

March 3, 2025

Dear Presbytery Family,

Several of you have noticed that I have been missing in action last month, and I think I am in a position to give an update. Thank you for all the prayers and notes of concern, and I apologize for not responding to everyone.

You know that like too many others, I lost my house in the Eaton fire. I stayed with my cousin for a night with another refugee, but then they got an evacuation warning, so I headed south to Santa Monica and stayed with my niece. She had already given notice to move out at the end of January, so I took a short-term apartment in West Hollywood, and then I was able to secure a cottage in Eagle Rock, starting mid-February. I am now in Eagle Rock, and though I'm not at all moved in, I'm happy and grateful to be back in the bounds of San Gabriel Presbytery.

In the midst of the moves, I received a diagnosis of early-stage breast cancer, but I was assured that it was local and once I have surgery to remove the cancer, the outcome would be good. (It has since been called "pre-cancer.") I set up an appointment for the initial consult with the surgeon for early February.

On Sunday, February 2, I drove with my dog to Occidental Presbyterian and saw Jihyun Oh. Though we delayed WinterFest, Jihyun decided to come to SoCal anyway, so I asked her to spend Sunday with us. She worshipped with Occidental, and met with the leaders of Interwoven, and then we went up to Altadena so she could see the fire devastation in person. We were at my house when I got dizzy; I thought it was because it was unusually hot and sunny that day. I took leave of Jihyun and got in the car, and as I was driving I had the first and by far the worst of gastrointestinal bleeds. Because I have no experience with health issues, I foolishly thought I could still do errands, but when the dizziness got worse, I drove to Arcadia hospital, where I safely parked in the back of the emergency department and passed out. I had notified my nephew, who met me there and got my dog, and I was then whisked into the emergency department; much later on a doctor said that the records showed my hemoglobin level was around 3 g/dL (normal for women is 12.1-15.1).

They gave me blood and removed four polyps, stopped my bleeding, diagnosed diverticulosis, and confidently sent me home on Thursday. I felt fine, stayed with my cousin overnight, then went back to West Hollywood. But I started bleeding again on Friday, and since I was less than a mile from Cedars-Sinai, I went there, and stayed there until February 21. While there, they tried multiple procedures (some many times over) to identify the source of the bleeding, and never found it, but after the bleeding stopped for several days, they sent me home. Thanks to our Stated Clerk for Administration, Carrie Kohler, who is chaplain at Cedars, so she checked in on me regularly, including at times of my greatest frustration. I also consulted with Dr. Ihab Beblawi, elder at Mideast Evangelical Church and GI doctor, who gave expert advice balanced with deep faith and Christian love.

While I was at Cedars, my family moved my stuff from WeHo to Eagle Rock, so I went straight to Eagle Rock on February 21. The good news is that the bleeding stopped and up to that point, I never felt pain. The bad news is that weekend I was in debilitating pain, and by February 24, I was shaking from chills and pain. So instead of going to my delayed breast surgeon appointment, I continued my SoCal hospital tour by going to Huntington Hospital. There I was told I had a bowel obstruction and a *c. diff* infection (which apparently happens after long hospitalizations). After what my cousin called some "expert rolfing" by a surgeon, and armed with oral antibiotics, I came home the next day, and I have been resting at home since.

I am getting a little stronger every day, but my stamina is just not there. But I have been able to stay connected with folks, especially Wendy Gist, who has been doing a terrific job leading the response to the Eaton fire, and Peter Tan-Gatue, whose first day was February 1 and has taken on amazing leadership with no startup time at all, especially in the areas of property and finance.

So there's much to be thankful for, though I am not out of the woods yet (as I write this, I just felt the small earthquake). If this had to happen, I'm glad it happened in February, which was a quiet month. And any concerns that the Presbytery would have a hard time continuing after I leave have now been dashed! We have a strong and committed staff who carried on without a hitch—and I know many of you showed grace through these trying times.

We live in uncertain times. Perhaps we are just joining the rest of the world in knowing that all of life is uncertain, and our one sure source of strength, and life, and salvation, is Christ. Thanks be to God! Thanks again for your continued prayers, and I hope to be able to serve more again soon.

In peace,

*Wendy*