



November 17, 2021
A Note from Deanna Shirley

Dear Friends,

As we have been studying The Good Gift of our Bodies, I am sharing some personal experiences about bodies, aging, and faith.

The natural process of life includes aging, and if we are fortunate... we are able to experience it. Our bodies age, they change, they respond, and they sometimes betray us. It's our job to take note of what they are telling us and find ways to accept and deal.

In my case, I'm fortunate to be aging because it could have gone a different way... more than once.

When I was 18 and in my first three weeks of nursing school at Grant Hospital, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease (a.k.a. Hodgkin's Lymphoma).



Hodgkin's Disease? What's that? I was 18. I quickly learned what it was and underwent the appropriate treatment (for 1966) at Grant, including surgery and 30+ radiation treatments to my chest, neck, and back.

Nursing school, was of course, interrupted. When I was cleared to return to college, I personally thought I'd been introduced to nursing from the wrong side of the bed and decided to pursue another avenue.

Fast forward to the next several years — with tenacity, commitment, and more than a few compensations, I earned bachelor's and master's degrees from The Ohio State University, got married, enjoyed a teaching career, and always included medical check-ups: scans, bloodwork, chest X-rays, the works.

Intervening years brought some non-life-threatening situations, but I was living and aging and grateful.

In 1995, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I was a lot more involved with my treatment than in 1966 and a lot more concerned, because I was a lot smarter at 47 than I was at 18. I chose my surgeons with care, and both operated at Grant Hospital. Mastectomy, reconstruction, and 5 years of Tamoxifen brought me closer to retirement from a 30-year teaching career (and oh yes, the chest radiation that helped save my life at 18 can possibly be a cause of breast cancer later in life).

Of course, I was not traveling this journey alone. I had the unyielding support of family. My parents had taught me from a very early age about God's love.

My mother said, "Deanna, God already knows about this and is working on it." My mother said it. I believed it. It is with this spirit that I have continued to live and gratefully age.



Six weeks ago, I underwent an aortic valve replacement. My doc had been watching the aortic stenosis for a few years, and the time had come for intervention. The team assembled, and the procedure would be performed at the Structural Heart Center at Grant Hospital.

"Was I familiar with Grant?" they asked. Unfortunately and fortunately, the answer was yes. (And oh yes, by the way, chest radiation can be a cause of aortic stenosis.)

The aortic valve has been successfully replaced. I am healing and feeling well.

When cancer trespassed into my life at 18, my pathway was altered. I learned that changes had to be made, and I made them. **My body, with its flaws and scars, is aging, and that's OK. It has been resilient and strong for me, and I repay it by taking care of it the best I can with proper diet, exercise, weight control, and listening to its signals.**

This Sunday, as the final part of our fall series on **The Good Gift of our Bodies**, Pastor April will have a conversation with Beth Latella about her own journey of aging and facing the realities of cancer. I know you will want to join us for worship at either 9 or 11am, in person or online (<https://hilliardumc.org/worship/>).

As I said, I have not walked this path alone. Faith, family, and friends have supported me always. I know where my strength lies. I do not know what the future holds, but God already knows and is working on it.

My spirit is strong. Blessings to you, and may you find strength and resiliency in the good gift of your body.

Deanna Shirley



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