

Speak Out!



**“...you will
always have
a seat at
my table...”**

This past May I gathered with a group of twenty pastors from around the country for a week. We stayed at a simple but nice camp on the banks of Flathead Lake in Montana. It was a beautiful setting with meaningful worship and conversation, lectures and prayer.



On our last night together, my friend, Mark, who is a pastor and gifted chef, led us in making a meal and sharing it around tables. It's one thing to get to know someone else through a meeting or short conversation after worship, but something altogether richer to build relationship while cutting up ingredients for a salad and sharing laughter and conversation around a table over food you have prepared. The relationships grew deeper over food and the table.

Jesus knew this was true, regularly gathering for meals to enter deeper relationship with people and introduce them to deeper relationship with God. He did this so much that He gained the reputation of "a glutton and drunkard" (Matthew 11:19). On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus brought His closest followers around a table to prepare them for the saving work God was going to bring about through Him. We still celebrate that table today in the communion meal. Among other things, that table signifies that we belong with God. It is God's radical invitation through Jesus Christ to sinners and castaways like us, "You are welcome at My table."

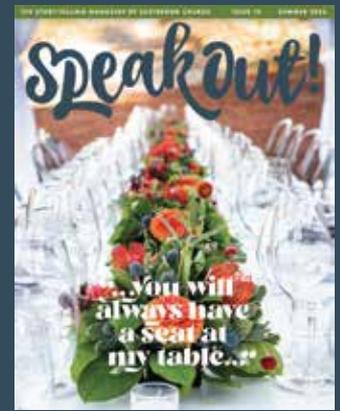
This latest issue of Speak Out! reminds us that through Jesus Christ, God brings us from various places to become a new family. We have found a place at His table not because we earned it or deserved it but because God invited us there. Maybe this summer we can literally invite people to our tables to enter deeper relationship with them and invite one another to deeper relationship with God.

Matt Erickson, Senior Pastor

Practice Hospitality this Summer:

How can you embody the love of Jesus Christ in your neighborhood this summer? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Invite people to a meal in your home this summer.
- Invite a friend or neighbor to join you at an all-church event (Sunday worship service, Eastbrook Outdoors, Lakefront Baptism, 2nd Tuesdays, Neighborhood Prayer Walk, etc.)
- Move mealtime outdoors! Get to know your neighbors by spending time outside. Invite passersby to join you for dessert or lemonade.
- If you have outdoor space, plan weekly bonfires or game nights and invite others over!
- Save seats at the 4th of July parade in your neighborhood so that your neighbors have a place to sit with you and your family.
- Practice the art of noticing. Take a walk and notice your neighbor's garden, dog, home improvements, chalk art, etc. Strike up a conversation about common interests.



The theme for this issue was inspired by the Old Testament story from 2 Samuel 9, where King David extends radical hospitality to Mephibosheth, the son of his best friend Jonathan, telling him, "you will always have a seat at my table" (vs. 7). We are reminded that our King welcomes everyone to His table, providing hospitality to nourish us all physically and spiritually despite our outward differences. Our team was inspired by this video from Faith Church in Indiana — scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to see it for yourself!



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STORY

Okumu, Yudah Tadeo

Okumu, Harriet, and their children (left to right), Jael, Jessie, Jezreel, and Joy



My name is Okumu, Yudah Tadeo. I am originally from Uganda, the Pearl of Africa — it's such a beautiful country! I was born to Catholic parents in Butema Village in eastern Uganda. I'm the fifth of twelve children; five of my siblings died at infancy due to preventable diseases like malaria. I grew up in a miserable home, witnessing the domestic abuse my Dad inflicted on my Mom day after day. Although we shared a roof with my Dad, he was very absent in our lives. Peace at home was very seldom.

All of my older siblings were enrolled at a Catholic church-founded school, but when my time came to start school, I was enrolled into a Baptist church-founded school which was close to our home. That school had a child sponsorship program through Compassion International. Because I was coming from the poorest of the poor families in my village, I was enrolled into the program. This is when my life got a new turn. I was soon introduced to Jesus Christ through the Sunday school teachings and the weekly church services. Eventually, I received Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior after knowing and understanding that He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). It was through the Compassion sponsorship that I was able to get an education from elementary school through college. What a great blessing! I'm forever grateful to my sponsors.

While at college, I met the one who would become my dearest friend and now my lovely wife, Harriet. She too was sponsored through Compassion Interna-

tional. We got married in 2010 and God has since blessed us with four beautiful children. Soon after our wedding, we received the calling to full-time ministry in 2011, when we were asked to coordinate ministry activities for a small missionary organization in Uganda. Then, in 2013, I received a call to leadership when my childhood church asked me to consider taking on senior pastoral leadership, but first we needed to get theological and pastoral training before jumping into the fray.

Through God's miraculous move and provisions, I was able to come to Moody Bible Institute and Seminary in Chicago in 2015. Unfortunately, as is the fate of most families from humble backgrounds, we had to wait for one and a half years to be reunited.

In that season of being separated and waiting, we saw God's faithfulness. We were reminded of 2 Chronicles 16:9a: "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him..."

Going through college and seminary for six years, while childbearing, was to some degree a testing of our call to ministry, but more importantly a strengthening of our faith and commitment to the Lord and to one another as a couple. We have had our good share of joys and sorrows but knowing we were walking in His will has made a whole lot of difference. God has continued to be our daily support and strength through celebrations of

childbirth, birthdays, graduation from Moody, and 11 years of marriage!

Through all that, God has also laid a ministry vision for Africa on our hearts. By His grace, He enabled us to incorporate Restore Africa Network USA, a ministry dedicated to training African pastors and ministry leaders and equipping the body of Christ for Kingdom impact. I see God mobilizing churches, men, and women to be part of the great work ahead.

Certainly, God has continued us onto the journey of additional pastoral and leadership training. That journey has seen my family move from Chicago to Milwaukee so that I could serve here at Eastbrook Church as the City Ministry Manager. We are excited about this great opportunity, and we will be here until the Lord says it is time to transition back to Uganda. As we serve and wait, we take refuge in the words of the Psalmist; *"The LORD will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands"* (Psalm 138:8).

I love city ministry because in the city, you get to impact people from all over the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the coming years, I want to see Eastbrook's City Ministry thrive and usher transformation in the lives of the people we serve in our core ministries and beyond. ■

In his role as City Ministry Manager, Okumu oversees the critical work of the Food Pantry and Bread of Healing Clinic at Eastbrook. To learn more about these ministries or to serve, visit eastbrook.org/missions.



Making Space

by Kaitlin Moser

One of my favorite things in the world is when God brings people from different backgrounds into friendship and fellowship together. I love it because it is a little piece of heaven on earth—a reflection of the peace we will one day see between people from all nations, as we worship before the throne of God together. There is something so beautiful about the Revelation 7:9 verse that is core to who we are as a church: *“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”*

God loves the people He created—of all cultures, ethnicities, and tongues. I believe wholeheartedly that we can more fully see His beauty and creativity when we come to know people from other cultures. God has invited people from all backgrounds to His great banquet feast (Luke 13:29-30), if we would only accept His invitation. He invited us to have a seat at His table; the Holy One of the Universe chooses to be in fellowship with us. What a precious gift this is.

This past year, the people of Eastbrook responded in a beautiful way to this love from God by making space at their own tables.

Eastbrook has a history of being in community with those who have been displaced or are seeking refuge. As soon as Afghanistan fell to the Taliban in the summer of 2021, concern poured out from members of the church, prayerfully seeking a way to step in and help when suddenly this distant concern was brought to our doorstep.

Last fall, Missions Pastor Dan Ryan received a message from a congregant working in the English Language Academy at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The university had received a request to accept a small cohort of women who had recently fled from Afghanistan. These young women were now waiting at a U.S. military base to be resettled in a new home community in the United States. They had begun English studies while in Afghanistan, a pursuit they hoped to continue at an American university before transitioning to an undergraduate program. The university was ready to welcome and support these women with their academics, but also knew they would need community and many additional resources. Given our history of working with internationals and the church's desire to help the Afghan people, perhaps there was a way Eastbrook could help with this?

So many pieces would need to come together: housing, finances, resettlement benefits, social support. Despite the many unknowns, Eastbrook felt the prompt from God to say yes. Moving forward and trusting that He would bring the pieces together, we have seen Him continually provide beyond belief and prove that He powerfully shows up when we trust Him. Many Eastbrook families quickly stepped forward to host one of the students in their home. We have seen God beautifully match host families and students together, and have witnessed sweet friendships and bonds form in many of these homes. Through our 2021 Thanksgiving Offering, many people in the church were moved to give generously. We quickly raised the amount that we needed for the cost of the students' Intensive English Program.

Despite a long wait for the students to arrive after their stay on the military base, they got here just in time to spend the holiday season with their host families and begin classes in the spring semester. As different needs have come up, several organizations have stepped forward to help the students in tangible ways. God has

continually opened doors that we could not see at first, and He has provided each step of the way. We continue to trust Him to pave the way for the students' undergraduate education.

Our God is powerful. He invites us to open our lives to others the same way He sacrificially gave His for us. And He promises to be there for the ups and downs of the journey.

Our group of women will soon be growing from nine to 11, and we already see doors opening for these two additional students to transition to Milwaukee and begin their studies.

We've also seen the powerful way that God can change our lives when we seek to bless others. Our host families, staff, and volunteers have been changed for the better by getting to know these beautiful Afghan women. The students have shared their culture with us and made delicious meals. They've taught us pieces of their language and educated us on the history of their country. They've broadened our perspective of world events and made us less self-centered by opening our eyes to the circumstances of those in other parts of the world. They've shared their laughter, kindness, and generosity. They've cared for their host families in unique ways. They've deepened our love for Afghanistan, and I am very grateful for that.

Please continue to pray for Afghanistan. Pray for safety and protection for the family members who remain there. Pray for peace in the land and hope for the people. Pray for Afghans around the country who are adjusting to life in the United States while their hearts are torn by the circumstances back home. Continue to pray for our group of Afghan women — for their health and well-being, their studies, and a sense of stability. Pray for hope and peace to permeate their lives.

Thank God that He has opened His table to us and has challenged us to do the same with others. We're grateful that God has blessed us with the presence of these women at our tables during this season. ■

Kaitlin Moser has joined the Eastbrook Church staff on a temporary assignment to coordinate Eastbrook's efforts to resettle our new Afghan neighbors. To help, or to learn more about how you can make space at your table and welcome the stranger (Matthew 25), contact Kaitlin at kmoser@eastbrook.org.



GET TO KNOW AN EASTBROOKER: **Liz Hacker**

LIZ HACKER has been a part of Eastbrook since she was born 22 years ago, and has grown into a faithful community servant and advocate for fellow students with disabilities. Let's help make our big church feel smaller as we get to know Liz.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I am currently a college student at Concordia University of Wisconsin with a major in Marketing. Due to a brain injury at birth, I have cerebral palsy. As a result of the injury, I am unable to walk, have trouble with communication, and require a feeding tube. But despite needing help with everything, I am grateful for the abilities that God has given me.

How has your disability impacted your relationship with God and your faith journey?

My faith journey has been a journey of hope and grace through so many battles with my health and just trying to live with physical limitations. God has given me the strength to go

through so many trials that I could not have gotten through myself. I do have my times of grief and sorrow for friends with disabilities. But it's so worth the strengthening of my faith.

What role has Eastbrook played in your faith?

Eastbrook has been my church for my entire life — people have been praying for me since I was just minutes old. From day one, I have attended services with my dad, my mom, and my older sister. Eastbrook is more than my church, it's my family. I am truly blessed to have people who work hard to include me in every way possible. Whether it's being in choir or playing on the playground, I have always been included. Various people

have become my caregivers and companions, just being with me and talking to me, which has been so beautiful (*see more on page 6*).

Can you think of a specific example?

Connie [Hendrix] has been a dear friend and caregiver for me for 14 years. She has been there helping me through so many circumstances. I was in her choir, and we just created this beautiful bond that I truly cherish.

I remember when we were first beginning and how I struggled with holding the music sheets. She was kind enough to get a music stand. Even though I have a hard time communicating, she is so patient and listens to me. There have been count-

less times of praying together about situations that I have been through. She has a gift of serving people with disabilities. We have had so many special moments that still touch me even years later.

How did you first get involved in serving at Eastbrook?

Fellowship with other believers has been so refreshing, regardless of what I'm going through at the time. So, besides attending Eastbrook, I am a volunteer for the Adult Special Needs Class and work as an Online Host. When you go online to watch the services, it might be me who you are chatting with! I enjoy it — meeting people is fun. I'm also a member of the Special Needs Resource Team (see sidebar), which helps families who have members with disabilities feel included. I am truly blessed to have the abilities to serve God and Eastbrook because there are so many people with the same disability that can't serve.

What is your prayer for the Eastbrook community?

I hope young people who join our community are loved and valued for who they are, not for who they have been with their disability.

We also spoke to Liz's companion, another longtime Eastbrooker, Connie Hendrix, to learn more about our new friend. Here's what she had to say:

Connie, how did you meet Liz?

She came to choir in 2008, when she was in 4th grade [Connie leads the children's choir]. It seems longer! I knew her parents before she was born, through the church. Just like any of the kids in choir, they're with me for a number of years. With some of the kids, we have a relationship that lasts as long as they're in choir, and sometimes once they get to high school some of them will still acknowledge you! Liz always kept in touch. Once we started going back to having everybody at church, Liz and I would sit together.

Liz calls you her "companion" and "caregiver." How would you describe your relationship?

I'm her friend.

Because Liz is differently-abled, some folks might hesitate to approach her, in the hopes of doing so sensitively and appropriately. What would you say to those people?

Don't be afraid to approach her, or approach someone who is differently-abled. I think it is scary in a way, because you don't know if you're going to say the right thing or not, but I would not be afraid to address her. She's very loving and very caring. She engages with people. Sometimes it may take a little bit to understand, but she's a whiz at her tablet. I hope people take the chance to get to know her. ■

ABOUT THE Special Needs Resource Team

Have you ever wondered who is working behind the scenes within Eastbrook to specifically advocate for kids of all ages with special needs?

Since 2019, the Special Needs Resource Team has existed to make the gospel and our NextGen ministries (birth-grade 12) accessible to all children and students within our community. The team aims to help all people to feel loved and accepted, including those who are differently-abled, and encourages all families to understand that no matter their child's needs, Eastbrook can be a place for them to know the love of Jesus and find community.

The team seeks to accomplish this in three ways:

- supporting families,
- carefully crafting accommodation plans, and
- pairing buddies one-on-one with specific students.

To get in touch with the Special Needs Resource Team, contact Sarah Fridenmaker at sfridenmaker@gmail.com.

For a full listing of available programming specific to families of children with special needs, check out the most recent Summer 2022 Connect, Grow, Serve brochure or visit eastbrook.org/kids.



Summer 2022

Lakefront Baptism

Sunday, June 12 · 1 pm · Bradford Beach

2nd Tuesdays Worship & Prayer

June 14 · 7 pm

ServeMKE (for Students Grades 7-12)

June 22-26 · Milwaukee

Family Worship Weekend

Sunday, July 3

Summer Camps (for Kids)

July 11-15 & July 18-22

Middle Eastern Global Gateway

Sunday, July 10 · Lunch at 12:30 pm · FH

2nd Tuesdays Neighborhood Prayer Walk

July 12 & August 9 · 7 pm

Small Group Connect Picnic

Sunday, July 17 · 1 pm · Kletzch Park #1

Wilderness Trip (for Students Gr. 9-12)

July 21-31 · Colorado

Family Camp

July 22-24 · Green Lake Conference Center

Wilderness Trip (for Students Gr. 7-8)

July 27-30 · Kettle Moraine

Asian Global Gateway

Sunday, July 31 · Lunch at 12:30 pm · FH

20s & 30s Retreat

August 5-6 · Location TBD

Leader Launch

Saturday, August 13 · 9-11 am

Eastbrook Outdoors Service & Potluck

Sunday, August 14 · 11 am

Middle School Step Up

Wednesday, August 24 · 6:30 pm · FH

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Starts

The Week of August 29 · TEDSmilwaukee.org

Baptism Preparation Classes

Sunday, August 28 or September 4 · 11 am

Take Note: September Reset

Next Fall, we will take some time as a church to press "reset" after the last few years. Save these dates: September 11-October 3!



Allen Hardrick's Story

Present in Spirit

Walking into Allen Hardrick's room at Alexian Village, you know you're in the presence of a man who loves the Lord and is glad to be "at the table". On the bed by his right hand is a Bible. By his feet is a huge *Commentary on the Whole Bible* by Matthew Henry. On a table by his right hand is the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, and on his face is a welcoming smile.

"You're right on time!" he beams.

Allen grew up in Milwaukee on 5th and Locust, and spent much of his childhood at St. Matthew CME Church, where he attended with his mother, father and older brother, Chuck. Allen remembers setting up a pulpit on the family's front porch on Sunday afternoons and preaching the same message he had heard from the pastor that morning. Passersby often threw him coins, and his mother told him he was going to be a preacher someday.

Allen accepted Christ as his Savior at age 12, because he thought, "If Jesus decided at age 12 to follow his father, why shouldn't I?"

After graduating from North Division High School, Allen worked a variety of jobs, primarily in the recreation department for Milwaukee Public Schools. His passion was coaching and forming teams. He coached Little League baseball for 30 years. He formed his own basketball and football teams for elementary and middle school-aged kids, and set up competitive play by contacting local schools and asking if his teams could play them during their bye weeks. Two of his more

memorable teams were named the Hornets and the Monsters.

In the early 2000s, Allen went back to school through Moody Bible Institute, earning a diploma from a program called Evangelical Training Association. At this time, he preached to young people, stressing to them how important it was to live holy lives for the Lord.

Allen began attending Eastbrook years ago at the invitation of Tom and Glennda Meyer, whom he got to know while serving as secretary for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Milwaukee. Although he is not able to come to church anymore, he watches Eastbrook Online when his technology is working.

Allen is no stranger to suffering. He has had 10 surgeries starting when he was eight years old. He suffers from Crohn's Disease and deterioration of his bones. His doctors say he won't walk again, but Allen would love to prove them wrong. He has dialysis three times a week and gets rehab at Alexian Village, but spends most of his days in his bed, reading and studying the Bible, writing sermons, reading the paper, and praying for people. When asked what word he'd like to leave with Eastbrook Church people, he said, "If you go there, stay there. The preaching is good and the Holy Spirit is there." ■

Allen is one of many Eastbrookers who is unable to attend church in person for health reasons. In addition to supporting these friends spiritually, our church serves them through fellowship. Want to learn more or get involved? Contact Pastor Ruth at rcarver@eastbrook.org.