



BLUES NEWS...

An official publication of Concordia Deaconess Conference – Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod (CDC). Distributed six times a year, it serves our members by circulating devotional thoughts and articles, professional submissions, and member announcements.

Print subscriptions for non-members are \$9 for six issues. Digital subscriptions are free of cost. All subscription inquiries and submissions can be directed to our newsletter editor Mary Moerbe at editor.bluesnews@deaconesslcms.org or Trinity Lutheran Church PO Box 545 Blackwell, OK 74631-0545.

OUR CONFERENCE

Concordia Deaconess Conference is a free association of certified and LCMS rostered deaconesses, who subscribe to and live by the confessional position of the LCMS and who hold membership in a congregation or partner church of the same. As a Recognized Service Organization of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, CDC works to provide opportunities for spiritual, personal, and professional growth and fellowship for deaconesses and support for diaconal service in Christ.

Donations for the work of the conference, a 501(c)(3) organization, may be mailed to Kim Schave at Saint Paul Lutheran Church 5433 Madison Rd Cincinnati, OH 45227-1507.

Vol. 24, No.5—September
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CANCER

- A History of Cancer . . . 1
- Pero Somos del Señor! . . . 2
- I Will See Her Later . . . 3
- My Journey Is Not Over . . . 4

FROM THE EDITOR: A HISTORY OF CANCER

I was very young when I first overheard a conversation about cancer. They were talking about my grandmother and I was very confused. I could not tell which grandma they were talking about and I could not remember anybody seeming sick. What I knew is that I was very, very scared.

I did not want to talk about it. I did not want to ask questions. Even then “cancer” seemed to be an ancient, mysterious, and very deadly expression.

It turns out it is an ancient fight, fraught with frustration and losses. Cancer has been recorded throughout history. The oldest known description is from Egypt and dates back to around 3000BC— nearly 1000 years before Abram was called by God! The description is found in something called the Edwin Smith Papyrus, an ancient Egyptian textbook on medicine and surgery. It concludes that the disease has no treatment.

The famous Greek physician Hippocrates (460-371 BC), who is often called the father of Western medicine, himself studied cancer and described the disease with the terms *carcinosis* and *carinoma*. A Roman physician, Celsus (28-50 BC) later translated the Greek term into *cancer*. Another Roman physician, Galen, used the word *oncos*, which is Greek for swelling, hence, oncologists.

The theories and practices of Hippocrates and Galen dominated medicine for the next two thousand years. Though they did perform surgeries to remove tumors, too often the tumors grew back. Cancer was deemed incurable. Research and thought went into areas considered more promising. In a very literal sense, cancer was a problem the Hippocratic oath had no answer for.

It was not until far later that treatment in the form of surgery proved more successful. Beginning in the fifteenth century, autopsies began to shed light onto the human body and its internal workings. In that time of medical exploration, a Scottish surgeon in the sixteenth century named John Hunter (1728-1793) suggested that if a tumor had not yet spread, “There is no impropriety in removing it.” Thanks be to God that such developments were made! Another century later anesthesia allowed operations to improve and become more frequent.

So many of our basic tools of medicine did not exist! Yet thousands of men and women have done their best in their vocations to prolong life and seek healing. It was not until the nineteenth century that the modern microscope could be used to study diseased tissue! Diagnosis became more precise than ever and a pathologist could tell the surgeon whether the operation has completely removed the cancer.

There is much more to do. Thousands more dedicate themselves to fight cancer in the medical field. By us there are more prayers to be said. There is day after day of life to be lived by faith and not by sight.

God has not left us. Even as we await His perfect solution of life everlasting, He sends us one breath after another. He sends doctors, researchers— knowingly or not, pursuing God’s will of life—and loved ones who simply love and serve as they are able. What can we do? Accept God’s gifts as He gives them. Thank God for the infinite mercy shown in Christ. Walk by faith into the opportunities for good works that God grants us.

Cancer has devastating statistics. The lifetime probability of developing cancer for men is 1 in 2. For women that statistic is 1 in 3. Though it is not the death sentence it once was, cancer is still a haunting and fearful presence. A hidden foe, it sneaks up on us, whether in our person or through another. But it does not win. It does not have the final say. Christ is the victor; He is the final and ultimate Word; and He has said, “Take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33).

Mary J. Moerbe

*History found here:

<http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerBasics/TheHistoryofCancer/index>

“HIS MERCY ENDURES
FOREVER”

Ruth Ann Endicott

Every day I realize and give thanks for God’s mercy which is available to me through Jesus’ blood and righteousness. However, I was made even more aware of God’s mercy when I experienced God’s mercy four and a half years ago during the critical time in which I was diagnosed with breast cancer and underwent a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery.

God’s mercy was evident in that this occurred after I was retired from my Call as a Deaconess in Seattle and my husband and I were moved and settled in our retirement home in northwest Montana.

God’s mercy was evident that even though the diagnosis was breast cancer, it was very, very early Stage One breast cancer and the “markers” were all favorable.

God’s mercy was evident when we were made aware of a young breast cancer surgeon who was practicing at the regional hospital 123 miles from our home. She had the latest, important information as to what my options were. After surgery I did not require chemotherapy or radiation.

God’s mercy was evident when my oncologist later said, “If your cancer had been found any earlier, it would not have been cancer.”

God’s mercy was evident in the cancer-preventative drug that I only have to take once a day for five years and which has not shown any side effects.

Cont. on p. 3 sidebar



One of the particular things I cherish most about growing up and now serving in the Atlantic District is the camaraderie as well as the shared struggle between the churches, workers, and serving saints. This is especially true in the churches that dwell within urban contexts. A bond is formed when struggles are shared and worked through whether they are theological, financial, emotional, physical, or whatever other distresses our sinful world throws at us.

The apostle Paul spoke of this in His letter to the Philippians (1:27, 29-30): “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ... For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.” It should be of no surprise that when one congregation or member of the Body is suffering, others also indirectly suffer. This reality was felt by many, and especially roused in me when one of the most beloved servants in the Atlantic District was diagnosed with cancer.

Her name: Rosa Cruz-Molina. Her title: Catechist (Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bronx, New York.) Her message: Christ. Her spirit: at rest with the Lord, and remembered by those she served. Catechist Cruz-Molina was a positive presence in my life as a young minority woman growing up in the church. Though we were members of different congregations, the Lord arranged it so that we would cross paths often at different church and district events. Catechist Cruz-Molina always had a smile, an encouraging Word from

the Lord, and an unparalleled zeal for service to her Savior.

Little did I know my interactions with Catechist Cruz-Molina were early formational contexts for my current and growing deaconess identity. Being able to see a woman serve God and instruct others in His Word without usurping the Office, or a distasteful hunger for recognition, while still living as a poised and assertive woman of God was quite inspirational to this young city girl!

After being diagnosed with cancer, Catechist Cruz-Molina’s joy and zeal did not change, although she could not serve in the ways she always had. I remembered Paul’s urging that we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. The Lord used Rosa Cruz-Molina to embody those words to me, as she suffered through the pain, hurt, and agony of the afflictions of cancer. Cancer was in our midst, but it had no power over this servant of God!

One of my final memories of Catechist Cruz-Molina is from my deaconess internship year when I made a special visit to New York from Baltimore for the commissioning and installation of my sister deaconess and friend, Raquel Rojas. It was during the communion part of the service, and Catechist Cruz-Molina, in usual form, was fervently singing out praises to our God. She had a microphone on (though it was rare that you needed any amplifiers to hear her!) and we were singing the

*WE BELONG TO GOD...PERO
SOMOS DEL SEÑOR!*

JANINE BOLLING

bilingual hymn, “When We are Living/Pues Si Vivimos.”

As I looked at her, her frame was smaller than I’d remembered and her hair shorter, but Christ’s message of what cancer looks like in our midst was bigger than ever: we are *His* whether dying or living! Here are the words of that hymn:

WHEN WE ARE LIVING

When we are living, it is in Christ Jesus, And when we’re dying, it is in the Lord. Both in our living and in our dying, We belong to God. We belong to God.

PUES SI VIVIMOS

Pues si vivimos, Para él vivimos Y si morimos para él morimos. Sea que vivamos o que muramos, somos del Señor, somos del Señor.

(1983 Abingdon Press: Eslinger, Escamilla and Lockwood tr. and text)

Rosa Cruz-Molina was a teacher, role model, and joyful servant. Her faith in Christ allowed her to face cancer boldly, and to be an example of Christ’s hands and feet in the lives of those she served. Her evident love for the Lord is far surpassed by His love for her and for us, all his children! Cancer comes and goes in the lives of many. It also comes and stays. Whatever situation we find ourselves or those we serve and love in, we can be assured that we belong to Him. Yes, cancer is in our midst, but it has no power over the children of God!

Janine Bolling



I WILL SEE HER LATER

Jane Obersat

Cancer. It still makes me shutter. When I hear mention of cancer, having lost so many family members both young and old to this ravenous disease, it is taboo to speak of it. And yet, through this tribulation, God has granted strength of character to those suffering. This is what truly defines one's faith in Christ. The first person that comes to mind is my would-be mother-in-law, Ruth, and her battle with cancer.

Ruth was my pastor's mother and a person of great faith for me, as she was to so many people whom she came to know. Her witness to Christ helped lead me to the church and later my vocation. She encouraged me in my faith, strengthened me in my convictions, and supported me in my studies. She never told me what to do; she only suggested. We poured over many of the world's problems over a cup of tea. She was my friend and mentor.

After I became a member of the church, I applied to be a missionary in Russia. Ruth supported me in this decision and even promised to visit me in Siberia. Unfortunately it was not to be. She was feeling very weak and yet the doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong.

By the time I came back to the United States and had started my master's degree, she finally got the diagnosis: pancreatic cancer had metastasized into her lungs and vital organs. She had only a few months left and asked me to come see her.

I drove the six hours to her home to spend the weekend with her, to talk and listen. It was the last time I saw her. Later, when I spoke to her on the phone, I knew that her earthly time was drawing near.

The last thing that we said to one another was "I'll see you later" with the knowledge that it wouldn't be on this side of heaven.

Her faithful witnessing to me and others will be remembered by so many whose lives she touched. I consider it an honor to have known her and cannot help but think of her when we partake of the Lord's Supper. She is on the other side of the aisle with all the saints. I will see her later.

Jane Obersat



"HIS MERCY" cont.

God's mercy was evident through the prayer support of my husband, father (now deceased), children and grandchildren, brothers and sisters, other family, friends and church members. Besides prayer, their support evidenced itself in so many ways: phone calls, cards, gifts and so on.

God's mercy is continually evident in the modern advances in cancer research and the treatments that are available, especially when cancer is discovered early. Women: please do have a yearly mammogram if you are over the age of 40 or as recommended by your physician.

God's mercy is evident in that a diagnosis of cancer is not the "death sentence" that it was some years ago. There is a huge awareness of the need to support cancer patients and to work tirelessly to support cancer research.

God's mercy is evident in the "peace that passes understanding" that a Christian realizes is a part of God's great grace and mercy because Jesus is our Redeemer. Jesus is always our merciful and shepherding Savior.

Ruth Ann Endicott

CDC SCHEDULE

October 15th—Deadline for November issue: Ministry to the Unmarried, Teens and Adults

December 15th—Deadline for January issue: Family Ministry

June 19-22, 2013—Conference in Fort Wayne, Ind.

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¿Quién nos separará del amor de Cristo? ¿Tribulación, o angustia, o persecución, o hambre, o desnudez, o peligro, o espada? Como está escrito: Por causa de ti somos muertos todo el tiempo; Somos contados como ovejas de matadero. Antes, en todas estas cosas somos más que vencedores por medio de aquel que nos amó. Por lo cual estoy seguro de que ni la muerte, ni la vida, ni ángeles, ni principados, ni potestades, ni lo presente, ni lo por venir, ni lo alto, ni lo profundo, ni ninguna otra cosa creada nos podrá separar del amor de Dios, que es en Cristo Jesús Señor nuestro.



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extra cross pins (\$10) or
insignias (\$7) for themselves
from Heidi Bishop at 101 N.
Spring St, Elgin, IL 60120.*MY JOURNEY IS NOT
OVER*

Reneé Young

"Each time he said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.'" 2 Cor. 12:9a (NLT). These words, in various translations have been my favorite Bible passage for a long time. Never in my wildest imagination did I realize just how powerful Jesus' grace is until I traveled the road call Breast Cancer.

I got the first phone call September 24, 2010. They needed me to come back and have a more detailed mammogram followed by an ultrasound because something didn't look right in my left breast. I knew immediately. Immediately. I have breast cancer. Yet I had a peace about it. I knew that however things would progress, Jesus would be by my side through it all.

People were optimistic, telling me that many times people get called back and nothing is wrong. In fact, previously I have had to go back for additional images. I knew though. That day in September I started singing the Cares

Chorus and I have not stopped. I sang through each testing procedure. I sang it October 15, 2010 when I was in NYC and finally heard those words, "You have breast cancer." Through surgeries, chemo, complications, and losing my job, I have been singing the Cares Chorus. As helpful as that is, it is not the things that I did throughout the journey, but what Jesus did on the cross that strengthened me and carried me along this journey. I never had anything to fear. Jesus would heal me spontaneously, or through medical interventions, or in death.

Jesus helped me far more than I ever imagined. I would have chemo on a Monday and then give myself an injection 24 hours later. Within six hours I would start to feel ill. As I crawled into bed and curled up in a ball to face four horrific days I would pray, "Jesus, I can't do this. Take the brunt of the side effects for me." Just as Jesus took the brunt of

God's anger at my sin, He took the brunt of the side effects. I have very little memory of those worst days, but I can tell you the peace I felt lying there curled up in a ball. Peace that passes all understanding. Jesus gave me the strength to continue working, the strength to face treatment after treatment and surgery after surgery. His care goes even further. Knowing in His omniscience that I would be facing this, He kept the promise of Romans 8:38 and set things in motion when I lost my Call providing insurance policies that kept us from bankruptcy.

My journey is far from being over. There are currently no signs of cancer in my blood work (Thanks be to God!), but I have to be on oral chemo for five years and my oncologist informed me that they never say "cancer free." Jesus died and rose almost 2000 years ago in order that I would be reconciled with God the Father. I get to live forever in the presence of God, cancer free. Nothing is more comforting than that. Sola Deo.

Reneé Young

