

## Tina Carter - My LIFE Story

My story as in what is life giving -- not as in my history. Although these things might be important to note:

I am...a wife, daughter, mother, grandmother, auntie, friend, creative, mostly centered, writer, adventurer, storyteller, knitter.

I was...a research scientist, an environmental consultant, a published author (guess I am still that), a pastor.

I have...had two daughters before I was 21, completed a bachelor's in engineering chemistry, a Ph.D in applied chemistry and, years later, a Master of Divinity, worked on some of the most contaminated sites in the U.S., done a ton of weddings and funerals, published both fiction and non fiction, knit for miles and miles.

It is hard for many of us, me included, to remember who we really are through this process. Not just who we used to be or what we used to do, and not just our current diagnosis, but who we really are. In our country, so many of us think of ourselves as what we do. And, when Stage IV cancer shows up only 6 months after being diagnosed as Stage II and being assured that "we got it all" sometimes we are determined to remain, "normal." When I realized that "normal" or "what I used to be" was not in the cards for who I am now (I think that happened for me after chemo 6 with oxalyplatin), it took some adjusting.

And some focusing on who I really am, not just the automatic, "this is what I do," but really who I am. I am a person that likes to have fun. I am a person that uses knitting as a way to think and pray. I am a person that loves deeply. I am a person that loves stories -- telling them and hearing them. That's who I actually am. And that person continues to enjoy everyday. Writing daily and living with this Stage IV incurable cancer not being inactive but engaging the world with as much humor as the day encourages.

I realize that I am one among many who are struggling (one of the pictures is of my second daughter who had just survived her second brain surgery -- picture was taken after my Stage II colon cancer surgery). And my role in this universe is one of encourager, and fun provoker. And so I stick to that job assignment most days. I plan as many interactions as my body will allow. I don't worry about having to cancel because planning to live and then having to cancel some things is much better to me than planning to not die and not engaging at all. As Monty Python fans would say, "I am Not Dead Yet." And I have the t-shirt to prove it.

