

Time for the Next Chapter...

January 8, 2019

Over the past five years, I have undergone almost every conventional treatment for prostate cancer [surgery to remove prostate, 3+ years of anti-hormone therapy, 38 rounds of radiation, SBRT radiation, 2 separate series of chemotherapy, and now Abiraterone Acetate (Zytiga) along with cryotherapy surgery in two days]...and the prostate cancer has never went to remission. With an aggressive and treatment-resistant form of prostate cancer now being treated palliatively, our medical team has recommended my entire case file be reviewed by an oncology research team at a tertiary site to identify any "fringe"/experimental treatment options available to me.

No question, as much as I've worked to maintain my physical strength and stamina, the treatments have had a cascading impact on me physically; with a multitude of side-effects now becoming permanent conditions with which I must cope. This requires me to focus substantial energy on navigating the progressing state of my prostate cancer.

It's time for Ginger and I to focus on making the most of the life we have ahead of us. While none of us know the time we have, Ginger and I have been given a unique opportunity. Rather than deal with a medically definitive and a significantly limited health scenario over a short period of time; we have been afforded a more ambiguous timeline with the hope of a window of opportunity before the cancer is allowed to have its way.

So...it's time to conclude my nearly 30 year professional career (15 in Owatonna and 15 in Mankato) in which it has been my mission to rise everyday, and make the lives of communities and the people who live in them, better today than they were yesterday, and better tomorrow than they are today.

Stepping away from the role I've played professionally in and for the community, offers the opportunity for me, and us, to do much more with the time ahead. Most have dreams of what they want to do when they are no longer working, I am no different. It's just arriving in much sooner than expected and with a window of time shorter than we had hoped. But, on diagnosis just over 5 years ago, God told me, "There is more for you to do..." At the time I believed it had to do with my professional work, and it may have been, for much has been accomplished within and as a result of GMG over the past 5 years. However, it also could have meant there were other "things" I was to do, via other "canvases" prior to joining my Father in His heavenly Kingdom.

In order to "do more"...I must first do less. Shedding the responsibilities of my professional role will enable me to place my primary focus on my health. Resting as I need, undertaking necessary health care without constant shuffling of commitments, and engaging in ways I might "do more"...that today, fight for attention against the demands of the profession and my health care journey.

First, I want to optimize the health I do have, for as long as possible; all so I can spend as much quality time as possible with my most cherished earthly love and divine partner - Ginger. I want to rise and be active based on how my physical body is feeling, rather than according to a clock or a schedule. I need to shed the obligations and mantle of responsibility of the professional world which I've carried. I've happily given my all to my professional work, but it's time for me to give my all to my overall health.

Secondly, I want to take the time to fill my days in other ways...

- with my photography hobby...producing and sharing the work I've already accumulated and gathering even more images,
- perhaps do some writing...about what I've learned along my journey as a professional and/or a person, maybe even using my photography as a way to write that book I've always wanted to
- be available to mentor
- give additional energy to the leadership and volunteers of the JZ Cancer Fund...using this next chapter as a way to expand the connections the Fund is able to provide those experiencing the cancer journey...

Up to this point, I've been the guy diagnosed with an aggressive and serious form of cancer...appearing to balance the disease with my professional role. People have seen me not only as a survivor, but as Ginger labeled me early on, as a thriver. Able to relate to the mass of folks who will experience a cancer diagnosis, travail, and continue to move forward in their lives, albeit forever changed. But there are those...who at some point, will transition from surviving this disease, to squarely facing the magnitude of one's imminent mortality. All too often this transition occurs in an abrupt and abbreviated fashion, when one's doctor definitively says something like "go home and get your affairs in order," or "you have 6 - 12 months." Just as Ginger and I have shared our journey and started the JZ Cancer Fund as a way to approach cancer differently, we have an opportunity to add another dimension to the Fund's body of work, how to face the mortality curve. This is something we will be uniquely positioned to share and give to the Fund as a way to positively impact even more people experiencing cancer.

Finally, I want to spend more time enjoying the relationships I have, while my health allows. Whether family, friends, colleagues, etc...I want to see them, talk with them and be certain we don't wish we'd have had more opportunities.

This morning marked the beginning of our transition, with a public announcement I will be stepping down from my role at GMG. With our board leadership we have designed a transition period mutually best for the organization and us. I'll target my time and energy over the next approximately 60 days transitioning myself out of the organization with my final day March 15th.

Please know, given the weight of an experience such as this and as difficult as it may be to understand, Ginger and I are very much at peace. We know God has a perfect plan laid out

and all that is required of us is to believe. To that end, and to paraphrase a friend, the Lord WILL heal me, we just don't know which side of eternity on which it will happen.

Jeremiah 29: 11-13

11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

Peace, Blessings and Love,

Jonathan (& Ginger)