

Speak out!



**“Train children
in the way they
should go;
when they grow old,
they won’t
depart from it.”**

Proverbs 22:6

One of the most interesting, if sometimes overlooked, parts of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life must be Luke's record of His early years. We may forget that after the infancy narratives, and all that leads up to that, Luke includes the story of Jesus' parents visiting Jerusalem when he was a boy. There we encounter the fascinating story of the youthful Jesus astounding the seasoned teachers of the law in the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 2:41-51). Sometimes this story reminds us so strongly of Jesus' divinity that we may lose sight of his full humanity. In case that temptation grips us, Luke makes it clear in a simple statement at the end of that story: *"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"* (2:52).



Jesus grew. Yes, Jesus grew physically, but He also grew in other ways. He learned the ways of wisdom, where knowledge is seasoned with the experience of life and reverence for God to make something even more valuable. He learned the importance of relationships, seeking the favor of God and also developing meaningful connections with other people. These were characteristics that Jesus needed to learn. Sometimes such lessons were not easy, which is why the author of the epistle we know as Hebrews wrote of Jesus' incarnate life: *"Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered"* (Hebrews 5:8).

No wonder, then, that we have to learn these things as well. We know that our life as humans involves growth and development; this is also true of our life as disciples. Like Jesus, we must learn the ways of wisdom and cultivating meaningful relationship with God and others, even as we grow physically.

At Eastbrook, we are prioritizing our calling to make disciples, putting that into sharper focus this year. One piece of that are the educational ministries that help us gain knowledge that becomes wisdom as we are formed into the life of Christ both individually and together. In this issue of *Speak Out!* you'll see how we are doing that as a church in various ways and settings. I hope we will be encouraged not only to read about it but also to become like Jesus as we also grow *"in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man"* (Luke 2:52).

Matt Erickson
Senior Pastor, Eastbrook Church

Eastbrook Educates

In this issue, we're sharing stories of a few of the many ministries around our church that seek to provide education about God, or in a Christ-centered setting. In truth, this edition could be much longer! Eastbrook seeks to engage, grow, and multiply disciples in the city and across the world through what feels like countless studies, groups, media, classes, events, and service opportunities.

Looking for your chance to plug in at Eastbrook? We recently released the latest edition of our "Connect, Grow, Serve" brochure, which outlines some of these opportunities in the upcoming season. Grab your copy in the lobby after service, or download a PDF at eastbrook.org/cgs.



A group of Lower School students at Eastbrook Academy poses on the playground with teacher Chloe LeClair during the 2022-23 school year.

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One word to describe Greg Marshall: “enthusiastic.” If you’ve ever watched him preach on a weekend at Eastbrook, you certainly know that to be true. Along with an energetic physicality, Marshall presents his deep love of God’s Word with an obvious depth of knowledge about theology—something he has pursued over many years, in varied contexts. Let’s help make our big church feel a bit smaller as we get to know Greg.

Tell us about yourself and your connection to Eastbrook.

I have four daughters who have gone to school at Eastbrook Academy since they were in K4. My oldest is now a senior! My wife and I have been coming to the church since 2021. Through the school, we’d come to know Eastbrook Church pretty well, so it didn’t really feel like we were coming to an entirely new place, and a good number of our old neighbors go to Eastbrook, so it feels like home in many ways.

For a long time, I was on teaching teams at a different church out in Hartland. We wanted to be part of a community that felt like it had a good sense of who it was. So for a few years, we just came and enjoyed seeing people we knew, meeting people we didn’t know, and over time started getting more involved.

How did you get involved with preaching here?

I love preparing messages, studying theology, tapping into the realest and deepest part of myself to try to communicate the truth that I think others are going to appreciate. I’ve been on stages in front of people, performing or speaking, since I was 18 years old. [Pastor] Matt was aware of that, but he was being careful not to ask me while we were in transition. I didn’t want to be in front of people just yet. Long-term, it was something I wanted to do more of, and I was processing that with Matt a bit. Through those conversations, eventually he invited me to speak.

You’re very active, very demonstrative when you preach. Where does that come from?

It’s from performing. I fell in love with hip-hop music when I was about 15. I’ve found that with singing but especially rapping, I have to move in order for my brain to connect fully in that context. It’s part of how I learn and how I process.

What got you interested in the Word?

Some friends asked me to record in a professional studio when I was about 19. After I wrote a verse, one of the guys I really looked up to said, “It’s pretty good, but we’re going to record a song that’s positive, something that glorifies God.” I so badly wanted to record that I started reading the Gospel of Matthew, and while I read I had



these really powerful moments where I would look at the ceiling of my dorm room and realize I wasn’t alone. There were moments when I felt like it was speaking back to me. That was how I came to faith. That feeling of discovery when reading with curiosity about God has never left, whether I’m reading scripture or systematic theology.

After finishing my undergraduate degree, I also studied at TEDS. I had some powerful experiences that affirmed yes, I do love studying this, but I don’t want to go the traditional route of being a pastor. I left the program to pursue music full-time in my 20s. I finished it over time—I took extension courses through Elmbrook Church, and ended up with a Master of Christian Studies.

What would your advice be to people who have an interest in studying theology or learning more about God, but might prefer non-traditional learning environments?

Take ownership of it in your way, and push yourself. Make it a priority to come up with questions that you’re curious about, and find people to ask them to. Theological conversations are out there for the taking if you are fueled by curiosity and not anxiety to try to convince somebody of something, or to find the perfect answer.

Look up messages or sermons on YouTube. Listen to somebody share wisdom instead of just binging shows on Netflix—we rebel against our impulses and our appetites in order to feed our souls. Get to know how different speakers see things. Feel free to study everybody, but prioritize people who are comfortable with paradox and complex-

ty. Widen your imagination, but stay tethered to Christ.

Who are some speakers and artists you look to?

Some people I read and listen to: C.S. Lewis, Dallas Willard, Tim Keller, N.T. Wright. Musically, Lecrae has a depth of insight he’s gathered over time, analyzing himself and culture, what Jesus is doing in him and in the world around him. He even talks about how the church has responded to the evolution of his music. Another person I think is fascinating is a rapper named NF. He has no interest in being referred to as a Christian rapper, but it’s pretty clear in how he’s operating that he’s following Jesus.

Is there anything else you’d like to say to Eastbrook?

I think we have to be honest with ourselves about whether or not we want to actually know who God is, and how that’s relevant to our lives. And if we do, then we have to blow up this way of thinking that says that starts with a formal pursuit of theological education, or even reading the Bible. It starts with opening your eyes and realizing that God’s story is being told everywhere, all the time. There’s a rich treasure awaiting you in the basic choice to be curious and to pursue understanding of who God is wherever you are.

We go to the Bible to understand, who is Jesus? What is he like? And then you get into real life and take the opportunity to choose to allow the Spirit of God form you. That’s where theological education really takes root. ■

The ICC is located at 4204 S. Howell in Milwaukee's south side. Cheery windows welcome students in many languages!



THE NATIONS ARE HERE

LOVING OUR REFUGEE & IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORS AT THE ICC

By Megan Littell

There are multiple avenues for missions. Some are called to leave their homes to be missionaries in other countries.

AT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY CENTER, THE NATIONS COME TO US.

Located on Milwaukee's south side on Howell Avenue, the ICC is a program of Eastbrook that brings the church's mission to Milwaukee: by loving others, we embody the love of Jesus. Since 2011, volunteers have served refugees and immigrants who now call Milwaukee home by offering adult English classes, citizenship preparation classes, and tutoring for middle and high school students.

Generally, the majority of families who utilize the center's services are Muslim. Between August 2022 and August 2023, families from 27 different countries and speaking 22 different languages filled the ICC. Nearly 70% of these families come from Myanmar

(Burma); about 60% of them spoke Rohingya, a language of the Rohingya ethnic group, while others spoke Burmese and Arabic.

Barb Deltgen, a retired kindergarten teacher, has been volunteering at the ICC for over two years. After a lifetime career working with children, Barb found herself teaching phonics and vocabulary to adults in the literacy classes. Her students vary widely in ability, from those who do not know how to read or write in their own language, to others who are multilingual and can read and write in multiple languages, and are adding English to their linguistic repertoire. This mix is often present in one class!

Volunteer teachers like Barb are provided with a variety of lessons—they are not expected to come up with their own lesson plans, which makes volunteering accessible and less intimidating. Barb describes how starting out can be nerve-racking, but says her experience has always been fun. She has helped a woman prepare for her citizenship test, and got to celebrate with the family when she passed and became a U.S. citizen!

Two other Eastbrookers, Kurt and Tayna Schachner, volunteer weekly at the ICC by tutoring middle and high school students. They say that in their work with teenagers, it's important to build relationships with the students' parents. Tanya and Kurt have two adult children themselves, and say that makes it easier to empathize with the parents of these teenagers: "As parents, you want what is best for your child and for them to avoid the pressures of this world." In addition to relating with the families, demonstrating respect and showing their desire to care for these teens is essential. When one teenage girl was struggling emotionally, Tanya took her out to lunch to offer support and love.

Talking with volunteers, it quickly becomes evident that the practical skills of teaching are a central tool at the ICC—but it's so much more.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IS THE REAL HEART AND SOUL OF THE PLACE.

During an informational meeting hosted in October, director Jim Dressner described the ICC as “the gateway to the community of refugees in Milwaukee.” Teaching English and citizenship classes are practical ways to meet needs, but ultimately the goal and measure of “success” is in building authentic relationships and friendships.

ICC volunteers have invited refugee families to their homes for Memorial Day cookouts and birthday parties. Equally, they are invited into the homes of these families, attend community events with them in parks or at a local mosque, and receive the blessing of their hospitality.

According to Lauri Budzynski, the ICC is a ministry that provides “an easy place to build relationships in a safe, neutral zone.” Lauri became connected with the ICC after MissionsFest 2022, and since then has been working with one woman in particular who speaks English, but was looking for the opportunity to continue improving her reading and writing skills. They often go to local libraries, pick a children’s book to practice reading, and then write a short summary. What started out as a gateway connection for teaching a practical skill has naturally blossomed into a friendship. Lauri has invited her friend to her birthday party, and in turn has met her friend’s family. There is a reciprocity of relationship; as the saying goes, friendship is a two-way street.

We know how relational Jesus is and serving at the ICC feels like a practical way to follow Him. In His ministry, Jesus served, healed, washed feet, had theological discussions, and built relationships with others. We also saw Him accepting hospitality—think of all the homes where He ate, including the home of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38).

THE ICC IS A MINISTRY OF RELATIONSHIPS. LOVING THE NATIONS AND LOVING PEOPLE DRAWS US CLOSER TO THE HEART OF GOD.

Many volunteers express initially feeling intimidated by the language barrier, but say relationship—and learning—happens regardless. Many adult students who attend daytime English classes bring their preschool-aged children along. To accommodate them, a kids’ room sits in the back of one of

the classrooms with toys, games, craft supplies, a play kitchen, and even a small playset with a slide. Most of these children do not speak English, but playing is a great opportunity to introduce them to the language.

During a recent visit, one little boy in the middle of playing abruptly pointed to longtime volunteer Sue Gilliland’s face and exclaimed, “eyeball!” The comedic moment was really his brain making language connections as he plays and picks up English. Volunteer Liz Kohli reminds us that communication goes beyond words; there are facial cues, body language, emotions, laughter. Recently, a female student excitedly pointed to an African American doll and then pointed to her own skin, glowing to see a toy that represented herself and her child. A shared language was not needed to grasp the beauty of what that mother was communicating.

When you first enter the main door of the ICC, there is a scripture verse on the wall that reads as a reminder of our mission: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:30-31)

The families who come to the center are people who laugh easily, are full of life, and want to make American friends.

MANY HAVE BEEN FORCED TO FLEE THEIR HOME COUNTRIES, OFTEN DUE TO PERSECUTION, YET EVEN UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY ARE WELCOMING, INVITING, HOSPITABLE.

They have a great sense of humor, even with language barriers. They are generous; they want to serve and share their food in their homes. They are eager to learn and be a part of community. They have so much to offer and to give. And we have much to offer and to give them in return. Let’s go love them. May we pray for God to open our hearts to the nations that are here in Milwaukee. ■

If you are interested in learning more about volunteer roles at the ICC, contact Jim Dressner (jim@iccmke.org). Consider joining in this ministry that builds relationships with people from all nations as we seek to follow Jesus’ command to love our neighbors as ourselves. The nations are our neighbors, and they are right here in Milwaukee.



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Kingdom Diversity

By Joshua Kok



In the book of Revelation, we are given the picture of heaven that God imagined from the beginning of time, the heaven that would exist once all things according to the Scriptures were fulfilled. Revelation 7:9-10 says:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'

Classic depiction of the Christian afterlife, right? What hopefully stands out is the multitude from every nation, tribe, and language. With one word, we can sum up what the author describes: Diversity.

Today, the word “diversity” is often synonymous with political agendas, and can make some people cringe or shudder. I don’t believe John’s description of diversity within Revelation carries that sort of modern baggage. Instead, it is what I believe God desires is to represent His cosmic, complex diversity. It suggests that, to the God of heaven, our skin color, nation of origin, native language and culture are beautiful and intentional gifts from Him, details of our personhood that we should not throw away. At the same time, I believe the diversity God desires goes far deeper than the color of our skin or the country in which we were raised.

Midwest Culture Shock

I am a graduate of Eastbrook Academy. I attended EBA from K-5 through 12th grade, graduating in 2012 as a member of the school’s third graduating class.

My time at EBA reminds me of the famous short fiction by David Foster Wallace about two young fish meeting an older fish. The

elder asks, “Hey youngsters, how’s the water?” The two young fish exchange a look, and one asks the other, “What’s water?”

At Eastbrook Academy, diversity and difference are not only celebrated, they’re accepted as standard. I would call it the school’s greatest strength. It is normal to have friends with a different skin color from yours, living in another zip code, or holding varying opinions on religion or politics or music. My classmates and I didn’t see our differences as a wedge, but rather as a glue. What distinguished us shone brightest in our small community.

After graduating from EBA, I attended college at UW-Madison, transitioning from a class of 12 students to a university of 40,000. Naturally, in a crowd that large, there are people who are different from you. However, at that stage of life, in that big of an environment, it doesn’t come as naturally to be in community with those people. Rather, we tend to seek comfort by gravitating toward people who “look” like us: students with the same major, similar social activities, or the same faith background.

This is tough. Our hearts crave relationships with people like us, yet the God of the universe craves an eternal community made of people from all over the entire globe. What do we do with that?

Redemption of Differences

In a community where everyone is the same, there is no chance for new and enlightening perspectives on ourselves, the world, or God. When everyone is the same, there is no conflict, therefore no chance for humility, repentance, and reconciliation. When everyone is the same, even the connection to and understanding of our fallen nature is the same.

In a church of all white congregants, it is much more difficult for us to weep with those who weep in the Black community over police brutality.



In an all men's Bible study, it is much more difficult for us to see that who we are as men is deeper than our jobs and financial security.

In a small group of all young people, it is much more difficult to give someone meaningful life advice grounded in genuine experience.

The church is designed to be a group of people with distinct life experiences, strengths, and struggles, uniting under a single identity that comes not from financial status, skin color, or nation, but by faith in Christ Jesus as Lord.

Diversity in God's kingdom is so much deeper than just skin color, nation, and culture. To be clear, it is all of those things, too. But it also includes the sins we struggle with, our personal hurts, our various passions for reaching the lost and ways of worshiping our creator. God's definition of diversity is so wide and so deep, it fits all of the tiny differences and idiosyncrasies of humans to an infinite extent.

If our prayer is "on Earth as it is in heaven," as followers of Christ, we are forbidden from creating churches, communities, and groups that exclude others who are not like us. And yet we must contend with our human reasoning: in many corners of the world, diversity doesn't bring healthy community, it brings problems. How then can the God of the universe command us to be in a diverse community?

Simple. The life of Jesus.

What We Strive For

During my time as a student at Eastbrook Academy, numerous staff poured into my life. Some were older teachers, others

younger. Each shared a small connection to me, but none were exactly like me, but that didn't matter. What mattered was how they treated me: even though we are different, I love and care about you because Jesus loves and cares about you.

Jesus is our ultimate example of fostering a diverse community. He didn't exclude anyone on account of ethnic background, sin struggles, or wealth. Simply, if you believed His teachings and did what He commanded, you were with Him, as well as every other person who followed Him. The power of Jesus' life and message is how frustratingly simple it is. When we want to raise concerns about letting someone into our community, His singular question to us is, "Do they wish to know me? Yes? Then bring them in."

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus is our great high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses, and one such weakness is the desire to be surrounded by those who look, sound, and behave just like us. Jesus understands because He was also tempted by that same desire. The Pharisees knew the Torah like Him; His neighbors in Nazareth knew the talk of the town and who He was; people like Barabbas were fellow Israelites sick of the oppressive Roman heel keeping them down. Jesus could have chosen to build His church with only these people—yet, He built it with first the Jew, then the Gentile, with the promise that all nations would hear.

That is the Gospel: All nations serving Christ.

That is Eastbrook Academy: All tribes, nations, and tongues tasting the goodness of an eternity promised. ■

Joshua Kok graduated from Eastbrook Academy in 2012. He currently teaches Philosophy & Christian Thought at the Academy, where he also works with his wife Gloria.

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS IN THE HOLY LAND

by Leslie Matheus Osborne

Palestinian children live with limited hope. Holy Land Ministries exists to educate and empower them in an environment of love and security, enabling them to reach their God-given potential and to transform their community. This is the mission statement for the two Christian schools in Palestine that Eastbrook supports.

Eastbrook has been connected to this ministry since 1982 when Greg Livingston, the leader of the North African Mission and that year's MissionsFest speaker, suggested Pastor Emeritus Marc and Nancy Erickson meet Gregg and Rawda Doolittle. They were planning to go Egypt—one of Eastbrook's target areas at the time—so our church decided to support them as field workers.

While the Doolittles did spend time in Egypt along with their two young daughters, Jessica and Priscilla, in 1990 they found their way to the West Bank, Palestine—specifically, the Hebron School. This was a Christian elementary school for Muslim students, originally established in 1952 by Mennonites as an orphanage. Holy Land Ministries had become the governing board for the school in 1982, recognizing the amazing opportunity to reach Muslim children and their families.

Gregg and Rawda became the directors of the school and lived through many perilous situations. During the Second Intifada, Hebron was a closed military zone for at least a year; they had to find ways in and out—typically, dirt pathways through fields made by Palestinian bulldozers, which were closed by the Israeli army within a couple of hours. There were frequent gun battles between the Palestinians and the Israeli army on the borders of Hebron, as well as missile attacks by Israeli helicopters on suspected terrorists. At one point, an angry mob of Islamic militants came to the school to deliver an ultimatum: "Leave or suffer the consequences." Ten days later, the mob returned to make good on their threats, attacking them. The Lord delivered the Doolittles through the mediation of a tribal leader.

During the First Gulf War, the Doolittles were instructed by their mission to evacuate, so they got the last tickets on the last boat out of Israel to Cyprus. After waiting a month in Cyprus, they felt compelled to return and found a small charter plane to take them back to Israel while missiles were still falling.

They returned because they had a vision: in faith, they hoped and planned to provide both a middle and high school option in Bethlehem for students who graduated from the elementary school in Hebron. In 2010, God began working in a way to realize this vision. Through miraculous circumstances, Holy Land Ministries was able to purchase eight acres of land in Beit Sahour, Palestine, draw up plans, obtain commitment for funding, and break ground on the perimeter wall—all within 18 months! Holy Land Ministries recognized that Bethlehem had a different demographic profile with different needs, so it was decided Bethlehem Evangelical Academy (BEA) would be an English-language school with an American curriculum for K-3 through grade 12.

While the school was being built, Jeff and Ghada Pribble were on a mission trip to Jordan in 2013 when God called them to the Middle East. In the midst of fasting and praying, Ghada found a post online about BEA needing teachers; both she and Jeff had previously taught in Florida. They sent in their applications and were soon hired. Along with their two young sons, Steven and Sebastian, the Pribbles left for Palestine in the summer of 2014 during active conflict between Israel and Gaza.

BEA opened in 2014 with a state-of-the-art building and 40 students in Pre-K through first grade. The very next year, the school expanded through grade 5, adding one grade level each year thereafter.

Today, BEA educates more than 500 students. More than 100 students sit on a waiting list, hoping to get into the K-3 class.

Through the years, Eastbrook has continued partnership with BEA, the Doolittles and Pribbles, and those working within the school. Eastbrook members have prayed for them. Eastbrook members and pastors would often visit the Doolittles and encourage them—once, even in the midst of a gun battle. Early on in the school's existence, finding English-speaking Palestinian teachers was a challenge; candidates were either English majors with no teaching skills or Education majors with poor English skills. So, during year two, a team of five teachers and friends from Eastbrook traveled to help staff the school. A few of them took on full classes of students, while others helped with administrative duties. Eastbrookers John and Leslie Osborne have visited the school several times, from the construction stage to the first graduation this past May;

because of this commitment, they were asked to be board members for Holy Land Ministries and continue to serve in that capacity.

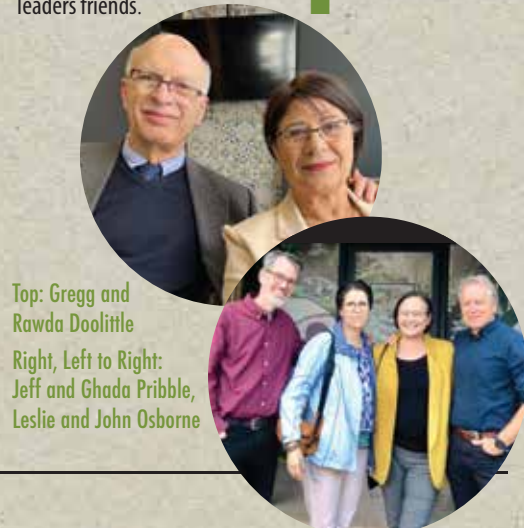
Amidst the current conflict in Israel, the importance of these schools is even more evident. They continue on as a place of hope.

The struggles the Doolittles faced early on in ministry prepared them for a time such as this. As Jeff Pribble puts it, "Some of the most important work BEA has ever done is happening right at this moment." He reports regularly to Eastbrook about ways the school is carrying on and teachers are growing stronger in their faith. God has not only strengthened these families for this season, but has also brought strong Palestinian Christians to be principals of the schools.

"We would like to underline how faithful Eastbrook has been to us over the past forty years of our ministry, comforting us in our times of struggle and supporting us in our times of need, and that we now consider them like family," says Gregg Doolittle. "The current struggles are very real, as each day is uncertain. Schools are closed regularly by the Ministry of Education, and teachers and staff scramble to do Zoom lessons. Students hearing the rockets and sirens and protests become fearful. Having family or friends in Gaza is heartbreaking."

"People are weary. And yet the schools are a place full of believers who know the peace of Jesus. Worship and Scripture is a comfort, as well as a weapon against fear."

We are blessed to pray for and call these faithful, strong leaders friends. ■



Top: Gregg and Rawda Doolittle

Right, Left to Right: Jeff and Ghada Pribble, Leslie and John Osborne