

Day 4 of my recovery from a stroke.

Thursday, February 9, 2023

I am very grateful for all the prayers and well wishes and love that I have felt. Janelle has been wonderful at keeping up with what's going on with me, including some fun things to tell you. I thought you might like to hear from me.

I'm using voice to text because I can't control the amount of pressure I apply with my right hand so it's very difficult to text and scroll on my tablet. Thank goodness for technology.

I slept well last night, except for all the times they woke me up to take my blood. I'm glad I have some left.

I had a good breakfast of French toast, eggs, sausage, and lots of coffee. I've seen my cardiologist and the hospital doctor. I've been approved for rehab and I'm looking forward to getting started.

I've gained a lot of abilities back in a very short time. This morning I spent an hour picking up a Styrofoam cup with coffee in my right hand and trying not to squeeze the cup. I would pick it up in my left hand lightly and look at it and then try and duplicate it on the right side. I had some success and didn't spill anything. Praise God, it was a lot better than yesterday when I had to change my hospital gown because it was so messy.

I am walking well with a walker and can take care of myself in the bathroom, but I haven't had a shower yet and I don't know when that will be. I can't do that by myself. The good news is I have had a very slight feeling of pressure in different places on my right side. Occasionally I could feel soft touches but not very often. I can't feel any needles when they take blood, or prick my finger for diabetes testing which I don't have, thank God. My blood pressure has come down to 137/80 range which is moving in the right direction.

The doctors, nurses, therapists, aids, ER workers, EMTs have all been wonderful. I so appreciate all of you in the congregation who work in the medical field. It's truly a holy calling. I look forward to meeting the people at the rehab center and gaining skills. The visitation hours are limited so once again we ask you to keep up with my progress online. It's mostly to help the hospital staff so they're not overwhelmed by what would be, I'm sure, a hundred visitors. I can feel your prayers and your love, and it touches me more than you know.

Here's what you can pray for. I believe in miracles, so pray my feeling comes back on my right side. In the meantime, pray for me to learn how to use what I have so

I can fully function. I want to be able to dress myself. I want to be able to take care of myself in terms of hygiene. I want to be able to drive. Pray that I can play guitar. It's a good thing my left hand wasn't affected, there's always a silver lining. And I want to go to Israel and Egypt on February 28 through March 14.

Lastly, I want to tell you about my attitude throughout this whole time. From the very beginning there was never a time when I was anxious. There was never a time when I've been worried. I have been completely at peace trusting in your prayers but also my theme verse.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your needs be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

I stopped writing for a minute because housekeeping came into the room. It was the first time since my Calvary caretakers have been so good at keeping my room clean. Her name was Gloria. After a moment or two she told me she paused at the door when she first came in because she saw the presence of God in this room and an aura all about me. I realized then I was being visited by an angel. I immediately asked her to pray for me knowing that is why she was sent. She changed her gloves and came over and placed her hand on my shoulder, held my hand and prayed the most beautiful prayer invoking the Father to bless his child and to guard over him and bring him complete healing. She believed with all her heart that God could do this and thanked God ahead of time. I felt overwhelmed with the presence of the spirit and for the first time since I came here, I began to weep. I'm still very emotional.

We entertain angels unaware to bring us a word from above that everything will be alright no matter what and that God moments are miracles within themselves. Thank you so much for your support, for prayers and for your love.

Day 5 of my recovery from a stroke.

Friday, February 10, 2023

Thank you for all the well wishes, the prayers, and the love. I read the comments on all the Facebook pages and couldn't help but notice the diverse crowd of people I attract! I'm truly grateful for all the ways in which you touched me yesterday.

Day five really began with my being admitted to the rehab center. My son Joshua followed the van in my car bringing all kinds of things he bought that I needed. That's what you get for only having pastored up clothes. I think he liked taking care of his old man. It's about time!

I was greeted by caregivers, all of whom offered optimistic words with one saying God told her I would receive my feeling again and go to Jerusalem. Deirdre, my aide, wore a Saint Anne of Carmel medallion. She was the mother of Mary, mother of our Lord. A good sign.

I want to thank all of you who encouraged me to watch The Chosen which I binged on until about 10:00 o'clock at night when I finally had to go to bed. The series began with one of my favorite verses and will be my theme verse for today. Isaiah 43:1 Fear not. I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine.

On a new bed, in a new place, with new restrictions, this verse was a constant. I belong to the Lord. I am not anxious. I am not worried. I am at peace.

They are not letting me get out of bed by myself until I get evaluated so I had to ring the nurse numerous times. The first time was at 1:00 AM. Deirdre came to help me. When I came out of the bathroom she asked about the city of David which she had heard me talking about. I told her all about it and where it was in relation to the old city. This led to her asking about the story of David and so we got into Bathsheba and the death of Uriah and the word of the prophet Nathan and David writing Psalm 51.

I think I realized at that point that I had been standing with my walker and talking with Deidra for a good half hour. She was very chatty.

It gets better. She said can you pray for my husband. His name is David and he's in prison. I said certainly will. We have a prison ministry called Kairos; it goes into the prisons to minister to men. I can have them pray for David too. She looked at me surprised and then she said "listen, listen, love, love". She knew about Kairos.

So I took her hands and like Gloria did for me yesterday I gave thanks to God for the kindness of a stranger and I prayed God would meet her every need and find a way to reunite her with her husband.

She helped me into bed and then I said you know I don't see your name on the board as my aide. Oh yes, I don't go by Deirdre. My husband calls me Angel.

Entertaining angels unaware, again.

Day 6 of my recovery from stroke.

Saturday, February 11, 2023

My verse today has been one of my favorites since being a camp counselor at Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp, Lakeside Mt.

Micah 7: 8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, for when I fall I shall rise; When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.

I find great comfort knowing that I am never alone and that in the darkness of night when I wake up and can't feel my right arm and it takes everything I have to push down with my left arm to help my right side turn over the Lord is supporting me, and who knows may be giving me a little push. :)

I had a full day of therapy with Peter the OT and Jesus the PT. I will not be going to speech therapy because I scored a 29 out of 30 and truthfully, I never lost my speech, thank God. I just had to figure out how to speak with a Novocain mouth.

I keep meeting wonderful people of faith in this profession. I felt a little awkward in the PT room because so many people have such a hard road ahead and mine is relatively simple learning how to work without sensory feeling and trying to get sensory feeling back.

I do a lot of work on my own in my room, like picking up things of different sizes and widths and putting them down again, slapping my face until I'm silly (ha, ha) to stimulate the outside of my cheeks, using a swab inside my mouth to stimulate the nerves, trying to touch parts of my right side that are numb, so I know where they are. All these things are helping my brain relearn what it already knows.

I have a free day today because I worked sessions yesterday. I have more sessions tomorrow morning and then free time in the afternoon. I just discovered I can watch the Super bowl for free on Fox sports so that is my plan.

Of course, no update from me would be complete without some sort of God incident. I binged on The Chosen again. There were all kinds of wonderful healing stories; the leper on the road, Peter's mother-in-law, the man who was paralyzed and lowered through the roof. I took all of them as a sign that faith could make me well along with the power of the Holy. Peter the OT said it's a matter of listening to God who is always talking to us. If we pay attention, we can hear him.

It had been a long day, so I decided to go to bed a little early. Since I didn't need the restroom I scooted over to my bed without calling the nurse and went to sleep. I woke up in the darkness to the sound of soft singing. The door opened and it was a

nurse. I've just come to see if you need anything. I'll be here all night. My name is Angel.

Of course, it is. Entertaining Angels unaware or maybe they are sent to entertain us.

Day 7 of my recovery from a stroke.

Sunday, February 12, 2023

Last night I went to sleep using a prayer I saw on The Chosen as part of the Jewish practice at the close of the day. "Blessed are you, Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, who gives sleep to our eyes and rest to our eyelids." This morning when I woke up, I used a Jewish morning prayer. "Blessed are you, Lord our God, Sovereign of the universe, for the rest you have given me through the night, returning to me the breath that restores body and spirit."

It's not that different from Luther's practice of a morning and evening prayer. It's a shame he didn't realize how much he had in common with his Jewish brethren.

I was on my own most of the day, so I had a lot of time to think. There is a scene in The Chosen where the disciples are asking all kinds of questions and finally Jesus holds up his hands and tells them to be quiet and then he says if I must explain everything to you whenever I do something different it's going to be a very annoying time for you and for me. I guess that's why I have simply accepted this. I don't want to annoy Jesus or myself.

Proverbs 14:30 "A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body..." My heart has been peaceful throughout this entire test. I've decided to call it a test rather than an ordeal, even though there are parts of it that might be called troubling. I really wish my right hand was working better and I didn't have numbness in my arm and the right side of my face. You can pray about that.

You were my "angels unaware" yesterday. I went back and read and reread all the things you wrote on multiple platforms – Facebook, text messages, emails, no tick tocks, but there's still time. :) It is an incredibly diverse group, church members, of course, bartenders, servers, pub church people, family, strangers, classmates, former interns, pastors, VDC folk, friends, and even former students from Toledo. I'm always surprised by the apparent effect I've had because I don't think about it very much. I just kind of do what I do and am grateful the Lord can use a broken vessel such as myself. Now broken in more ways than one!

I wish I could have joined you online for worship this morning, but I had three hours of therapy starting at 9:00 AM. I'm pooped! I'm still doing a lot of work on my own and hope that will speed up the process. My new nurse this morning (I'm going to call her Angel) said to me "I hear you're going to Israel. I have no doubt the Lord will make it happen." I'm going to take her at her word, trust your prayers, work hard in therapy, and trust the Lord. "A peaceful of heart leads to a healthy body."

Entertaining angels unaware...

Day 8 of my recovery from a stroke.

Monday, February 13, 2023

“... suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope and hope does not disappoint...” Romans 5:3-4

Your comments yesterday were a source of great comfort on what was perhaps the most difficult day so far of this journey. I'll tell you about it in a minute but first in a strange way these are the things that led to it.

I watched the worship service at Calvary later in the day and sang along. I loved the pictures of the annual meeting, especially the meeting of the Little Lutherans. I felt God's presence coming from my dear friend Leah's blessing party, as she prepares for yet another surgery at the Mayo Clinic. I was humbled, and moved to tears, to think that she would pray for me when she already has faced so much and has so much more to endure ahead of her. My troubles are slight and momentary compared to hers. I enjoyed seeing one of my favorite artists Sarah Carrino and the folks at pub church and appreciated Pr. Kristen's prayer. I loved seeing the new leadership like V take on the sound. Made my heart glad.

But here's what made it difficult... I wasn't there and I desperately wanted to be. I'm still at peace with all this. I'm not worried and I don't have anxiety. But if you know me you know that I like to be in control. You know that I don't accept help very well. You know that I cherish my independence. I like to do what I want and when I want to do it. And I like to keep busy. Very busy. I've had to stop, slow down, and deal with new limitations placed on me by a body that is not fully functional and one that I can't fix overnight.

However, in a strange way, watching events function without me fits my idea of what leadership should be. I've always thought that if I did my job correctly, I should be able to walk away and places like Calvary and Kyrie wouldn't skip a beat because I had put good things in place to function without me. And that appears to be true, which is good. In some ways I was standing in the way of what Kyrie is becoming, not that I wasn't important, just that I had done what I needed to do.

But all of that gave me a spirit of melancholy. I want to get back in the game. I want this to be over. I want to be better. I want to get back to my life, well maybe not all of it. :)

I had a fitful night. I couldn't get comfortable and for the first time since this started, I had pain. Pain that wouldn't go away no matter how I turned. During one of the long watches of the night, about the time that a week ago I realized something was wrong, I heard a voice in my head. A song I haven't thought of for a long time... “and in my hour of darkness she is standing right in front of me speaking words of wisdom, let

it be.” It’s a new day, with new challenges and new opportunities and through it all my Angel will sing to me, let it be.

Telling you about the way I felt yesterday also gives me a chance to acknowledge that this attitude of peace and acceptance, this lack of anxiety and worry, does not come from me or frankly, from my faith. It is a gift, plain and simple. As the scripture says, “...we carry this treasure in jars of clay to show this all-surpassing power comes from God and not from us.”

Let it be.

Day 9 of my recovery from a stroke.

Tuesday, February 14, 2023

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13 is my dear friend Leah’s confirmation verse. I'm borrowing it as my verse for today. It's only fair since I lent her Philippians 4:5-6 for her blessing party.

I worked hard yesterday. First in the morning for over an hour and then three straight hours in the afternoon. OT, group, OT, and an hour of PT. The OT had me trying to do impossible things, some of which I managed to do. I'm quite proud of my kindergarten trace the alphabet letters sheet. I might frame it and hang in my office. :)

Some of the things were more difficult, like picking up small objects out of a bin of dry macaroni with my eyes shut (which would be impossible with my good hand) or trying to put tiny pegs in tiny holes. My hand coordination has a long way to go, but it is improving.

Group was a large gathering of every kind a disability you could imagine, some heartbreaking. I don't know all their names, but I've added the group to my prayers that God might do for them what God is doing for me. I realized from the beginning how fortunate I was not to have lost more. I was again moved by the ministry of the therapists, (that's what it is) their kindness, their attention to their patients, their laughter - in every way they make the unbearable more bearable.

After one day of melancholy, I'm back to my cheerful and optimistic self. I guess everyone's allowed one day of semi self-pity. Of course, it's hard to stay that way when you're surrounded by so much love and support and you witness minor miracles every day in all the angels unaware who make themselves visible through acts of mercy and kindness and love.

Unfortunately, I had another fitful night. I'm not sure why. I tried every position. I tried getting up. I tried sitting down. I tried walking around and then getting back in bed. Finally, I just laid it on the Lord and said I guess you want me to pray some more, so I raised the head of my bed up, leaned back, closed my eyes, and began to go through my long list of praises and petitions. When I opened my eyes a moment later, it was time to get up.

When in doubt, pray, and you'll be able to do all things through Christ who strengthens you including, apparently, going to sleep.

Angels unaware being made known in peaceful sleep.

Day 10 of my recovery from a stroke.

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

This verse is a past and a present tense for me. God has and is supplying every need I have, even those I didn't know I needed.

I made great gains yesterday in PT and OT. There is almost nothing that I cannot do now and though I still have limited feeling on my right side, I've been able to compensate and figure out how to use what I feeling I have.

I was up early with my door open when my OT Megan walked by. “You want to do some OT before breakfast?” She's as eager as I am to get as much back as I can, even though she often gives me impossible tasks to do. Even with my good hand. :)

As I said in a previous update, all this does not come naturally to me. I would normally try to figure out how to avoid going to rehab altogether and if I did have to go, how to escape it as quickly as possible. At any rate I would be very impatient and bored beyond belief.

I am giving all the glory to God that I have experienced complete contentment, peace, and the overwhelming sense of God's presence, especially in the people God has put on this path to journey with me. I think this experience will make me a better pastor (even though my career is almost over) because now I can relate on a different level to those who find themselves facing all manner of trials.

My dear friend, Leah Stanfield, came to visit and share what she experienced at her blessing party. I am in awe of her courage and strength and fortitude and faith. What I face is nothing compared to what she faces every day. We had a chance to reminisce about how we first met and her first coming to Kyrie pub church and how our relationship has deepened over the years. She accuses me of making her more religious, but I think it's the other way around.

Lastly, I want to share my experience with the group. I've talked about it before, but over the last few days the camaraderie and the sense that we're in this thing together that I experience in the hour sessions has had a profound impact on me.

While the staff knows I'm a pastor it's only become known to the group recently. Now they know that I plan to go to Israel and they are cheering me on.

Betty, who's having a serious surgery today, and will be in rehab for months, was in Israel after a tour of duty in Iraq. Before she left she said she was praying for me and she was confident that I would get back to Israel. Another Angel unaware named Betty.

Roger, fell during ice storm and broke his femur is having surgery later this week and will be in rehab for a while has said all along that he is praying I get back to Israel.

And just yesterday, one of the group stopped me and said, "I heard you're going to Israel. I'd love to go but I don't think it will happen, so you'll have to go for me."

In a way, Group is a lot like the experience of church. We are a community gathered around mutual loss of movement or function or memory or all three. We find mutuality in our communal need to care for and be cared for and are encouraged and strengthened by one another.

The group cheers on those who will be released soon as a sign that one day they too will be discharged. Hope springs eternal that through hard work, mutual support, and the grace of God all our needs are met.

Entertaining a group of angels of whom I am well aware.

Day 11 of my recovery from a stroke.

Thursday, February 16, 2023

The prayer(s) of the righteous (are) powerful and effective. James 5:16

Last week Thursday I wrote: Here's what you can pray for. I believe in miracles, so pray my feeling comes back on my right side. Pray for me to learn how to use what I have so I can fully function. I want to be able to dress myself. I want to be able to take care of myself in terms of hygiene. I want to be able to drive. Pray that I can play guitar. And I want to go to Israel and Egypt on February 28 through March 14.

I wanted to give a praise report for your righteous prayers which have been incredibly powerful and effective. I have learned to use what I have and even without feeling can fully function. I can dress myself including buttoning the only clothes I have – pastor clothes. :) I can tie my shoes if I should have to wear them. I can take care of myself in terms of hygiene. I can sort of strum on my guitar.

My feeling is coming back although it's nowhere near 100%. I am hoping to drive sometime next week, though some think that's too soon, so if you see a tiny red car sports car coming your way you might want to pull over. :)

My OT Megan and my PT Amanda both believe me when I say I'm going to Israel and Egypt. To that end they have been designing challenges that anticipate what I might face in the Holy Land. Amanda had me climb two whole flights of stairs to the second floor, just like I was going to the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem or climbing the stairs to Tel Megiddo. Megan designed an obstacle course outside that had me walk on uneven ground and go up and down curbs and around poles as if I were walking through the old city in Jerusalem. I think they are really having fun trying to find new ways to challenge me.

The very first song I wrote was when I was a camp counselor in Montana. It was 1972. I don't remember the whole song anymore, but I remember the first two lines. "I know there is a reason behind everything; I know, Lord, you're always there." Of course, those are the lyrics of a 16-year-old and a naive one at that, but in a real sense the unshakable, optimistic faith of that 16-year-old still lives in this 66-year-old stroke stricken body. I am confident that God is always there. Of that I have no doubt, even when the night is long and all you can do is endure the day.

But what about the reason behind everything? Maybe it's enough to believe that God knows even when we don't. Sometimes you can see the benefit, sometimes you can't. I know that this experience has strengthened my belief that God is at work amid setbacks and through challenging times. In an ironic twist it's given me a new lease on life by taking away my life as I knew it.

But what of those who truly suffer? I wish I knew. I think the best we can do is determine to get through tough times together and leave the rest to the Lord. It really is a matter of trust, which is a matter of faith, which is our source of hope.

God sends us angels so that we will be aware that God is present.

Day 12 of my recovery from a stroke.

Friday, February 17, 2023

“Strengthen the feeble hands; make firm the knees that give way. Say to those with fearful hearts, ‘be strong and do not fear...’” Isaiah 35:3-4

Isaiah 35 is one of my favorite chapters in the entire Hebrew scriptures. I've always used these verses as a metaphor for strengthening and supporting people during difficult times rather than a literal strengthening of feeble hands and steadying of unsteady knees. I'll never think of it that way again.

That's because I've seen the therapists make this verse come true time and time again during my short stay at Texas Rehabilitation. When a person can't move their arms or legs the therapist does it for them. They surround people with support, both physically and emotionally, and get frightened people to try things they thought they couldn't do. And through it all they show incredible compassion for the difficulties the patients are facing.

One woman had had all she could take yesterday during a PT session and just broke down sobbing. Someone went for Kleenex and two more therapists stepped up to put an arm around her shoulder. They spoke to her quietly and encouraged her and let her weep. Sometimes you just hit a wall, and you can't go any further and the only thing you can do is cry. In time she was ready to go again and continue trying to do what had been and still was, incredibly frustrating.

The group was in a good mood yesterday afternoon. There was a lot of conversation and laughter. Maybe because some of us are going home soon - I get discharged tomorrow at 11:00 AM, praise God! Or it might be because the weekend is almost here and we'll get a rest, or maybe it was just a day to laugh at our shared situation.

At some point OT Bob gave some advice for exercises at home. He finished his little talk by saying, “remember that stretching is really good for old people.” One of the old people said, “who you calling old?” Another one said, “Yeah, we're not old, we're vintage!” The human spirit is remarkable. Here we were in a circle of wheelchairs with all manner of ailments and challenges and deficiencies and yet we all had a good laugh. It truly is the best medicine.

Last night I had a setback. It started sometime around dinner. I had had a full day of OT and PT and walked by myself to my room. One of the staff joked with me, “are you on staff or are you a patient?” I laughed. I was feeling good. Sometime around dinner my ankle started to feel sore, like it was sprained. It started slowly, just a twinge, but then it got very noticeable so that I had to use the walker again just to be safe. I'll tell you the truth I felt a little deflated by it and wondered why it had happened,

especially now at the end when things have gone so well. Not quite a pity party, but I was close.

But then I thought, wait a minute, it's on my right side. I've not felt any pain in my limbs since I had the stroke, so at least I feel something. I'll take the pain if it means I can feel something. When Amanda came this morning to take me for PT, I showed her my ankle. We had another therapist come in and then the doctor. It became clear that the pain was very localized, like about the size of a dime at best. At first, they thought it could be a stress fracture but didn't know how that could have happened. They were going to order X-rays and then the doctor asked the magic question. Have you ever had gout?

I have never been so happy to have gout.

Here's to vintage friends who make us laugh, and gout that makes us glad because it's not a stress fracture. Not quite angels unaware, but close enough.

Day 13 of my recovery from a stroke.

Saturday, February 18, 2023

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Day 14 of my recovery from a stroke.

Sunday, February 19, 2023

“...it was good of you to share in my troubles. ...for even when I was in Thessalonica (Medical City and Texas Rehabilitation) you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.” the apostle Paul (Philippians 4:14,16)

13 days after suffering a mild stroke, I'm going home today. Well, first I'm going to get a buzzcut because I'm tired of my hair standing on end and not behaving. And then per Janelle I'm told I'm in need of a manicure and a pedicure. :)

Speaking of Janelle, I know I said a lot of nice things about her ministry in the annual report, but she has gone above and beyond anything I could imagine. I know many of you in the church have experienced Janelle in hyper mode, taking care of people, making sure that they are fully provided for, especially when they can't do it for themselves. It's what she does. I think it's a part of her DNA. Thank God I had Janelle to negotiate all the twists and turns of this misadventure. Speaking of entertaining angels unaware...

I was also blessed by a group of people that wish to remain “angels unaware”, but that I will thank profusely and with great humility when I see them. They took care of my dogs, spent hours cleaning my house, fixed plumbing, took care of my overgrown yard, basically all the things I should have done all along that I had let go for whatever reason. My house was a disaster and now it's not. I know I will weep when I walk through the front door because of their incredible, and I've been assured again and again, non-judgmental, kindness.

I know all of you want to help as well and do whatever you can. You have already done so much for me with your prayers, your well wishes, your concern, your letters, your love. I have read and reread your posts and your cards, especially during those dark nights when I couldn't sleep because of constant pain. I'm sure I would have given up if not for the grace of God and your support. I am blessed far beyond what I deserve.

I will need to be driven to different places while I have gout. I think it was God's way of keeping me out of that red sports car, and everybody safer on the road. :) Since I eat out every meal I wouldn't know where to begin to cook for myself anymore so Janelle has made a signup sheet for the days I'll be here before I go to Israel. I'll also need rides to the gym, to the bank, to rehab, and other places. Thank you for this service. The truth is I would much prefer driving myself but I know I have to learn to accept help and I'm working on it :)

I took a shower and dressed myself. It felt good to be pastored up again. Francis, my nurse's aide, came to take my tray and saw my clothes. "I thought you were a pastor, but I wasn't going to say anything. I knew there was something about you. I could feel the spirit every time I came into this room. I was ordained by T.D. Jakes in Columbus, OH, eight years ago."

"No," I said laughing out loud, "I went to seminary in Columbus, OH. Imagine that."

I told her the Lord had put something on my heart in the middle of the night and I asked her if she would confirm it. She said, "where two or three are gathered there I am in the midst of them, what did God say?"

God said I was supposed to pray for whoever is in room 132 from now on and make it a part of my everyday prayer and when God tells me I'm supposed to send an anonymous card that says I'm praying for you. What do you think?

Francis said, (in all seriousness) "that's a word from God, you better do it."

She came back briefly before I checked out and closed the door. She said God gave me a word for you. Then she quoted psalm 91, word for word, all 16 verses. I know better than to let an angel get away unaware and so I asked her to lay hands on me and pray for me. She prayed a powerful and moving prayer, evoking the Spirit, and quoting scripture. It felt like an altar call. When she finished, I was laughing and crying at same time. It was as Pentecostal as a Lutheran can get.

I've come to believe I needed this stroke to give me new life for the rest of my life by taking my old life away. It has made me more open to receive the kindness of strangers and friends, rather than doing all the giving. I have reconnected with that mystical presence of the Holy that I always see but don't always feel as intensely as I do now. Some of you are a little nervous about my preaching after this experience. :) To tell you the truth, so am I.

Entertaining one last "angel unaware" whose name is Francis.

Day 15 of my recovery from my stroke.

Monday, February 20, 2023

“...Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places... Psalm16:5,6a.

It is good to be home amidst familiar surroundings albeit much neater than when I left. It is a pleasant place. The dogs are happy and content, although they miss all the people coming and spoiling them.

I started the morning with the familiar routine of feeding dogs, making breakfast, and going to Starbucks. I went to my water aerobics class at L.A. Fitness and staff meeting. It was good to see everyone again and pick up where I left off even if I can't feel my right side, which means I can't use my pc without my right hand accidentally moving or deleting whole folders. :)

Today's update will be short, but I want to leave you with my God incident concerning Room 132 at Texas Rehabilitation.

Yesterday, I started my prayers for whoever is assigned to Room 132. I thought about the new occupant coming to that room for the first time in the same way that I did, not knowing what the future would hold, how long the stay would be, not knowing if recovery was even possible. I prayed for the things that sustained me: contentment, trust, and most of all, the peace that passes all understanding.

This morning I had a moment where I wondered if 132 could be connected to a bible verse. The only possibility I could think of was a psalm, so I looked up Psalm 13:2.

“How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?”

It turns out Psalm 13 has six verses. Four verses of questioning and lament followed by two verses of confident trust and praise. Sounds about right for the journey that is rehab.

God gives us words, like angels unaware, to give voice to our feeling.

Day 16 of my recovery from a stroke.

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

This will be my last update until I go to Israel and Egypt and start blogging about my trip.

Frankly, I'm just too busy to manage updates now that I'm back to semi normal. What with morning prayers including Room 132, Starbucks at 7 Am, LA Fitness, (I did my 30-lap routine this morning) getting back up to speed at church, getting ready for my trip, outpatient rehab, helping shop for the cafe, trying to squeeze in a nap, and then going out for dinner, there's not much time for reflective writing period.

This has been quite an adventure. To say it has been a spiritual experience doesn't even begin to come close to what it has meant to me personally. If you've been reading the updates, you know that God has been present in ways that I could not have anticipated, even though I generally believe that God works in mysterious ways all the time.

No, the remarkable thing has not been God at work or your incredible kindness or all the people who have been such a blessing to me. The remarkable thing has been my attitude, which is not my natural way of being by any stretch of the imagination. But I have fully embraced this new way of being. I find joy at every turn, I have absolute peace, I smile more and am more engaged. I am excited about what God is doing with this new me and will do through me and God knows what in the future.

As I said before, it took a stroke for God to give me a new life, for the rest of my life, by taking my old life away.

Thanks for being on this journey with me. I have read and reread your comments and treasure them in my heart. So as OT Bob said, "God is always speaking. You've just got to listen."

Look for angels. They are not as unaware as one might think.

Shalom, Shalom, Pr. Phil