

Great Commission Support Ministry

Summer 2013

Personal News

Thank you for your patience in hearing from us. Much has happened in our lives since March. I know this letter is quite long, but I hope you will take time to read it. If you haven't heard, in March, Denise was diagnosed with Aplastic Anemia (a potentially fatal bone marrow failure disease). The medical literature says there is no medical cure. But it can be manageable with successful treatment. The symptoms are much like leukemia – unusual bleeding and bruising, extreme fatigue, breathlessness with little exertion. Denise had been experiencing these for some time and it all came to a head in early March just as I was returning from a mission trip to southern Mexico.

Denise's story:

For quite some time I just wasn't feeling well – a little queasy, low energy, not really sick, just not quite right. Sometime in February I had a cold that just seemed to knock me out. I couldn't regain my usual energy. I began to get breathless just from walking; it progressively got worse. I've always been one to bruise easily so I wasn't so concerned about that. The unusual bleeding caught my attention. On March 5th I started having strange blurriness in my left eye which I had read might be from a detached retina. How I wished it was that!

The next morning, the same day Gerry was to return from his trip, I went to see my eye doctor and he saw some bleeding in both retinas. I could tell he was alarmed. As he noticed how pale I was and heard of my other symptoms, he told me it could be leukemia. Leukemia!?! Surely this could not be! He referred me to another doctor who sent me for blood test. The next day I was hospitalized and actually diagnosed with leukemia. Praise God Gerry was home and I didn't have to face all this alone including all the tests and blood transfusions. It was truly a shock! After days in the hospital and two bone marrow biopsies, I was then told I did not have leukemia but Aplastic Anemia. What a relief...until we learned more about A.A. Again, shock and grief gripped my heart. I felt so overwhelmed.

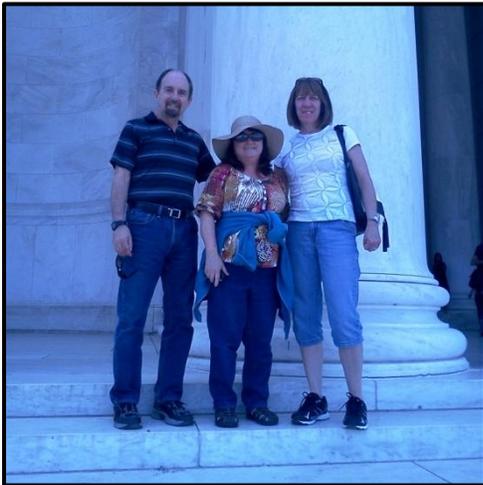
While those days were filled with much uncertainty, we also experienced a peace that only God could bring. I was amazed how He surrounded me with Christian doctors and nurses. What a great encouragement. Many of them prayed with us. I even got to minister to some of them. God provided me the best care I could have. Our church family, friends, and our children gathered around us – Nicole & Paul, Anna (7 months along) & Dave from Colorado, and my sister Terry came from Florida. We even had a mini baby shower and birthday party in my room! I'm pretty sure it was the only one on the oncology ward with laughter echoing out into the halls as we waited for test results.



Because I was very prone to infection, I stayed home much of the time. One Sunday, while Gerry was at church, I decided to do a little research on AA. This led me to the AA Foundation website where I learned about a medical conference coming up the following weekend – April 20th! And you know where? Houston! The same city and weekend Gerry would be picking up our daughter Renee and her girls who would be arriving from Africa! - A mere coincidence? I don't think so. Gerry urged me to go with him for the encouragement it might be to me. As much as I wasn't up to it (a 6 hour drive), I went. I'm so glad I did.

The conference speaker, Dr. Danielle Townsley is a clinical doctor and laboratory research scientist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, MD. Her key focus is bone marrow failure. She explained all about my condition and the latest advances in its treatment. She informed us of a clinical trial she was spear-heading and invited me to contact her nurse to apply for admittance. If accepted all my medical care, life saving treatments, medications would be free!

That was on Saturday and by Monday afternoon I was back in the hospital. My blood counts had again dropped to critically low levels. After another transfusion and insisting that I mustn't get Neupogen (a med which would postpone my acceptance into the trial at least two weeks), **the very next morning**, Dr. Townsley called at the hospital to tell me I was accepted for diagnostic evaluation at NIH. We were exhilarated! This created another whirlwind of events! Three hours later we were in flight to Maryland! Can you imagine? How could all this happen so fast? Was this God? In less than one day my diagnosis would be confirmed (very severe Aplastic Anemia) and I would be accepted into the clinical trial.



In the midst of all this, God brought to mind our good friends, Bob and Pat Hale, who **happened** to live near NIH. After calling them from the hospital, they gladly volunteered to pick us up at the airport and host us, even giving us their bed! Their bedroom would become my room for the next two months! What a testimony of brotherly love! They have been so encouraging to me; believing God with me for my healing. Every week they cheered me on when I got my test results. Pat gladly drove me back and forth each week. And on the weekends she and Bob would take me to see the sights in Washington, DC. What a great blessing they were! I knew I was where God wanted me.

Along with Dr. Townsley, I had a whole team of doctors on my case—including world renowned Dr. Neil Young. (Dr. Young's research developed the standard of care treatment for A.A. accepted and used by the medical world.) All the staff and medical providers have been absolutely amazing. They're so compassionate and caring, many of them Christians. Several chaplains visited me as well. What a blessing to be able to encourage them as they encouraged me. I have been so blessed!



my
husband
is one of my greatest blessings
from God. His love is a gift
that I open every day.

I would be remiss if I did not mention how supportive Gerry has been throughout this ordeal. While carrying such a heavy burden of not knowing if I only had a few months to live, trying to find out what to do about my illness, along with the financial burden it brought (without health insurance), he has managed to care for me so beautifully. He took over all the household responsibilities, put other ministry aside and totally focused on me. Our son-in-law, Azarja, eventually joined Renee and the girls. And together with Gerry, they have done

so many repairs to our home (and theirs), completely remodeling some areas, and making sure there is no mold or fungus (which would make me ill). Renee and Azarja also organized volunteers to help. How especially loved I have felt these past few months.

In the midst of everything, our daughter Anna delivered her first baby 6 weeks early and Renee suffered a miscarriage at 4 months along. In the same week, Anna was rushed to the hospital hemorrhaging due to part of the placenta being left behind after her delivery. You can imagine, as a mom who is very close to her girls, how difficult it was for me not to be with them through their sufferings. But through it all God has given me a peace and a joy I have never known before. I've come to know more intimately the Shepherd who walks beside you as you pass through the valley of the shadow of death.

What the enemy meant for evil, God has definitely meant for good. He has been so close to me and assured me He is in control. He is doing a very deep work in me, preparing me for greater things, greater service with Gerry – a more fruitful life. From the first night in the hospital, I've had complete assurance – come what may – whether I live or die – there is only victory for me.

I had the joy of returning home for 3 weeks to spend time with Renee and her family. What joy to hold them all in my arms again! Here they had come home to be with me and I was whisked away so quickly. Why had God brought them home only to send me off to Maryland? Was it coincidence or God? Renee had not picked the date for her flights home; they were chosen by her travel agent. Had she not returned when she did, we wouldn't have gone to the conference—would not have heard of NIH or the trial at that critical time when my life was hanging in the balance.

At the beginning of August I returned to NIH for my 3 month evaluation which included another bone marrow biopsy. The results – **no abnormal cells!** This is amazing and means I am not progressing into MDS (another more severe bone marrow failure disease) or AML (severe form of leukemia). While I've responded amazingly to treatment, this is an ongoing condition. I still have 3 months of treatment ahead and will need to monitor my blood levels for the rest of my life. Please continue to keep me in your prayers. I will be returning to NIH for my 6 month evaluation Nov. 4th. I am believing God to heal me of this disease.

We thank God for His provision. While the treatment at NIH is free, treatment at home isn't. As you might imagine, we are facing high medical bills from the previous three hospitalizations. Plus I need to have my blood tested weekly with very specific and expensive tests. We are confident He will provide.

I am so thankful to each one who has responded to our emails and Facebook updates. Your words of encouragement and prayers have meant so very much to me. They are literally carrying me through this. I am thankful for every gift – Bible, CDs, books, care packages, stuffed animals, candy, flowers, balloons, cards, hospital visits, help at home and finances. Everything! You are such a blessing!



Family Re-union



Our newest grand-daughter (Jordan Debra Fry --5 months old) has just recently been taken off oxygen. Born six weeks premature, after a tough but quick delivery for Anna, we thank God that Jordon is a healthy and happy baby. We were so blessed to meet her for the first time in July when Anna and David flew down from Colorado to be with our whole family. What a time we all had (11 of us) squeezed into our 67 foot mobile home. Another one of those “God’s perfect timing” events! How we treasure these special family times together! The days flew by way too quickly



Reflections from Gerry

As you can imagine, the thought I might lose my wife to this disease weighed heavy on me. We've been married 33 years now and have been through a lot together. It was hard trying to imagine my life without my best friend. We truly are "in love" and love saying: "I love us!" Through this trial, I feel we've drawn closer to the Lord as well as to each other. His presence is more real than ever.

You know, I had my own medical wake-up call in July. I found a lump on my body that seemed to be growing. I didn't want to alarm Denise with all she's facing. So I kept it to myself for a couple weeks. The only thing I thought it must be was a tumor. I guess with the cancer patients I've run across and all my reading on it, I've had it on my mind. Well during those 14 days as I contemplated my future (or lack of it) I realized how really brief my time on earth is. It's not that I'm terrified of death or don't appreciate the thought of Heaven, but I don't want to check out prematurely either. I want to do all I can here in this cruel world to bring the GOOD NEWS of Jesus to as many hurting people as I can. Matthew 9:36 has greatly touched my heart this past year seeing how Christ was moved with compassion for suffering humanity.

BTW, I have a hernia.

Ministry News

Tactic Guatemala

I really enjoyed my dental mission's class in Guatemala in February. I travelled with a team from Canada (a doctor, dentist and a nurse). They were associated with Impact Ministries Canada who have had a ministry there for many years. They have founded five Christian schools (with over 2000 students if I recall correctly). I trained a Canadian physician and nurse along with three Guatemalans involved in full-time ministry. Impact has a new and very impressive medical clinic that will now also be used for dentistry. Each of these five students—both the Canadians and Guatemalans were a joy to train. They have true servant hearts and wonderful attitudes. What especially blessed me were the wonderful hugs I got from the kids at the school we visited. What precious little ones! If you are interested in becoming a sponsor of a needy child, check this link: <http://www.impactministries.ca/ChildSponsorship.aspx>



Oaxaca, Mexico

Within days of my return from Guatemala, I left for the mountains of southern Mexico to supervise my dental trainees from To Every Tribe Mission. I was thankful for my friend Gary Fenwick (who lives in southern Mexico) for assisting me. He supervised the students freeing me up to do tooth extractions. Gary did my course about 10 years ago and helps me with training from time to time. We had about six trainees who did very well overall. It was also good to re-connect with Dr. Alajandra who joined us on this trip. She's a Mexican physician living in Mexico City. She herself had taken my course around the same time Gary did when she lived here in Matamoros. Not holding a Mexican license, I normally do extractions only in cases of serious infection and pain, unless we have a Mexican doctor with us. Last year in Oaxaca I had a serious complication with an extraction and was glad a doctor was with us.

Institute of Biblical Community Development (formerly of John Brown U)

In light of Denise's illness, I wasn't sure if I should leave her to teach this course in OK. After discussing it, we decided I should go. This was my fifth year teaching at IBCD. I sense that the director, Dr. Kim (from S Korea) and I have grown closer over time. Our ministries truly complement each other. This was our largest class to date with 12 mission oriented students including several from Africa and Asia. I was joined by Dr. Paul Yee, a dentist from Baltimore. This was his third year assisting me. I would not have accepted such a large number of students without him. He is a great encouragement to me and truly respects and appreciates our course. He said, "Gerry, I want you to know that you can count on me coming to assist you in these classes for the next 10 years." That's commitment! Check out these photos from their website: http://www.ibcd.net/index.php?mid=en_gallery&page=7



Continuing Education

I found an excellent website where I can earn online continuing education credits for maintenance of my dental therapy license. I talked with the registrar of my dental association and was pleased to hear they have approved this site. Dentalcare.com offers more than 150 CE courses. I completed my first for 3 credits. This is a big help as it reduces the time and expense involved attending dental conferences. Thank you Lord!

Next Dental Class

My next dental class is scheduled for January and may be my largest yet. It will be at the Center for Pioneer Church Planting in Los Fresnos, TX with field trips to Mexico.

Book Project

As you know, I published a book, *Hope Beyond Hell* in 2007 and revised it in 2010. It has been read by thousands now in many countries. Though its main topic is judgment, it is really about God's character and love. It draws people closer to God and fills their hearts with peace and joy. It has been translated into Dutch and Spanish and the abridged edition into Swedish. I would like it to be simpler, concise, practical and comprehensive all rolled into one. That's a tall order. Please pray for me as I work on this—for God's inspiration and guidance. I believe He is giving me a window at this time to focus on this.

Thank you!

This has been a challenging time for our family. We have received much encouragement and support from friends, ministry partners and family. Denise and I are so grateful to each one of you who have touched our lives in one way or another. We thank God for you. Your continued prayers and support are so appreciated. May the Lord richly bless you and your loved ones in every way!

Thank You,

Gerry and Denise

Financial support and correspondence may be sent to:

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