



Hands of Compassion

A Ministry of The Rochester Church Of Christ



840 W. Center Street
Rochester, MN 55902



A Father's Perspective

It was August 21, 2018. Kourtney and I traveled from Seneca, MO (a small town in the southwest corner of the state) to Rochester, MN. We came here so that Kourtney would be on a high flow oxygen machine and be on the top of the list for a double lung transplant. Kourtney was born with Cystic Fibrosis, a genetic disorder that affects many body systems, but maybe the lungs the most. So this trip was many years and countless hospital stays with a steady decline in her health. We had high hopes of a short wait for new lungs, a 3 month recovery, and then back home. It didn't take long to see that our Father in Heaven had different plans for us. We were about to get a lesson on patience and who was really in control. We were also learning through this how little control we had.

One month, two months, three, four. Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, all passed without receiving the lungs we were waiting for. We kept thinking that this was going to be the day, but it never was.

There was some close matches, but the lungs were never good

enough. They were consistently rejected by the doctors for one reason or another. We all wanted the best for Kourtney. One cold winter night during a blizzard we got a perfect match for Kourtney, but the weather was so bad that the team from Mayo could not travel to get the lungs. That was probably our low point. To come so close, but not be able to get them. Again, we learned who was in control. It's funny how small you feel when you have no control over something.

The evening of March 5, 2019 we got the call that would change our lives forever. We had a set of donor lungs, a perfect match. From the evening of the fifth, the surgery on Wednesday the 6th, until first seeing Kourtney Thursday morning there was a roller coaster of emotions. We were happy for Kourtney, sad for her donor family, praying for Kourtney, the doctors, the donor and their family. The transplant was a success and Kourtney is doing great. As a father, I cannot stop thanking the Almighty Father for the care and blessings he showered on Kourtney. For the churches in Rochester and Seneca, what a blessing to have such wonderful groups of brothers and sisters in Christ. The visits, cards, calls, and support all kept us going.

We love you all,

Kevin Keith



**Kourtney and Kevin at the
Rochester church of Christ**



**Kevin and Kourtney
after transplant**



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A Week of Transplants

Over the course of the last year, we have had the opportunity to get to know some amazing people who have been here in Rochester for a transplant. Bryan Perrin (featured in the summer 2018 newsletter) was in Rochester for approximately one year waiting for a transplant. Kourtney Keith was here for approximately six months prior to her transplant. Awaiting a transplant can be a rough road. By the time the doctors designate that you need a transplant, you are already dangerously sick. Even at the top of the transplant list you may have to wait several months for your transplant to finally occur. One of the truly amazing stories about these two transplants is that neither family knew each other. Yet



**Bryan & Angela Perrin at
 Hands of Compassion—Fall 2017**



**Kourtney Keith at
 home in Missouri**

one of the most incredible things happened! On March 5th, the Keith family got the call that Kourtney had received her lungs. Almost exactly 24 hours later, the Perrins got the call that he would finally have a new heart! Bryan and his wife Angela flew up to the Mayo Clinic and were checked into a room in the hospital *right next to Kourtney!* God's plans are truly bigger than ours in providing a new heart for Bryan and new lungs for Kourtney in His timing. It's truly amazing to witness Him working in the lives of people like the Keiths and the Perrins! Kourtney is now home for good and Bryan went home for a weekend visit.

Contact Information for Donations and Reservations

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Website: www.hocrochester.com



Come see us on Facebook at:
 House of Compassion—Rochester, MN



Memorials and Honorariums — February 25 to May 22nd

Memorials

Velma Blake

Duane & Ellen Ernst
 Carlton & Muriel Holt
 Jeanne & Dick McClemens
 Linda Trenholm
 Allison Strain
 Edwin Fitzgerald
 Blake Family Trust

Elizabeth Church

Jeannie March

Dottie O'Dell

Gladys Willis

Laura & Lawrence Eiler

William & Janielle Schaller

Carol T. Forrest

Jerry & Judy Swicegood

Bob Greenhill

Gladys Willis

Bruce Gruper

Margaret Anderson

Effie Hendrickson

Margaret Anderson

Ruth M. Jones

Margaret Anderson

Roger Robertson

Inez Robertson

Steve Schaaf

William & Janielle Schaller

Daniel Schiefert

Bill & Donna Knadel

Boyd Taylor

William Boyd

Toni Renee Vaughan

Roy & Thelma Kirkpatrick

Howard & Pauline Vincent

Harold & Dianne Mitchell

Richard Waggoner

Gladys Willis
 Dale & Dorothy White

Thomas & Julia Weatherly

Al & Dale Ogren

Roger Westra

Bill & Donna Knadel

Gerry Willis

Patrick & Anita Gillespie

Honorarium

Billy Don Hollowell

Ronald & Linda Sandefer

Stacy Sikes

Roy & Thelma Kirkpatrick

If you would like to have periodic communications from our ministry as well as an electronic version of this newsletter, please give us your email address by sending it to hocministry@gmail.com.

Share with your Church

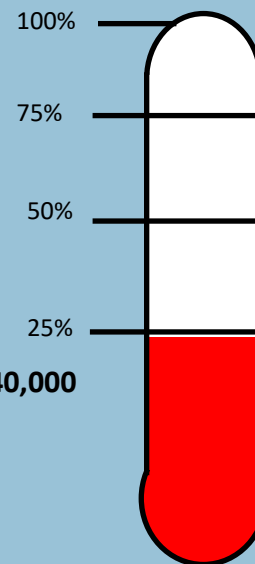
We are constantly looking for churches to share in this ministry with us. If you believe that your church might be interested in hearing more about the Hands of Compassion ministry, please contact us at 507-216-8993. We would love to come visit your church and share about the work here in Rochester.

How Can I Help?

There are a number of ways to give to the Hands of Compassion Ministry. You can donate by mail or visit www.hocrochester.com to donate electronically. Also use the website to find information on donating through a Will. There are many other ways to give as well. Pray for our ministry! Donate supplies or HyVee gift cards that can be used for our guests. Donate parking cards for people who struggle with having money to park at the Mayo Clinic.

Funds Collected For New, Integrated, More Accessible HOC Expansion!

Goal—\$1,900,000



Raised—\$440,000

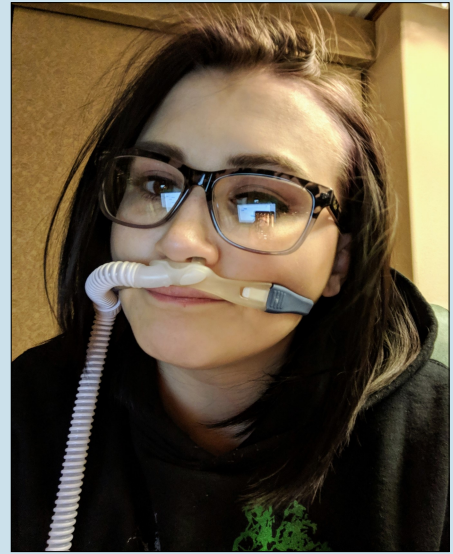


Donate to HOC anytime you make purchases through Amazon. Simply type in smile.amazon.com and select Hands of Compassion Ministry Rochester, MN as your charity!

Kourtney's Journey

Twenty-three years ago I was born with a lung disease that, to this day, still doesn't have a cure. Cystic Fibrosis is a disease that affects how well your body can thin out the mucus it makes. As you get older and the disease progresses, the mucus builds up and settles in your lungs. Unable to clear it out like your body's supposed to, it causes infections and bacteria in your lungs and causes scar tissue to form from coughing and surgeries. Eventually most people with Cystic Fibrosis undergo a lung transplant because their own lungs start to shut down. I was two days old when they discovered I had Cystic Fibrosis, 19 years old when I was listed on Mayo Clinic's double lung transplant list, and 23 years old when I received a new set of lungs. At the time of transplant I had around 20% lung function, had spent August 2018 to March 2019 in a hospital room hooked up to high-flow oxygen, and couldn't walk from one end of the room to the other without getting short of breath and needing to sit down and rest. All that changed one Tuesday night in March.

We had been in the hospital for 199 days when I got a call at 9:30 p.m. from the surgeon that would be performing the double lung transplant asking if I would be comfortable accepting a set of lungs from a donor with a benign brain tumor that had only 1% chance of ever affecting me. After 7 months of being 9 hours away from my home and family I was ready to say yes to anything. The surgery started Wednesday, March 6, and ended Thursday, March 7. I was taken off intubation Friday, and could remember my own name by Saturday.



Kourtney at Mayo before Transplant



Kourtney at home in Missouri

The most popular question I get asked since transplant is, "Could you tell a difference right away?" Nope! It would make a great

story to say I automatically breathed deeper and felt like a new person, but it wasn't that easy. There's a video of me taking my first breath after intubation where I'm just repeating the word "wow!" over and over, but unfortunately I don't remember that. I do remember waking up unable to lift my arms up more than a few inches and couldn't sit up or move my torso without someone keeping me from falling off the hospital bed. Everything was bruised, it looked as if I had already fallen off the bed and taken a dive down some stairs while I was at it. I still had five chest tubes attached to me that were taken out over the following week, and a wound vac down the middle of my chest where they cut me open and cracked my sternum in two to remove my old lungs and put the new donor lungs in. I stayed in the hospital 10 days after transplant before they let me leave, but it took another month before I started to really heal and notice just how different it felt to breathe with my new lungs. During the first week right out of the hospital, I even called one of my doctors around midnight in a panic because something didn't feel right and my mom said something about my breathing sounded off. It turned out we just didn't know what normal breathing would sound like coming from me, and that thing that didn't feel right to me? Lungs that actually worked like they should. Almost three months later, with all incisions healed and bruises faded, my lung function has reached all the way up to 116%, a far cry from the 20% it was just a few months ago. Now I feel the difference.

Without the pain distracting me I can fully appreciate how much being able to breathe can change your everyday life. I no longer have to depend on supplemental oxygen to breathe, four hours of my day are no longer dedicated to treatments that help clear out my lungs and open airways, and traveling no longer entails packing more medical equipment than clothes. I still take what seems like a million and one pills a day, for everything ranging from anti-rejection medicine to insulin to counteract the Prednisone, or as the doctor's like to call it, "the sugar pill," but I can finally plan ahead for my future, attend campus classes instead of only being able to do them online, finish my Criminal Justice degree, and start working towards a Forensic Scientist career.

It's been just a few months shy of a year that we've lived in Minnesota. We've seen every change of the seasons, made neighbors with others living in the hospital waiting for their lungs, was the trial patient for student nurses and lab technicians, and ordered so much Chinese food they recognized my voice and my order. And as excited as we are to finally get to go home to our family and farm (and dogs!) and resume our lives, we're going to be leaving behind us some of the most generous, uplifting, and thoughtful Christian friends we've ever had the opportunity to get to know, that made living nine hours away from family feel less isolated and a little more like a home.



Kourtney after transplant