

A Personal Testimony

Submitted by Mrs. Polly Gregory and shared at Mt. Zion UMC

March 30, 2008

“Thank you, thank you, thank you!” I’ve tried to find a word like “Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” that means “Thank you” but couldn’t find one. So, just a little “thank you” will have to do.

Sunday, July 8, 2007 Charles stood here in the pulpit and said “I am the sickest I have ever been in my life. I have stomach cancer and am beginning a journey. I’m asking you to walk this journey with me and I need your prayers and support. We’ll keep you posted on what’s happening and where we are on this journey. But please pray for God’s will to be done.”

After he sat down and as Pastor David made some comments about Charles’ testimony, I glanced over at Charles and I was **told**, “You’re losing him.” I immediately said, “**Not without a fight!**” Now I know we shouldn’t argue with God, but He has known me this 71 years and He knew what I was going to say. He expected it from me. At that time, I told no one about this. Later I told Pastor David when Charles was in the hospital New Year’s week. I told Charles about it when Hospice came in.

After Charles’ testimony at church the roller coaster ride started. Up with the good news and progress – and down with the bad news. Extreme loss of weight, pneumonia twice, MRSA staph infection twice, feeding ports in and out. Your prayers, support, calls and cards were tremendous! I have saved every card – hundreds of them! During that time he had 25 radiation treatments and managed fairly well. The tumor shrunk, he could eat on his own and the feeding port came out. However, the stomach tumor cancer had spread to his lungs. The stomach tumor could be maintained with treatments but was not curable or operable. The lung tumors could be eliminated with chemo treatments and he had 5 of those, but was unable to take the 6th one. He had pneumonia again. This put him in the hospital New Year’s Eve day and we learned he had blood clots in one lung.

During all of this time we were learning how much we are loved. And that’s something I can’t stress enough. Let people know you and love them before it’s too late. It’s far better to hear it before the funeral. Let them go in peace knowing they are loved by you. We had so many express their love in so many ways.

All during these months we talked about the future. He made plans for his memorial service. Pastor David was told what to do. He had no fear of what lay ahead, only concern for me and my being alone.

The youth came before Christmas to sing for us. What a treat!!! Then they came again in January after he was under the care of Hospice. They had the opportunity to see the change in his body. More importantly, they had the opportunity to hear him. He told them that he knew he was dying and had no fear of it – and not to cry for him. They might cry for themselves, but not for him. They should make sure they had their lives right, make the right choices in their lives and know there were consequences for bad choices.

During all this time I tried to keep my chin up, but will admit I had to go around the corner a few times to have a “pity party.” Still do! Yet, I knew Charles was in the best hands – God’s! All I could do was

dote on him and love him as I had for over 52 years. God was in control of everything else. We did not question anything that was happening to us. No need to. We knew we had done our best to follow God's direction for our lives. This was not a punishment. We felt He was still using us for His purposes. And He still is!

When Charles crossed over that Saturday night, January 26, 2008 I was on the bed with him. I felt his life leave him from his feet to the top of his head. As his life left him, I felt a veil come over me from the top of my head to my feet. It was that "peace that passes all understanding." We've heard it mentioned in sermons and prayers. When it does come, you know it. You feel it! And a blessed peace it was. I had a strength I would never have believed I could have.

Final plans and arrangements were made. The Thursday Memorial Service was at Haygood United Methodist Church in Virginia Beach, our church home for 45 years. I'm told there were over 400 there. Charles would never have believed so many would honor him that way.

The second service was here at Mt. Zion. Following the service and reception the family and I went home exhausted. I dropped into Charles' chair and looked out the front door. It was suddenly getting darker. I told the family, "Well, it's over. It's finished now." Then the storm hit!!! It was dark as night. The wind blew so hard I didn't know pine trees could bend so far and stand back up! The thunder and lightning popped and cracked. The rain poured down sideways. All I could think of was how my life now seemed just like that! All blown to smithereens! How God must have felt when His Son died on the cross.

Then it started to ease up and get lighter outside. I noticed the neighbor's house getting lighter and brighter. I told Bob and Tom, my sons, to look outside at Christine's house. They went to the door and told me to get there quick. There in the middle of the door was the boldest rainbow I have ever seen!! In all the travels Charles and I have taken we've often taken pictures of rainbows. Last summer we both remarked how we'd not seen a rainbow since living in Grandy.

Well! Here was the rainbow of rainbows!!! It was the widest I have ever seen. The brightest in color and most distinction between colors of any other! I told all of them this was my rainbow from Dad. If you'd driven by the house about that time you'd have thought we were a bunch of nuts who'd never seen a rainbow before. We were all hugging, crying, taking pictures.

This was Charles saying, "Here's your Grandy rainbow, honey. It was the grandest ever! For 7 months we've weathered the storm just as you did this one that just happened. Now it's over. This is resurrection and only a piece of God's glory. What I'm seeing is far beyond the beauty of this." I told the family this was a sign of Dad's resurrection. He's alive and having a great time. He's well, he's whole. No more cancer.

That Sunday Pastor David mentioned the rainbow when he was speaking of God's glory all around us. But, maybe selfishly, I knew that was MY rainbow from Charles – and we shared it with all who could and would see it.

Again, that peace that passes all understanding came over me and I know all would be right with us. It will take some time, but I know I'll make it. I still have my "pity parties" occasionally.

When Charles crossed over, I jumped into God's arms and asked Him to carry me for a while. I was drained. God is still carrying me. I'm not ready for Him to put me down on my own two feet just yet. One of these days I will, but not just yet.

God brought us to it – and through it. His love and mercy are right there for the asking and taking. Step up and sept out into that love. It's the best way to travel, each day.