

# Speak out!

## Living on Mission

**AGAIN, JESUS SAID, "PEACE BE WITH YOU!  
AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME,  
I AM SENDING YOU." (JOHN 20:21)**

**W**hat does it mean to be the church? That is a question that could receive any number of responses.

The church is a community of people gathered together with faith in Jesus of Nazareth as Savior and Messiah. The church is a community of prayer and worship. The church is a community worshipping God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and filled with God the Holy Spirit. The church is an imperfect family brought together and made one through God's work. The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints. Any of these answers are legitimate, and that question is one we are exploring throughout this Fall as we journey through the book of Acts.



In the book of Acts we see so clearly that along with everything mentioned above, the church is a community joining God's mission in the world. The church is a missionary community, and this is so because our God is a missionary God. I love how William Temple, theologian and Archbishop of Canterbury in the mid-20th century, said it: "The church is the only organization that exists for the benefit of its non-members." I love that description. Responding to God's self-giving love revealed in Jesus the Messiah, we, too, reach out in self-giving love toward others.

This explains why our mission at Eastbrook is "to proclaim and embody the love of Jesus Christ in the city and in the world." We want to declare the message about God revealed in Jesus—speaking words about it—but we also want to embody that message—living it out in concrete, loving action. What, then, might that mission look like? The shapes and forms of the mission are as diverse as the lives and contexts in which the message shows up.

In this issue of *Speak Out* we read about some aspects of God's mission in and through the Eastbrook family. Like each of the churches we encounter in Acts, God works in and through us uniquely with our gifting, personality, experiences, and context. There is no church quite like Eastbrook, just like there is no church quite like those we encounter in Acts, whether in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, or elsewhere. This is part of God's wondrous work in and through ordinary people in ordinary places just like you and me here at Eastbrook in Milwaukee.

As we read the stories in this issue of *Speak Out*, I hope you are encouraged by how God is at work in our midst. But I also pray we catch a vision for how God might continue to work in and through us in new ways. By God's overflowing grace may we continue to truly become the church.

Matt Erickson  
Senior Pastor, Eastbrook Church

## Join God in His Work this MissionsFest

Here at Eastbrook, we host a weeklong celebration of all God is doing in our city, country and world called MissionsFest (running Sunday, October 12 through Sunday, October 19). This is a great opportunity to learn more about how Eastbrook is partnering in God's mission, and where you might be able to plug in! Below are just a few opportunities for you to join in—find the rest at [eastbrook.org/missionsfest](http://eastbrook.org/missionsfest).

### 24-HOUR PRAYER

Friday, October 17–Saturday, October 18

Join us for a Family Kick-Off prayer event at 6 pm on Friday, a 24-hour prayer room in Holy Grounds, and Prayer Walks around the city on Saturday. Learn more & sign up at [eastbrook.org/24HourPrayer](http://eastbrook.org/24HourPrayer).

### READY, SET, GO!

Sunday, October 19 at 11 am in Fellowship Hall

Eastbrook organizes or participates in several short-term trips each year, and this information session will give you a chance to learn more from those trip leaders for 2026. Families are welcome to attend!

### A MISSIONS ADVENTURE

All week! - Main Lobby

Is MissionsFest your first real encounter with the missional work Eastbrook does? No problem! The Missions Spot is a great place to start. While you're there, pick up a Passport Adventure guide and go on a Missions Adventure with your family!



Hands covered in henna at a celebration from the ICC (International Community Center) this past spring. Read more about the work of the ICC in the lives of refugees in the city of Milwaukee on page 3!

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# STORY

## What the Romanians Taught Me About Plumbing

by Miranda



In June, a group of six of us from Eastbrook traveled to Calarasi, Romania—a new place for our Church to send a team, and an amazing experience of learning and growth for all of us.

We traveled to serve with Outstretched Hands of Romania, which exists “to raise an army of children and poor to bring the Gospel to the unreached parts of Romania.” They do amazing work to not only meet the physical and emotional needs of children and families, but to help bring holistic change and hope through the Gospel. The county of Calarasi consists of over 100 small villages with a very small Christian witness. It is one of the poorest areas in Romania, and many children there live without a stable roof over their head, food to eat, or adult love or supervision.

Reflecting on my personal experience in Romania, I was impacted deeply by the people we met, and I also learned some new things about plumbing.

### Holy Conduits

A conduit has two ends: it receives through one end and gives through the other. Its purpose is to transport. As followers of Jesus, we are meant to function a lot like conduits. God is constantly pouring out blessings to us, even if we don’t realize it, and they are meant to be shared with others! We are blessed to be a blessing.

However, we can end up with a plumbing problem if we let either (or both) ends of our conduit get clogged. If the receiving end is blocked, we won’t have anything to give; if the giving end is blocked, we will become bloated, uncomfortable, purposeless, with the potential to explode. I think a lot of us (myself included) often have one or both the ends of our conduit blocked off, and it causes major problems and frustrations in our lives with God and others. We all need to learn some plumbing skills to make sure God’s “rivers of living water” (John 7:38) are flowing through us to others without hindrance.

### Romanian Plumbers

In Romania, I was struck by how evidently God’s Spirit moved amongst the Outstretched Hands team. I felt it, witnessed miracles,

and heard even more stories of His provision and guidance that encouraged and challenged me. The believers we spent time with were full of joy and talked of a richness and fullness in their lives despite their daily struggles. They were flowing freely as God’s conduits, abiding in Him and receiving so they could pour out to others. Here are a few things I learned from them:

- Keep an open mind—The Outstretched Hands team looks at situations not from a human perspective, but with faith in the God who split the sea for the Israelites to walk through. Their minds are open to God working in ways that go beyond human understanding. Many pieces of their ministry that are the most “successful” don’t make sense using human wisdom, “*but God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong*” (1 Corinthians 1:27). Sometimes I think I miss out on what God is trying to give me because I am too busy overthinking and worrying instead of simply trusting in His promises and waiting on Him.
- Keep an open life—The Outstretched Hands team lives with their lives open. They recognize that nothing they have comes from themselves, so they hold it with open hands and give generously of their resources, time, and money for the sake of the kingdom of God. They focus more on others than on themselves. My new Romanian friend, Nicu, and his family showed me a beautiful example of what it looks like to live as a conduit for the Holy Spirit. Nicu was gifted a large home a few years ago. Now, their house and lives are wide open 24/7, feeding and nourishing the community with food and the Word of God. They drink deeply of God’s living water and are sustained to pour out selflessly every day in ways most of us would maybe even count as “foolish.”

Our time in Romania helped me see my need to daily unclog my soul of all the lies I have come to believe and replace them with the truth of God’s promises to me. I want to live as a conduit, ever flowing with the Holy Spirit, with a heart connected to the Vine, a mind open to a God who can do the impossible, and a life ready to be poured out for others as He poured out for me. Will you join me?

Are you interested in being a part of a short-term trip in 2026 or in the future? Your first step is Ready, Set, Go!—an informational meeting on Sunday, October 19 at 11 am in Fellowship Hall. Can’t make it? Contact Miranda: [miranda@eastbrook.org](mailto:miranda@eastbrook.org).

# WELCOMING THEM HOME

## ICC VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS GROW THEIR RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

by Rachel Shuster



**M**issions on the home front takes on a whole new meaning at the ICC.

Located on Milwaukee's south side, the International Community Center is a ministry of Eastbrook that provides a safe learning space for refugees coming into our city. Volunteers teach English and citizenship classes, as well as tutoring and caring for students' kids.

**JUST AS MUCH AS WHAT'S SHARED IN FORMAL INSTRUCTION, THE RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOPED IN THE MIDST ARE REALLY THE CORE OF THE ICC'S MISSION.**

Case in point: volunteers have begun refugee home visits to extend a neighborly hand and bring a sense of Jesus' presence into their new friends' new homes.

A "refugee home visit" is exactly what it sounds like. ICC volunteers visit current or previous ICC students and their families, usually people they met through class. The schedule varies; visitors might help read the mail or review a report card. Mostly, they enjoy time together, share food and other customs, and pray with one another.

ICC Director Jim Dressner says the purpose of each visit is to develop friendships and be a blessing.

"We want our refugee and immigrant friends to feel like they belong to this community," says Dressner. "The ICC is more than simply meeting needs and helping refugees and immigrants learn English; it's a gateway. We want people to have friends who can help them, advise them, and share what it means to follow Jesus."

These visits pre-date the genesis of the ICC in 2011. Volunteers have always been encouraged to spend time with their new friends on their own, but over the past couple of years the Center staff have arranged more formal events to encourage fellowship—including a recently scheduled day for those without home-visit experience to tag along with a veteran.

Visitors themselves see fruit beyond feel-good moments—although those are plenty, too.

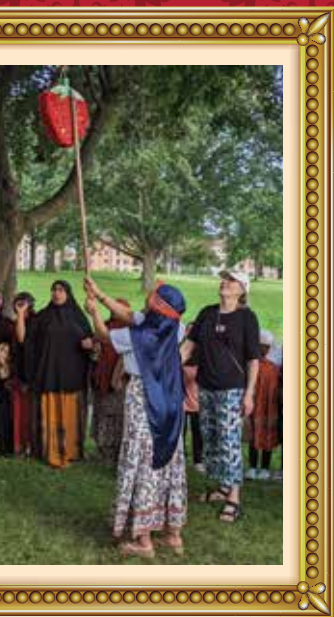
"Recently, I drove a family home from an event, and afterwards they asked me to come in for coffee," shares volunteer Liz Kohli. "Hospitality is one of their love

languages, an opportunity for them to be the giver, rather than always the receiver, and I feel it honors them and gives dignity. We had a lovely time, and later that night once I was home, God spoke powerfully to me of hope for my friends with these verses: *Anyone who welcomes you is welcoming me, and anyone who welcomes me is welcoming the Father who sent me [Matthew 10:40 NLT]*. Oh Lord, let it be so for these families!"

Paula Trulen has also felt welcomed by the families she's been able to get to know. When she began teaching English at the ICC, a young woman in her class needed a ride to an appointment. This was the beginning of a lasting friendship with the woman and her family.

Together, they have made memories in the time spent together helping out and having fun—communicating with a landlord, doing the weekly shopping (and afterwards putting hands together for food preparation and cooking—yum!) helping their kids with homework, and taking trips to local Milwaukee landmarks.

"In all these things, it's good to remember that we depend on the Holy Spirit, and that He is the one who can bless the time



# BREAD OF HEALING CLINIC

AT EASTBROOK CHURCH

## Recognition for Reaching Out

This summer, the Bread of Healing Clinic received recognition for its work to improve health outcomes in our city.

The Milwaukee Awards for Neighborhood Development Innovation (MANDI) recognize individuals, organizations, and projects that are working to improve conditions in Milwaukee's neighborhoods. Finalists are selected from public nominations by a cross-sector committee.

This year, Bread of Healing was one of 14 finalists named within seven categories, specifically nominated for the Community Health Award presented to an organization working to eliminate health disparities through system change. While that award was ultimately presented to another group, Bread of Healing took home the Peoples' Choice Award, chosen by more than 3,200 community votes!

Eastbrook is home to one of three sites across Milwaukee for Bread of Healing, a neighborhood-based clinic for individuals with financial or other barriers to health care. A variety of volunteer roles exist at the Eastbrook site, for those with or without medical expertise! Visit [eastbrook.org/clinic](http://eastbrook.org/clinic) for more information. ■

that we share with others," Trulen shares. "They can benefit from our friendship and support, and we can be blessed through their kindness and their examples of courage in all of their life experiences."

And the blessings are manifold. Meeting with the refugees and immigrants who are known quantities through their presence at the ICC can lead to meeting others like them in their community, perhaps those who may not know about this ministry or others like it available to them—and the potential for friendship that goes along with it.

"The families I've visited have since bought homes and have continued to share life with me. They have become citizens, taking classes at ICC. They also are great advertisements for ICC, and others have come because of their recommendations," says volunteer Loris Jacobs.

Jacobs has seen the immigrant community grow around her own home on the South side over the last twelve years or so; she has been an ICC tutor for about nine years now. As she spends time with her new friends, she speaks freely about her faith.

**"THESE DISCUSSIONS CUT THROUGH THE NEGATIVES THEY HAVE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE," SHE SHARES. "WE ARE BEING UNITED BECAUSE OF ICC. PEOPLE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE SO MUCH TO TEACH US ABOUT GENEROSITY, HOSPITALITY, GRATITUDE, FLEXIBILITY, PERSEVERANCE AND MORE. WE, IN TURN, CAN BE CHRIST'S HANDS AND FEET IN BRINGING THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO THEM."**

"You will find the prevailing stereotypes crumble in the presence of real people," Jim Dressner adds. "You will be stretched to see God's grace working in ways you are not accustomed. You will be challenged to grow deeper in your faith to see how God might work to bless your new friends." ■

Feeling inspired? The best way to get involved with home visits is to become an ICC volunteer! If this is not possible for you at this time, ask to accompany someone when they visit. Questions about the ICC can be directed to [jim@iccmke.org](mailto:jim@iccmke.org). You can also visit the Missions Spot in the Main Lobby at Eastbrook for reading materials and a resource list regarding the work we do with our refugee brothers and sisters.

# GET TO KNOW AN EASTBROOKER ON MISSION

When you think of “missions,” maybe the first thing that comes to mind is a foreign field worker—somebody who moves abroad for years at a time to minister to our brothers and sisters in distant countries. The beauty of missions at Eastbrook is that it does happen across the world—but it happens right here in our city, too. Many of the folks who sit across the aisle from you at Sunday service are living on mission in their own families and neighborhoods. Let’s meet a few of those “members on mission,” and learn from their commitment to serving God on the home front.

## HOW CAN I LIVE OUT MY FAITH IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

### MEET...ABBY & JOBI WALL AND FAMILY

#### What are some things your family is doing to join God in His mission?

One of our biggest hopes and prayers for our family is to faithfully live life on mission. We want to be open and available to the opportunities that God places in front of us to be love and light here in Milwaukee. We have seen these opportunities present themselves most often through the relationships that we are getting to build through our businesses, our kids’ school community, and in our neighborhood. We are finding that consistently treating people with authentic love, respect, and value has opened doors to relationships with people from all sorts of backgrounds and belief systems. One practical way we have tried to facilitate these connections is to work to prioritize finding times to have different families over to our house for a simple meal. We are amazed how God can use a simple act of hospitality to build deeper connections and new friendships.

#### How have you seen God at work in your sphere of influence?

We are grateful for how many people God

has brought into our lives here in Milwaukee in the almost six years we have lived here. Before moving here, we were constantly moving and living in different countries for Jobi’s job. We were still living on mission, but it was for short sprints in various cities. Here in Milwaukee, we are learning to be faithful to the people around us over a longer time period. We haven’t seen much spiritual fruit yet, but love the opportunity to grow in love, plant seeds, and pray for our friends and community who don’t know the love of Jesus personally yet.

#### How do you see God using your unique gifts and talents for His mission?

God has given us a passion for people and real estate. We believe safe housing is foundational to people being able to grow and thrive. We do this through Abby walking alongside clients helping them to buy and/or sell houses, through providing safe and beautiful units to our tenants who rent from us, and through finding opportunities to partner with sub-contractors to renovate and breathe life back into old junky houses. The goal is to use real estate as a tool to build relationships, provide stability, love people, guide others to financial health and wellness, and be a light in our city.

#### What are some challenges you have encountered as you live on mission with God?

One of the challenges we have found is that there are a lot of opportunities and needs in our city. It is easy to feel like we



can and should always be doing more relationally and missionally. However, as a family with four (soon to be five!) young kids, we are constantly feeling stretched in our day-to-day capacity. As more, usually good, opportunities present themselves and different commitments demand our time and energy, we have found ourselves increasingly relying on God for wisdom and discernment on what to say “yes” to and how to prioritize our time and energy. Finding this balance is very much a work in progress. We go through seasons where we feel run down and stretched too thin as a family; however, we are also finding that in the uncomfortable places, the Holy Spirit often shows up and provides a supernatural energy and capacity to navigate various challenges.

## How can we at Eastbrook come alongside you in the work God has called you to?

Pray for wisdom in how to live and invest in the lives of neighbors and friends who are not big fans of Jesus. Pray for our kids to grow and know and love Jesus for themselves personally, and for us as parents to guide our kids to be leaders, learners, and lights in their communities as well. ■



## HOW CAN I MULTIPLY THE BLESSINGS I HAVE BEEN GIVEN?

### MEET...BETH PFOTENHAUER

#### What are some things you are doing to join God in His mission?

In 2015, I bought a house in St. Francis that has a lot of bedrooms. Since then, over twenty single women of many ethnicities, races, ages, and backgrounds have lived with me anywhere from two months to two and a half years. With the simple act of putting up a "room for rent" post on Craigslist, I recognized a pattern of women needing a place to live. They were women who had been hurt or abused and needed a safe place to land or reset and prepare for whatever was next. Lower-than-market rent, the lure of community and shared chores and meals meant I always had applicants.

Some years into this venture I remembered a prophecy spoken over me many years prior: that I would have the opportunity to mentor many women. I had



envisioned leading a youth group, but I believe it has come to pass in a very different way. It has been relationally "living out loud" with what God is doing in my life with the women He has brought to my home. There is nothing quite like living together to give you opportunities in everyday life to share your faith and grow. It is a vulnerable, costly (in terms of privacy and patience) endeavor, and I never know how He will choose to use me next or how He will use people to work on sanding down some sharp areas of my own life.

#### How have you seen God at work in your sphere of influence?

He has birthed beautiful friendships, and not just with me, but with the other women who lived together in the house. Many gospel seeds have been planted: practical expressions of love shared and prayers spoken over ladies who haven't recognized God's love yet. My house has given places to sleep and meals to share when money was scarce. "Family" dinners, walks through the parks together, and game nights all created a sense of peace, love, and community.

#### What are some challenges you have encountered as join God on His mission?

Normal selfish human tendencies and issues of "property management": frequently having to give grace to those who defaulted on rent, tenants pushing boundaries of the lease rules, housemates'

mental health problems, lack of personal accountability, and avoidance of healthy conflict resolution, lack of empathy for the other's hard situations...and at one time, bed-bugs!

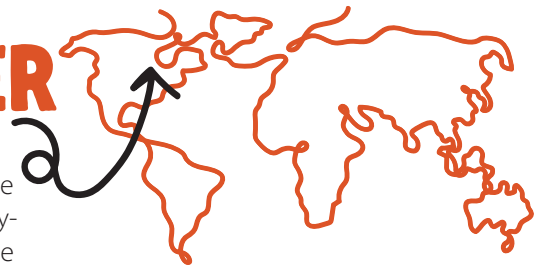
#### How do you see God using your unique gifts and talents for His mission?

My God-given friendly and welcoming nature has made the gift of creating community come alive at my house. I don't remember praying for patience, but clearly God has given it to me as I have helped my ladies with conventional and unconventional landlord/house-mother/roommate issues. God has also given me the gift of vision for beautiful potential, both in physical day-to-day tasks at the house as well as people's character and their futures. ■

## 3 THINGS TO NOTE!

1. Eastbrook highlights different "Members on Mission" like Beth and the Wall family each month in the **Missions Spot**, located in the Main Lobby of the Worship Hall. Visit us there after MissionsFest to learn more and to engage with other examples of Eastbrookers living on mission right where they are.
2. Know someone who should be highlighted or **want to share about your ministry in the city?** Contact Miranda, our Missions Ministry Coordinator, at [miranda@eastbrook.org](mailto:miranda@eastbrook.org).
3. This year, we are exploring how best to engage those returning from serving overseas in meaningful ways to bless and disciple the church "back home." Terri & Marshall Plant have returned from serving in the Holy Land and are helping us pilot a new **Missions Fellowship** this year where they will help care for our Members on Mission and collaborate on training materials for our Local Outreach ministries.

# WELCOMING THE STRANGER



**In Matthew 28:19-20, God calls us to go and make disciples of all nations. In the past this meant we had to leave our homes and go far away. Some of us are still called to “go”, but God has also brought the nations to us. How amazing is that?!**

**Here they are...now what? Enter Welcome Corps, a program that gathered groups of people from across the country to sponsor a refugee or refugee family and help them get settled in America. A few groups of Eastbrookers jumped on board to sponsor some families from Afghanistan, but unfortunately, only one family was able to make it to Milwaukee before refugee resettlement and the Welcome Corps program was shut down earlier this year.**

**Corps member Christina Winrich gives us the rundown on this group and the work they've been doing—as well as what God has been teaching them along the way.**

## **What is the mission behind this program?**

To help refugees settle in during their initial three months, so that they eventually flourish here and get connected into the social fabric of the U.S. During this process, we all became friends with each other and with the couple we were blessed to be matched with.

## **How did it operate?**

Our purpose was to do everything that a refugee resettlement agency would normally do. With a resettlement agency, you have one social worker helping several families; with Welcome Corps, you have one group helping just one family, couple, or single. Our group was set up as five “units” (each unit a family, couple, or single) who agreed to be a group to help one “unit” resettle.

We worked with World Relief, who assigned us a social worker who gave us all of the government information we needed, such as checklists and timelines so the refugees could move forward with their legal resettlement process. This included health checks, applying for social security numbers, getting bank accounts set up, and more. We also found their first apartment and got it ready with basic furniture and supplies, organized where

and when they could take ESL lessons, helped them navigate the bus system, the grocery store, how to pay their bills...everything! Each member in our group became the main “point person” for one area: finances, English lessons, health, government and other appointments, etc.

## **When did your sponsor group band together, and why?**

Our group was formed at Eastbrook. We came together last summer, when it looked like several Afghans could be resettled via Welcome Corps. We wanted to be involved in helping refugees get settled into the U.S. It seemed like the perfect way for the church to be welcoming and loving towards the foreigner, something that is clearly on God's heart for us to do.

## **What drives all of you to service more generally?**

The desire to give back to God what He has so richly given us—not just with our money through tithing, but also with our time and energy.

## **Why did you personally feel called to do this work with Welcome Corps?**

Having been a foreigner many times in my life (in Europe and Asia mostly), I have always been drawn to working with immigrants, international students and refugees in my own country. Because in my life as a foreigner I always had choice of where to live, when to go and come back, what to take and what to leave, perhaps I feel especially drawn to refugees, who have so few choices. They are caught up in events beyond their control (civil wars, genocides, religious and other persecutions) and often have to leave in a manner and time not of their choosing, to go to a place they would rather not go to, leaving almost everything that made up their full and normal lives behind. God loves the foreigner and the refugee, and He is inviting us to be part of showing them His love. Welcome Corps does this very well.

## **What would you like to share about the experience, thus far?**

It was a wonderful experience. It was great working with other Eastbrookers who have a heart for refugees. It was amazing to get

to know this couple who we worked with and to be part of the hands and feet of Jesus to them, welcoming them to their new home and helping them in many ways that were so similar to the ways people helped me when I first moved to Asia.

## **What has the impact been on you personally to be involved in this way?**

It's been amazing meeting this couple who have been through so much and getting to hear more of their experiences as we've gotten to know each other better. They have been through so much and yet cling to the Lord in hope and expectation that He has good things for them, for their families (most of whom are living in very bleak situations), and for their homeland.

## **What would you say to someone in our church who is seeking the best way to serve right where they are, to partner with God in His mission?**

Pray! Ask God where He wants you to serve, not if. If you've never worked with internationals before, then I would suggest starting by getting to know someone different from yourself. You could visit the ICC or other international ministries Eastbrook partners with and talk to the teams there about what they do, and spend some time getting to know the internationals that frequent those ministries.

There are six ways of being involved in missions: pray, send, go, learn, welcome, and mobilize. “Missions” means all of these things, and all of us can be involved in at least one of those ways.

We are so very blessed in this country. We have material wealth and the freedom to gather as Christians and worship where, when and how we please. God's Word makes it clear that these blessings are never just to stop with us—they are for us to pass on! See Genesis 12:3 or Jeremiah 4:1-2 for example. So, let's get up and get going, partnering with God in His work of blessing the nations. ■