

Love - Ron and Libby McGowan and daughter Beth

As Ron or Libby light the candle:

Beth: Today we light the candle that reminds us of the love of Christ.

(After the candle is lit)

Beth continues:

Our scripture comes from Isaiah 9 2-7

John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

It was supposed to be a short stay in surgery, then it got worse. My mother in the last year has been through septic shock, four surgeries, and a comma for three weeks -- much of which she doesn't remember. Every night, day after day and week after week-- then month after month-- my father was by her side. In three hospitals, and then in life care, he was there. One night he had to sleep on the floor. In all their trauma, they wanted to get back to Banner Elk where they knew the love and support would see them through and that is exactly what happened. My mother was still sick, still bad, but when they returned they were surrounded by people they knew at Cannon hospital and at this church. The community of Banner Elk enveloped them with love.

Then I did a crazy thing this summer. So, my parents could enjoy my happiness, my fiancé and my children traveled to Banner Elk to the Life Care Center. There, in the Life Care patio, we were married, all so my mother and father could be part of the joyous occasion.

Fourteen years ago, my mother went into cardiac arrest. So, this wasn't the first time that we have experienced horrific fears of what may lie before us. But a year after that cardiac arrest, she was climbing the Great Wall of China.

My mother's ability to come back from these unbelievable events makes Christmas all the more sweet. We do not know what the future holds but we know who holds the future. And we have experienced love. The love of family and a new marriage, the love of doctors and nurses, the love of friends, and the love of my parents who have celebrated 61 years of being husband and wife. God tells us to love one another and although the year has been more difficult than you can imagine, love has broken the barriers of worry and tears. Christ came to show us how to love and we could see the face of our Lord in the faces of all those surrounding our story.

Let us pray:

Dear God thank you for showing us how to love through your son, Jesus Christ. Amen