



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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Message from the Interim Conference Minister

Dear Friends and Colleagues in Ministry:

I received an email with a letter from the Cleveland Clinic on Monday, October 14, 2019, informing me that I need open heart surgery to remove a tumor on my heart valve. This clarity has just come into focus after many tests and examinations. Surgery is scheduled for Thursday, October 31, 2019 at the Cleveland Clinic.

There is historic precedence that in the absence of the Conference Minister, the ACM for Vitality, Transformation and Sustainability serves as head of staff in collaboration with the other ACM's, our Controller and conference leadership. Thus, in my absence the Rev. Michelle Hughes will serve temporarily in the additional role of Acting Conference Minister on my behalf with all rights, responsibilities and authority to keep the ship moving forward. God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit will be in control as they always have been and always will be. Michelle will work with and consult our Conference Leadership on major issues.

You are welcome to read the details of my unwanted and unexpected journey outlined in this letter. I want to share with you the road James and I have traveled since June when I had my TIA's (transient ischemic attacks) at General Synod.

After the 4 TIA's that I had in Milwaukee this past June 2019, the medical team here in Chicago hospitalized me in an attempt to have multiple specialist's review my case and attempt to determine what was the root cause of my TIA's.

The initial diagnosis was inconclusive. MRI's and heart Eco's showed what they believed to be a blood clot. Because the images also were not as clear as they hoped they also ordered an MRI of my heart. The expert brought in to read it stated that the image was more consistent with a blood clot. Of course, my "blood clot" would happen to be located on my heart valve.

This led the team to tell me they believed it was a blood clot and the immediate prescription for high dose blood thinners. I'm still on them. Upon release I've had two more TEE's (scans of my heart). The second scan caught us all off guard. The "blood clot" grew rather than shrinking as was expected with the blood thinners.

The 3rd TEE also showed it had grown though at a slower pace. The Chicago medical team was debating what to do and their recommendations were all over the place. I choose to see a heart specialist at the Cleveland Clinic who did heart valve surgery on my brother-in-law's son.

The Cleveland Clinic made very specific recommendations and ordered further testing. They were sure that I never had a blood clot on my heart valve. After sending many medical records from various stages of my life they ordered additional studies. Along the way, the Chicago medical team has come to the same conclusion as Cleveland. I've decided to have the open heart surgery at the Cleveland Clinic. Things are moving quickly. I will have surgery in two weeks, Thursday, October 31. I decided that date as I'm covered October 31, as its All Souls Day (Día de Los Muertos) and November 1, All Saints Day. Your prayers are welcome and appreciated.

I've been told that recovery is between 6-8 weeks. It is my hope to return to work full-time on or about December 9. Ultimately, clearance is provided by the doctors.

The Reverend Justo González, II
Interim Conference Minister
Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

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