



DAVE & MARGIE STAFFORD

SERVING IN THE PHILIPPINES



JULY 2021

Normal service will be resumed shortly!

A phrase we see usually when a tv program or live streaming service goes off the air for a brief period of time, usually just when you don't need it to!

Well, the reality was, and many of you will not be fully aware, that I had taken ill on Wednesday, 24th March. I drove myself into Sacred Heart hospital here in Pensacola, to be told at the Emergency Room that I was suffering a heart attack! The next day, Thursday was told that I would need open heart surgery and it was to be Friday morning, March, 26th. The procedure was successful, bless the Lord, and I left the hospital the following Tuesday, March 30th, having had quadruple bypass surgery.

But sadly, my return home was short-lived because on the morning of Thursday, April 1st (not an April fool's day joke) I was rushed back into the Emergency Room because I had been throwing acid and bile up all night; not a good thing I was later to learn! Before lunchtime on Thursday, I was being taken down to the operating room for an emergency operation to investigate what was going on inside me. It would be Sunday around lunchtime before I would wake up in the critical care unit at Sacred Heart with my thoracic surgeon, Dr. Wyatt, standing at the foot of my bed.

He would go on to explain that on opening me up they found my bowel had stopped working and my stomach had an obstruction in it. On Thursday, they saw the bowel was dying but didn't know why and didn't have a solution. So, the gastrointestinal team decided to leave my wound open, not sew me back up, but wait. And they waited until Saturday to go back in and work on me again. Bearing in mind I'm sedated and on a ventilator while all this is going on!



At Sacred Heart



With Pastor Mike at Cardiologist appointment

The testimony of the attending surgeons, in a conversation on Saturday evening with my Pastor Mike Collens, was that whatever happened in the operating room, God has turned it all around. They told Pastor Mike that they thought "they had lost me", that they couldn't get the bowel to function despite everything they had done, but whatever happened they said we ought to be thanking God for His intervention. Wow! This type of testimony is not normal conversation out of the mouths of surgeons. Of course, I had this relayed to me afterward by Pastor Mike when he came back to the hospital to see me.

At this point let me say just how truly marvelous and Christ-like Pastor Mike was and is! With Margie unable to drive and not fully able to remember what would be told to her, Mike stepped up BIG TIME! He became my advocate and voice, my messenger extraordinaire. He would communicate morning and evening with Margie to keep her up to date and to see what needs she had. He was communicating with dear friends, some he knew, many he didn't, as to the progress or lack of it during the whole episode. I spent 3 weeks in the hospital, much of it in various levels of intensive care units. Then I was transferred to a rehab clinic for 20 days. Not the most exciting or restful place I'd choose to stay! Eventually, I was discharged in the first week of May and boy was it sooo good to be home again, even if I couldn't really function independently.

I have now returned to work part-time and I'm attending a gym session 3 times a week as part of Sacred Heart's Cardio- rehab program because my energy and stamina levels are lower than I need them to be.



Many people have helped Margie during my absence, especially Barbara Akers and Sue Hunt, who helped by shopping and driving Margie to hospital visits. I know many, many people, all across America and around the world were praying for my recovery. Many local churches in Pensacola engaged in intercessory prayer for my health. God answered those prayers by restoring me back to health. I don't take lightly the fact that in God's economy, He decided I still have a purpose to fulfill, to continue to image God to everybody I come into contact with but especially those whom the Lord has called me to disciple in the Philippines. Big thank you to Howard Sandusky, his wife Sylvia, Sylvia's sister Emma, who between them were able to release the news of my serious illnesses calmly and passionately to those Pastors and groups that I serve, and especially, those spiritual sons and daughters of the Chosen Generation, who would have otherwise thought I'd just abandoned them. To those and many, many others to whom I was unable to respond, thank you for your patience and understanding, and prayers. I was simply unable to respond to the deluge of well wishes and questions that I received either by telephone, text, messenger, WhatsApp, KiK, and other platforms.



Visitation was at first strictly limited but once in rehab God sent his messengers (ma'lak) to bring insight and wisdom, love and concern but above all the Presence of Yahweh Himself.



Vein harvesting looking better than it did!

Pastor Mike Collins would sit night and night, day after day in the ICU and Rehab just being there for me. Dr. Mike Jacobs, a bastion of God, took it upon himself to enroll his name as an attending doctor at the rehab clinic so he could guide and direct the rehab team to take better care of me. His wife Susan, who has always believed in me. That John Curtis, Peter and Louise Curtis, Margaret and Frank Simmons took time out to hunt me down, truly blessed me! The agents of Yahweh, Dennis Lingbeek, and Chris Hansen really stirred my spirit and the fellowship we had was truly God-ordained. That my dear friend Scott Brown would travel from Orlando and bring sense to my nightmares and torment was life-giving. Pastor Sean Lagasse also traveled up from Orlando and we had true fellowship, and his heart for me in petitioning the throne room so as God would preserve my earthly life touched me to the core. We got to meet Dr. George Smith's (our primary care doctor) new wife Margaret, who served us and had never met us before! My boss at work, John Bullard, has been caring and gracious with visiting me and also accepting me back part-time.

There were lots of friends who texted me and kept me in prayer before the King of Kings. I was reconnected with my best friend and best man at my wedding, Ray Allan, whom I went to school with, and we joined the same company and worked together for 30. Our move to the USA brought natural distance and loss of contact, but now we speak on WhatsApp every week. Last but not least my dear wife Margie who didn't know what was going on when I didn't come home from work on the eventful Wednesday evening in March, prayed faithfully for my restoration and would have killed me if I'd died!!!! My thanks to you all!

It's taken a while but I'm ministering again across the 9,000-mile, 13-hour divide, to my mission field in Mindanao. I'm in regular contact with the many people who God has brought together and I'm beginning to pack the boxes that have stood idle since March! Every gift we send we send in the Name and love of Jesus, blessed be His name.

Live Loved and remember, as I do every day, that with Jesus You'll Never Walk Alone! #YNWA

- Dave & Margie Stafford



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