

# STORIES OF GRACE

Our church family shares their story of Grace  
Katherine Beckner



This past year has been full of new experiences and a lot of growth for me and I am honestly not sure how I would have made it without the hope Jesus provides. This time last year, I got sick, and it took me until July to start recovering. Not thinking anything of it at first, doctor appointments started in January; the first of which we insisted I get referred to an endocrinologist because a friend had pointed out my symptoms seemed to point toward a thyroid problem. My blood test results came back normal, so we left that alone for a couple months until we could finally get in to see the endocrinologist. At the end of February, I started showing worse symptoms that we knew were not related to a thyroid problem, so we contacted my family doctor, got some x-rays, and were told it was over their heads; I needed to see someone with a more specialized education.

Off to Hershey we went, and seeing one doctor led to me seeing doctors in cardiology, pulmonology, rheumatology, endocrinology, and finally infectious diseases. No one could seem to tell us what was wrong with me. All my blood tests came back normal, and when I had a bronchoscope, nothing grew from what was flushed from my lungs. Still, we had no answers.

By this time, it was the beginning of May and I had finally seen the endocrinologist. The tests she did on me also showed my thyroid was fine; however, my morning cortisol level was unnervingly low. The beginning of June was when God finally let us receive some answers. I had a lung biopsy at Hershey and three of the four samples taken showed I have aspergillus (which is a form of mold) growing and causing cavitations in my lungs, which then caused hemoptysis. I began taking a harsh antifungal that has a lot of side effects, which is why I spent my summer in big hats and long dresses.

About a week after the lung biopsy, I had a cortisol infusion test done to figure out why my morning cortisol levels were so low. The test results from that showed that they are low because my pituitary gland doesn't send a hormone to my adrenal glands, telling them to make cortisol. The lack of cortisol was causing fatigue, paranoia, dizzy spells, and quite possibly a lot of other symptoms I didn't even realize were symptoms until I stopped experiencing them thanks to another medicine.

Although I have improved significantly since June, I am still fighting. I do believe the hardest part of the whole experience was suffering through depression and paranoia caused by the stress of everything that was going on. It's by God's grace I'm still here, because without Him, that dark time in my life would have been insufferable. He put people in my life that encouraged me a lot, even though a lot of them didn't know what was going on. I am especially grateful for the young people I have had the opportunity to teach some Sundays and Wednesday nights.

Through all of this, I am learning how difficult it can be to trust God, but at the same time, sometimes trusting God is the only thing one can do. God knows what He is doing and He brings the right people in and out of our lives exactly when we need those things to happen. I am getting better, and Lord willing, one day we will have a name for whatever it is I have and God can use my experiences to help other people.

**Editor's note:** Katherine has been in the church family all her life and was involved in the youth group and now serves on staff at youth week of Camp Grace, team teaches grades 1–3 with Nancy Musselman, teaches grades 1-2 on Wednesday nights, and is part of the Worship Team.