



May 7/8, 2016

To all my beloved St. John members,

Thank you for your many and frequent prayers. That support has both encouraged and strengthened me through this long ordeal. I came home from the hospital on Tuesday, May 3rd, after 13 days. It was a welcome relief to have better tasting food and "real" coffee. I was diagnosed with a fractured vertebra, and had it surgically repaired by inserting some "cement-like" substance into the fractured vertebra. This began to relieve the pain, but I can't tell you how bad the pain was. I would not wish my worst enemy to have to go through this. The biopsy on that vertebra for possible bone cancer is still pending, I am sorry to say. Please join me in praying to God to bring a positive report. I am still very stiff and in moderate pain still, but all that is manageable now. I will try to keep you informed with these little notes as to my prognoses and recovery. I will also let Chris, our secretary, know of any new updates. I will be off this Sunday, obviously, (Hunter, I especially feel sad to have to miss your Confirmation.) as well as Pentecost Sunday, May 15th. I hope to be back in the pulpit May 22nd, but at this point I can only hope for that. I thank you for your understanding and ask you to continue in joining me in prayer to our Gracious God for more mercy that I deserve. God bless you all.

Your Pastor Jim

Weekly Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of May 14-15, 2016

Dear Members of St. John,

On Friday, May 6th, my oncologist called to say that my biopsy showed I have Multiple Myeloma, a cancer of the plasma cells in the bone marrow. He said, while the disease is not curable, it is treatable, which is good news. I will have to go through a lot of tests to determine where in the development of the disease I am, which will then determine what treatment plan to follow. This means, I will not be back in the pulpit anytime soon, unfortunately. In the Sunday Paper on May 8th, the Parade Magazine portion, the lead article was on the disease I am now wrestling with. The title of the article is "A Mouse that Roared." You can check it out on line as well.

I am so thankful for Pastor John Ramsey, who has really stepped up in a big way to cover the congregation's pastoral needs. He truly is one of God's great blessings to all of us. I also have to give a big thank you to Chris Morse, our secretary, who is really covering the bases in the office. Her love and concern is very obvious and I give thanks to God for her. Our Board at St. John has also been very caring and supportive, and I am so thankful for these dedicated and loving people, who are helping out in so many ways.

I am still in a fair bit of pain each day and sleeping during the night is difficult. I am hoping that this week, some of the testing would begin to get a jump start toward treatment. I try to remain positive and I am especially thankful for all your prayers and get well cards that I have been receiving. I will try to keep you updated each week on my condition.

Thank you, one and all and may God continue to bless us with His presence and power for healing.

Your Pastor Jim

Weekly Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of May 21-22, 2016

Dear Members of St. John,

Thank you all, for your many prayers and get well cards. These are very helpful in lifting my spirits and enabling me to continue day to day. The fact that so many people continually lift me up in prayer is very encouraging to me. Thank You!

Since being diagnosed with this disease, I am amazed at who else has it. Interestingly enough, Tom Brokaw, of NBC Nightly News, has the same disease and has written a book, "A Lucky Life Interrupted," which chronicles his life and treatment of the disease. Only 1% of all cancers worldwide is multiple myeloma, the disease I have. In his book, Tom gives a simple description of what the disease does. He says, bone marrow is where our red blood cells are produced. Once cancer invades the bone marrow, it produces red blood cells that attack the person's bones. This is probably what fractured my vertebra and now causes all my terrific bone pain now. I am on heavy duty pain meds daily to control this pain. If it were not for this constant pain, I probably could do some of my pastoral duties. But with the pain, I simply cannot.

This past week I underwent several tests to determine what stage I am in with multiple myeloma. The most painful test was the bone marrow biopsy. Suffice it to say, I am glad that is over. These tests will help the doctors to determine what course of treatment I will undergo. Unfortunately, the test results will not be ready for two weeks. So, I am again playing the "waiting game."

While at the doctor's office for these tests, I was weighed. Not surprising, I have lost 18 pounds since this ordeal began. While I have extra weight to get rid of, it is still not a very pleasant way to shed the pounds. My appetite is still not what it used to be, and with all the pain meds, it will probably remain an up and down kind of thing.

At this point the easiest way to contact me is by mail (19469 Cyclone Dr. Cleveland, OH 44135). While I do receive telephone calls and texts, I often turn off my telephone in order to sleep. If you should receive my answering service when you call, please do leave a message, and if I am able, I will return your phone call or text.

Your support and prayer for me is what is carrying me through this. Thank you so much.

Please add to your prayer concerns my granddaughter, Breana, who compound fractured her left arm about three weeks ago. The doctors now say they will have to do surgery to set the bones in their proper alignment. She had surgery on Tuesday, May 17th and we hope and pray all went well. She will have this cast on for six months, then they will have to go back in to remove the plates and screws.

Your Pastor Jim

Weekly Update from Pastor Jim – Weekend of June 4-5, 2016

Dear Members of St. John,

Thank you all, for your many prayers and get well cards. These lift my spirits and enable me to continue day to day. The fact that so many people continually lift me up in prayer is very encouraging to me. Thank You!

With my doctor's appointment on May 31st, the Memorial Day Weekend seemed especially long. I am happy I am through that. While at my doctor's appointment, I was told that all the paper work has been filed to start me on a 21-day course of chemo pills. Then I am off for 7 days, and then begin another course. The doctor expects that I will have to go through 2 or 3 courses before much improvement will be seen. Blood and urine tests will be required throughout the month to see what effect the chemo pills are having. My only hope is that they will relieve the pain.

My hot flashes continue during which I sweat profusely, become very anxious, restless and unable to concentrate. I have little interest in reading or watching TV. I try to go for as many walks as I can, just to keep moving and get some exercise. I have asked the doctors for some anti-anxiety meds, but we both know the hoops one has to work through to get them in hand. I am hoping that request will be filled soon.

Now I am waiting for this specialty pharmacy to contact me saying that they have shipped these chemo pills and my instructions in taking them. There will be regular reviews to see how I am doing with them and any side-effects I may be experiencing. These meds are closely monitored and the results, etc., will be fully evaluated and documented for future patients and continued study. The disease I have is now in its second or even third stage of clinical trials. I have not heard yet what the cost of these high-powered meds are, but I am sure the price tag will also be very high. The good news is that I was weighed at the doctor's office and I have lost another 6 pounds. I am down about 30 pounds through this ordeal, and fortunately I have weight I can lose. Terrible way to do it, but I guess there is no easy way to lose weight. My appetite is just not there because of the constant pain, so maybe when that is relieved, my appetite will come back.

There are so many people at St. John that have stepped up to cover my absence. I thank you all for your wonderful service and dedication to continuing the ministry of St. John. Thanks also goes to all the members who have supported our members "pinch hitting" for me and continue to encourage them. We have a congregation full of wonderfully loving and caring people, for whom I am forever grateful. We also have many caring Pastors who have stepped up and helped us out. I am so very grateful to all of them.

Continue to keep me in your prayers and may God, according to His Will, soon strengthen and heal me. Thank you and may God Bless you.

Your Pastor Jim