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96-88

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Her medical miracle
came from her husband

By Karen Willoughby

Baptist Press
5/21/96

NORTH FORK, Calif. (BP)--He gave her a kidney. She gave him a purple heart.
John Stafford, pastor of North Fork (Calif.) Baptist Mission, knew when he married her that Pat Matthews had a life-limiting kidney disease.

What she didn't know then was that he planned, whenever it became necessary, to give her one of his kidneys, the Lord willing.

It became necessary earlier this year.

Pat learned when she was 13 that she had inherited polycystic kidney disease, which meant that by age 40, her kidneys would be less and less able to clean her blood.

There was no cure, she was told. The only way to stop the disease was to stop passing it on, to not give birth.

The disease also meant her kidneys were twice the size they should be, and covered inside and out with cysts. She had to be careful to not overexert, which would cause the cysts to burst and bleed. Kidney infections were all too common.

She's 44 now, with a 14-year-old adopted daughter. It was about 18 months ago that Pat's body began to feel the effects of the disease.

"I was weak, not thinking clearly, had a lot of nausea and headaches, deterioration of muscles," she said. "The last month I couldn't even pick up a carton of milk, I was that weak. I'm 44 and felt 88. I know what it is like to be an old, old person, just worn out."

Her older sister died four years ago from the disease. Dialysis hadn't helped because it functions at 10 percent of what the kidneys are supposed to do, which is to clean the blood, purifying the body's toxins.

"I had six friends, six or seven, who offered me a kidney," Pat said. "I was scared at the thought, but watching my sister suffer with dialysis I thought, 'I can't live like this.' I prayed, 'Lord, I'm scared to do this, but I don't want to leave my daughter or my husband.'"

There was no one possible in her family line to get a kidney from, the chances were slim that everything would match for a non-family donor, and with O-positive blood, the waiting list would be long for a donor from a cadaver, Pat said. But it was a choice between trying and dying.

She talked about a transplant with her husband. He didn't tell her that he had planned almost 25 years previously to give her a kidney when it became necessary, if God would make it possible. He just said she needed to make her own decision.

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It wasn't until they were sitting in the office of the transplant surgeon that John said he wanted to be first on the list of people to be checked as possible donors.

"She was shocked and a little teary-eyed," John said. "She hadn't considered me" as a potential donor.

"I went through all the tests and everything said match, match, match, match," he continued. "That was the miracle. I asked the Lord to do it, but what if he said no?"

His kidney was to be his 25th wedding anniversary gift to her, the pastor said to his wife. The gift came early, Feb. 29, because of her rapidly deteriorating physical condition.

They were in the hospital together for six days. The surgery is harder on the donor than the recipient, Pat said.

"I went through some tough times, but six days -- I was ready to come home," John said. "I lost a pound and a half. That's what the kidney weighed." Pat takes 50 pills a day, but that will decrease to about 20 in a year or two.

"They're fooling my body to accept the kidney," she said. "By leaving in one kidney, the disease attacks it instead of the new one."

The surgery was a success, she said.

"I've got my brain back," Pat said. "I knew I was going to be better, but I didn't know I would be this better this fast.

"I have friends now who have put on their driver's license they want to be a donor," she continued. "You have to have a heart; you have to have a brain, but until you go through this, you don't know what a kidney can do."

Pat gave her husband a purple tie tack for their 25th anniversary. Like the kidney, it too was early.

"He willingly went to battle for me," she said.

The certificate that went with the tie tack says, "Greater love hath no man than this"

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**She sees the miraculous
despite return of blindness**

By Don Kirkland

**Baptist Pres
5/21/96**

TRAVELERS REST, S.C. (BP)--The year was 1991. Diane Martin faced laser surgery on her eyes. It was an effort to correct blindness caused by her 27-year battle with diabetes.

Micah 7:8 came to her mind: "God will bring me out of my darkness into the light, and I will see his goodness."

"I claimed that verse," she said. "It's lonely to sit in the darkness."

Diane and her husband, Mike, have been members of First Baptist Church, Travelers Rest, S.C., the past 21 years. She's been director of emergency assistance for United Ministries, Greenville, for 12 years.

And for five years, she has been blind. The official diagnosis: diabetic retinopathy. By January 1996, her vision had deteriorated to 20/2400.

On March 9, she was up early. She and Helen Lynn, wife of First Baptist Church pastor Dennis Lynn, planned a visit to Peniel Prayer Center in Cowpens.

That morning, Diane could see. Not just light, but the tops of trees. As the day progressed, so did her vision. She could identify plants. Back home, she could see the house across the street.

It was a miracle. "I went from blind enough to use a guide dog to sighted enough to drive a car," she said. "My doctor, Nick McClain, had never seen any change that dramatic."

She saw her family again, including sons Mich, 23, and Matthew, a junior in college. It was time for her to "catch up on life."

Everybody wanted to hear Diane's story. Churches. Television stations.

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The story she tells is not what you might think. Emphasizing the faithfulness of God more than the miracle of sight, she said, "Whatever your darkness, God is going to be there for you. God will sit by your side in the darkness and in the light."

For Diane, the darkness has returned. Bleeding within the eye has robbed her of sight. Again.

Is a seven-week miracle any less a miracle? Not in her eyes. "I know it was God who gave me back my sight," she said, "and I don't have to understand everything. That's what faith is about."

She's hopeful yet another miracle will occur. "I don't know what tomorrow holds," she said, "but neither do you. I do know this. God is able. God is enough."

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Her hospital ministry is
demanding yet rewarding

By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
5/21/96

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--A day in the life of Barbara Kimbrel might include:

A single mother, age 14, giving birth to a second child.

Hearing good news from a patient's tests: no cancer!

Ministering to a teenager paralyzed in a motor vehicle accident.

A premature baby's kidneys miraculously start working.

Being with a female, age 21, receiving an AIDS diagnosis.

Using sign language with a deaf mother during childbirth.

Attending surgery of an employee at another hospital.

Ministering to parents and hospital staff after a baby is stillborn.

Teaching a seminar.

Arranging a patient's request for renewal of wedding vows.

Providing counseling sessions.

Attending a funeral.

Managing support group meetings.

Kimbrel, the lone female member of the chaplain staff at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center (MBMC) in Jackson, acknowledged the work can be long and tiring, but she's never felt more rewarded.

"I sense God's pleasure saying, 'Yes, this is what I want you to do.' I'm the one who comes away blessed," she said.

Kimbrel said she has been well-received as a woman in a predominantly male ministry.

"Working with mothers and babies just comes natural. Women will talk to a woman about things that might be embarrassing in front of a man," she said.

Kimbrel, a native of Birmingham, Ala., said she felt God calling her at the age of 5, but she thought it was into foreign missions. Working as a registered medical technologist, however, clarified for her that the call was to hospital chaplaincy.

At age 44, she took a "step of faith" and enrolled at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. After receiving a master of divinity degree in 1988, she served as a hospital chaplain in Durham, N.C., before returning to Birmingham to join the clinical pastoral education program at Baptist Medical Center.

Since 1992, she has served full-time on the MBMC chaplain staff. Beyond her seminary study, she has been ordained by a Southern Baptist church and endorsed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's Commission on Chaplaincy; she has 9 units (3,600 hours) of clinical pastoral education; is a Fellow in the College of Chaplains; and participates in a continuing education curriculum.

At the medical center, her assigned responsibilities include labor and delivery; neonatal intensive care; pediatrics and pediatric intensive care; adult intensive care; surgery; diabetics; geriatrics; oncology; Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS); and transitional care.

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Kimbrel often deals with tragedy and, thus, with people who are angry with God.

"I hear what they are saying. I tell them it's OK to be angry with God. I facilitate their emotions, so they can talk about it," she said.

When visiting patients and their families, she recounted, "Typically, they are open and receptive. When people go through a serious experience like this, they are truthful with me. Many of them already know the Lord, but there are also opportunities to witness to lost people.

"There's always the seed that you plant. I pray with them and leave devotional material," she said.

Kimbrel said she also has a strong bond with the medical center's 3,000 employees.

"I feel I am as much here for the employees as I am for the patients. The prayer requests I have right now from hospital employees include an employee's mother who is terminally ill, employees concerned with health problems and a mother/daughter relationship," she said.

Kimbrel foresees momentous changes in the future of chaplaincy, most notably the trend toward more community involvement in addition to responsibilities at the hospital.

"Home health programs are really expanding; I see a role for chaplains in the home health-care field. Years ago, the challenge for a chaplain was to try to see every patient in the hospital. Now, chaplaincy has expanded to include many other things," she said.

As examples, Kimbrel pointed to the involvement of chaplains in the construction of MBMC's Habitat for Humanity house in Jackson and to her invitation to speak at a World Missions Conference in Pascagoula in February 1997.

The topic of her talk at the conference will be, "Going Where Others Cannot Go."

"I love to tell the chaplaincy story. I enjoy the work and feel called to do it," she said.

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It's a musical & comic book,
with lesson plans for teachers By David Mallory

Baptist Press
5/21/96

CARL JUNCTION, Mo. (BP)--Ever wonder what the "boot camp" for God's army is like? One vision is offered by a new contemporary youth musical, "Armor: Armored Christian Warriors." Brothers Darrel and Doug Campbell of Carl Junction, Mo., collaborated on the project.

The musical begins with the lead character, a new Christian named Blades, walking into an army barracks carrying a helmet. "I got my helmet of salvation from the Commander-in-Chief," he announces, "and I'm ready to fight!" The rest of the cast point out to him that he is still ill-prepared for battle. Then, led by "Sarge," representing the mature leadership of the church, they take the new recruit through each piece of the armor of God.

"The kid arrives, unprepared, and leaves prepared," said Darrel Campbell. But Blades isn't the only one who learns. "Sarge arrives jaded and tough, but leaves softened. He comes to realize that they are a team."

The musical is targeted toward what the Campbell brothers consider "a generation at risk" -- young people between the fourth and 10th grades.

"Up to that age, they have real active children's programs, with musicals, Bible study and all that," Darrel observed. "Then suddenly they're almost in junior high, but not yet in the youth department.

"There's this point where they're either going to lock into who God is and be excited about the whole church experience, or they're going to be saying, 'Man, I can't wait to get home and watch the Bulls.'"

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Darrel noted Christian artists have succeeded in reaching this age group with upbeat, well-produced music. "That's the direction we wanted to go," he said. "We wanted to give the kids something more like what they hear on the radio, something they can relate to."

Most youth music books, though they may have colorful covers, are strictly black and white on the inside, filled with musical notes, lyrics, script and possibly production notes, Doug said.

He and Darrel, however, wanted to make their student books more appealing to young people. To do this, they decided to go with a comic book format, complete with color illustrations showing action scenes and word balloons telling the story. Insets provide additional dialogue for acting out the scenes on stage.

"Armor" also comes with complete lesson plans for teaching Ephesians 6:11-17, the Scripture passage on which the musical is based. The leader's manual contains material for a 10-week study and is designed to be a broad learning experience. Each lesson contains an introduction, a devotion, music rehearsal, dialogue rehearsal and a game that supports the lesson.

"We talked with music entertainers at the Southern Baptist Convention and other places," Doug noted, "and they thought the easier we made it on the music directors the better it would be, because there are so many directors who don't have the time to really sit down and spend the time that needs to be spent as far as making devotions or lesson plans.

"This research showed us that people want curriculum, not just music. They want a total package that will take them through the summer, or through the fall -- so it's more than just doing a musical on Saturday night. This is much more than that. It's everything that leads up to that night."

Darrel added, "We didn't just write this for the Saturday night performance. We wrote this for the 10 weeks they're studying Ephesians 6:11-17. What we're trying to provide to the leaders are tools they can use to teach kids the Word of God."

Erin Burger, a member of First Baptist Church, Carl Junction, sang on the soundtrack tape that is part of the "Armor" package. "I think kids will really enjoy performing it -- I know our youth group is."

"Armor" also has given her spiritual insight, the 15-year-old high school freshman said. "I'd heard of having spiritual armor, but I'd never really thought of it. This musical has helped me understand it better."

She said "Armor" would be a good outreach tool to young people who don't go to church. "It would help kids understand that without God it's really hard to survive in the world."

The Campbells are graduates of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Doug with a major in music and Darrel with a major in theater. Doug is now a bivocational minister of music with First Baptist Church, Carl Junction. He also teaches music for the Seneca school system.

Darrel worked in New York, Virginia and California with such studios as Disney and Paramount before returning to his native Missouri to start his own production company.

"I have some music background, but I certainly don't have the theory and experience that Doug has," Darrel said. "That's what makes us really effective -- he has gifts I don't have, and I have gifts he doesn't have."

Darrel's contacts in Hollywood allowed them to line up some talented help, including Al Phillips of Catalyst Production Studios in Camdenton, Mo. "He's one of the top engineers in the Midwestern United States now," Darrel said. "He was one of the best in Los Angeles when I was there. Then he moved to the Lake of the Ozarks and bought Catalyst Studios. He's a friend, somebody we could trust."

Although the "Armor" materials provide guidelines on props, sets and costumes, these are deliberately simple. The Campbells wanted to make the musical as easy as possible to present, allowing each church flexibility. The brothers are hoping to hear about churches doing the musical so they can attend.

"They wouldn't have to say we're there," Darrel said. "We just want to stand in the back and watch, because we'll learn from that and glean information for the sequel."

Sequel?

"Oh yes, we've already started on 'Armor II -- The Conflict,'" Darrel said. "Many of the characters will be the same, with a couple of new ones, but the setting will be different."

The Campbells said their main thought is to build on the foundation they have laid in the original "Armor."

"If we can get kids learning that they must be prepared spiritually," Doug shared, "then we will have accomplished our task for this musical."

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Mallory is a correspondent for Word & Way, Missouri Baptists' newsjournal.

Teaching helps for kindergartners,
pre-first-graders now on SBCNet

Baptist Press
5/21/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Preschool Sunday school teachers looking for some extra helps in working with kindergartners and pre-first-graders may find what they're looking for in some new electronic files now available on SBCNet.

Ideas for additional activities for these groups are being posted monthly as electronic text files in the Preschool/Children's Library in the General Ministry A forum on SBCNet, Southern Baptists' private area on the CompuServe computer network. They supplement those already included in Preschool Bible Teacher C, the Life & Work Series teacher book for 4-, 5- and preschool 6-year-olds.

Files are posted one month in advance of the date of the lessons. For example, the file of helps designed to supplement June Sunday school lessons was posted May 1.

Carole Hallum, a biblical studies designer in the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division, said the helps are being prepared by preschool curriculum writers and are targeted to the special needs of kindergartners and pre-first graders.

Gayle Lintz, a preschool curriculum writer from Waco, Texas, said these two groups are literal-minded, active learners who need "hands-on" experience. "They show us that they are unique creations of God and they learn in their own individual ways.

"They are growing and learning, quick and curious," she explained. "Compared to other age groups in the preschool division, they're mature and competent. But compared to first-graders, they're still babies."

Hallum said the new online postings "should provide some additional ideas that are both age-appropriate and challenging for this age group."

SBCNet can be accessed by using a computer, modem and a membership kit distributed free by the Sunday School Board. To order a kit, or for more information, call 1-800-325-7749. Persons who are already members of CompuServe may join SBCNet by simply typing "GO SBCNet" at any CompuServe prompt.

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