

Two stories shared in the FMC worship service on April 29, 2012:

Arlene Geissinger –organ donation story

What goes into making a decision to become an organ donor? The idea of giving a life giving gift is definitely both appealing and daunting. If I remember correctly, I first read the email from Ernie in August of last year, that Marilyn had decided it was time to let people know that she was in need of a kidney. The thought crossed my mind that maybe I should be tested to see if I might be a possible donor. I have been lucky to be healthy all my life, and I also have a healthy, or shall we say unhealthy fear of all things medical. I put off annual physical exams, because I dread having to have blood drawn. I get light headed hearing other people talk about medical procedures. Therefore, the idea of going through the tests and the process of kidney donation, was really scary. Glenn and I had talked briefly about being tested. He knew he didn't have the right blood type. I didn't know my blood type. Knowing Marilyn's health was declining kept me thinking that for me, while there was fear to overcome, for her receiving a kidney was a critical factor in her quality of life. I knew that several people, including her daughter and some of her friends had been tested or were in the process of being tested. I kept thinking about doing this, but didn't move on to taking action.

Finally, in November, I decided I would begin the process. From the beginning, I knew that if I started the process, I would see it through to the end, whatever that might be. The first blood test was done at my clinic. Something may have been lost or a connection missed. For whatever reason, I didn't hear anything for weeks. I think I was thinking/hoping that maybe this meant I wasn't a match, but that didn't make any sense. I figured I should hear one way or the other. I put off calling to follow up. After Christmas, I got up the courage to make the call to the living donor clinic. I left a message, and within hours I got a call back that said I was the right blood type. We scheduled the next step for the following week. This was another blood test. It turned out to be 10 vials of blood to determine compatibility. I didn't pass out. Within a week the positive results were back. I got a notebook of information in the mail about the program with all the procedures, risks and benefits. The next step was a full day of tests, procedures and interviews to determine if I was a good risk. The drive in for that day of testing was traumatic. I came as close to a panic attack as I have ever come in my life, on my way to HCMC. It took lots of deep breaths to maintain control. As I knew I would, one of the first things I had to do that day was to sign a document stating that I knew the risks involved, including possible death, and that I was doing this without pressure from anyone. This didn't help me feel more confident, but we proceeded. As it turned out, I had to have more tests and procedures due to a family history of cancer – more needles and probing. I was pretty preoccupied and consumed with thinking about this for about three months. I kept Marilyn informed of what was happening and what we were waiting for. Through all this time, she was remaining hopeful and encouraged. Whenever I talked about it with anyone else, I kept saying I'll just be happy when it's all done. People everywhere told us both that that they were praying for both of us.

No doubt this is one of the biggest decisions I have made. Knowing that this was a life giving process kept me going. It was a way of putting faith into action, of doing for another what I would want someone to do for me. There was the ever present hope that the process would result in Marilyn regaining her health. Affirmation and support from family and friends were strong.

Seeing the life changing work that can be done by medical people is quite amazing. Kidney removal was done laparoscopically – quite amazing. The care and attention we received in the hospital was excellent. I only had to be in the hospital two days. Within hours I was walking the halls of the hospital, and the day I came home, I was walking around the gardens and the neighborhood. Marilyn looked really good and healthier within a day of the surgery.

The Easter season was particularly meaningful this year with all of these things happening. Among the cards and responses I received, people noted the courage and generosity involved in making this decision. Particularly poignant were notes from Marilyn's granddaughters thanking me for saving their grandma's life. I have to say these things were not what were going through my mind. Throughout the process the thought of this being a life giving decision was too big of an idea to embrace. I was thinking about Marilyn getting better and being able to live a more normal life. The fact that kidney transplants have become almost routine seems miraculous to me. I am thankful that my friend, Marilyn, had this option available to her. All in all it turned out to be a very positive experience.

Laying down one's life: the story of Rachel Corrie

Rachel Corrie grew up in Olympia Washington. At 23, when she was a senior at Evergreen College she traveled to Gaza, in Israel/Palestine, to do her senior thesis in international studies. She proposed to join protesters of the international Solidarity Movement and initiate a sister city project between Olympia and the Gaza city of Rafah. In preparation, she organized a penpal program between school children in Olympia and Rafah.

Rachel arrived in Israel/Palestine at a volatile time in a part of the world known for its turbulence. Palestinian militant bombings were killing Israeli civilians. The Israeli government had launched an aggressive program to demolish Palestinian homes and water wells in both the West Bank and Gaza. Many Palestinian civilians were caught in the frequent crossfire between Israelis and Palestinians. International groups like the ISM and Christian Peacemaker Teams were attempting to be human shields to decrease the violence and protect Palestinians.

Rachel arrived in Hebron, in the West Bank, in January 2003 to train with Christian Peacemaker Teams. She and others then went to

Gaza. She began getting to know Palestinian families who provided meals and a place to sleep. In an interview on March 14 of that year, Rachel said, "I feel like I'm witnessing the systematic destruction of a people's ability to survive...sometimes I sit down to dinner with people and I realize there is a massive military machine surrounding us, trying to kill the people I'm having dinner with."

In her journal she wrote, "There is something I'm supposed to do. I know there is something big that I am supposed to do. I just don't know what it is yet." She spent time at the "Canada Well" (which had been built in 1999 with international funding), trying to protect municipal workers who were repairing damages made by bulldozers. Because of the damage, water was scarce, rationed to a few hours of running water on alternate days. Snipers routinely shot at the civilian workers. Numerous homes were being bulldozed. The activists stood between the bulldozers with blaze orange vests and megaphones, and sometimes were able to prevent the destruction of homes.

On March 16, Bulldozers were clearing brush and beginning demolition of the home of local pharmacist Samir Nasrallah, in whose home the activists had stayed. Rachel stood between the Caterpillar bulldozer and the house, with a megaphone and wearing her blaze orange jacket. She knelt with arms outstretched 15 yards from the bulldozer, waving her arms and shouting, just as activists had successfully done dozens of times that day. This time the bulldozer just kept moving. When it got so close that it was moving the earth beneath her, Rachel climbed onto the pile of rubble being pushed by the bulldozer. She fell back, as her friends ran toward the bulldozer shouting at the driver to stop. But the bulldozer just continued forward, until it buried Rachel.

Her friends dug her life-less body out of the rubble. She had literally laid down her life for her Palestinian friends--friends she had known for only a few months .