

Is there life after ME? You bet there is!!

A few years ago I was writing about the frustrations and the very real misery of living with a long-term chronic debilitating illness, in my case, ME. One of the only pleasures in my life at that time was to snuggle back under the duvet on a cold, frosty Monday morning, knowing that other people were all off out to face the morning rush hour, and I was going to doze off for another three or four hours' kip. Well, a lot has happened since then, and I too am getting up at the crack of 7.15 am to join the working world. How come? Let me take you back to 13th May 2007.

It was a Sunday, and I went along to the evening service as usual, not knowing that my life was going to be completely changed from that day on. Our vicar and his wife had just come back from a New Wine Leaders' conference and were full of all the things they'd seen – the deaf able to hear again, the blind see, the lame walk. Fantastic I thought, but what about me? I'd been ill for eight long years, completely housebound for about two of those years, unable to do the simplest tasks. I had to rely on friends and family to shop, cook and clean the house, even having to have my hair washed for me at times! I'd had prayer for healing loads of times, and each time I had felt a tiny bit better, but I was still very disabled and nowhere near well enough to work. I asked them to pray for me, and four people prayed for about twenty minutes. I felt God's presence very tangibly during this time. Afterwards, one of the women said to me, 'You are healed Linda'.

'Time will tell,' I replied, as I felt so exhausted after standing up receiving prayer ministry for twenty minutes that I couldn't even think that I might be healed. So I went home to get an early night to prepare for my holiday the following day.

I was driving to Wells-Next-the-Sea in Norfolk with a friend. We usually took it in turns and drove for an hour each. However, she had a cold and was feeling unwell, so after a break I carried on. I ended up driving all the way there! After an afternoon rest (old habits die hard!) we went for an hour's walk by the sea. An HOUR! That was a miracle in itself. We were there for five days, and every day I did a little bit more, and every day I waited for the crash – which never came. I am still waiting!!

My family doctor was a tad gobsmacked when I marched into the surgery and announced that God had healed me! He was very supportive though, and suggested

that I give it six months to check out that this was a permanent healing – and also to build up my stamina. After eight years of doing very little my muscles had just about disappeared and I was very unfit. I can't tell you what a joy it was to take part in normal life again. At our Church Weekend away a few weeks later I was still bouncing around with energy when everyone else around me was wilting with weariness!

In February 2008 I started to volunteer at Nottingham Playworks – just two hours twice a week. That was a real culture shock I can tell you! The workplace had moved on in nine years, and I had only ever been a nurse/midwife. Everything seemed so technical and computer orientated. But I coped, and gradually increased my hours to twelve per week. Then a paid job came up – eighteen hours a week doing virtually the same as I was already doing. I applied (another shock – have you seen application forms these days? You need a degree just to fill them in!), and was absolutely thrilled to get the job. I've now been working there for three and a half years – having graduated to receptionist/administrator and working three full days a week - and I really enjoy it, although it has been a big challenge to have a total career change at my time of life. (I am in my fifties after all!)

I'm very active in my local church, leading a home group, playing my guitar in the evening services and praying for people on Mapperley Precinct on Saturday mornings as part of the Healing on the Streets team. I sing in a choir, and I absolutely love going for six or seven mile walks. When I go on holiday these days I drive myself – no matter how far it is. I recover from colds (and even a dose of 'real flu' last Christmas) at the same rate as everybody else. I **love** my life, and am so grateful to God for giving it back to me after eight long years of existence with that wretched illness – ME.

Linda Freeman
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This is Linda's story and expresses her personal opinions.