Our God of Miracles

Mario Da Silva 11 June 2019



One year ago, we sent out this letter, desperately needing God to meet us at our point of need.

“Our son, Aiden, is six years old and has been fighting many medical challenges over his lifetime, some of which include a severe narrowing of the airway (Supraglottic and Laryngeal Stenosis), which requires him to have a tracheostomy, which in turn gives him swallowing complications, for which he has a feeding tube. Aiden is also a left hemiplegia, which resulted from a stroke. Aiden needs to go to Switzerland to see a specialised airway ENT surgeon, who can help open up Aiden’s airway, which will help him breathe on his own and have a better voice.

Why Switzerland? Because no doctor in South Africa has done this surgery with Aiden’s complexity. We have been to many doctors in Johannesburg, which then led us to reach out to specialists in Cape Town, who have suggested that we send Aiden to Switzerland, as this may be his last chance at a normal life.

Why now? Doctors have suggested that the best time for these procedures to be done is before Aiden turns eight years old. He will be turning seven in August this year, 2018.

If we are able to obtain the necessary funds, Aiden will be going to the Center Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois (CHUV) in Lausanne, Switzerland, where the series of three surgical procedures have been planned to take place. The hospital has proposed that he gets hospitalised on for a period of two weeks. Thereafter, he will require a period of approximately two weeks of recovery. The doctors have proposed that we plan to be there for a period of three to four weeks. We are required to provide a deposit guarantee of CHF 41,000 (Swiss Francs) upon/before arrival, which equates to approximately R521,110 (CHF/R R12.71). We have compiled

a budget, including travel costs, food, accommodation, day to day expenses etc., all of which have equated to approximately R1 million."

We had been given 8 weeks to raise this money (not knowing then that even more funds would be needed than we'd originally thought). My wife, Jade, phoned Sam Barnard (lead elder's wife at City on a Hill Church, Benoni) and said to her, 'This is our task.' Sam replied, '..And so? God is able.' Over the 8 weeks that followed, we saw the hand of God come in and take over this mammoth task. Our church family rallied together to help us with videos, fundraisers, posters – everyone provided a helping hand to help get Aiden's story out there as quickly as possible. Without the support and love of our family, the task would never have been completed.

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Within 8 weeks, God had provided over R800,000, our flights and accommodation paid for separately, and not only had He provided this, but also for our whole family of 5 to travel together and walk this journey as a family.

At the beginning of May 2018, we arrived in Switzerland, with excitement and apprehension all together. A few days after our landing, Aiden had his first scope, which showed that Aiden's treatment would be much more complicated than originally anticipated. Aiden would also have to be mute for 6 weeks, all without any guarantee of the surgery working. They also said that his vocal cords were not moving at all and that they were irreparable.

The day of the surgery arrived, and an 8-hour operation turned into 11 hours, after which Aiden spent 2 weeks in ICU. This time was tough for us, and we were hungry for family, for like-minded, Jesus-loving people with whom we could share testimony. One day, I was walking out of the hostel (where we were staying), and I saw a guy walking towards me and I felt the Holy Spirit stir me to ask him if he was a Christian. So I boldly asked, "Bonjour, are you a Christian?" to which he replied "Yes". This was the beginning of a God-ordained friendship that stands to this day, where during our time there, we would uplift one another, pray together and seek God in the turmoil we were facing (Ian's son was in ICU for ear operations). At that moment, I was reminded that God will never leave us alone, or to face challenges in isolation. He always knows exactly what we need, when we need it. It was so important for us to remain in community and to be continually focused on Kingdom-purposed living. We felt God say to us many years ago that, no matter what our situation looked like, we have to surround ourselves in community and always be ready to serve the body of Christ and speak of His goodness, wherever we are.

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So, after a long 6 weeks, Aiden's stent was removed and it was time to test how successful the operation was, how he would eat, and if this resulted in him still aspirating – which is when food goes into your lungs (if he was aspirating, he would not be able to eat again). But as we'd seen so many times before, Aiden (by God's grace) defied the odds. He ate 5 yoghurts with the doctor sitting there in awe and shock. The shock came because Aiden's epiglottis had been surgically connected to the back of his tongue and his tongue had learned a new function, together with the epiglottis attached to it, to help him swallow for the first time in 7 years. The next step was to remove the tracheostomy, which went well.

Our son could now breathe and eat on his own for the first time in many years, which we were told would not be a possibility... but our God is a God of the impossible.

In February this year, Aiden's medical team in Cape Town did a follow-up scope, and their findings were that they had never seen him so healthy, and that there was still no trace of aspiration – even his lung function was normal. The doctors even said that he doesn't need 3 monthly follow-ups anymore.

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God has given us our son back. This has been our first 7 months of infection- and hospital-free life in 7 years. Our time in Switzerland taught us that God is a God of miracles and restoration, and we are privileged to be able to praise and serve our mighty God.