



Carol H.M.

The phone call about the diagnosis came on April 16, 2014. From the length of time the biopsy had taken, I had sensed that the news wasn't good. I felt devastated, scared, uncertain, altered. Late-in-life married, I also felt fortunate to have my husband Dana's encircling arms. As the fog cleared we decided not to tell family until I had much more information and a treatment plan. I am a pastor, and didn't feel ready to deal with a hundred daily questions; no one at work was to know for now. Instead I reached out to found-family: two circles of women, with whom I keep in touch largely via e-mail, and whose friendships have long sustained me. Their response began sending hope back to me.

My dearest friend died of ovarian cancer in 1996; her widower eventually married Heidi's oncological social worker - true! - and so I thought to phone Martha, who led me to BCCR & Holly, and to Dr. Skinner, life-giving choices for me. My first Brown Bag, ten days later, gave me such peace that my husband asked if they met daily. Please, he said.

Dawn on the day of surgery brought a peace I hadn't expected. I took lipstick to write on our bathroom mirror words from a blessed & feisty Aussie friend, Pam: "Suck it up, Princess." The mastectomy was uncomplicated, the healing reasonable, the reconstruction interesting and the dance of which meds to be on for the next five or ten years continues quite the physical and emotional challenge. Ah well.

And so, the on-going reality of cancer contributes its fill of dull and difficult as well as sparkling and stained-glass colored threads to life's weaving. I have learned anew how much I am loved. I have learned anew how weak I am, and how strong. I have learned that I cannot do this alone, and I have discovered depths in other people that have occasionally been mirrored in me. At BCCR I continue to meet amazing and life-giving people, who give me so very much help and hope. I am grateful.