



## *Sharing the Good News!*

Penn Northeast Conference of the United Church of Christ

“Let me believe for you until you are ready to believe again for yourself!”

by Alan C. Miller, Conference Minister

Things have been interesting, to say the least, these past three weeks for our family. For the last fourteen months we have been preparing for the wedding of our daughter to a wonderful young man on May 24<sup>th</sup> in Greensboro, NC. Then, one and a half months before the wedding, I learned that I had lupus. Next, just twelve days before the wedding, we learned that our thirty-year-old son had thyroid cancer and needed surgery. To make things real interesting, I started to lose the vision in my right eye during the rehearsal dinner the weekend of the wedding. Not wanting to spoil the excitement and joy of the weekend, I didn't say anything until Sunday morning after our daughter and new son-in-law had boarded a plane for their honeymoon. Nine hours later in a hospital emergency room I learned that I had torn retinas in both eyes which would require laser surgery before I could travel back to Pennsylvania.

Then, just ten days after the wedding, our family (including the new bride) found itself gathered in a waiting room in Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia while my son underwent thirteen and a half hours of surgery to remove the cancer from his body. During those hours (which felt like days) I kept reliving the roller coaster of emotions we had been on the past twenty-two days: joy flowed by shock, followed by joy, followed by fear, followed by joy followed by anxiety.

As the hours of surgery mounted, I found it harder and harder to remember all those things about faith in God that I had so boldly professed in other times and settings. I began to question myself: Did I only believe during the good times? Was my faith weak? Had I not prayed hard or long enough?

And then came the unexpected! First it was my brother rubbing my back, asking me if I couldn't use a back rub. Next it was text messages from colleagues and friends telling us that they were praying for us and that we were on the prayer chains at their churches. Our cell phones started to ring and vibrate as the Conference Staff and Candy's Office Staff called to tell us that they loved us and we were in their thoughts. And then I remembered the prayer shawls that had been lovingly knitted for us by members of two different congregations. All of this combined to remind me of a word I had frequently offered to friends and parishioners as they were faced with a time of anxiety and uncertainty. I used to say: “Don't fight your doubts; they are part of being human. But I'll tell you what ... while you are going through this difficult time, I will believe for you until you are able to believe for yourself again!”

Suddenly I realized that there were literally hundreds of people in a number of different states who were believing for us in our time of fear and uncertainty.

Because of the position that I serve in, I and my family receive a good deal of public exposure, thus many people and many congregations in both Pennsylvania and North Carolina were aware of the challenges we were facing. I cannot begin to express my gratitude for their prayers, emails, cards, letters, prayer shawls, and calls – my family is deeply blessed and we are grateful.

But there are many others who are facing the same types of fear and uncertainty that my family faced – and often they don't have the support network that we have been blessed with. So never take another's need for granted ... never assume that someone else will be there to encourage them ... for you never know when God might be calling upon you to believe for another until they are capable of believing for themselves again!

### **TO CONTACT US OR TO REGISTER FOR EVENTS**

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