

Dear praying friends,

Much has happened since I last wrote about 5 weeks ago, some of which has been rather difficult. Let me start with today and work backwards a bit.

This afternoon Lynette was admitted to the hospital and will be operated on tomorrow morning at 8. The back story to this began three weeks ago, when something suspicious was discovered in her breast during a routine check-up. A week later she had a biopsy taken and we have been waiting ever since. Today we went in to talk with the doctor about the results. She was great, full of assurances, but also clear: Lynette has a malignant tumor, small and slow-growing, but invasive. The doctor we spoke with was also the surgeon and she was able to get a bed and OP room organized within about 30 minutes. We went home, had lunch, gathered up a few things, and a colleague drove us across town to the same small private hospital both of our children were born in nearly 28 and 31 years ago. Please pray that all would go well, that nothing would have spread to other organs, and that Lynette can come home on Thursday, if possible. Thank you.

In the midst of this, we experienced a real spiritual attack in our church, resulting in our Muslim friend "M" being on the brunt end of several hurtful and loveless comments. M suffers from PTSD and though he has been faithful attending church and has always treated others with respect, he does not have the inner strength to handle others' unkind words. A few hours after this incident, I received a heartbreaking message from M that he will never, ever come to church again, never read the NT again, and wants to have no further discussions about faith. A few days later he returned the Bibles I and others had given him, including a NT in Arabic and German. The most difficult thing about this was that those who hurt him are believers, and he was consequently deeply disappointed. Fortunately, he wants to stay in relationship with me and a couple of others. We spent 4 hours together after this incident and are planning to see each other again tomorrow. Please pray for M.

God used this in our church to "take the lid off" of a deeper problem that has been simmering for some time – broken relationships, deep hurts, and bitterness. The week after this happened, I happened to have been assigned the message – and, as if the Holy Spirit was really in charge, the passage I was preaching on (chosen months ago), was ideally suited to talk about love in the community. God seems to have used that message to speak to many people – but there is much work to be done before we can say we have healthy relationships in our little congregation. I have a whole new appreciation for the words of Jesus, that the world will know us by our love. The opposite is also true – the world will reject our message by our lack of love. Ouch.

On a more positive note, our times with A&F now include P&J – we met twice since I last wrote and both times were Spirit-driven and full of promise.

Re. my GEM leadership role, I attended the Germany field retreat (without Lynette this time) and have been thrilled to see the current Field Leader, who steps down on July 1, enthusiastically embrace his replacement – in fact, the entire field seems to be welcoming and even excited about this new leader, who comes to the field from the outside, something they explicitly did not want. This has been a difficult journey, but the Lord is doing good things, better than I had hoped.

Well, I think it is time to send this off. Thank you for your prayers. As you can see, we desperately need them.

Yours in Austria for the Kingdom,

Jim for both of us

The words of Jesus for 2018:

"Seek first the Kingdom of God..." (Mt. 6:33) "... for apart from me you can do nothing." (Joh. 15:5)

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