

The encourager

The magazine of ELEVATE Christian Disability Trust

Issue no. 142. March 2014



Jo Edwards' view of the ministry at the Centre...

- Enthusiastic people
- Life-lasting friendships
- Entertaining everyone
- Valuable life lessons learnt
- Artistic people
- Talented, talkative people
- Environment like a second home

People are all-important at the Centre

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PLUS:

Inspiration
Information
and much more





You can never cross the ocean unless you

JESUS HEALS A PARALYTIC.

Of course, have read the account of Jesus healing the paralytic many times in the Bible – probably the most graphic account is in Mark 2 1-10. But I had never really identified with this story, mainly because I have never seen myself as a “paralytic”. Just recently I identified with the story completely for the first time when I realized that the term “paralytic” as used in the Bible, is exactly the same thing as “paraplegic” the term we use today. Doesn’t language make an incredible difference?

The story as recounted in Mark means a great deal to me, because it was by means of his friends that the man encountered Jesus and received his healing. Obviously there were no wheelchairs in those days – and they would probably be of limited usefulness if they did have them. Homes would never have been adapted, roads and footpaths would be inaccessible, public buildings would be absolutely hopeless for a chair. So what did this man’s inventive friends think of? They used a mat, yes, an ordinary mat that perhaps was normally placed before a fireplace, rectangular rather than square. The Bible account says that the building was really full – choc-a-block! And there would be no room for the four good friends carrying the paraplegic man on his mat. So what did these great, inventive friends do? Determined not to miss the opportunity for a healing, they made a hole in the roof, presumably the size of the mat, and as the Bible says, they dug right through the roof and the

“Obviously there were no wheelchairs in those days – and they would probably be of limited usefulness if they did have them.”

ceiling, and lowered him carefully and lovingly to the floor! So what flashed through my mind when I read the account again? What magnificent friends- how practical they were, and how loving!

And yes, I have had many wonderful and amazing friends and relations. If you were able to come and see my garden, you would be amazed that I had such a thing of loveliness and beauty... It is absolutely ablaze with colour - scarlet, purple, white, gold, orange..And do I do the work of this wonderful garden? It is a built-up-garden, so I can do some things in it, but mostly my brother and sister-in-law show up every few months, take out the dead plants, put in plenty of fertilizer and mulch, then plant it up with flowers! It is a joy to everyone who sees it. And there is a fragrant viraya beside the door, and a magnificent Maiden Hair fern that covers the planter-box. No, I do not do all this work! It is the handiwork of my brother and sister-in-law who come regularly to see that everything is in order.

Then my sister has taken me away



on several wonderful holidays to Australia. To help me, she gave up her own holidays, she paid, in the main, for our motel accommodation. We shared the preparation – because when a severely disabled person is to go on holiday, for the holiday to be a success, and result in enjoyment and refreshment, a great deal of preparation has to be undertaken. Briar always organised and paid for the rental car, which was a marvellous provision for me.

And so, if our family had been living back in Jesus’ time, and I had to be carried on a mat to Jesus, I think my family and friends would have seen that I got there!

Jesus’ response to this paraplegic man carried on the mat which was let down through the roof, has always worried me. Why did Jesus forgive the man his sins when he had such an obviously

have the courage to lose sight of the shore

major mobility problem? But on reflection it was clearly to show the Pharisees who followed him around, ogling his miracles, and to us, asking pointless questions? So, without even asking him what his sins were, he made a statement, forgiving this man his sins, then giving him what he and his friends were really wanting, he issued the statement "Take up your mat and walk". And that is what that man in the Bible did. Wouldn't it be great if we were given some further biographical details about this man, how he became a paraplegic, and now he had received his miracle, what he did with the rest of his life. Sadly we don't have any further information about him and his friends- I would love to know, as would a great many other people I imagine.

However I must finish on a thought which many of you people with disabilities will have had....Is Jesus still healing today? To be brief, yes, he definitely is, and there are those in our own Fellowship who can testify to Jesus healing. But there are those, like myself and Margie Willers, who have attended healing meetings, with hearts full of faith and hope, and yet it didn't happen.

And do we lose hope? No, because we know when we go to be with Jesus, our bodies will be fully restored. ■

*Pastors in
the church
THIS IS
FOR YOU*

**22nd
MAY**

The Life Church
60 Rockfield Road
Penrose

10am - 4pm

BEYOND DISABILITY



ARE YOU A LEADER WHO WANTS TO FOSTER MORE BELONGING IN THE CHURCH?

Register your interest **today** for details:
Phone or Email Kirsty on:

09 636 4763, kanderson@elevatecdt.org.nz

CAMPS COMING UP

21-23 March	KIDS CONNECT	CBM Motu Moana, Blockhouse Bay: Calling all kids 10 to 18 with a disability
11 - 13 April	Christchurch CFFD	Blue Skies, Kaiapoi for all folk in Christchurch and surrounds
9 - 11 May	Auckland CFFD	Carey Park, Henderson for all those with physical disabilities
16 - 18 May	Joy Ministries National	Totara Springs, Matamata for people everywhere with intellectual disabilities

Remember this year is the BI CENTENARY of Christianity coming to NZ. The first service was held on Christmas Day 1814. Keep an eye out for events. Remember that Christianity played a big part in NZ history.

This could revolutionise the impact of the ministry. We need YOU to speak to your minister

There are over 6,000 magazines going out each time.

If every reader was to speak for a couple of minutes to their minister imagine the impact!

Ask if the church could include something on **Disability Awareness Sunday, 20 June**. Tell him that if he rings 09-636-4763 a 30 page Idea booklet will be sent to him without charge with lots of possible things that could be included. Some churches are already giving the whole service to observe this day, others just a few items. **BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW**



In the middle of difficulty

THE BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO M



At ten weeks old, I was diagnosed as being legally blind. A lot of parents would be devastated at this, but mine overcame their initial shock and sadness, and raised me as they'd raise any other "normal" child ... just with a few little adaptations. They got an amazing lady called Ainsley in to work with me on tactile and audio things, developing my senses of touch and hearing. While sighted people learn from colours, shapes and scenery, I learnt by texture, taste and sounds.

Yes, we had our struggles, my parents and I. Especially when I was little. But we fought through them well. My parents were told that I wouldn't walk until I was two-and-a-half, because I wouldn't have the visual motivation to get up and walk. But no. I was walking at 14 months instead, and was able to walk down the aisle as the flower girl on my parents' wedding day.

We were also told that I'd never attend a mainstream kindergarten or school, and would have to be sent away to a special school to get the education I'd need. But my parents jumped up and down

and fought for this, and I've been fully mainstreamed ever since. Yes, I had to use Braille books and technology rather than print, and learn through tactile and auditory means rather than visual, but I did it. There have been many more occasions where my parents and I have had to fight for things, but it was worth it in the end! I've found out that you can be bitter about having a "disability", or you can get better at the things you can do and exceed expectations. I know what I'd choose!

I have a quote on my wall that says, "One of the greatest pleasures in life is doing things people say you cannot do. So true! On so many occasions, people with "disabilities" are put in the Too-Hard basket because people think we're unable to do something because we're blind, deaf, or in a wheelchair. Okay, maybe I can't do some of the things sighted people can do. But I do other things instead that not many other people can do. There are so many advantages to blindness, and they cancel out the rare disadvantages to my situation. From silly little things like being able to use the mobility carparking spots in carparks, jump cues in theme parks and the airport, get special discounts for things, and being an eco-friendly citizen because I don't necessarily need light to operate! I also have the ability to judge people by personality, not by appearances. I'm blessed to have an amazing group of friends around me, because I've been drawn to people by the way they treat me and others, rather

"You can be bitter about having a "disability", or you can get better at the things you can do and exceed expectations."

than how they look. I could be surrounded by the ugliest people in existence, and I couldn't care less. They're still good people. Still people I want to spend my time with, so there!

And then there's the ability to sense the atmosphere around people, places and things. If I walk into a room where someone's upset or angry, I can tell. If I come into a positive, warm and welcoming environment, I know as soon as I walk in the door. I sense the environment around me and mould to that setting so that I can add to it in positive times and be a light in the negative.

When I was little, I asked my Mum why she made me blind if she could make my younger siblings sighted. I may have not known then, but I do now.

I responded to a salvation altar call when I was maybe ten or 11, but didn't really have a relationship with God until I came to my incredible youth group, Wired Youth Ministry at Harbourside



Church, Takapuna, in my second year of high school. Since then, my faith in God has grown and grown, making me the person I am today. Since I was little, I've always wanted to be a singer/songwriter - touring the world maybe. Singing with my favourite artists etc. But a couple of years ago now my youth pastor spoke a message on dreams and purpose, and invited us to let God stir up our dreams in our hearts, and help them come to fruition. I'd always known I wanted to be a singer/songwriter, but I felt like something was missing from that dream. I realised that I wasn't called to be your average singer or songwriter, but to escape the norm writing about sex, partying and drinking, and bring messages of hope, freedom, encouragement and inspiration to mainstream media through my lyrics and personality in general. Since then, I've had gig opportunities coming out my ears, heaps of exposure in the media, and a real chance to get my name and music out there.

So what I'm basically trying to say is, God can take someone who others would think would be the underdog of society, and use me to do great things for him. And he has made me a princess in his kingdom, just as he has with all who read this, even if you don't know it yet. So when people are

sympathetic towards me about my blindness, I just smile and say, "No, it's okay. It's the best thing that's ever happened to me. My physical eyes may be blinded, but the eyes of my heart will always be open." ■

- *Natalie Te Paa.*

WHO IS INDISPENSABLE IN THE CHURCH?

» The text in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 NIV reveals that the way to prevent division in the church is to have a culture of "honouring" one another - each and every one in the body of Christ. In fact, according to this Corinthian text, those who are to be most honoured should be the weakest and the most vulnerable. We would be hard pressed to get more counter-culture, more prophetic than this.

Look at verse 21, "I don't need you." By our actions and inactions, prejudices, secret thoughts, attitudes, and inclusions or exclusions of others, we all in some measure say to some members of the body of Christ, "I don't need you." Black, Caucasian, Latino, Asian, fundamentalist, evangelical, Pentecostal, Catholic, liberal, poor, rich, powerful, obscure, strong, weak, lovely or unlovely - members of Christ's body can be found saying in word or action, "I don't need you".

Verse 22 states that on the contrary "I don't need you" is all wrong; it is fundamentally flawed. Now listen very carefully and closely to what God the Holy Spirit says next: "Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable."

Of all the members of the body, the only ones that this text declares are "indispensable" are those who "seem to be weaker". The Greek word used for "seem" means "only appears to be, but is not really so" as in an illusion. While we often hear that perception is reality because what people see is real to them, this is not so with theological or philosophical truth. Thus, perceptions can be, and frequently are, false views and just wrong-headed ideas. As Christians our minds and hearts, and thus perceptions, must align with God's word.

While people with disabilities seem to be weaker, in actuality they are indispensable. We can't do without them. I have visited and worshipped in scores, perhaps hundreds of churches of all sizes in various denominations and non-denominations. Most have been Christ-honouring, loving, and Bible-centred. But no matter how vibrant and healthy they may be, if they are not inclusive of people with disabilities, they are not all God has designed them to be or wants them to be. In fact, while their buildings may be full of people and programs, they are not yet full or complete as a spiritual body (Lk. 14:23b).

Taken with permission from: Pages 114,115 of The Lost Mandate: A Christ Command Revealed. Dan'l C. Markham



Grace doesn't promise the absence

HOLDING ON TO LIFE: BY JOHN FOX

I am John. I have a family and friends, I am loved and I love Jesus. I have spastic hemiplegia, with a side dose of cerebral palsy.

Ten weeks premature coming out of my mother's tummy, we both made it, by the skin of our teeth, and from that very moment, I loved, and held on to life, and the God who gave it to me.

There are two memories of my childhood that keep coming back: love and pain. **Pain** because of learning to walk with braces on my feet, of falling, and bruising, falling again and bleeding, of scars and doctors, of antiseptic and plaster casts. And the pain of learning I was different, and would always be so. I wanted so badly to be normal—but God made me strong instead. Both my parents insisted I would do everything everyone else did, even if slower. I climbed and ran and limped and fell, and got up again. And I remember **great love**: Church people sending me cards and letters, hands holding me up, friends looking out for me, learning I could do other things: write and read and speak and pray, and play spastic hockey with disregard for all the rules.

I taught Sunday school, did youth work, mentored kids and used a walking frame to ref at Sunday school handball. I taught Bible class, and found I learned to love Jesus more as I taught about Him. I went to university, got a job with Maxim Institute, and started writing newspaper columns. I met politicians and advocated for social justice—using the same skills I learned when teaching, got involved in pro-life work, and started advocating for disabled people.

I was prayed for healing, many times—and received, through the power of the Holy Spirit, half a healing—one leg was healed, the other stayed the same. I kept asking the Lord what He thought He was doing leaving me like this—and why He did, and what He still wanted me to do.

At first, I wanted to be a doctor, this changed to an English teacher and then an MP, but this all faded



away when I became very sick, with ME, cerebral palsy related pain, and nerve pain as well.

The vicar came to see me, and read me the Visitation of the Sick. ***“The aim of the Christian, whether in health or in sickness, is that God may be glorified in him through Jesus Christ.”*** This is what Jesus had said when the disciples asked Him about the problem of pain. In John 9—He said that God would be glorified in the blind man, just as God wants to glorify Himself in me, shine in me, make me look like Jesus..

Flat on my back with God, I got the point—and will go on re-learning it I think, for the rest of my life. I can't do a lot these days, but I can shine with God's glory. I can let the Power of the Saviour who suffered for me work in my heart, taking away anger, bitterness, sadness and self-pity, building into me strength, tenderness, love and fortitude. Flat on my back with God, I got the point—and will go on re-learning it, I think, for the rest of my life.

“In Him was life...and that life was the light of men.. Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it...”

I don't know what I'll end up doing. But I know Jesus smiles when I try, and reaches down to help me along. And together, as W H Auden once said, “We stagger onward, rejoicing!” ■

MARK GRANTHAM AWARDED THE QUEEN'S SERVICE MEDAL

Mark Grantham has been a familiar sight in his wheelchair to Newmarket shoppers for more than 20 years, selling chocolate bars for charity, and in that time he has raised more than \$40,000 for children in need. He started as a 12 year old, when he was the top student vendor in his school fundraising initiative.

He also sponsors five children in India and Tanzania, and has travelled overseas to meet them. On one trip, after meeting a sponsored child with a club foot, he paid for her to have corrective surgery. His efforts have also seen him named Newmarket volunteer of the year, and he won the Spirit award in the 2011 Attitude awards, for someone who overcomes hardship to achieve their goals. Now his achievements have been further recognised in the New Years Honours being awarded the Queen's Service Medal for services to the community. Congratulations Mark!



David Senior, Chairman of the Elevate Trust, reminisces about:

THE PERILS OF A BLIND MAN

When my wife was in hospital, Marian, my mother in law, came to manage the house (or me!) and cook my meals for me. Some weeks after she had gone home I felt peckish and found a tin of biscuits my mother in law had made, in a cupboard I found out later my wife rarely used. Philippa was out, so was not there to see there were ants crawling all over the biscuits. I thought, Yummy! And proceeded to eat quite a few, which were very tasty, albeit rather gritty! I only found out when Philippa returned, and horrified, tipped what was left down the sink.

Another unfortunate eating experience was when my children told me that I must try "Fruit for Yanks" snacks – a fruit leather packaged in a neat roll for school lunch boxes. I said, "No thanks," but later when the family was out decided I would try one and proceeded to put the entire roll in my mouth and ate it! Later, when the children returned, they asked how I liked it, and I told them it was very chewy and difficult to swallow. "Did you remove the waxed paper before you ate it?" they enquired. OOPS!

I used a mobility cane to get around in my early married life, and would walk rather quickly as I have had the philosophy that if I was going to hit something I would rather get it over and done with! I was coming home from the train station after work one day and bumped into someone's shoulder as they were walking the other way. The other fellow exclaimed, "Why don't you watch where you're going? Are you blind or something?" "Actually, I am," I said. After a bit of silence he replied, "Oh, so am I!" We had a brief conversation and then went our separate ways, never to meet again.



Stumbling blocks are

PART TWO

“ I was full of what ‘they’ should be doing for special people like my daughter.

God spoke and showed me it was ‘me’ not ‘they’. ”

We had heard of a program running in Tauranga that had been started by parents, so we took a trip to investigate. We spent a day there and saw all that they were doing. They explained in great detail how difficult it was to achieve all the associated problems. Flying home there was plenty of time to sit, look out the window and reflect. I can remember feeling very discouraged. The task was bigger than I thought, and it was looming larger by the minute. My mind was reeling with all the problems, and I could not see the way forward.

It was a very cloudy day, and as we flew over Mt Egmont it was the most incredible sight. I’ve flown over it quite a few times now and have never seen it as we did that day. The ground was not visible, totally covered with thick, dark, puffy, grumpy looking clouds, but looming directly out of the clouds and standing tall and proud in pure sunshine was the mountain top coated in snow. It was stunning, and as I sat there and gazed at it, I couldn’t help but think that if I was on the ground right at that moment, all I would

see was clouds, but looking at the view from God’s vantage point it was nothing short of spectacular.

It was as though God said, don’t look at all the problems, keep your eyes on me and I’ll show you the way. It was a defining moment for me. It suddenly became very exciting. Terrifying yes, but very exciting! I knew that day that I needed to do three things, trust God, trust God, trust God.

I started to ask Him just to give me the ‘next step’. It was as much as I could handle, and that is what He has done. It has been one step after another.

“The first thing we needed was a name and we spent a lot of time tossing around ideas that would reflect what God has said to us as we looked at the top of the mountain...” thus ‘Pinnacle House’ was born.



After much prayer, a lot of hard work and a lot less sleep, Pinnacle House is now operating and into its fifth year. It is a registered Charitable Trust with Trustees from this church, and is now a registered Day Service Provider with the Ministry of Social Development – an achievement of no small measure! It has a staff of seven, managed daily by the incredible Carol Burson who has formed a formidable staff team.



Pinnacle House residents at Hanmer Pools while the move was taking place

God’s love and grace is evident in everything they do, and they have built a service that is second to none in this community.

We are rent free - thanks to the extreme generosity of a local family who built a large room for youth work and then graciously offered it to us for our use. I trembled as we tumbled onto their brand new carpet that first day, and every day I drive in their driveway I ask God to return to them the blessing that they have been to us. Pinnacle House operates each day of the week. It provides full interesting days for those with very high special needs. They go horse riding, swimming, each has a ‘job’ - volunteering at the food bank in Nelson, in a florist shop, in the local Hospice shop, at a big tree nursery, in a local office, visit rest homes...there is music therapy, masterchef classes, art, photography...their days are rich and very full.

It has not been easy. I have felt the responsibility enormously. During the series we did on Joshua last year, we memorised the verses from Joshua 1:8-9 and I felt they were just for me. “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your



mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." I knew I was utterly dependent on God and His Word.

There have been many, many times where I have wondered why on earth I have complicated my life, and how did I possibly get myself into this...it would have been easier to stay at home and care for Lisa myself...just worry about her alone.

But I have come to realise that giving my life to God meant exactly that. Giving my life to God.

My days are not my own, I have joined forces with a mighty God, and He has work for us to do.

If I want to live for Him and serve Him, then I must be concerned and active about the things that He is concerned and active about. And He is concerned about people. It's pretty much summed up in

His commands, and really He has made it easy for us to understand ..."Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and love your neighbour as yourself." He cares about people, He really cares about people, and He particularly cares about those in our society who are weak, who are vulnerable, who are marginalised, who are unable to speak for themselves. He cares that people who through no fault of their own can become lonely, forgotten and isolated from society.

He has shown me that thoughtlessness is nothing short of a sin. When we are thoughtless and inattentive it leads to inactivity. Inactivity can be devastating for some of the weakest and most vulnerable members of our community –those with special needs and disabilities.

Proverbs 3:27 says "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act."

I know that those who come to Pinnacle House each day deserve good, and we cannot withhold it from them when we have the power to do otherwise.

God is active on the earth to redeem it back to Himself. Each and every time we join forces with Him to reach out in love, compassion, mercy, grace – extending His love to those in need, extending love to those around us – speaking up for those who can not speak for themselves, we do the work that He has planned for us to do. I don't know why God chose to act this way, but He does.



Linda Gill

1 John 4:12 says "No one has seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us."

For God's love to be perfected, He needs us to love others. It is nothing short of incredible.

God's word gives us a very clear mandate that we must care for those who are not able to care for themselves. It is not an option, it is what God calls us to do. It is not just the responsibility of the government alone, but the responsibility of each and every one of us. The Government cannot and should not be totally responsible to provide all that is needed, and that is why we must act. As God's people we should be leading the charge in areas of compassion, we should be the ones showing the way.

How are we funding Pinnacle
Cont. Next Page



God does not comfort us to make us comfortable,

House? – Most of the young people have a degree of funding, parents pay for some of the programs. But it is never enough to provide the kind of programs with the level of care that we run. We have fund-raised for funds, and God has provided money when it has been needed.

At the end of the first year things were a real struggle, one agency did not pay for three months, and I was scared to tell Graham we might have to sell the house!

I had a phone call from a couple that I did not know – he was from a large Bible College in Auckland, and he had heard about Pinnacle House. They were in Nelson and he wondered if he and his wife could come and meet. Aaaah...yes!! I spent the morning with them and they hugely encouraged me as they asked question after question. After they had gone I found an envelope tucked behind a vase and inside was \$500. I was totally humbled and so grateful to God.

I was also nervous about the account that would arrive from the lawyer who prepared the Trust.

I was scared to ask 'how much?' as we had no choice but to get it done. I was expecting \$1000, maybe more. When the account arrived they had charged us \$175. I was blown away.

We serve an amazing God who really does provide everything that we need. ■

ANT ASPECTS

» Ants are not something one would readily consider watching, other than watching them die as you apply poison. Here in Florida we are plagued with ants year round and if you aren't careful they will take over your yard and work their way into the house. There have even been reports that "killer ants" are making their way throughout the south taking over open fields a little at a time.

The Bible brings up ants in two places and both are very applicable.

Proverbs 30:25 (NIV) Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer;

Proverbs 6:6-8 (NIV) Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! (7) It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, (8) yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.

If you ever watch a colony of ants you'll notice the ants are in continual motion. There is no stopping them, even when you place an obstacle in front of them. They are on a focused mission, and the Bible tells us we'd do well to think about how the ant works. The lesson is simple. We all have things we are putting off today for a more convenient time. Sometimes that convenient time never comes and things get so out of hand calamity comes in our health, our wealth, our jobs, etc. All because we kept putting things off. It's almost time we needed someone on our case, standing over us, pushing us to do what we needed to do. So God brings up the little

pesky creature known as the ant, whose brain is about the size of a pinhead if that. He reminds us that the ant does not have someone pushing it to move, yet it will not stop until the job is done.

It's not a lesson in becoming a workaholic, rather a lesson in overcoming procrastination. If the ant can do it so can you. What have you been putting off? Take the first step today by taking action, however small it may be, take some action. Even if the first action you take is to make a list of things you have been putting off, at least that's action. The next step is to do something to get the work going. Once motion is begun, let momentum take over. Next time you go to poison or crush an ant, remember God's lesson before you do that He has placed that ant before you as a reminder – don't procrastinate.



WANTED

Someone with the skills and experience to reduce the articles and testimonies we have about our ministry with people with disabilities, to 60 minute power-packed slots for the radio.

I asked for strength and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve.

I asked for prosperity and God gave me brawn and brains to work.

I asked for courage and God gave me dangers to overcome.

I asked for patience and God placed me in situations where I was forced to wait.

I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help.

I asked for favours and God gave me opportunities.

I received nothing I wanted, but I received everything I needed.

My prayers have all been answered.



If you would like to help with our costs you could send a donation to:

ELEVATE P.O Box 13-322, Onehunga, Auckland 1643

I wish to give for the magazine:

\$.....

I wish to give for general running costs:

\$.....

Name:.....

Address:

.....

.....

WHO WE NEED TO BE

By: Joseph J. Mazzella

My Dad gave me a few of my Grandma's old photo albums the other day. When I looked through them it was like taking a step back in time. It was so incredible to see my brothers, my Mom, my Dad, and my Grandma all looking so young. And on some pages I even saw a smiling six year old boy with my face staring up at me in sweet innocence.

I wondered what that boy would think if he could see what would happen to him during the next 40 years. He would have his home burn down in the middle of the night and lose everything he owned before he was 12. As a young man he would watch his Mom fight a losing battle with cancer and die far before her time. He would see his Grandma slowly lose her health and her memories to dementia before passing away as well. He would graduate from college but still struggle financially for many years because he refused to move away from the family and community he loved. He would have two sons who everyday must live with the challenges of autism. He would deal daily with physical pain from an injured back. And he would suffer emotional pain too from all he had lost and all he had gone through. Yet, in spite of it all, he would look back on the life he had lived so far and thank God for it, because it had helped him become who he needed to be.

Just as God writes straight with crooked lines, He also takes the many twists and turns in our



lives and uses them to help us to become the people we were meant to be. Without all of that pain, struggle and loss, I would never have become who I am now. I would never have been able to love as deeply, to help others as much, or to appreciate life as fully as I do today.

When I look at that boy in the pictures I wouldn't trade a second of his life. Even when his heart was broken again and again, he never walled it up from the world. Instead he allowed God's love to flow freely through the cracks. Every time he stumbled and fell along the way he took God's hand, rose up, and tried again. And no matter how difficult the path he travelled became, he still walked it with a loving heart and a joyous spirit.

No matter what you have gone through in this life, no matter how many troubles you have faced and agonies you have suffered, know that God can use them all for good. God can ease your heartaches with wisdom. God can heal your pain with love. God can temper your trials with joy.

God can help you to help others as well. God can guide you to become the person you needed to be in this life and in the life to come. ■



Every journey begins with a



Cherry's group at National Camp



THEY PLAY SUCH A VITAL PART

By Cherry Lewis

Cherry Lewis is another of those behind the scenes people who play such a vital part in the National Camp each year.

It all started seven years ago when Cherry, who is a teacher at Carlson School for children with disabilities, felt it laid on her heart to bring some of the children to National Camp. There were a number of issues to overcome:

Could she get the school van?

She would need a driver for the van.

Would the parents be prepared to come up with the finance?

The parents would be naturally worried about the care for their child.

Could she convince them that the camp had all the set-up to allay their fears?

Despite all these she persevered, and has continued to do this each

year. Cherry remembers vividly one of these occasions:

Before this camp there were three major issues:

- My dog was sick.
- I didn't have a second driver.
- There weren't enough buddies for the children.

Driving along I saw that there was something written at the back of the car in front, but I was too far back to read it. At the lights I came up behind the car and was easily able to make out the words, "Relax, God has it all in control".

It hit me so forcefully. It felt as though I was being thrown through to the back of the car. I thought, how could I ever doubt after that?

Within 24 hours my dog had recovered, I had the required buddies and had it said, "Have faith!" I would still have been stressed, as it's often not easy to carry that out, but when it said, "Relax," I thought, "that's something I can do. It's achievable."

Another time I had such a need for two strong Polynesian men to help with a particular boy. At an end of year function I spotted just such a person - good physique and obviously very strong. I approached him. He came, and not just that, but he brought an equally strong friend. Praise God!

There are so many blessings I receive. The families are so appreciative.

They realise their children have been loved and cared for.

For children who don't normally go on school excursions it is such a huge experience. They talk about it for ages after.

Some come up to me in the playground and keep asking, "When is the next camp?"

Finally, I must pay tribute to the school and the Principal for allowing the use of the van, and continuing with it. ■

MANUELE

We include here a small excerpt from what Manuele was sharing at National Camp as he and Vicky Shivas led the teenage group.

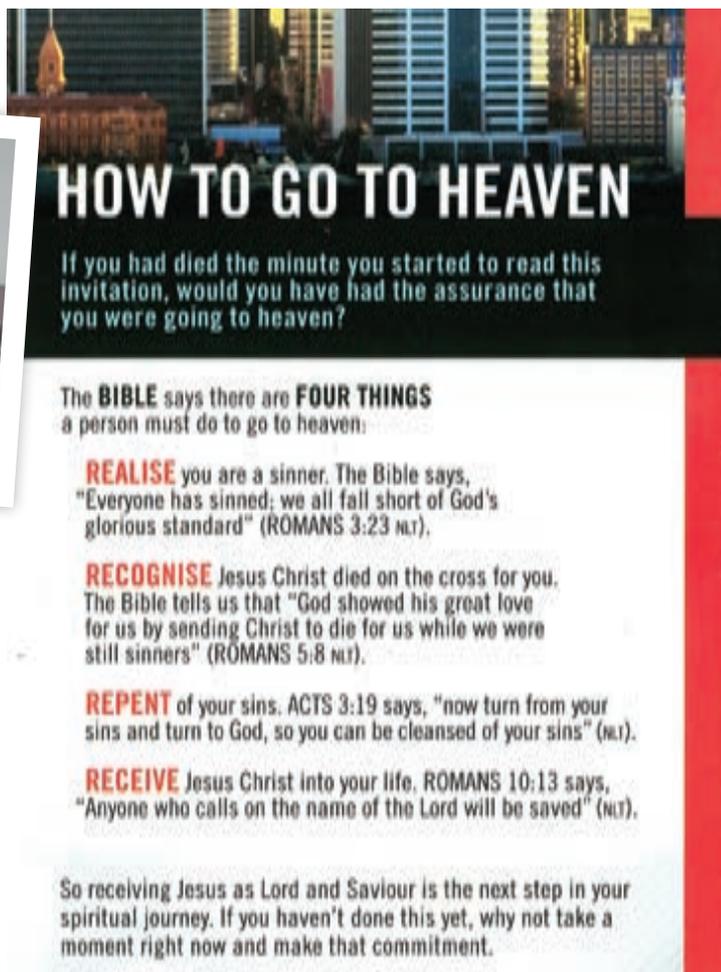


I am disabled and I am a Christian.

I started attending church when I was eleven. My primary school teacher invited me to join the Sunday School at Papatoetoe Baptist Church, and over the next year I made many friends from the church. My family had difficulty providing transport, but God provided generous people who made it possible for me to go to church and youth group. Getting to church became significantly easier when God blessed our family with a mobility van.

In church I feel I am involved and that I belong. However, in recent years I have struggled with people my age getting involved with the church in practical ways. This challenged me with the question 'what can I do?'. Practically, I can't do much, but I think God and my teachers have been getting across to me that I don't need to serve just in practical ways. I am learning that every kind of service is equally valuable to God. Saying an encouraging word, smiling at someone, or even, I believe, just being present is seen as serving others and glorifying God.

I encourage you to do whatever YOU can, to be involved in your church. The commitment of being a Christian is to lead a life in obedience to Christ. This means that every day, wherever you and I are, we must give glory to God. I have a passion to communicate the Gospel even though I am unable to engage in conversation with other people. I can communicate online, but I don't find this fulfilling, but I try my very best to create friendship in society and have some influence on others.



HOW TO GO TO HEAVEN

If you had died the minute you started to read this invitation, would you have had the assurance that you were going to heaven?

The **BIBLE** says there are **FOUR THINGS** a person must do to go to heaven:

- REALISE** you are a sinner. The Bible says, "Everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard" (ROMANS 3:23 MLT).
- RECOGNISE** Jesus Christ died on the cross for you. The Bible tells us that "God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners" (ROMANS 5:8 MLT).
- REPENT** of your sins. ACTS 3:19 says, "now turn from your sins and turn to God, so you can be cleansed of your sins" (MLT).
- RECEIVE** Jesus Christ into your life. ROMANS 10:13 says, "Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (MLT).

So receiving Jesus as Lord and Saviour is the next step in your spiritual journey. If you haven't done this yet, why not take a moment right now and make that commitment.

PHILIPPINES UPDATE

Greetings to you all! The new building is truly an inspiration to many –Thank you for your prayers and support! Called the Home of Love and Compassion, it was officially opened on January 11 by the Governor of our Province, along with his Vice Governor, a Congressman, the Mayor and Dept of Social Welfare, leaders of disability groups, and of course the CBM staff, the children and others, 250 in all.



The challenge now is to get the policies in place, find one or two care givers, get it fitted out for an intake of children for the coming school year that starts in June, and get it paid off! We still owe about \$30,000.

God bless! Dianne Bayley



PAGES FROM THE PAST

DO YOU KNOW WHAT MAKES ME FEEL DISABLED

"I have cerebral palsy and can't leave my wheelchair, but that doesn't mean that I feel handicapped – only that I need your understanding.

Let's get the facts straight. For a start I'm not sick. And I definitely don't think I'm suffering. In fact, I'm glad I'm me and not someone else!

"Oh, yes, sometimes I do wish I could run and jump and dance. But it's not the end of the world if I don't. Besides, there are too many things I CAN do to worry about the few things I can't.

"Unless you know me well, my speech is hard to understand, my tongue and mouth won't take the shapes to make the sounds you know. And typing out my thoughts on paper while you wait takes concentration, effort and time – just to raise my arm and aim my fingers at the key to punch a letter out.

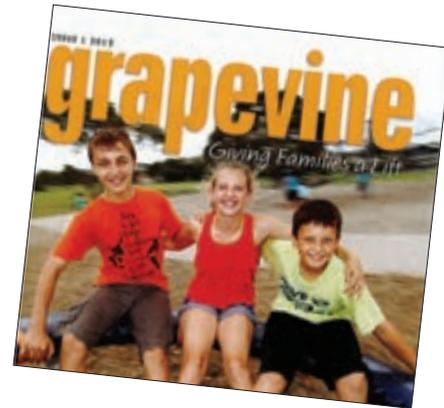
"Yet all my words and all that effort doesn't add up to what I call 'communication'. For me, communication is more than that. It's you seeing me the way I know myself to be inside.

I am MYSELF, a total ME! And when the secret's shared, it's twice as joyful!

I've grown up in a world that finds me a puzzle. But it's not my disability that makes me feel handicapped – it's the people out there who don't understand. I can deal with a wheelchair that breaks down, and I can laugh at myself when the spoonful of coffee misses the cup. But I can't always hold back my tears when people let me down.

That's my disability. That's when it hurts the most."

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ASK WHY IS THIS HAPPENING

By Claire Thompson

The topic under discussion was the little boy with Downs Syndrome.

"He's a danger to the others," they said. "He's aggressive." "He should be removed from the group." "He has rages."

This did not tie in with the experience of the boy. "What causes the aggressive behaviour?" I asked.

They seemed to feel the explanation was patently obvious. "He's Downs Syndrome," they said.

To me this was a far from satisfactory explanation, and I began to observe the three-year-old boy whenever possible.

"He's a danger to the others," they said. "He's aggressive." "He should be removed from the group." "He has rages."



Firstly, there it was. A definite rage with blocks flying in all directions. Fortunately I'd seen what led up to it. He was trying to build with the blocks. The first one was carefully placed on the floor, the second on top of it. The third one went on, then the fourth. This was

when the trouble started because the blocks were very smooth and he just didn't have the dexterity to get those third and fourth blocks to stay in place. They slipped and fell every time. His rage was his frustration with the blocks, and with himself.

Inspiration came – in the box of offcuts at the woodwork bench were several pieces which had smooth rounded sides, but were rough on the top and bottom. I collected a pile and took them to him. He started to build: one, two, three, four, five! The traction of the rough ends held the construction safe and steady. Never before had he built so high! The excitement of his achievement transformed him and the frustrated rages gradually became a thing of the past.

It is very easy to judge and condemn situations or behaviour we don't approve of. A much more constructive reaction involves two questions. The first one is: "Why? Why is this happening? What's causing it?" And the second one is even more important. It goes like this: "What can I do about it?"

WHAT WE ARE

Two disabled people entered a church one day, disabled – but each in a different way.

One had a body strong and whole, but it sheltered a warped and twisted soul.

The other walked with a halting gait, but his soul was "tall and fair and straight."

They shared a pew. They shared a book, but on each face was a different look.

One was alight with hope and joy, and faith that nothing could destroy.

The other joined not in prayer or hymn, no smile relaxed his features grim.

His neighbour had wronged him, his heart was sore, he thought of himself and nothing more.

The words that were read from the Holy Book struck deafened ears and a forlorn look.

To one came comfort – his soul was fed.

The other gained nothing from what was said.

Two disabled left the church that day, disabled, but each in a different way.

A twisted foot did one body mar, but the twisted soul was sadder far.

CONTACT ADDRESSES

Magazine Editor and Ministries Director
Hugh and Di Willis
87 Deep Creek Rd, Waiake,
Auckland City 0630, New Zealand

CFFD Branches or Contacts*

Name	Email	Phone
Northland - Jacqui Gardner	jacquigardner@clear.net.nz	09 438 4952
Auckland - Jean Griffiths	cffd@slingshot.co.nz	09 555 1947
Coromandel-Hauraki - Don Watson	musketeer1803@hotmail.com	07 862 7174
Waikato - Heather Major	heatherjmajor@gmail.com	07 855 0681
Bay of Plenty* - Ken Miller	kenzkastle@gmail.com	07 579 3003
Hawkes Bay - Joan Parker	ej.parker@xtra.co.nz	06 877 8026
Taranaki - Richard West	flourishwest@gmail.com	06 753 9466
Manawatu - Lyn Spencer	lynette.spencer@clear.net.nz	06 357 0045
Wellington - John Hawkins	john.lyn@clear.net.nz	04 569 9096
Nelson* - Lyn Harris-Hogan	lynhh.motivate@gmail.com	03 547 2337
Christchurch - Dave Palmer	davepalmer@xtra.co.nz	027 216 5743
Dunedin - Patsy Appleby - Morrison	patsyls@gmail.com	03 482 2505
P.C.F.F.D - Ruth Beale	ruthpaul.beale@paradise.net.nz	04 934 6785

Ministries under Elevate

Ministry and Contact	Email	Phone
Emmanuel - Ross Sullivan	sullivan@family.net.nz	09 838 1018
Torch National		
Alan Little	vision@inspire.net.nz	06 367 5900
Auckland - Leyna Coleman	leyna@actrix.co.nz	09 832 0130
Joy Ministries National, Central and West Auckland		
Jan Bridgeman	bridgeman@xtra.co.nz	09 818 3858
East Auckland - Christine McGill	christinemcgill56@gmail.com	09 576 3363
Hamilton - Jeni Hawker	jennyhawker@clear.net.nz	07 855 0946
Whakatane - Wanda Hughes	bwtroop@gmail.com	07 315 5012
Hawkes Bay -		
Brad & Karen Spurgeon	spurgeon@xnet.co.nz	06 876 1106
Taupo - Wendy Emsley	wendy@taupobaptist.org.nz	07 378 1413
Masterton - Brenda Morgan	bpbeacgan996@gmail.com	06 377 3125
Blenheim - Johanna Warren	jowarren@actrix.co.nz	03 579 1164

Other ministries around the country

Able to Worship - Warkworth Methodist Church		
Jenny Totter	k.jtotter@xtra.co.nz	09 422 7358
33.3 (Jer 33.3) - Te Puke Baptist Church		
Janice Landon	jlandon@eol.co.nz	07 573 8609
Kumbayah - St David's Presbyterian Church - Palmerston North		
Ann Bennett		06 355 2818
Bible Friends - Wanganui		
Louise Rostron	rostrons@xtra.co.nz	06 344 5955

Church starts "Life Group" in Tauranga

A Life Group for disabled and abled people has started in Tauranga under the umbrella of the Greerton Bible Chapel. Called 13th Ave Life Group, it meets at OAKLAND Life care, 108 thirteenth Avenue Tauranga. They meet every Saturday, always open with a prayer and worship songs, and the program could include a guest speaker, a DVD, and as at Christmas a rousing singing of carols.

At Christmas some of the group went on the walk through "the Journey to Bethlehem", and on Good Friday they are going to carry the cross in to a church on Good Friday.



Above: The Northland Branch recently held a car rally with the drivers shown here receiving the bags containing the clues they had to follow



Above: The Christchurch CFFD

Spent a wonderful day hosted by the Canterbury Society of Model Engineers enjoying numerous rides on the two model trains owned by the club members

Staff photo at Elevate - staff meetings at the Centre are not always solemn occasions!

