue was to go to the printer, a new theme emerged from the stories themselves: stories of God redeeming our suffering, making beauty from brokenness, turning our tears into triumph and a witness for Him. This is our most vulnerable, honest, and REAL issue yet. We hope it inspires more vulnerability and honesty in all of our lives.

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BROKEN beautifully

On January 29, 120 students and 30 leaders from Eastbrook & City on a Hill arrived at Fort Wilderness in the snowy Northwoods of Wisconsin for the 2016 Winter Retreat. Students studied the four-chapter gospel (Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration), reflecting on the theme of "Glorious Ruins." Throughout the course of the weekend, students also created a large mosaic, representing how God can rework our brokenness into something far more beautiful than we could have ever imagined. This mosaic will hang at Eastbrook as a reminder to us all of what God can do through our lives. ■



Smashing plates to represent the sin in our lives



Pastor Matt was the guest speaker for the weekend

"It was really hard for me to even begin to relate beauty and brokenness together due to how our culture categorizes them as opposites. But I began thinking how God uses my brokenness and turns it to beauty. I found many examples of glorious ruins in my life through prayer and reflecting during retreat."

junior gracey lynch

"One of the main things I took away from the retreat was a stronger realization of how God is willing to restore our lives and make us whole again. It's amazing to me that the Lord continues to fill up my empty cup with love and grace until it is overflowing."

junior olivia paul

"We sorted all the colored pieces, smashed them again to make them fit, got our hands all sticky with glue—but the end result was beautiful. It's a great thought that we serve a God who can do the same thing with our lives, to turn all of our brokenness into a work of art for His glory!"

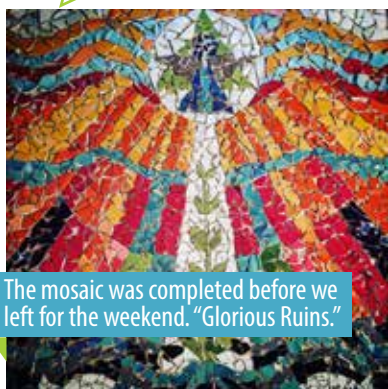
senior andrea bech



Sorting thousands of pieces to make the mosaic



The worship team wrote a special song for the weekend, "Overwhelming Love"



The mosaic was completed before we left for the weekend. "Glorious Ruins."

"It's kind of incomprehensible that God would desire in any way to interact with us, let alone use us. But He is love! In high school especially, I witness a lot of people seeking purpose in sources outside of God and that quickly becomes a dark and scary place. But when I found my home in God and allowed Him to start to mold me into something beautiful, I was filled with something that no worldly offer could quench. Simply knowing that God has a plan to use me for something beautiful and is already working that out in my life through His spirit; not only makes me feel whole but also allows me to love others better in His strength."

senior olivia loomis

Racine King

A Story of Faith, Food & Finding Joy Through Suffering
As told to Ruth Thompson Carver | Photography by Rachel Radewahn



"We had collard greens and cornbread and fried fish..." Racine Addison King was talking about what was on the menu at Forest Haven assisted living in Fredonia the previous night. When Racine talks about good food, her passion is obvious. But if you talk to her for a few minutes, you'll realize that it's not just that she likes good food—she knows what she's talking about. Racine has been a chef at some really nice places, like the Hyatt House in downtown Los Angeles and the Hyatt here in Milwaukee. The menu above is one she worked on with the cook at Forest Haven where she lives.

Racine is one of those people who makes friends wherever she goes. Right now that place is Forest Haven, a place Racine

resisted going to at first, but now recognizes as God's provision to her. At the age of only 66, she can no longer live alone because of a bad fall she had last summer compounded with osteoarthritis in both knees. She can't walk, but never fear—she gets around without a problem on her red scooter. She has a supportive community at Forest Haven, and all the residents and staff know her well and love her.

Racine says, "I don't have a pity party about myself. I'm so thankful to be positive. I love the Lord and I want to learn more about Him." But how did she get to this place of joy and contentment? It was through suffering.

Racine's mother was a 13-year-old victim of incest. As a newborn, Racine was taken from her mother in Chicago by a great-aunt, a "madame," who raised her in a hostile, unloving

environment in Milwaukee. She remembers many times when there was no food in the house. Racine's escape was school—she loved it! She excelled particularly in reading and home economics. But her great-aunt didn't want her to learn and become educated, so Racine had to "sneak-read". Once she got in trouble at home for winning a reading award at school. When Racine heard her great-aunt talking on the phone to someone from the school who had called about the award, she thought, "I'm busted."

Another bright spot in Racine's childhood was Brother Bob from the church across the street. Brother Bob got her great-aunt's permission to take her and her half-sister to a Bible study for kids. Racine remembers the flannel boards the teachers used to teach the Bible stories. She thought those flannel boards were the "cat's meow!" More importantly, she loved this Jesus she learned about.

In an effort to get out of the house, Racine got a job at Butter-bun, a restaurant in downtown Milwaukee. This was against her great-aunt's wishes, who did not want her to work because her welfare would be reduced. But this job didn't last long because Racine got fired for kissing a white boy, even though the boy was willing. She ran away from home, which landed her in a foster home that wasn't safe. Then she was raped. All of this meant that, although she did graduate from Rufus King High School, it was four years later than the rest of the kids in her class.

God's grace to Racine continued to come in the form of cooking. Racine had an uncanny way of catching on to anything food-related. She got a job at The Protestant Home working in the kitchen and mastered the grill remarkably fast. She went to MATC and got a degree in culinary arts. Meanwhile, her longing for Jesus continued and she got baptized in a Baptist church. Then she decided she wanted to be Catholic and was baptized again at Holy Hill. Then she started going to a Lutheran church. She laughs about this church-changing now and says, "I wanted a diverse church and I wasn't finding one." Through all the church-searching, she loved Jesus.

When Racine was 25, she married a childhood sweetheart, Robert Henry King. They had a son and then twins, a boy and a girl. All three children had severe developmental disabilities. Life was hard. Racine's husband was a firefighter but became ill with Hodgkin's Disease. Because of a number of stresses, Racine left her husband and children for a while and went to Los Angeles where she landed a great job as a chef at the Hyatt House on Wilshire in downtown LA. Then she learned that her husband was failing fast physically, and she realized she needed to come back to Milwaukee to take care of him. Thankfully, the Hyatt in Milwaukee was just opening, and she

was able to transfer from the one in LA to the new one in Milwaukee as the chef.

Her husband died in 1980, and before he did, he asked her to promise to find a good living situation for their three children. Racine knew what to do. She took them back out to California because she had learned while out there of a place they could get the help they needed. In order to do this, she had to give up parental rights, which was extremely painful for her. But she knew she could not take care of them.

*Throughout this pain,
Jesus was her life, and she knew
He would be sufficient for her.*

Now Racine was in a position to start over. She enrolled in the nursing program at Mount St. Mary College in Los Angeles, but when she saw a cadaver, she said, "That's it. I need a new major." She changed her major to early childhood education. After she got her associate's degree at Mount St. Mary, Racine's friends urged her to apply to Marquette University for a bachelor's degree. She was sure she wouldn't get in, but she applied and was accepted. She majored this time in communication studies and secondary education. After graduation, she taught in elementary schools for several years.

During this period, Racine was attending an apostolic church which was wonderful, but still didn't have the diversity she was longing for. A friend recommended she try Eastbrook. She ventured through our doors for the first time in 2008 and when she walked into the Worship Hall, she looked around at the people, and said to herself, "This is it!" Racine has been active at Eastbrook ever since, first taking the membership class, then serving on the prayer chain and working in the nursery. Now it is difficult for her to get to church, and she is rarely able to attend. But Racine is staying as involved with Eastbrook as she can, and she is being a light for Jesus at Forest Haven. Recently she recruited three Eastbrook worship leaders to come to Forest Haven and join her in leading a program of music and teaching for Black History month. Racine says, "I'm the only African-American up here and these people need to be educated!" The worship leaders sang spirituals and led the residents in singing more spirituals. Racine gave a mini-lecture on African-American inventors and closed with a reflection on I Corinthians 12. It was great. And then she served everyone pecan pie.

When she was asked what word she would like to leave with Eastbrook, Racine smiled and recited Psalm 103:1, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." ■

A "SISTER" IS BORN FOR ADVERSITY

So, what happens after someone tells their God Story at Eastbrook? For Tricia Schmidt and Alexandra Thiessen, it was through telling their stories that a special link was formed, and a spiritual friendship forged. Both women suffer from rare neurological disorders that have stumped doctors for years, have been to Mayo clinic, and have suffered through chronic, debilitating and lifestyle-altering pain. Tricia and Alex recently sat down over coffee to talk about how they met, how God has used their friendship over the past few years, and what it means to walk the hard road of suffering.

ON BECOMING FRIENDS

Tricia: Alex mauled me in the lobby after I shared my God Story in church a few years ago. She ran up to me saying, "You have a rare neurological disorder? So do I!"

Alex: (laughing) I had to get a small pep talk from my husband first. You might as well put your weirdness up front so that people know right away that this isn't going to be a normal friendship.

T: We exchanged phone numbers and started meeting up for awhile. I started getting better but you were not so much.

A: Yeah—I told my God Story a year or so ago at one of the 2nd Tuesdays: Worship and Prayer nights. Through being involved in serving at the Bread of Healing Clinic, they had diagnosed me, and found treatment that worked. But a few months later, by the time Tricia told her story in church, I wasn't doing okay anymore. It was interesting. **There was this expectation that everyone had that God had worked through my life and that meant that my circumstances were going to be completely worked out in this perfect, Hallmark kind of a way. And that's just not how God worked.** He offered a temporary treatment which was incredible, but then the wheels started falling off my health again. And in the midst of that, Tricia gave her God Story and so I was able to reach out and just be really honest with her.

T: And every time we talked about our stories, whoever was talking, the other one would be like, "YES! YES!" We understand each other's struggles. Alex's faith is super inspiring to me. She has to stay home a lot, she

doesn't have a lot of energy and she's very fragile.

A: I'm allowed out twice a week by my doctors.

T: So she gets lonely at home and she thinks she should just be happy being home alone with God.

A: But see, for the longest time, I was! I was with Jesus every day around Scripture. And honestly, whether I laughed or cried with Him, I had this soul satisfaction knowing that I am here with Jesus and even if all I do is cry all day, He will hold my hand. What's been difficult recently is that I haven't felt that palpable presence of Jesus with me. The only thing that made the suffering okay is that it magnified [His] presence to me. It feels like the only good that comes out of the suffering is closeness with [Jesus] and being refined in the fire of adversity. And so, Tricia's been helpful, reminding me that **faith is holding on, being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we don't see. When you don't feel God showing up, you choose in faith to say, "God is here."** Tricia's been really helpful for me in that.

T: Which is ironic to me because I could never sit at home and be still! But I'm just amazed by you—I am awed at your strength. To sit home, and be with God and be content with that. It absolutely amazes me!

A: (laughing) That makes it sound like there's a halo over my head every day. It's a place of brokenness, is often what it is.

T: That's where you grow.

A: Right. It's where I'm growing. There are plenty of tears and there are plenty of days when I say, Lord, you should be enough, and yet I wish—I wish I could go out, I wish I could be at the grocery store, I wish I could do everything our culture says I should do but I can't. But you (Tricia) help me remember that it's normal and when I have a day like that I should not be kicking myself.

T: One of the big lessons I learned was to have compassion for myself. After I gave my God Story, I was like "Oh, I'm so much better!" But I was in total denial and I wasn't so much better. I was halfway there, and I still had bad days all the time. I realized I wasn't so much better when I still had to miss a lot of work because I was ill all the time. I almost lost my



TRICIA (LEFT) & ALEX (RIGHT)

job.

So I

went and saw

a doctor. I was talking about all the hard things I've gone through in life and he was like, "So if someone like your husband or children were to go through this, how would you want them treated, and how would you treat them? Why don't you have that same compassion for yourself?" (To Alex) You're human! If anyone else you knew was going through this, you'd say, I'm sorry. That sucks. I wanna pray for you. You can do the same thing for yourself!

A: See, she's giving me a pep talk right now! (Both laugh) She's really good at that.

T: God's that way with us. He says, "You're my child and I have compassion on you and you need to have compassion on yourself."

A: Jesus is amazing that way. When He has the right to condemn the woman who has been caught in adultery and He says "Neither do I condemn you." I mean, He's not the Savior who condemns. He's the Savior who finds something redemptive in what we've done and even when we've messed everything up, He encourages us. I guess that's what we should be doing for ourselves.

ON SUFFERING

T: When we were at Life Group and talking about the message [in the sermon series on Job], one of the guys said, "Tricia, you know about suffering." I just like want to be in denial and have no part of it, and I told people in my Life Group that I just want to cartoon-run away from it! Why does it bother me that people associate me with suffering? Because I did go through a really hard time. I was talking to my step-mom and realized that **while I want to deny and ignore what happened to me, it's what happened to me that made me who I am today. I need to envelope [my suffering] as a complete part of my life along with all the good parts. That's a BIG, HUGE part of who I am. I got so close to God through that.** It's hard though

because now I am a lot better and Alex is not so much better. I told her last week, I have survivor's guilt!

A: Which you shouldn't. It's a joy to see you better.

ON VULNERABILITY

T: Everyone pretends that everything's good and so this transparency that we're talking about [at Eastbrook right now] is refreshing. We lost our first pregnancy at 12 weeks. It was our first pregnancy and so everyone knew that we were pregnant and when we lost him, everyone knew. [Miscarriage] is a sad, sad thing that no one talks about. I found that the only thing that helped was talking about our baby we lost. **That's when I realized being vulnerable and talking about what you're going through is great. It's necessary.** But not only that, people who've lost pregnancies since then come to me. I know what they're going through and how to comfort them and what to say and about their insecurities and worries. We lost our baby right before Mother's Day and so that was the biggest thing in my mind: Am I a mom?

A: You were a mom.

T: I had a cousin who, a year or two later, lost her first pregnancy right before Mother's Day and that was the first thing I said to her. I said, "You're a mom, Kayla. You are." **But being vulnerable and transparent—it's about being able to help others who are going through what you're going through.**

A: I am a really private person, just in general. I've had an autoimmune disease since I was 15 but no one in my life other than my immediate family knew until I was 23. I hadn't told anyone at church and we lived here for two years before Pastor Femi asked me to do my God Story. I wasn't sure. My instinct was to hide my story and say that it was my private thing to grow from. I was praying about it when I was driving home from church and talking to Jesus about it and that's exactly what He said to me. He said, "You have no right not to share this story. **It's not your story, it's my story. I wrote it, I'm the one working in you, I'm the one working in your circumstances. It's not about what you have done, it's about what I am doing.**" It was so difficult for me because I thought if I got up in front of the church, people would walk away from the friendships I had. People had done that in the past. In the past, people had said things with good intentions but they were very hurtful.

T: That sounds like Job's friends!

A: It was exactly like Job's friends. But what has really helped me every time people say things like that to me is to go to Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus understands everything I have experienced. He understands every

suffering, every moment, dream and fallen hope. The other week I was talking to my mom [about my upcoming hospitalization] and it felt like she didn't understand what I was going through. It really hurt my feelings and I was like, "Jesus, I'm really hurt right now...she doesn't understand." He turned me to the story in John where He had just told the disciples that He was going to be crucified, and what do the disciples do? They start fighting! I felt like Jesus was saying to me, "I get how you feel...I had just told my friends about my suffering, I bared my soul. They were so wrapped up in who would be sitting on a throne that they completely forgot about my suffering." It's so nice that Jesus is so alive and we can pray to Him and He can be like, "John 7."

ON COMFORT

T: My biggest comfort [in the midst of suffering] is knowing that some good would come from going through such a hard time. But I say that in faith, because we don't necessarily know what good comes out of it. We might not ever know.

A: For me, it's definitely the Bible. Three years ago, I was told I probably wouldn't live until the end of the year. I weighed 85 pounds and I could only leave the house to go to the pharmacy. When I went, people would stare at me and some would make comments. So I carried Bible verses on note cards in my purse. Anytime people would say something to me like, "it's disgusting to be so skinny," even though I had no choice in the matter, I would get out my cards and I would read what the King says: "**You are precious and honorable**" (Isaiah 43:4). **I made those words my truth. I made them my self-esteem. I had to reject what people with imperfect eyes see as truth, and hold only to what God said.** I started memorizing scripture that year, really because I read the notecards so often they just started falling into my memory. Scripture has been the biggest blessing of being sick.

ON A THEOLOGY OF SUFFERING

T: I'm a firm believer in God's will. I have the faith enough to accept God's will no matter what it is because I know that His plan is better and stronger. I tell Alex, it's very easy for me to say these things right now because I am feeling better. But even when I couldn't get out of bed and my kids were crying because Mom couldn't play with them, this was true. **God forms us in a very special way for very special reasons that we may or may not know.** As an ER nurse, I see everything—bad things that happen for no reason and sometimes for a reason. I know of millions of people worse off than I've ever been. I'm just grateful that I know God and have the opportunity to trust in Him and have faith in Him. I don't know how I could go through something like this and not have God.

A: Um... I guess this is sort of cheesy and can sound like a Hallmark moment but I mean it! I've never asked God, "Why me? Why have I suffered?" **I've asked God, "Why not me? Why have I experienced any goodness in the midst of this brokenness?"** There are days I feel very broken and my life feels very empty, but I can never forget who's sitting with me. I have autonomic autoimmune ganglionopathy which is a neurological autoimmune disorder that affects 1 in 6 million people. So there are fewer than 1000 diagnosed cases in the world. The doctors are always trying to answer that question, "Why? Why did you get this?" I don't know why, but I trust that when I get to heaven, Jesus is going to show me why He allowed this into my life. I don't believe He made me sick but I believe He allowed it. I believe He knows my heart and He knows that when I am the full woman of God He desires me to be, I will look on His purpose and say to Him, "Lord, it was worth it." I think He knows that I would give Him retrospective permission. I just think sometimes God allows us to go through suffering because He knows our hearts better than we do. He says, "I know if you knew the cosmic struggle at play here, you would say, 'Bring on the suffering.'"



A friend loves at all times, and a brother [sister] is born for a time of adversity. (Proverbs 17:17)

DATES TO KNOW

(March-May 2016)



An Evening of Worship & Prayer (2nd Tuesdays)

Tuesday, March 8, 7-8:30 pm, Worship Hall

Eastbrook Academy Gala

Saturday, March 12, Wisconsin Club

Banquet With the Briscoes

Tuesday, March 15, 6 pm, Fellowship Hall
RSVP at eastbrook.org/briscoebanquet

Braids of Blessing

Saturday, March 19, 10 am, A006 (Little Theater)

Good Friday Services "Lost in the Dark"

Friday, March 25, 12 & 7 pm, Worship Hall

Easter Services, "Living in the Light"

Saturday, March 26 at 5 pm
Sunday, March 27 at 8, 9:30 & 11 am

April Lunch With the Staff

Sunday, April 3, 12:30 pm, Fellowship Hall

An Evening of Worship & Prayer (2nd Tuesdays)

Tuesday, April 12, 7-8:30 pm, Worship Hall

"Renew" Women's Retreat

Friday-Sunday, April 22-24, Green Lake
Register at eastbrook.org/renew

"Back to the Cross" Kids Musical

Sunday, May 1, 5 pm, Worship Hall

May Leadership Forum

Monday, May 2, 7-8:30 pm, Worship Hall

An Evening of Worship & Prayer (2nd Tuesdays)

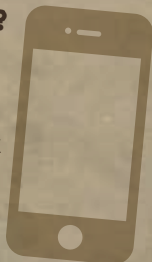
Tuesday, May 10, 7-8:30 pm, Worship Hall

Family Worship Weekend

May 28/29, eastbrook.org/familyworshipweekend

DID YOU KNOW?

Find a full, up-to-date list of calendar events at eastbrook.org/calendar. Or, download the Eastbrook App, available on smart phones, and now on Apple Watch!



ONE to ONE

CARE MINISTRY IN FOCUS by Greg Johnson

ONE TO ONE CARE MINISTRY: *Where did it come from? Who are One to One Caregivers? What do they do? Who do they care for?*

Let me start first by introducing myself—my name is Greg Johnson and I am the Awareness Building Coordinator for the One to One Care Ministry at Eastbrook Church. In this role, it is my responsibility to help our congregation understand this ministry, support it, volunteer to serve, and receive One to One Care when they need it.

Last year, we changed the name from Stephen Ministry to One to One Care Ministry in order to more directly reflect what this ministry provides: individual care for those who are hurting.

There are many ministries here at Eastbrook that do an outstanding job of providing care to those who are experiencing difficult times, but the care may be provided in a group setting. One to One Care does not take the place of these groups, but is there to help when individual attention is needed.

CAREGIVERS

One to One Caregivers are lay members of Eastbrook who have received specialized training to become a caregiver. These individuals are not counselors and do not provide therapy. They are attentive and compassionate listeners, who walk alongside the individual as God heals them. Caregivers come from all walks of life, but what they all have in common is their unwavering trust in God and love for their brothers and sisters in Christ. It is the caregiver's faith, love, and support provided to the receiver which enables the receiver to accept the fact that their issues/problems are in God's hands and He is the ultimate Caregiver who will heal them.

The uniqueness of the ministry stems from the fact that Christian men and women are the ones ministering to those in need. One to One Care Ministry is centered on truth and love. God is always present and freely spoken about—there is no obliqueness, but a sharp focus on the Word and its healing powers.

CARE RECEIVERS

We provide care to all those experiencing a difficult time in life, such as grief, divorce, job loss, chronic or terminal illness, relocation, or separation due to military deployment. The following are some examples/situations in which an individual might want to seek out the One to One Care Ministry:

- *You receive the phone call you hoped you'd never get.*
- *Divorce papers are served and the bottom falls out of your life.*
- *Following the funeral, everyone has left and the emotions you've held at bay come crashing in on you.*
- *The doctor says, "I'm sorry, but there's nothing we can do."*
- *The nursing home director shakes your hand and says, "Welcome to your new home."*
- *The last child honks the horn, waves, and drives away—and the house is suddenly empty.*
- *The gavel goes down, the handcuffs go on, and your loved one is led away.*
- *The baby arrives, demanding more of you than you ever dreamed possible.*
- *You find a pink slip with your final paycheck.*
- *Your family and friends have heard your story one too many times, but you still need to talk it out.*

Confidentiality is the key to making the entire process work and is the foundation upon which the relationship between the caregiver and receiver is built. Everything the care receiver relates to the caregiver is held in strict confidence. This is what enables the care receiver to speak freely and unburden themselves of their problems. Because of this, you will rarely hear stories of how the ministry has helped. But as a caregiver, I can personally attest to the help the ministry provides to receivers and the enrichment participation in the ministry has brought to my life.

The One to One Care Ministry is an excellent opportunity to spread God's word and help others. If you would like to learn more about the ministry, have someone that you would like to refer, or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. May God be with you. ■

Find Greg's contact information, as well as more information about this ministry online at eastbrook.org/onetoonecare.

