

Dear Friends and Family,

It is with great joy and sincere thanks that we can tell that my almost two year battle with Cushing's Disease has had a positive outcome. On January 17 my surgeon gave an "all clear" report and the specialist overseeing my case gave me permission to return to work

I had been suffering from deteriorating health for some time. Finally after a year of tests I was diagnosed and scheduled for neurosurgery on my pituitary gland on September 14. In those difficult months I struggled with many difficult symptoms (high blood pressure, weakness, pain, high blood sugar, anxiety, chills, sleeplessness, swelling and some too personal to describe). Following surgery I developed a pulmonary embolism which was very difficult to treat under the circumstances and I nearly died. In fact it is what I anticipated and was preparing myself for (surrendering and trusting is the hard work of faith). For nearly three weeks I was in hospital, then home, then back in, and then finally home again. To my surprise I was still alive and beginning to heal (learning to live again is the hard work of faith). That healing continues and though not complete I feel better today than I have in over two years. This has been an incredible, difficult, at times frightening, humbling and life changing journey. It has given me a new appreciation for beauty and fragility of life, for the absolute need for faith in Jesus and for the wonderful gift of community. I am both really excited to share this news with you (for obvious reasons) and also a little reluctant because this isn't the end of the journey and we still need your encouragement, prayers and support.

During this time we have been carried by the love, encouragement, and practical help of friends and family. The love of God was displayed to us in so many ways. Love cooked us meals, gave our children rides to their activities, invited us to rest at the cottage, helped our kids get on the ice at hockey, sent us cards (yes people still do that and it still means a lot), called us on the phone, listened, prayed, watched the boys when we weren't able to, sat with us in the hospital, took time off to come and visit, washed my hair when I was too weak to stand, walked with me to the bathroom and pushed my wheelchair out into the sunlight (even though we were told not to leave the ward). Love was seen in an old friend who went out of their way to come by and a new friend who cared in unexpected way. Love bought us a computer when ours was stolen, was a nurse who held my hand when I was afraid and crying, sat in the waiting room for hours just to be there, explained what was happening in words I could understand, paid for a gym membership so I could regain my strength, sent us e-mails, helped us replace our van when the Windstar became too dangerous to drive, assured me that my job would be there when I was ready to return, went for a walk with me (first for just a few houses, then down the street, finally around the block). Love gave us a cell phone when ours got lost in the chaos, cleaned our house, folded our laundry, and walked our kids to school. Love was a hockey community that treated us like family and coaches who let me on the ice to help with my sons' practices when I was finally able to skate again. Love was shown through a doctor who helped move up my surgery date by four months (a little less suffering) and another doctor who didn't just see us but also prayed with us in the examination room when the answers were not coming. I have learned what Romans 8:27-39 declares that "nothing in all of creation is able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And that love was shown through you (1 Corinthians 13, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.")

God's presence, provision and protection and were evident through a specialist who went with a hunch and ordered a test that finally unlocked the mystery, a surgeon who gave me hope at the darkest moment - he told me repeatedly to just keep going, a thief who stole our belongings but left our family unharmed and who wasn't able to steal our children's sense of security, teachers who were sensitive, colleagues who were supportive and picked up the work we couldn't do it, elders who served us

communion in our home and a church family who gave us a gift bag at Christmas to remind us we were part of a community. If I were tempted by agnosticism at the beginning of this journey or had days when I wondered if God really cared it has now been replaced by confidence and faith in a God who is ever present, loving and who even in the midst of suffering gives (in the words of the song by Chris Tomlin) ten thousand reasons for our hearts to sing! I believe not because God healed me physically (he didn't have to and many times he doesn't) but because God was with me. Isaiah 41:10 is a promise for all who trust him - "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." To all of you who have stood with us during this time – our sincere thanks. We deeply appreciate you and all that you have done. We know we cannot repay you but we do hope that you truly sense the pleasure and honour that you have brought God through your actions and love that we hold in our hearts for all of you!

I am hesitant to even mention Amy's care because words are too inadequate to describe it and how I feel about it. She got the boys ready for school every morning, and worked each day before coming to the hospital to be with me (I wanted to tell her not to come but I needed her there so much). She would stay with me throughout the day until it was finally time to leave. She would then head home, finish homework, get everyone ready for bed and tuck them in with reassurance, love and prayers. She then had to prepare for the next day, including lesson plans and filled lunch bags before finally falling into bed herself. Most nights one of the boys would join her, not being able to sleep and the dog, perhaps needing comforted too, snuck onto the end of the bed. I temporarily lost a lot of my memory and perception of reality during the trauma of those days but Amy was the one thing I was certain of. She was my rock, my hope, the one who listened to my fears, wiped my tears, and gave the strength to make it through another day. Seventeen years ago when she said "For better or for worse, in sickness and in health" she meant and she has lived it out. Thank you sweetie! I love you with all of my heart.

My anticipation is to return to work gradually over the month of February (something I am really looking forward to). I would love to visit and thank each of you personally but that too is something I will need to pace myself on. Some days are still hard and it will likely be at least a year before I return to full strength. I will need to have ongoing monitoring of my hormone levels and a regular MRI. In addition I will need to be on medication for a while for the continued treatment of the embolism. There is still ongoing testing around this and I ask you to pray for a clear diagnosis and for complete and total healing. So while we are realistic that there is still a journey ahead, over all we are mostly just deeply appreciative of you all and are thrilled to share this good news with you.

Thank you all so much for everything! I do not know why God has allowed us to suffer so publically nor do I understand why he has allowed me to be healed while others he has not. But I do know that we are love by God and even though we live under a curse that makes our bodies fail, we have been given the opportunity to be redeemed from its lasting judgement through faith in God. I can repeat the words of 2 Timothy 1:12 – "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day." I have sought to honour God in my actions and words while I have entrusted my life and eternity to him. It is only faith in Jesus that gives us hope in this life and the one to come.

Peace to you all.
With deep gratitude.

Andrew