

Surviving Breast Cancer

One Woman's Story of Victory and Hope



**LUTHERAN HOUR
MINISTRIES**

People Of Christ With A Message Of Hope

This booklet is distributed by
Lutheran Hour Ministries
660 Mason Ridge Center Dr.
St. Louis, Missouri 63141-8557

In Canada, write:
LLL — Canada
270 Lawrence Avenue
Kitchener, Ontario
N2M 1Y4



**LUTHERAN HOUR
MINISTRIES**

People Of Christ With A Message Of Hope

**Our ministries are
designed to proclaim the
Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

We would be happy to hear your comments after you read this booklet. If you would like more materials for spiritual comfort and hope, or if you would like more information about Lutheran Hour Ministries, please write to us, or call us at:

1-800-876-9880

In Canada,

1-800-555-6236

*You can now reach
Lutheran Hour Ministries through:*

E-mail:

U.S.A.

lh-min@lhm.org

Canada

luthhourmin@lll.ca

or on the World Wide Web:

www.lhm.org

Printed in U.S.A.

Surviving Breast Cancer

One Woman's Story of Victory and Hope

by Karen Merkel



Copyright © 2000 by Lutheran Hour Ministries

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) is a Christian outreach ministry supporting churches worldwide. It is also a volunteer movement more than 100,000 people strong.

Unless noted otherwise, Scripture is taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. Capitalization of pronouns referring to the Deity has been added and is not part of the original New International Version text.

Diagnosis

1976 was quite a year for me. I was thirty-three years old, living and working as a missionary in La Paz, Bolivia. Between January and October, I got hepatitis, typhoid fever, amoebic dysentery, had my gall bladder and appendix removed, and had a benign tumor removed from my right knee cap. I was treated for all of these in Bolivia and continued working all the while. In November, I went to North Dakota to visit my family. At about 10:30 one night, I was taking a bath and shaving under my arm when I felt a hard, immovable lump in my breast. Suddenly the warm water that had been relaxing my body felt very cold.

Fearing what the hard lump might indicate, I jumped out of the bathtub and called a friend who is a nurse. I happened to have a doctor's appointment the next morning for something else, so my friend urged me to tell the doctor about the lump.

The doctor examined the lump and then sent me on a whirlwind of additional tests. One test was a needle aspiration, to determine if the lump was hard or if it contained fluid. If the lump contained fluid, it was probably a cyst. If it was hard, a biopsy would

determine whether it was a benign (noncancerous) or malignant (cancerous) tumor. My final doctor's visit that day was with a surgeon. I was stunned when he told me that I would be hospitalized to have a breast biopsy. If the biopsy showed malignancy, then he would do a radical mastectomy immediately. (In 1976, if a tumor was malignant, a radical mastectomy was automatically done while the woman was still under anesthesia.)

When I awoke from the anesthesia, the tight bandage wrapped around my chest told me immediately that I had breast cancer and had lost a breast. No one had to break the news to me.

Breast cancer is an insidious disease. "It is like a terrorist attack and can sneak up on a person like a thief in the night," said one cancer patient. There is usually no pain, so cancer can go undetected until it develops into a noticeable lump. Sometimes it is discovered by doing a breast self-exam, and some women find out during a physician's exam or a mammogram. Occasionally the cancer has already metastasized when it is discovered, which means it has invaded other parts of the body.

When you heard the diagnosis, "You have breast cancer," you may have felt

isolated, as if you were the only person in the world who has ever been given such a frightening sentence. But you are not alone. Except for skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common malignancy among women. More than 184,000 new cases will be diagnosed in women and 1,400 in men this year. Breast cancer strikes one in eight women and one out of one hundred men. It has attacked First Ladies Betty Ford and Nancy Reagan, ice skating champion Peggy Fleming, movie stars Ann Jillian and Richard Roundtree, and “ordinary” people like you and me.

This very frightening experience was life changing for me — I temporarily lost my independence, my privacy, and my active lifestyle, and I had to face my own mortality. Your diagnosis and treatment will also be life changing for you.

Since relationships are integral to our lives, we will consider the following questions in this booklet:

- How does having breast cancer affect my self-image?
- How does it affect my relationship with others?
- How does it affect my relationship with God?

Thoughtful introspection and honest answers to these questions are an important part of adjusting to this change in your life. You may also want to share this book with your family and friends to help them understand what you are experiencing physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Body and Spirit

I gained tremendous personal and spiritual growth from my battle with cancer. Sometimes I think that the experience was worth a million dollars, but I wouldn't take five million to go through it again. Having breast cancer forced me to accept adjustments in my lifestyle. I'd like to tell you about some of them.

I HATED losing my independence.

I had to let others help me. Oh, that was really hard! I had been an independent single woman living the unpredictable, sometimes dangerous and exciting life of a missionary in the underdeveloped, impoverished country of Bolivia, South America. But following my surgery in North Dakota, I couldn't drive and had to depend on others to take me to the hospital five days a week to receive cobalt treatments. They had to pick me up at 7:15 A.M., when it was 20 degrees

below zero. I later learned they were pleased and “honored” that I asked them to help.

You may also need to go for radiation treatments or chemotherapy and may have to ask others for transportation or other assistance. Accepting this temporary loss of independence and allowing others to help you will lessen your frustration.

Singer and songwriter Carly Simon was asked once about her experience with breast cancer, “What would you have done differently?” I love her response. “I would have allowed people to bring me their ‘chicken soup,’” she said. “I wish I would have accepted their help more.”

I had to emotionally adjust to the physical change in my body.

Today’s treatments are very different from what was available when I was treated 25 years ago. The radical mastectomy left me with a very large scar. The first time I saw the incision, which extended from my shoulder blade to my rib cage, was shocking. Sometime later, after returning to Bolivia, I was walking down the street and suddenly felt like a freak. I felt embarrassed and ashamed, thinking that people were staring at me. My first visit to the oncologist there didn’t help.

He examined my chest and said, “Hmmm, nice work; the surgeon did a good job.” I felt like a woodcarving! Eventually, I realized I was the only person who saw myself as a freak. And I came to appreciate my surgeon’s good work.

The radical intervention I experienced is seldom used today. Now a lumpectomy is often an option, with or without follow-up chemotherapy and/or radiation. If one or both breasts must be removed, you may choose to be fitted with prostheses or to have reconstructive surgery. These decisions will involve not only the physicians (oncologist, surgeons, radiologists and perhaps your primary care doctor) but also your family.

You, too, may feel “abnormal,” especially immediately after surgery. You may dread looking at your incision for the first time. If you had a mastectomy, it is natural to grieve the loss of your breast. You are reminded of it daily by the empty space on your chest. You will get used to the way you look now, and the loss will feel less devastating over time. You will find the courage to share your incision with your husband, and maybe even your children, especially if you have daughters. They may feel more at ease about it than you do.

I promise you will feel normal again. The first time I was fitted for a prosthesis, I had mixed emotions. I felt excited to be getting back to looking normal, but I also felt embarrassed as my bare chest was fitted with the bra and prosthesis. I've gotten used to it now, and getting a new prosthesis is like shopping for new clothes.

I had to give up my privacy.

I grew up in Bismarck, North Dakota, which was a beautiful city of about 25,000 people in the 1970s. Because I was a missionary, I had done much public speaking and was well known. When I had surgery for breast cancer in November of 1976, the news spread like wild fire. People visited me in the hospital, saying, "Do you remember me? You spoke at my church at such and such a time and day?" When I had first gone to the mission field in 1968, my picture was on the front page of the newspaper with an article about my going to South America to help people. Now, there was another picture in the paper with the headline, "She helped others, now it's time for her to receive help."

I had lost all privacy. It was humiliating for me to have the whole city and much of my world know that I had lost a breast. A hospital volunteer came to my

room to visit and said she learned I had cancer from a can by the cash register in the gift shop that had a sign saying, "Prosthesis for Karen Merkel." Everybody knew.

Morrie Schwartz wrote in his book, *Morrie: In His Own Words*, "The need to be needed is a powerful impulse, so ... when you accept someone's help, you are also giving back something." Helping you is one way people cope with their own grief for what is happening to you. I had to put away my disdain for the intrusion into my privacy and graciously accept the help of family and friends. What wonderful blessings we all reaped!

I had to give up many activities for a while.

Prior to my mastectomy, I was a workaholic. My self-esteem was wrapped up in my work. The surgery and radiation treatments delayed my return to Bolivia for four long months. I feared that my missionary career was over, especially when I heard that my work was being turned over to other missionaries. In my grief and anger, I failed to see the tender words, "until Karen returns," written in these reports.

Other people may need to make decisions for you about your activity

level following surgery or treatments. They are not trying to interfere with or run your life. They are truly thinking of your health. The time will come when you will be able to set your own pace again.

I had to face my own mortality.

Thirty-three years old is a difficult age to have to think about your own death. I was full of energy and dearly loved my work. All of a sudden, I was faced not only with the possible loss of my work and a part of my body, but of life itself.

The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 200,000 women in the United States will be found to have invasive breast cancer in 2006. Nearly 41,000 women will die from the disease this year. But there are slightly over 2 million women living in the United States today who have been treated for breast cancer ... and are survivors. It is encouraging to know that breast cancer death rates *are* going down, most likely due to finding the cancer earlier and improved treatment that's come a long way since my diagnosis in 1976.

Because I am a Christian, my first reaction was to take on the philosophy Lois Walfrid Johnson offers in her book, *Either Way, I Win*. I knew that through faith in Christ, if I died I would go to

heaven and that would be great. If I lived, that would be great, too. I have heard it said that in heaven there are no tears and pain. If this is true, and I believe it is, death would set me free from cancer and all the pain and fear that it brings.

A New Normal

It's hard to describe how a person gets through times like these. A year after the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, which left 168 people dead, a mother who lost two children was asked if her life was back to normal yet. I realized that her insightful response summed up my continued adjustment to having had breast cancer: "Life will never be normal again, but what I have had to do was try to find a new normal."

As you adjust to this change in your life and the effects it has had on you, seek a "new normal" where you can live your life to the fullest.

Relationships with Others

Your diagnosis affects not only you, but also dozens of people around you. Because of God's love for me, I was sure that I would be okay. My deepest heartache was to see my family and friends suffer shock, worry, and sorrow over my condition. How might breast cancer affect your relationships with others?

Having breast cancer can bring people together.

The first person I was concerned about was my mother. I felt so distraught when I saw the lines of worry on her face. I remembered the story of Jesus hanging on the cross where He died and asking His friend John to take care of His mother. Jesus found this way to care for His mother when He was gone. That was such a helpful image to me! I too, had to entrust my mother into someone else's care, and God is the greatest Caregiver. Commit your husband, children, parents, and friends into God's care. He loves them even more than you do.

I tried to be strong in front of others and not let them see me cry. But the evening of my first cobalt treatment,

I was so ill that I was afraid I was going to die, and then I was afraid I wasn't! I call it "my night of hell."

My mother came into the bedroom to offer me a bowl of soup and just then my tears began to flow like a river. Miserably, I confessed, "Mother, so many people have said that God would never give a person more than what they can bear, but this is too much for me. I don't think I'll be able to handle it!" She sat down beside me and let herself cry, too. Wrapping her arms tightly around me she said, "Karen, you don't know how much I have prayed that God would let me carry this illness for you!" We wept together for at least twenty minutes. I can still feel the warmth of her arms around me.

Don't be afraid to let other people see you cry. Tears are a wonderful and necessary relief. It allows your loved ones to cry, too, and sharing tears can bring people together.

You may face the difficult question of how to help a child understand and cope with cancer in the family. Good information tends to lessen a child's fear and anxiety. Bring them into the conversation, at their level, regarding what is happening. Encourage children to share their emotions and to cry when they are sad.

Having breast cancer can scare people away.

I remember the first Sunday I went to church after my surgery. People didn't talk to me. In fact, they walked away from me or avoided me completely. This hurt me deeply until I realized they avoided me because they didn't know what to say. Many were in shock and dealing with their own emotions, although some people may have stayed away because they believed that cancer is contagious.

It is not your responsibility to make people feel comfortable around you, but it can be helpful to talk openly about your cancer. After I did this, many people told me it helped them feel more hopeful.

Having breast cancer can make you more sensitive to what others say or do.

After my surgery, I felt like everybody was looking at my chest. I wore loose-fitting blouses with collars to hide it. When people know your diagnosis, many will wonder what kind of surgery was done and which breast had the lump or is a prosthesis. But most people won't really stare at your chest, even if it feels like they are.

One day shortly after I came home from the hospital, a friend visited me for lunch and remarked, "We need to get some padding in you!" I immediately thought about my flat chest, left the table, went into the bedroom and cried. When I came to my senses, I realized she wasn't talking about my missing breast. She was concerned about how much weight I had lost!

If your feelings have been hurt by what someone has said or done, give them the benefit of the doubt. Express your feelings and ask what they meant. You might say something like, "I may be overly sensitive right now, but this is how I felt when you said that." Honest communication is very important!

My Relationship with God

Billy Graham wrote in his autobiography, *Just As I Am*, that when people get sick and suffer, they either turn away from God in anger and bitterness or they grow closer to Him in trust and confidence. I chose to replace the three most dreadful c's — cancer, cobalt, and chemotherapy — with the most powerful, victorious C — Christ! My battle with cancer became a mountain top experience in my relationship with God. You also have that choice. Trials such as cancer are not enemies of faith, but opportunities to experience God's faithfulness.

Sometimes it takes an illness to make us realize we need God. God created you and He cares about what is happening to you. He is with you now, and wants to give you the strength, encouragement, and love you need. He invites you to give all your problems, even cancer, to Him. *"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened," Jesus says, "and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28).

When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, I asked lots of questions and rode the emotional roller coaster that you are probably experiencing. On the next several pages, I will tell you about

some of the feelings I had and how I found hope to deal with them. Ultimately, I always found hope in knowing that God's love and compassion for me never end. "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23).

The Emotional Roller Coaster and How to Hang On

Shock/Denial

This is probably your first emotional reaction, as it was mine. When I discovered the lump in my breast, my body suddenly felt very cold. I felt paralyzed with fear. You may tell yourself that cancer will not happen to you or avoid seeing the doctor because "it" will go away.

How to Hang On

Shock is a gift from God. It insulates our minds from a blow that would be too difficult to receive. Denying the possibility that you have cancer can cause dangerous inaction. You must get to a doctor as soon as possible.

Fear

I once asked a male friend who had breast cancer what his strongest emotion was. Without hesitation he said it was fear. "One, I fear that I

won't be able to endure the suffering; two, I fear that I might die while being alone; and three, I fear that my faith in God won't be strong enough to carry me through this."

Do you identify with his fears? What are your greatest fears? Maybe it's losing your hair, nausea, or physical weakness from the chemotherapy. Perhaps you fear the effect on your family life, loss of your job, or changes in your relationships.

Anytime I notice something unusual in my body, I fear the cancer is back. It is as if a radar gun is pointed at me and an automatic alarm goes off. But there is some relief from this panic response after the first year of recovery and especially after the fifth year of being cancer free.

Many people fear death. The when and how of your death is known only to God (Psalm 139:16), but know that God loves you and wants you to be with Him forever. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16). You, like every other human being, have done things wrong. The Bible calls those things "sin," and sin keeps you apart from God. But, in His love, God sent His Son Jesus Christ to live on

earth and to take the punishment we all deserve on Himself! By trusting in Jesus, your eternal life with God is certain.

How to Hang On

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "I gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which I must stop and look fear in the face."

Lance Armstrong, who won the arduous Tour de France in 1999 (and 2000) just three years after a battle with cancer that had invaded almost his whole body said, "Most people fear cancer because they are ignorant of what it is and what the options for treatment are. Educate yourself about your cancer. This will dispel much of your fear." Some people do not want information about their cancer. They think the less they know, the less they have to fear. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Knowing what to expect can prevent emotionally draining surprises. See the resource list at the back of this book for toll-free numbers you can call for more information.

The phrase "do not be afraid" appears dozens of times in the Bible. There is a "do not be afraid" for the situation you face.

"Do not be afraid, for I am with you"
(Genesis 26:24).

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father ... So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29, 31).

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27).

Anger

Oh yes, there was the evening in the hospital when in anger I shook my fist in God's face, and said, “It's not fair! It's like a dirty trick!” I was angry because my cancer might force me to give up my career. The night I began seriously to consider this, I had a water glass in my hand and I nearly threw it at the wall.

I had a friend who came to see me every evening to talk about what happened during the day and to pray with me. She saw the anger swelling up inside of me. She listened as the anger was reflected in my voice, both in conversation and in prayer. When I realized how angry and insincere my prayer was, I began to cry from the pit of my stomach and the depth of my heart. After the good cry, I was able to pray with sincerity, putting my future in God's hands.

How to Hang On

What are you angry about? There are a lot of things your cancer may take away from you: your job, one or both of your breasts, your friends, your family, even your life. There is no way around that fact that any of these losses is awful. You may be angry at God for doing this to you, and I'll talk more about that later. Mourn your losses. Cry over them. And know that as you grieve, God is with you. He grieves, too.

Confusion

Suddenly you are faced with making major decisions that will affect your quality of life. Your doctors, friends, and family are all giving you advice on what kind of treatment to choose. Should it be a mastectomy, lumpectomy, radiation, chemotherapy, a combination, something else?

How to Hang On

It is very important to educate yourself before deciding which treatment to choose. Read as much as possible about your options. Then, express your thoughts and questions to God, silently or aloud, and ask Him for guidance. He promises to "*instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you*" (Psalm 32:8). Finally, make your decision based on the doctors' expertise and the information

you have learned, then trust God for the rest. This combination of prayer and professional guidance will bring you peace, which is a good indication that you have made the right decision.

Depression

When your body is attacked by cancer and weakened from treatment, it is easy to feel depressed. Depression can make it difficult to reach out — to see family, talk to friends, pray to God. This loneliness can intensify depression.

I know one woman who came home from the hospital after having a mastectomy, shut the door, closed the drapes, and lived in total darkness for months. She wouldn't see anybody, refused phone calls, wouldn't leave the house or get active in a support group. She sat in her living room, wasting her life away — not from the cancer but from depression over her diagnosis.

How to Hang On

Pray for a positive mental attitude. Surround yourself with positive people. Read uplifting books. Read encouraging passages from the Bible (the Psalms, the book of John, chapters 5-7 in Matthew). Join a support group. Pray. Remain active and exercise as you are able. Attend church. Try to keep a sense of humor. Give yourself permission to cry; tears help release anxieties, frustrations, and fears.

Anxiety/Worry

Someone has said that anxiety and worry do not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, they empty today of its strength. You need all of your strength to get through cancer. Anxiety and worry can cause an adverse reaction to your treatment and damage relationships with people around you. What are you worried about?

How to Hang On

Accept Jesus' invitation to "*Cast all your anxieties on Him, because He cares about you*" (1 Peter 5:7). He is with you now. Tell Him what you are anxious about. He will listen to your burdens, cares, and worries. He cares deeply and personally about every part of your life.

Frustration

After hearing the diagnosis of breast cancer, many people wonder, "Why?" Not knowing why or how we got cancer is very frustrating. While in the hospital recuperating from my surgery, my twin brother came for a visit. The serious expression on his handsome face meant that he had a "God question" for his missionary sister. "Why is it, Karen, that you, a good person and a missionary, get breast cancer? I see so many bad people who make no positive contribution in life, and they don't get sick. I don't understand God." Why do bad things

happen to good people? Millions have asked that question.

I gave him the best answer I could.

“Kurt, I have experienced nothing but the love of God and His faithfulness in this experience. Why did I get cancer? One reason is because I, too, am part of the sin problem in the world. God has only allowed this to happen for reasons that I don’t yet know. But He in no way caused or gave me the cancer. I will never deny God’s love because of this.”

Robert H. Schuller best explains this question of “Why” in his book, *Turning Hurts Into Halos and Scars Into Stars*.

“It is a fact that most suffering can be blamed on the sins of humanity. Why does God permit and allow suffering? The answer is a mystery. The *why?* remains wrapped in a mystery. The real question now begins with *what?* What is God doing about sin? The suffering? The sickness? The death? What has He done?” He has sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on a cross and rise again, conqueror of sin and death. Now He has given us an amazing promise: that in all things, He works for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). God has promised to use the horrible experiences of our lives for His good purposes.

How to Hang On

After I understood the “*why*,” I took seriously the “*now what?*” Now what do I do with this illness? I knew I didn’t want to waste my suffering. I was encouraged to realize that my suffering could benefit others who needed comfort. “*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God*” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

The key words in this passage are comfort and comforter. I felt sure that one of the positive outcomes of my cancer was that I could be a channel of God’s comfort to those who were suffering from cancer. Could this also be your opportunity? Maybe you can be involved with the Reach to Recovery program and become a “bosom buddy” to a “sister” with cancer, or serve through a hospice program.

Jesus, Your Burden Bearer

Dear friend, as my mother said to me, I say to you: I wish I could carry this burden for you. I can't, but Jesus can and will. He knows about scars, hurts, and pain. If you do not yet know that Jesus Christ has won the victory for you over sin and death, let Him take your heavy burdens as He walks with you through your illness.

With Jesus in your heart, you do not have to face the future alone. He promises to be with you every step of the way, every day. *"Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20).

I invite you to pray the following prayer to express the faith God has created in you. Then tell another Christian — a pastor, a friend — what you have done so they can encourage you. With joy in your heart, declare these words:

"The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1).

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life ... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our LORD" (Romans 8:38-39).

*Dear Heavenly Father,
I realize I am a sinner and fall far short of what You want for my life. I cannot save myself or earn eternal life with You in heaven. Thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to die for me and for creating faith in my heart. Even though I do not understand how or why I got breast cancer, I want to use this experience to show others how Your love has carried me through this crisis. I thank You that I do not have to endure this cancer alone because You promise to walk with me every step of the way. Please give me courage to face every trial, patience during this journey, faith and hope to sustain me. In Jesus Name, Amen.*

Words to Know

Aspiration Removal of fluid from a cyst or cells from a lump, using a needle and syringe.

Benign Not cancerous; cannot invade neighboring tissues or spread to other parts of the body.

Biopsy A procedure, surgical or non-surgical, in which tissue samples are removed from the body for examination under a microscope to find out if cancer or other abnormal cells are present.

Cancer A general name for more than 100 diseases in which abnormal cells grow out of control.

Chemotherapy Treatment with drugs to kill or slow the growth of cancer.

Clinical breast exam A physical examination of the breasts, underarms and collarbone area by a doctor or nurse.

Cyst Fluid-filled sac. Breast cysts are benign.

Hospice Treatment given with the goal of controlling symptoms and improving the patient's quality of life, but not geared to extend the length of life.

Lumpectomy Surgical removal of breast cancer and a small amount of normal tissue surrounding the cancer.

Lymph nodes Part of the lymphatic system that removes wastes from body tissues and filters the fluids that help the body fight infection. Lymph nodes in the armpit are usually removed to determine the stage of breast cancer.

Lymphatic system The tissues and organs that produce, store, and transport cells that fight infection and disease.

Malignant Cancer

Mammogram An x-ray of the breast.

Mastectomy Surgery to remove the breast, or as much of the breast as possible.

Metastasis Spread of cancer from one part of the body to another.

Needle biopsy Use of a needle to extract cells or bits of tissue for microscopic examination.

Pathologist A doctor who diagnoses disease by studying cells and tissues under a microscope.

Prosthesis An external breast form that may be worn in a bra after a mastectomy. Also, the technical name of a breast form that is placed under the skin in breast reconstruction.

Radiation Energy carried by waves or streams of particles. Various forms of radiation can be used in low doses to diagnose cancer and in high doses to treat breast cancer.

Radiologist A doctor with special training in the use of x-rays (and related technologies such as ultrasound) to image body tissues and treat disease.

Staging Classifying breast cancer according to its size and spread.

Support group A group of people, often with some common experiences (such as surviving breast cancer) who meet to discuss their personal experiences and to support and educate each other. Proven helpful in recovering from cancer and prolonging life.

Tumor An abnormal growth of tissue. May be benign (not cancer) or malignant (cancer).

Resources

- American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2345);
www.cancer.org
- National Cancer Information Service
1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237);
TTY 1-800-332-8615
- National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov
- National Women's Health
Information Center
1-800-994-9662;
www.4woman.gov

Surviving Breast Cancer

One Woman's Story of Victory and Hope

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy among women except for skin cancer. More than 200,000 new cases will be diagnosed this year. The medical questions and lifestyle changes accompanying breast cancer can be overwhelming. You may feel fear, anger, confusion, depression, anxiety, and frustration. It may seem like you'll never feel normal again. Here is the story of one woman who faced breast cancer, learned to cope, and found hope in the midst of the ordeal. Her practical suggestions and spiritual strength will guide and encourage you as well.

6BE75



LUTHERAN HOUR
MINISTRIES

People Of Christ With A Message Of Hope

660 Mason Ridge Center Dr. • St. Louis, MO 63141-8557

1-800-876-9880 • www.lhm.org