

## Stories of Hope

Wow where do you start. I'm reading the bible through with my church, again. I always see something I didn't see the last time, isn't God good. In the old testament the people of Israel were so rebellious and God would allow them to go through some bad things. But it seemed God still had hope they would turn back to Him and they did and he would prosper them once again. I think that is where we are we've turned from the things of God which has brought much devastation upon our country. 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If My people who are called by My name would humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land". I lost my husband of 20 years almost 2 years ago and have brought my mother in to live with me. These 2 things are much of a burden but God is faithful and my hope is in Him because He knows the end of the story and what is best for me. Thanks for the opportunity to share. All is not lost only if you think it is. I love you.

Rhonda Richie Purchasing Agent  
St. Vincents East

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Every time a patient enters the doors of St. Vincent's, they have hope...Hope for a cure, hope to be relieved of pain, hope to have a little more time with their family. Every patient who goes home healed has renewed hope. Every new parent who takes home their newborn has hope for the future of their child. Every birth gives us all hope in the next generation. Hope is alive and well at St. Vincent's.

Susann Montgomery-Clark  
Director of Philanthropy

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I am the job coach at Jeremiah's Hope Academy; we have many wonderful stories to share. Jeremiah's Hope equips and empowers persons, who are vulnerable, for entry level healthcare positions. We had a very special student who was under the age of 21; she was a single mother with two children, had transportation problems but this young lady had a spirit of determination! She prayed, studied and made it through our academy. This young lady despite numerous deficits trained and became a patient care assistant. She came back and shared her story with the recent graduates of Jeremiah's Hope and is currently successfully employed and doing well.

In His Service,  
Sonya R. Williams

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I cannot believe that there is not one person living that does not have multiple stories of hope. I have a nephew, at age 16 who was paralyzed from the waist down in a terrible car crash. He is now 25 and plays for the University of Alabama wheelchair basketball team. He has traveled to Japan for the Olympics. Throughout this transition from accident to present our family experienced 3 episodes of attempted suicide, withdrawal from anyone close family or friends. My father had his 81st birthday in the MICU unit at St. Vincent's this year. He was admitted after suffering a stroke. We never expected to take him home. After 3 weeks in St. Vincent's, 2 weeks at Lakeshore Rehab and an additional 14 days in a nursing home he is back with us and his recovery progresses every day.

There is a key to the above two stories and all of the other stories of hope I have experienced in my life. Maybe Mr. Archibald is missing this key. He can find these and many more keys to hope in;

Romans 15:13

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Romans 5:2

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

1 Timothy 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.

My abounding hope comes from the knowledge of Jesus Christ in my life and knowing that without HIM in my life and without prayer, things would truly be hopeless.

Carol Burttram

Payroll Department

St. Vincent's Health System, Inc.

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I used to read John Archibald's column. Then when he wrote he didn't vote, I stopped reading. I could give him long lists of good things that people do but will include just one:

Every Saturday for the past 9 weeks, people from about 8 Lutheran Churches have come together to build a Habitat for Humanity House in the Western section of Birmingham. We are all strangers to the new homeowner, come from all walks of life, are made up of a variety of races & social backgrounds- yet it is a blessing for us to take the time to help someone have a new home even while it is a blessing to the new homeowner. And this is going on all over Birmingham!

Laura M. Noon, R.N.

Dial-A-Nurse

St. Vincent's Health System

Several years ago, an attractive young lady of 25 years of age was in an accident which left her with permanent spinal cord injury. She found herself in a wheelchair with nothing but depression as her companion. It was quite an event when Cheryl B. was well enough to leave a Birmingham rehab facility and move in with her mother. Still she was depressed and had little hope. One day Cheryl decided to take one course at a local university. Seven or eight years later, she made it to graduation. Life was worth living again. In 2008 Cheryl married an employee of St. Vincent's Hospital in Birmingham. He encouraged his wife to "be ALL you can be." In January of 2009, Cheryl began another exciting journey - as a law student.

God Exists. We are His children. He is always there for us. It is up to us to find Him. He is not far away.

Scott James

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I want to commend the staff of 3 West for the extraordinary way in which they responded when a young patient unexpectedly coded and died yesterday. The patient was most likely the same age as many of the staff, so it was a heartwrenching experience for them. Her sister was very vocal, and sometimes physical, in her expression of grief, but the staff never wavered. Everyone remained steadfast to offer comfort and support, even though the strain took a toll. Many nurses and PCAs, not assigned to the patient, stayed near and offered whatever support they could to the grieving family. Their compassion was palpable. The situation also touched the hearts of staff members of other units, particularly 3 South and MICU; they came - and remained - to be a caring presence. Members of the PICC team also helped arrange for a gathering place and made sure that there were tissues, cool cloths, drinks of water and hugs available. This outpouring of loving care was so very moving. It comforted the family and made me proud to be a part of the St. Vincent's family.

Barbara Wojciak  
Pastoral Care

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I have a story that goes beyond hope.

I was diagnosed with diabetes in December and for me that was something, because I didn't know really what diabetes was or what having it meant other than seeing people with limbs cut off and other than learning that, that was the reason behind the disease. First of all, I am a Christian and I wasn't going to except what the doctor was telling me, because I know that God did not give me a spirit of fear and I had to put myself in a place to pray and pronounce over myself that when God died on the Cross He died for my sins as well as this sickness, so I kept professing "By God's stripes I Am healed". Long story short, I continued to pray and seek God's word and profess His words over my life and I was obedient in doing what I know I needed to do by eating right and getting active. I went back to the doctor in April and I was told that I was not diabetic, all my blood work was fine and I give God the Glory!

Jennifer Martin

There was a patient that was a retired nurse here that was to have surgery and ended up having an reaction to the IV sedation before surgery which coded and was basically on death's coattail. The commitment of the nurses, physicians, friends and family stood with her every step of the way to pull her out of her circumstances when the family was told for over almost 3 months that her prognosis was poor. Because of the outstanding support from all involved with treatment, care, and the wonderful power of prayer, she is now back to full capacity and doing very well and comes to visit just to let us see how good she is doing. I have many stories of hope that I can share but this one was one of the best that could have been asked for.

Jamie Schram

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#### Help to the Homeless

Cindy Underwood, RN in the OR, began ministering to Birmingham's homeless through her church ministry called "The Nest." The group from Agape Baptist in Pinson feed those living underneath the viaduct across from the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex. Then, a year ago, God laid it on Cindy's heart, she says, to provide them with medical treatment.

So, she began purchasing things like Tylenol, vitamins, Neosporin, cold medicines, and distributing it to them. It was all done out of her pocket. When her co-workers found out about her mission, they began joining in. Now, eight people from the OR go out with Cindy, including Dr. Bloomston. Today, they have a makeshift clinic where the homeless can not only get fed and receive personal items, but also get medical treatment. Thanks to Cindy and the associates at St. Vincent's East for living out our mission. "It's a God thing," Cindy says. "He has been faithful."

If you'd like to join Cindy or donate items, please call her at 746-6265.

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My dad, Robert Millsap, was admitted to St.Vincents on Memorial day. From the moment he arrived in the ED, to his week long stay, on the fifth floor cardiac step unit, both he, and our family, were treated with loving care, and kindness by all the associates that we came in contact with. I truly believe that he, and our family, were in the arms of angels throughout his last days with us. May God bless St.Vincents Hospital.

William Millsap

This regards the fund maintained for Associates in financial need. At the time of Hurricane Katrina, the Ascension Health System had hospitals or outreach clinics in New Orleans, Mobile, and Birmingham. Everyone was concerned and trying to help. In Birmingham, a number of our Associates had family who were affected or new Associates who had had to relocate from New Orleans. They were all verified and then given a check for \$2,000. This help meant a great deal to them and their privacy was maintained.

At the same time, I received an e-mail from a Sister in Saginaw, Michigan asking if I knew of any nursing homes in Birmingham that I could recommend. Her nephew, his Dad and Mother were all dislocated from New Orleans and relocated in Birmingham. His wife and children were with his family in a small town in Alabama but there was no hospital there so he had had to bring his parents to Birmingham. His Mother had been in one of the hospitals in New Orleans, and after the dislocation due to Katrina, was currently in St. Vincent's-Birmingham. She was to be moved to a nursing home as soon as possible. I e-mailed Sister in Saginaw telling her of all the various recommendations. She then put me in touch with Michael, the nephew. I told him what I knew. He chose to have his mother moved to the nursing home on Hanover Circle next to the Daughters of Charity residence. I paid a number of visits to his mother, Mary, who was unable to respond but I felt very close to her. I never seemed to visit when the family was there and ended up leaving notes. I arranged for an Anglican Minister to visit her as the nephew had requested and I believe I did meet the husband of Mary, Joseph, at that time. When Mary died a few weeks later, Joseph called me to tell me. It was such a hard time. I kept in touch with him, visiting him at home and he came to see me before I left for retirement in Evansville. I kept in touch by phone and mail to comfort as much as possible. He died recently. I still care very deeply about this heroic family who all are doing very well now.

Blessings to you,  
Sister Mary Cecilia

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I was visiting with a 96-year-old patient who spent time reflecting on about the importance of faith and community in his life-time. He recounted the time right after the big battle at Normandy (WWII) when he was coming back to the United States on the Queen Mary ship. All around him were many wounded soldiers who were fortunate to be spared through the battle. He, himself in the Air Corps, had not sustained injury. He specifically mentioned seeing a man in a wheelchair who had his legs blown off, being pushed by a soldier who was blind. The seeing-injured soldier would give the blind soldier instructions on pushing him around in the wheelchair.

Community, "family," and faith are what sustained that now-96-year-old man.

In Christ's infinite love,  
David

I am a native of Eastlake. Eastlake was incorporated into the City of Birmingham in 1910. My family purchased a home in Eastlake in 1897. My family lived in the same house from 1897 until 1997. In 1998 my grandmother moved to Moody with my brother to a larger house. She was nearing 80 and so excited to make the move. About a year later a devastating fire destroyed almost the entire house. My grandmother was suffering from a fractured hip and my brother had fallen from the roof prior to the fire and broken both ankles and his arm. Somehow my grandmother managed to get out of bed and begin walking to my brother's room. Seeing the hall blocked by fire she went across the hall to his door and told them they had to immediately get out of the house. My brother got in his wheelchair, got grandmother in his lap, rolled to the sliding glass doors of the deck of his bedroom and got safely out. Both survived the fire but it was almost a complete loss. When I went to see my grandmother the next morning after the fire she asked me to please bring her the Bible she had read every day of her adult life (it contained many sentimental mementos including her marriage license, etc...). How was I to say to my loving grandmother that the room in which all her primary possessions had been kept was totally gone? I asked the firemen the next day if I could look through the rubble that had been her bedroom and separate den. Even the floorboards were gone. I stepped down into the rubble and began to dig. I finally found her beloved copy of the King James Bible. Only the Book of Ester remained and it was frayed around the edges. I opened the Bible and in those few pages remaining I found her Marriage Certificate from 1939, signed by her own father a local Baptist minister who performed the marriage in 1939, as well as her record of Baptism. Needless to say my when I went to Grandmama and gave her the items she expressed no sadness...she simply said, "I'm glad I was wearing my wedding ring, have my Bible (what was left) and my grandson was safe. Here is the hope...if my brother's bedroom had been without a door both would have perished in the fire. How few bedrooms have a door and while my brother normally could have jumped for safety with his injuries he could not have saved our grandmother. The joy is that both survived and recovered. My grandmother was a lifelong Southern Baptist but for her last hospitalization in 2002 I asked her which hospital and she said,"St. Vincent's...where else?" So spoke a woman of hope, a woman who lived from 1939 to 1998 in John Archibald's home suburb of Eastlake!

Charles Ellis Russell,  
Crestwood, The Book Seller

## The Elder Care Ministry at St. Vincent's A Story of Hope for Elder Orphans

Approximately four years ago an older woman was talking with the Director of Philanthropy about how discouraged she was as she saw changes in herself and wondered who would care for her should she become ill or need to move from her home. "If I fell and hit my head and went to the hospital there is NO ONE to call...I am an Elder Orphan. I have outlived all of my family and most of my friend -- and many of my friends have more problems than I do. Who will care for me?"

This touched the heart of the Director of Philanthropy who had been a caregiver for her own mother. She began to research elder orphans, available programs, the common needs of elder orphans and local demographics. This research led to focus groups comprised of professionals as well as senior adults.

Today St. Vincent's Birmingham has an Elder Care Ministry. The first year of a three year grant is almost complete. We focus on Elder Orphans (an individual or couple without family or family lives two hours driving time away), the orphan typically comes to St. Vincent's Hospital or various departments or affiliated physicians for the majority of his or her care, are age 80 or older, and allow access to medical records, diagnoses, and medications for IN HOME assessment and treatment by a social worker who specializes in clinical gerontological social work.

A ministry goal is to maintain independence while reducing risks associated with living independently through a biopsychosocial approach (body, mind, social environment, and spiritual self). We plan to have trained volunteers available to help elder orphans by accompanying him/her to the physician and taking notes during the visit so that the volunteer and client can ensure good communication and understanding of physician instructions and help comply with recommended treatment. The volunteer may also assist with errands, meeting the client at social events, visiting and watching a movie together, and "being a friend".

National and local studies all point to transportation to and from medical appointments (and travel in general) as being the number one need of older adults. We are working diligently to address this need and hope to have options in place within the next six months.

Some of the services already provided include: meeting clients and providing support during physician visits, opening doors so that clients with rheumatoid arthritis can access buildings and offices, supporting a client while she had outpatient surgery and providing a light meal and staying with her until a friend/family could be available, alerting a client that an over the counter medication had an ingredient in it that could interfere with a prescription medication and potentially resulted in a life threatening condition (the pharmacy and physician office followed up immediately), providing counseling for depression, anxiety, and life changes, acting as an advocate for someone who had an ill pet that required attention, completing VA benefits applications, providing information and referral about community resources. This is in addition to the 5-45 minute interventions provided by telephone or e-mail for those who call seeking direction.

This is an outreach ministry of St. Vincent's and provided without regard to sex, race, religious affiliation, financial/economic status, national origin OR the ability to pay. The ministry is provided through the office of Community Benefits and Outreach and currently funded by our Foundation. Our hope is that through community support and grants we will continue to be able to offer this ministry without any charge (Quote by Sister Dinah White, D.C. Vice President Mission Integration)"it is the Right thing to do".

Carolyn Neiswender, M.S.W., L.C.S.W., P.I.P., C.S.W.-G

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How many Vice Presidents of organizations care enough to reach out, roll up her sleeve and learn hands on about new programs (in our case a new ministry)? Sr. Dinah White, D.C. Vice President of Mission Integration does.

Following a Benefactors Mass where I was the asked to represent two benefactors as their Friend, not as an associate of St. Vincent's, Sister Dinah was present when someone asked me about my position and why was I not introduced as the Elder Care Manager. I was explaining that I would much prefer that clients see me as a friend vs. my title. I clearly remember saying, "I would much rather be remembered as a Friend than as the Elder Care Manager." This lead to a discussion with Sister Dinah about outreach and the types of services provided thus far (we are near to completing the first year of a three year pilot program).

I told Sister that we had older adults in the community that were hurting and in great need of our care and ask if she would like to ride with me and make home visits so that she would better understand the clients various needs and my role as a clinical gerontological social worker. She immediately said she would love to go with me "Let's schedule it and make it happen."

The day of our scheduled home visits was nasty. Storms, tornadoes and such were predicated all day but we went any way. The entire day was a God Day--a Mountain Top Experience, An Emmaus Experience. Where ever we went the sun started shining and the rain stopped. She had the opportunity to meet with three clients (2 ladies; 1 gentleman) and hear their stories and concerns, ask question and often she just listened. Our visits started at 9:30 am and ended at 3:30pm.

As we went through the day we reflected on our mission, ministry, and values and talked of future plans, hopes and dreams. I do have great Hope that St. Vincent's and Ascension Health will begin to lead the way in somewhat nontraditional care of older adults.

Carolyn Neiswender, M.S.W.,L.C.S.W., P.I.P., C.S.W.-G  
Elder Care Manager

Any day in our city you can visit hospital waiting rooms, patient rooms, and doctors offices and find hope. Ask a mother whose newborn is in the intensive care unit if she is hopeful her baby will get to come home. Ask a patient awaiting a life threatening surgery if they are hopeful of a success. Ask a physician of an oncology patient if they are hopeful of their cancer patients treatment therapy. Ask family members standing vigil over a loved one if they are hopeful for a recovery. One common thread you will find, where there is hope, there is prayer. Where there is prayer, there is hope.

Let's leave the healthcare setting and visit a few more areas of our city. Any day you can visit the safe houses established for battered women and children, the UCP of Greater Birmingham, and the classrooms of the EMR students of the Jefferson County school system. Ask a woman taking refuge from abuse if she has hope that her life and the lives of her children can improve. If she can rise above her circumstances and establish a solid foundation on which to raise her children. Ask the employees of UCP if they find hope that those they work with everyday can find any quality of life. Ask those teachers in our school system if they are hopeful that the challenged students they work with everyday have a chance in life. Where there is hope, you will find prayer. Where there is prayer, you will find hope.

Let's check out some other areas of our city. Visit Medmission any day of the week and see if there is hope in providing needed medical supplies and equipment to third world countries all over the world. Visit one of the free or low cost medical or dental clinic's and see if there is hope in providing medical and dental services and education to those in our city who otherwise would not have access to it. Visit the Jeremiah's Hope program at St. Vincent's and ask the students if they are hopeful that one day they can make a difference in someone's life. Visit a center for autistic children and ask a parent if they are hopeful for their child's future. Where there is hope, you will find prayer. Where there is prayer, you will find hope.

There are many more examples of hope in Birmingham if you just look in the right places and understand what hope really is and where it comes from. There are serious problems facing each and every one of us everyday. Those problems range from political, financial, personal, health, family, etc. the list could go on and on but that does not mean that hope does not exist.

God reminds us in His word that "these three things remain, Faith, Hope, and Love. The greatest of these is Love." Our faith allows us to have hope which enables us to love, may each one who reads this be blessed to understand the meaning of each one of these gifts.

Nancy Ling

Three months ago, in my second week as a St. Vincent's Associate, we lost our 30-year old son, Aaron, to a sudden heart attack. He was a beautiful young man, a great husband and father, the President of our family business, by all outward appearances the picture of health- and in the blink of an eye, he was gone.

We were overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and support from family and friends scattered across the country, our local church families, business associates and school buddies- but my fellow Associates in the Health and Wellness Department here at the Hospital, many of whom had not yet laid eyes on me, reached out in extraordinary ways to minister to us as well. Their words, cards, hugs, prayers and donations to an Education Fund established for my son's two young daughters (aged 3 and 5) truly exemplified the "Caring and Compassion" that we strive for in our ministry, and were of great comfort to us in our darkest days.

Our family lived in five states in ten years before moving to Birmingham in 1993, and we are grateful that we were able to "plant" here and give our children the roots they deeply desired. We are Texans who now call Alabama "home". Birmingham has its share of problems to be sure, but it also has some of the most caring and compassionate people to be found anywhere - and that gives me great HOPE for its future.

Sharman Huffstetler  
Health Referral Specialist  
Dial-A-Nurse

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In 2008, a pt was adm to 5 stepdown who was in extreme resp distress. She was from Mexico, here visiting family, had no insurance, didn't speak English and was in the end stages of lung cancer. We (doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, Jonathan with med supply co. and social workers) went above and beyond to find ways to help this lady and her family. Despite the fact that our oncologists saw her and could have given her treatment, her wish was to get home to Mexico before she died. With hard work and effort of all the team, we were able to get her from 100% oxygen down to 2 l/m nasal oxygen (requirement to fly). She was too ill to survive the drive home. Our Social workers obtained the funding to pay for her flight and there were volunteers (nurses and doctors) that were willing to go with her to Mexico. It was not necessary that anyone accompanied her, arrangements were made to get her to the airport, on a flight with her husband and she made it home. We heard that she lived more than a week after she arrived home.

These real-life scenarios are why I love what I do, and they are not few and far between. On the contrary, I could fill a book with what I have experienced in twenty years of nursing and I hope to fill another book in the next twenty years.

Karen Mays  
RN-SICU Throughput Nurse

The first story is about a student who attended and graduated from our Fall Term 2008 PCA program with WIA assistance. Upon completion of our program she was employed at St. Vincent's East as a PCA. Her goal has always been to be a nurse. She is currently enrolled in the nursing program at Jeff State while working 7 on 7 off.

Another story is of a student who was able to receive a scholarship through Jeremiah's Hope to come through our program. Her family income was below the poverty level and her family did not have insurance. She had shared with us she had never attended college and was unsure of what she wanted to do with her life. She knew that she loved to take care of others and was very interested in our PCA program when she found out about Jeremiah's Hope. During the program she excelled academically and in the clinical setting. She graduated in February 2009 and is currently employed at St. Vincent's Birmingham as a PCA (5 West) and has expressed to me how blessed she feels to have received the scholarship to allow her to attend our PCA program. She is now a FT associate with health benefits for her family and her current goal is to attend school to become an RN while continuing to work at St. Vincent's.

Another blessing for her has been the reduced health insurance contribution offered through Ascension since her income is the primary source of income for her family.

Belinda Thomas, RN, BSN  
Manager, Jeremiah's Hope Academy

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#### Getting Motivated To Declutter

Many of us are spending a lot of time planning the direction our businesses should take in the current economy. Every day, my email inbox is filled with announcements of seminars that promise to tell me how my business can thrive in spite of the economic downturn. The fear of what the future may bring creates a tendency to hoard, to hang on to everything we've got because we may need it later. My recent conversations with leaders of benevolent groups who rely on donations confirm that this is true. But Christ teaches us to give freely and generously, trusting in Him to provide us with direction and fulfill our needs.

So just how, you may ask, does this apply to organizing our offices?

It applies because there has never been a better time to clear out the clutter in your office. There has never been a better time to give away something you

don't need. Do you have three staplers? Four tape dispensers? Several staple removers? Outdated stationary? It's time to donate your excess and keep only what you need.

Obviously, the chances are slim that any of your donated items will wind up in the office of a struggling business. But the old stationary could become coloring paper for a child whose parents have been laid off and can't afford toys. The staplers and staple removers might find a new home with a high school student working towards a scholarship. The tape dispensers could help the college student with a part-time job who struggles to afford gas, clothing and school supplies.

The time to give it all away is now, and focusing your thoughts on others in need provides motivation to let go of items you don't really use. Give freely and abundantly, as God promises to give to us.

Would you like to receive more hints for keeping your files and your office functioning smoothly? Subscribe to "Filing, Office Organization, and TimeManagement" and you will receive bimonthly email tips for managing your files, your office and your time. Go to [www.mrmservicesonline.com](http://www.mrmservicesonline.com) and select "Contact Us" to send in your email address and request the hints and tips. There is no obligation, your email address remains completely confidential and you can request to unsubscribe at any time.

Kathy Mann

Kathy Mann is the founder and owner of Mann's Records Management Services, LLC, a records management consulting firm that specializes in bringing order out of chaos. Her mission is to leave clients feeling confident they can locate what they need exactly when they need it, because "if you can't find it, then you don't have it."

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I was diagnosed in 1989 by a new physician at STVHS-Bham with a rare disease, Systemic Mastocytosis. James V. Davis, M.D. caught my 2 presenting symptoms, which were reversed in order for most patients. I was 29 years old and most physicians were misdiagnosing patients world-wide. The average age at diagnosis was 58 after years of suffering and unanswered questions. I was supposed to die the first year because we thought I had the "malignant" form of the disease. I was so ill I thought I would die, too. As a result of faith and prayer, and by the grace, mercy and sovereignty of God, I did not have the "malignant" form but a "chronic" form of the disease.

In September of 1993 I had a consult with David Barnes, M.D. who referred me to Ira Gore, M.D. for a bone marrow biopsy. This biopsy was to check the disease progression and reconfirm the diagnosis. The outpatient procedure was performed in the Bruno Cancer Center. Everything went fine until I was rolled from my side to my back onto the pressure bandage. I informed Dr. Gore and the nurses that I was passing out. I was not conscious of what was going on in the room, but I could feel my organs shutting down. I prayed to God that I was ready to join him, but if it was His will, let me live until January and then I would be joyous to go at any time. My department was being downsized and I had several associates who were single parents. Their jobs would be eliminated by December 15. We had not yet found them other positions and I felt it was my responsibility to ensure they could support their families. I also told God that my husband would not understand since this was a routine procedure. Our parents did not know the extent of my illness and I knew the shock would be too much for them. You must understand that I was not begging or bartering for more time out of selfishness for me. I was thinking and praying for all of these others. As I said, "Amen," I heard one of the nurses say, "We have a blood pressure." I opened my eyes and everyone began to smile. I knew God had answered my prayers and theirs. God answered my prayers for my associates and all who wanted stay were placed in other departments at St. Vincent's! I did not see a white light but I was filled with such peace and contentment that I knew I had been in the presence of God.

In 2003 I was diagnosed with a large uterine fibroid tumor and multiple tumors in my left ovary by David Damrich, M.D. It was not clear at that time how to put a patient safely to sleep who had Systemic Mastocytosis. Dr. Barnes, Dr. Damrich and my anesthesiologist, Stephen Starling, M.D. consulted together and formulated a "safe" plan of anesthesia for the abdominal hysterectomy. In the meantime, the uterine tumor was growing a centimeter per week. At the time of surgery it was 13 centimeters and I was in constant pain. I wrote farewell letters to my loved ones, just in case, (no one but my closest friends knew how serious it was) and had the surgery. God, again, guided the physicians and the surgery was a complete success. I was extremely impressed with Dr. Starling. He came to see me before I entered the operating room and he visited me the day after surgery to make sure I was doing well. 3 weeks later the pathology report came back, no cancer. I was again spared by God.

In 2007 I was diagnosed with bilateral Morton Neuromas in my feet and prescribed orthotics. The pain was relieved until last fall. I made an appointment with Danalynn Gustferro, M.D. for a second opinion. She discovered that when I stand, walk and run that bone is rubbing against bone. She recommended a different brand of running shoes and a course of injections. If that didn't work, surgical removal of the Neuromas would have to be done. I received the first injection and made an appointment for a return visit a few weeks later. I immediately purchased the recommended shoes. When I next saw Dr. Gustferro I explained that I had been pain free since the injection and with the shoe change. I have not had any further injections and continue to wear the recommended brand of shoes, getting a new pair every 3 months. God did it, again!

In May of 2008 I had stroke-type symptoms while volunteering at St. Vincent's. I was seen in the emergency department. The physician ordered the usual tests and took an oral history. She felt certain that I was having atypical migraines which cause the same symptoms as a stroke. She recommended that I make an appointment with David O'Neal, M.D. He scheduled further tests and consulted with Dr. Barnes. Dr. O'Neal prescribed a simple medication and I have been pain free since! Are you beginning to see the pattern?

Now it is 2009. I recently selected Jeremy Smith, M.D. as my primary care physician. Dr. Smith has been wonderful. He has utilized every resource available to take the best care of me. He consults with Dr. Barnes as needed and appreciates my participation in the management of my disease. Mid-life and 20 years of a chronic illness are producing new symptoms. I accept them all in the full knowledge that God has brought me safe thus far. My faith is constantly re-affirmed. God is in control over Heaven, Earth, health and everything in between. He has provided St. Vincent's and these physicians as His ambassadors of healing. I have no fear of what is yet to come. Perhaps God has provided so many miracles in my life in order for you to believe that you can receive them, too!

Annette S. Horton, PRN Associate  
St. Vincent's Health System Birmingham