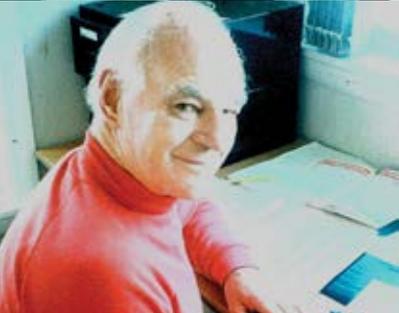


The encourager

THE MAGAZINE OF ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST

Issue no 148. August 2015



How many of these people can you recognise?

They, along with 400 others, are in this Book of Remembrance, having played a great part in our ministry. (see back cover)



The task ahead of you is never

Devotion by Joni Eareckson Tada

CONSIDERING OTHERS

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds” Hebrews 10:24

The ugly old woman sat slumped in her wheelchair, her dirty terrycloth robe twisted underneath her. Her hair was mussed, her teeth missing. Most of the group visiting the nursing home made a right hand turn down the hallways in order to avoid the woman. But my friends, Bev and Carolyn, made straight for her.

As Bev approached, she expected the crotchety-looking woman to snarl a nasty remark. Instead, the old lady smiled and said, “My, look at you two in those bright and lovely sweaters. And aren’t you sweet to come here and visit us. Thank you!”

Bev told me later that the old woman made her feel so at ease, so appreciated, so....beautiful. Here they had visited the nursing home to cheer others up. That

nursing home resident had developed the art of Hebrews 10:24. She may have only been able to offer her smile and short greeting but, oh, the difference it made, not only in the lives of others, but in the way people perceived her.

Considering others is not the art of doing something extraordinary. It’s the art of doing a common thing extraordinarily well. The most trivial action, the slightest smile, the briefest greeting may be considered a service not only to others but to God. The least thing – the shutting of a door gently, the walking softly, speaking quietly – all can be a part of the art of considering others. ■



Philippines CFFD

Giving out portable Christian radios starts in the Philippines

Leslie de la Ganar reports:

We are so thankful to God for His continual provision to PCFFD ministry. We were able to buy 30 units of PM (Portable Missionary) Christian radios through the help of many people, specially the CFFD members in New Zealand who donated whole heartedly for our radio project. It has only one am station, that is the Christian station. We have been distributing it to people with disabilities who are stuck at home so that they can hear the Word of God. Our aim and prayer is to distribute 500 or more units of PM radios to people with disabilities. And it is also a good chance to encourage and pray for them. One recipient said that he felt good inside after we prayed for him. **Thanks be to GOD!**



Our OT starts Group Activity with the SPED children

The purpose of group activity is to provide more facet for learning.

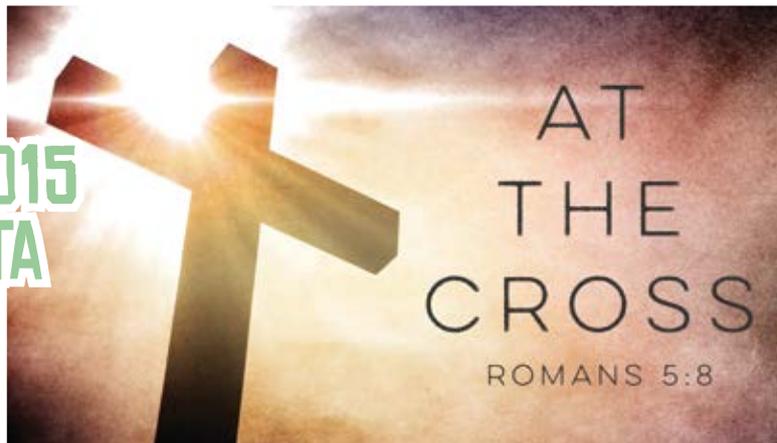
Kids are naturally curious about everything that reaches their eyes and their minds. Exploring is one of the best ways to learn. With this activity kids won’t just simply be fed with the curiosity of manipulating the ingredients and the tools, but also learn to prepare the food in the easiest and full of fun ways. *The occupation of kids is play and study, here we integrate these two!*



as great as the power behind you

NATIONAL CAMP

23RD – 26TH OCTOBER 2015
TOTARA SPRINGS, MATAMATA



The Camp Theme is:
At the Cross

COST OF WEEKEND:

Adults - \$170, 11-14 - \$110, 5-10 - \$75, 0-4 - Free

Adults fee reduced to \$160 if paid in full before 1st September (this is non-refundable)

Closing date for all registrations is 1st October, but please, to help our organising,

REGISTER WELL BEFORE THEN! YOU CAN NOW REGISTER ONLINE!

Registration forms are available to download from the Elevate website.

Email: elevatecdtcamp@gmail.com

Richard Goh, 118B Sunset Rd, Unsworth Heights, Auckland 0632 Phone: **09 444 3062**

If you don't want to miss out on a life changing adventure, get your registration in today.

Start saving now. You can use respite care hours.

A first-time-helper at National Camp 2014 wrote, "At Elevate Camp 2014 I have been one of the "newbies" ...a first time camper! Simply put, it is an amazing place. A place where difficulties are overcome, challenges are met and people live with others in mind. A place where wholeness is made possible by hearts that decide, that is the way it is going to be. I have loved every moment of it! In my life there will almost inevitably be other camps, but it is not likely that there will be anywhere love and grace will be more in operation than Elevate's National Camp."



HELPERS SEMINAR

3rd October
9.15am - 3pm

Cost: \$10

**Venue: 173 Mt Smart Rd,
Onehunga, Auckland**

No Lunch Provided
(kitchenette available for use, or
there is a bakery within walking
distance)

Learn practical ways to assist and communicate. Hear personal experiences of disability.

RSVP to info@elevatecdt.org.nz or phone 09 636 4763



Is God the Spare Wheel or the

WHAT VOLUNTEERING AT THE CENTRE HAS LED TO FOR ME...

Blair Woolley writes:

I was seeking a volunteer job after almost “burning out”.

I had sought a new job and found myself working 16 hours a week instead of 60. I approached Volunteer Auckland and went in for an interview, at which time I got access to their data base of jobs. I spent the next few days visiting and then revisiting this, and trying to figure out where I should try and fit. Every time I read about the position at the Elevate Drop in Centre I had a real stirring in my spirit. After so-o-o-o many times I rang and made an appointment to come in and find out some more about the place and what they do.

At this point I was nervous. I had never worked with the disabled and had very limited exposure to them in any capacity. Part of the job description had mentioned helping in the kitchen, and this really helped as I spend a lot of time there and am well comfortable in there. I was kind of thinking, I can hide out the back and do my thing, but.....God had a different plan

My first day as a volunteer was so awesome words cannot describe it. I know that’s going to sound weird, but it was. I left feeling shell-shocked. I was hooked. There was such a presence of the Holy Spirit, and everybody was

so helpful and nice. Much to my shock all the disabled people seemed really normal and were so welcoming. I met some awesome people, and could not wait to get back the following week. So here I am, three years down the track and still loving it. It has been an amazing spiritual experience, and I still feel I get so much more than I give. There have been times when I have been well out of my comfort zone, but in all honesty, can you believe that God wants us to operate only in our own comfort zone? The first radical thing I noticed was that my own perception changed. The “all about me” thing slowly slid out of my life as I received the blessings of our most gracious heavenly Father from serving others. The little things that used to stress me out “fell off”. Over time these changers just kept coming. I learnt so much.

The first time I experienced God’s full love was profound. I was helping one of my good friends at the Centre and as I looked at him I began to feel the most amazing love I have ever felt. I know I am not capable of this level of love, and it felt like a living fountain pouring out of me. Its depth disturbed me, and I was overwhelmed beyond words.



“It’s like the Holy Spirit gallops around the camp on a horse”

I couldn’t tell anyone for a few weeks because remembering it choked me up. It was a life-changing moment. I am happy to share that this is now a regular occurrence, not only in serving others, but at other times as well.

In the past I had heard others talk of this, but when you experience it yourself it is a true “wow” moment. You can never be the same, and you want more of that love.

I have attended two National Camps, and these are amazing. It’s like the Holy Spirit gallops around the camp on a horse. I have received huge spiritual visions at camp, and have never felt closer to God. Last year I heard angels singing in the auditorium during praise and worship. Another life-changing moment.

It came drifting down from the rafters and was the most amazing sound I have ever heard. I am very excited about going back to camp this year. The serving part is

Steering Wheel in your life?

fantastic, but all the God activities, praise and worship, preaching, workshops etc, etc, make for a spiritual boot camp. The blessings come thick and fast. I find myself volunteering at all the camps that I can. There is something about a whole bunch of people all striving for the same Godly goals, and the results just keep coming.

Another aspect of Elevate are the other volunteers and the people who are involved in running

the organization. From my own perspective, it's like they have seen the good in me, nurtured it and encouraged and supported me to do more with it. I am very grateful for this. At times when I have come in feeling low people notice and care enough to get you to the side and offer support, encouragement and prayers. At times I need this. There's that genuine caring factor in play here. Lasting friendships have been made as we all strive

to support and encourage one another.

Lastly, a word of encouragement, if you're not experiencing God at these levels, not feeling you're making a difference, wish you'd felt that love, can't remember the last time you had a vision..... perhaps it's time to step out of your comfort zone and start serving others with an open heart. It worked for me... ■

Through the Veil

By Joseph J. Mazzella

My two sons have Autism. It makes life difficult for them on even the best days. The condition is insidious. It hurts them, and chains them in so many ways. Even though they are both full grown, neither of them will ever be able to live on their own. Autism hampers their learning. It strangles their communication. It limits their interests. It traps them in their own minds. Autism makes them overly sensitive to touch and sounds. It binds them to their routines.

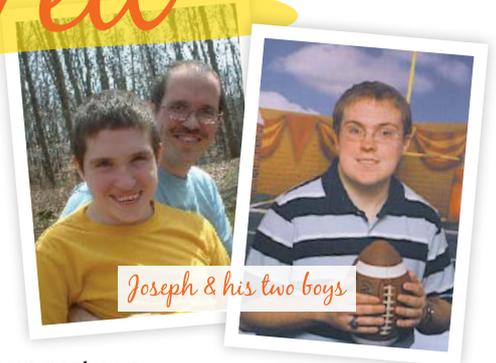
It makes any change feel like the end of the world. Autism causes them obsessions and compulsions. It makes their moods rise and fall like a roller coaster. It causes them stress and makes it so hard for them to find peace. Autism fills them with fear and frustration. What I take for granted they never can. Life for them is one endless mountain to climb. Often daily living feels so painful and out of control for them that they even hurt themselves. Autism forces them to go through their days wearing a heavy veil that obscures their minds and limits their lives. My heart aches too, knowing that I cannot take this burden from them. There are times every day, however, times that touch my heart, times that bring me such joy when my boys' spirits push through the veil and I see their love and light shining bright.

One of these times happened today after a morning

full of difficulties. I was just starting dinner when I heard, "Daddy!" behind me and turned from the stove to see my youngest son smiling at me with his sparkling eyes.

I stepped forward and gave him a hug. He laughed and rested his chin on my shoulder just as he had when he was a baby. Then I saw my oldest son walk into the room. He smiled too and said, "I love you, Dad." He leaned his head forward and I kissed the top of it. Smiling back at him I said, "I love you too, son." Then I held them both in my arms and thanked God again for giving them to me.

Seeing my two sons shine through the veil of Autism reminds me every day to do my best to shine as well. Every day I strive to follow my boys' example. Every day I try to love more, to live better, and to bring some light into this often dark world. Every day I seek to help others to do the same. My prayer for all of you is that you shine as well, that you love as well, and that you live a life that makes God and the angels smile. Let no challenge chain you then. Let no obstacle stop you. Let no veil obscure your light. Let nothing keep you from being the Child of God that you are called to be. ■



Joseph & his two boys



Faith sees the invisible, believes the in

His disability was a

gift from



The last Encourager told how Christopher Coleman was pronounced dead at birth and put to one side as the doctors worked on a second baby coming through. A Resident Doctor felt uneasy about the decision and worked feverishly on a back table to resuscitate Christopher.

Suddenly the tiny babe uttered a small cry. Miraculously, not having breathed for 15 minutes, he survived, but with extensive brain damage!

Christopher continues, "I was two years old when Mom first took me to the Association for Retarded Citizens near Baton Rouge. She brought me there every day for more than a year, hoping and praying for a miracle. The specialists discovered I wasn't as mentally retarded as doctors feared. Mom was so happy to hear the news! When I was five, she enrolled me at an elementary school with a special class for handicapped students. It was more than 40 miles from home, but Mom drove it every morning and again every afternoon. Three afternoons a week, she drove me to a Cerebral Palsy Center for speech and physical therapy before heading home. We always stopped for a hamburger first; it was something special just for the two of us. In between all the driving, Mom worked at her two jobs.

I dearly loved my mother and I know she loved me, but in my mind mothers always love their children. That's what she was supposed to do. I looked at the ways other people treated me to define who I was. I never felt I was worth much. I asked myself what was wrong with me? Why was I born like this? What did I do to deserve this condition? Can't anyone see who I really am behind this crooked, crippled body?

By the time I was six, I began to hate who I was. Life had given me a lousy deal. Anger and sadness churned just below the surface, but I couldn't tell

anyone because I couldn't talk. No one - not even my mother - understood the feelings I had inside. That's when Mom decided that the Grosvenor School (name changed) might be the best place for me. She trusted them. She thought the teachers were doing their job. She never knew how badly I was treated. Looking back, I know God's angels were watching over me, even if the teachers were not.

I had been sitting in the corner for nearly six months. I was afraid this was what it would be for the rest of my life. The world out there will probably always see me as a cripple. They'll probably think I'll never amount to much. But I want to be somebody besides a kid in a wheelchair. I wanted to be the same as other kids!

By now, my twin sister Christal was well into the first grade in the public school. I watched her as she sat on the sofa at home, trying to read her books from school. I want to read too, I thought. And that's when I began my midnight plan.

I waited until the lights were off, and all my brothers and sisters were asleep. While Mom was still working, I crawled from my bed and found my sister's books. Then I made my way to the bathroom, turned the light on, and closed the door. As I lay on the floor, mesmerized by the books' contents, I knew I had found my answer. "A is for Apple, B is for Boy, C is for Cat, D is for Dog," it read in one of Christal's books. There were big pictures on each page. I studied each picture and tried to figure out what each letter was. Slowly, I began to see how it all fit together. I was learning to read!

I repeated my mission every night, lying on the bathroom floor with my sister's books for several hours until I heard Mom come home. I crawled back to my bed and fell asleep, with visions of what I had learned dancing in my head.

When I finished Christal's books, I looked around our home for anything else to read. I'm sure Mom thought I was a packrat after finding stacks of junk mail, old bills and statements in my dresser. I didn't tell her why I was collecting all the stuff because I wanted to surprise her one day. But I was reading everything I could find.

As Christal's books became more difficult, my reading skills improved. As her homework began to include math problems, I learned to add, subtract,

God

Part 2 - The Midnight Plan

multiply and divide. By the time Christal was in high school I was reading most of her textbooks from cover to cover. I devoured the contents of a set of encyclopedias we had at home. I was hungry to learn as much as I could about anything and everything. And still, no one in my family knew what I was doing in the hours after midnight.

The aides at the Grosvenor School kept placing my wheelchair in the corner and ignoring me, but I didn't even notice the blank walls any longer. I simply entertained myself by reflecting on what I had read the previous night, and I was always looking forward to what I might read next. My midnight mission continued for seven years.

Mr. Robinson was writing his name on the blackboard when a teacher's aide wheeled me into the classroom. It was my first day back to the school after a summer break, and the beginning of my sixth year at the Grosvenor School. I was almost 12 years old. I liked our new teacher because he smiled and he liked his students. He wasn't like my earlier teachers, the ones who looked at their job as just a job. Mr. Robinson was committed and caring. He wanted us to learn.

Mr. Robinson didn't know I could read, but he sensed that I had a hunger for knowledge. It wasn't long before he began investing more time in me than anyone ever had except my mom. He began reading novels to me during his class breaks, pausing to define each word. I hung onto everything he said. I tried my hardest to memorize the words and their meanings. At the same time, I was assigned to Miss Lockett the school's new speech pathologist, and she and Mr. Robinson devoted countless hours reading books to me and encouraging my efforts to speak.

One night, when I was 14, I was sitting on the sofa watching the rain through the front window. Mom was in the kitchen getting dinner ready. A weather bulletin flashed across the television screen to warn about heavy thunderstorms in the area, and I slowly read each word aloud. Mom looked up in amazement. She rushed over to me, crying and laughing at the same time.

Christopher, you can read! I knew it! I knew you could do it! she cried. With tears rolling down her cheeks, she buried her head into mine and kept repeating, 'Thank you, Lord, Thank you! Oh Thank you, Lord!' I had surprised her, all right. My brothers and sisters

too. I just grinned.

I said goodbye to the Grosvenor School a few months later. I was nearly 15. Mom was determined to see me get the best education possible, and she enrolled me in another elementary school with a better special education program. The teachers tried their best to teach me basic living skills, such as counting



Christopher's Mother

money, arithmetic, and social skills, but I had already mastered most of them. Mom convinced the school to test my IQ, and the results showed I was reading and functioning at a 9th grade level. Elementary school subjects simply wouldn't do, Mom insisted I needed to be in a high school environment, learning subjects students my age needed to know.

The school administrators balked. They argued that placing me in mainstream classes would place an undue financial strain on the school's resources. I would need a full-time aide, a special computer and special transportation. It wasn't feasible, they said, but Mom wouldn't take "no" for an answer. She was my biggest supporter and she fought the system with everything she had. I know she prayed for a solution, because six months after the administrators first refused, they relented. I was going to high school like the regular kids.

As I was wheeled through the front doors of St. Amant High School, I knew it was my opportunity to prove what I could do. The teachers weren't prepared for someone like me. They just couldn't teach me enough. One of them called me "the human sponge," because I soaked up knowledge everywhere I went. My homework was finished before I left the school each day, and I studied my books for several hours at home every night. My grades were always at the top of the class. ■

Included here with permission, and to be concluded in the next "Encourager" in a third and final account.



*Courage is not having
It is going on when you*

THE TESTIMONY OF

Anita Gillbanks



I was born in Wanganui in 1935. My childhood days were very lonely and unhappy. At three months my sight was not good, it did not improve as I grew older, and I am totally blind now, but the Lord is good to me. Hospital for the first seven years seemed to be my second home because the specialists were doing all they could to help me with health conditions as well as sight loss. In the end in 1942 the medical staff felt it better to send me to Auckland to the Blind Institute.

The day arrived when I was on a train for the first time. I was very bewildered, and on arriving at the Institute and seeing the big red building I was terrified. At the school everything was in Braille. You learned the time with a Braille clock, read Braille Books and wrote using a Braille Frame. As I grew older we girls learned to sew by hand, and learnt how to knit, but I hated it.

When I turned eight I started my piano lessons. My teacher, who was totally blind, helped me prepare for my first piano exam when I was nine, and I passed with honours with 95/100. I realised then that music would be playing a huge part in my life, and the next year I again passed with honours at my second piano exam at the Trinity College of Music.

At the Easter weekend Sunday morning service in 1959 I took the Lord into my heart. Two weeks later I was baptized in water and received the Holy Spirit at the same time. I was involved in a five year campaign with Bill Subritzky and his team as one of his councillors and musicians, and was assistant Matron with friends at the Maori Girls Hostel in Ponsonby. I was moving in gifts given to me by the Lord, such as prophecy, visions,

interpreting prophecies, music and singing.

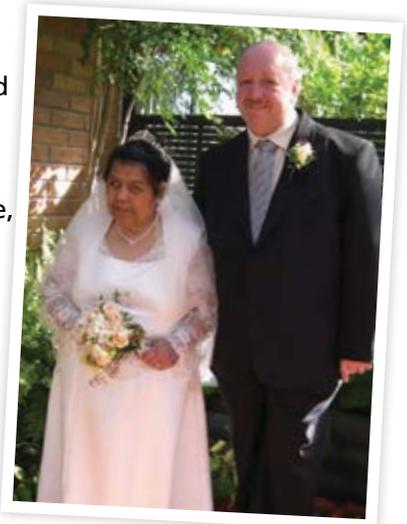
I have grown to know the love of my Saviour who has done so much for me over these years. I was a Salvationist for 10 years, and during that time I became Corps Sgt Major which involved being in charge whenever the officer was away. I also ran the Home League at the Salvation Army.

I started coming to the Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust, and in 2000 my time at the Salvation Army came to an end and I spent five happy years at Pakuranga Baptist Church. It was there on 20th August 2005 I married David Gillbanks, and we now enjoy fellowship at the Eden Assembly Of God Church.

I have made a tape of own compositions. It is called "Songs For Your Every Need", I am going to get the tape put onto cd for anyone who wants a copy. I have two favourite scriptures, the first one from St. John Gospel Chapter 15, the story about the vine. I would recommend you read the whole chapter which is beautiful. The second one is John Chapter 17 where our Saviour is praying for Himself first, and for us. When you feel down, read both those chapters.

God will quicken them to you as He has done for me, so that is why He means so much to me, and I talk to Him every day while I'm working around the house and study the Bible as well.

Lastly, for encouragement: We all need someone special to talk to. There is one thing I will say, there has never been a comforter more real than Jesus. No one really understands like Him, and remember, God has given human help for you and me. Everybody needs someone. He will keep you safe, that's for sure and He will protect you too. He will be your strength every day, just believe. Trust Jesus, He cannot and will not fail you. ■



the strength to go on,
don't have the strength.



WHAT DOES IT

MEAN TO BE WELL?

Taken from his lecture at "Wellness Conference", Laidlaw College

by Rod Thompson

Who is resigning as Principal of Laidlaw College at the end of the year, he will be sadly missed by Elevate folk.

In Jesus' prayer to Father God, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven", we find a startling confrontation to all other kingdoms, all other rulers, and all other visions of what it means to be human. It is from these grounds that we seek to live faithfully and do our work. Mental health challenges are increasing across this nation and throughout the world. We are convinced that they are among the most urgent to which churches must respond, and in which churches must participate.

What does it mean to be well? Here's a short passage from a NT author reflecting on the ministry of Jesus: *And wherever He went – into villages, towns or countryside – they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged Him to let them touch even the edge of His cloak, and all who touched Him were healed.* (Mark 6:56, TNIV)

The word "sick" in the Greek can mean sickness, illness, or more generally, affliction, exhaustion or weakness. These healings are signs that the kingdom of God has arrived in the person of Jesus, and in keeping with the visions and prophecies of Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah and Joel, Jesus demonstrates His power to heal the sick, give sight to the

blind, lift up the poor, and free the captives – this is good news indeed! The kingdom of God will be a place where there is freedom, abundance, new life, hope and peace. It will not be like the Roman empire or the previous great empires of Egypt or Babylon, in which so many were downtrodden and enslaved; in which injustice, cruelty, and the abuse of power flourished and human life did not.

But here's the strange thing: when Christ's disciples began to live by faith in the risen Messiah Jesus, by the power of God's Spirit, in fresh, young churches that sprang up throughout the world as the gospel was proclaimed, and then wrote New Testament epistles about discipleship, they continued to use this word for "sickness" or "weakness" as a defining characteristic of discipleship in the kingdom of God.

So we read the words of Paul to Christians in Corinth: *"But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in*

difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong". (2 Corinthians 12:9-10, TNIV). Weakness is not exchanged for strength. Weakness is not eradicated through healing. Something more wonderful is happening.

In 2 Corinthians 11 and 12 Paul uses the Greek word translated "weak", "weakness" or "weaknesses" on four occasions. Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7). A commonly held view among commentators on Scripture is that this thorn may have been a physical sickness, possibly epilepsy, a chronic eye disorder, a speech impediment, migraine headaches, malaria, or leprosy. Three times, Paul pleaded with God that this thorn be taken away from him, that he might be relieved of the pain and weakness. But rather than heal Paul, or ease the affliction through His power, God told Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness'.

God does not say His power is made perfect "instead" of weakness, rather made perfect "in" weakness. Paul then dares to affirm that being weak is to his advantage; that when he is weak, God's power is made complete.



Obstacles are the things we see wh

Paul asserts that he has learned to delight in his weaknesses; he is well content. The Message concludes this passage with the words "And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become".

Paul does not seek or exult in the sort of power that needs to be in control; he is not an egomaniac; he does not need to be noticed or praised. He celebrates being "well" in a radically different way. He celebrates power-in-weakness.

By the power of God, Paul seeks to live in imitation of Jesus dying on the cross. By God's power, he wants to exemplify the humility, obedience and utter dependency of Jesus. That's what it means to be really alive, to be fully human. Paul is utterly and scandalously counter-cultural in the violent, power-hungry, self-centred and ambitious world of his time. Such is the Gospel. Such is the kingdom of the crucified-risen Messiah. Such is kingdom discipleship in our time.

In 1933, as Nazi power was increasing across Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the young theologian and church leader who would be hanged by the Nazis in 1945, travelled to a village named

Bethel, a place that existed to care for people considered weak and fragile – people with epilepsy, with mental health challenges, people who were homeless and poor.

This visit had a deep impact on Bonhoeffer, his emerging theology and his courageous stance against Nazi euthanasia policies, among others. Concerning those with epilepsy and other challenges, he wrote to his grandmother: "Their situation of being truly defenceless perhaps gives these people a much clearer insight into certain realities of our human existence, the fact that we are indeed basically defenceless, than can be possible for healthy persons."

Bonhoeffer also came to a new understanding of the ambiguity of terms like "sickness" and "health". He wrote: "What we see as 'sick' is actually healthier, in essential aspects of life and of insight, than health is."

Bonhoeffer would have enjoyed Roy McCloughry's reflections on the challenges of epilepsy.

McCloughry writes:

"...having epilepsy has taught me extraordinary things about life. It has given me perspective



Bonhoeffer

on power, ambition, priorities and weakness that I would never have had otherwise. It has opened up close friendships with people I might never otherwise have befriended. It has taught me about the tremendous compassion and kindness of strangers in the street. Some of the strengths I have as a person are due to its influence on me. So it is a part of who I am, it is not something I 'have', though the word is difficult to avoid. It is integrated into 'me'. I have to own it. Without that I cannot come to terms with who I am." ■

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE WELL?

MIGHT I SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING:

1. To be human is to be weak. We are all weak. There is no "us" and "them". In God's kingdom, to be fully alive and blessed is to embrace weakness and know God's power-in-my-weakness.
2. We claim too much if we think we know for certain what it means to be well or to be healed.
3. We claim too little if we don't recognise that God's grace and power make a transformative difference in being well and being healed.
4. To be well is to live in imitation of the crucified/risen Christ by the grace of God and to be contented with God's power-in-my-weakness.

en we take our eyes off our goals.

Berni's dream job lost, along with her sight...

Every day more than 100 people across Britain learn that they are losing their sight. This experience – often likened to bereavement – can be devastating.

Berni lost her teaching job last year due to sight loss resulting from diabetes. "I could no longer see the children from a distance, or recognise their faces in the playground," she says. "I couldn't identify colours... when I was mixing paint. I couldn't tell if it was red or brown. I couldn't identify the children's parents. It came to a point where it was no longer feasible."

Her sadness, after 20 years in the profession, was intense. "It was a job I loved getting up for every morning."

Berni's two teenagers have also found it difficult. "I can no longer drive, so for them that's difficult as there are places they can no longer go to. We have to get buses, including to church on Sunday. Lots of people have offered us lifts, but I want to be independent."

The prognosis for Berni is uncertain. "I've had 19 injections in my left eye and seven in my right. Unfortunately my left eye is not responding to treatment. My right eye carries me an awful lot now, but with that I have contrast issues."

She feels her Christian faith has been vital. "I got down

on my knees and said, God, this is not what I envisaged for my life. But I felt God say to me, Berni, this is absolutely what I envisaged. In other words, Don't worry. Your life is in My hands. I really felt at peace." Berni has been helped by going on a Torch Moving Forward break – designed specifically for people new to sight loss. "It was fantastic," she says. "So informative. The people there were so friendly. It gave me hope. It was very confidence building."

These Moving Forward breaks are run with a clear Christian ethos but are open to all. They provide an opportunity for people to share their experiences as well as getting practical advice about everyday living. There are sessions on handling money and claiming benefits, discovering kitchen gadgets, and accessing computers.

Reprinted from Torch Trust Magazine, UK

Is there anyone who would feel led to start a ministry to people losing their sight? Contact the Elevate Centre.



My Heart went out to this school

Kathryn Stevenson writes,

"Music for their Eyes" - a recent fundraising concert to raise money for Akropong School for the Blind in Ghana. Why Ghana? – well seven years ago Simonne Dyer shared at a Torch meeting about her experiences of visiting the school. She spoke of how little they had, and my heart just went out to the school and the students there. I never forgot it, and this year put my vision (excuse the pun) into action. More than 100 people attended and were graced with musical presentations from many very talented musicians, several of whom were vision impaired themselves. Performers shared such personal stories. The evening was just beautiful, and I was reminded of what wonderful things happen when I follow what God has asked me to do. We raised over \$2700 for the school, for braille machines, braille paper etc. Presenters included Mark and Brenda Laurent, and Natalie Te Paa".



Kathryn playing



Grace doesn't promise the absence of

God Makes Me Stronger Than I Can Be Myself...



My name is Amie Spriensma and I live in Michigan, USA. God makes me stronger than I can be myself.

This is the testimony I am called to share with others as we journey along. I was born in Grand Rapids on March 22, 1974. Just prior to my second birthday, doctors diagnosed me as having Cerebral Palsy. Little was known at that point concerning my developmental delays, and my prognosis for the future. Nonetheless, as I look back upon my life today, I can truthfully say that God has had His hand on me at every turn. I was reared in a loving Christian home by parents who sought to raise my brothers and me in the ways of the Lord despite their own youthful inexperience.

In the mid-1980's, my parents heard about an intensive treatment programme for brain-injured children headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They were excited about the prospect of helping me overcome some of my balance and coordination problems. My early teen years became an entity all to themselves as I forewent the traditional classroom experience of middle school and spent 8, 10, and

12 hours a day dedicated to physical therapy and coordination development exercises.

My mom was a stalwart companion and encourager in helping me complete my daily "patterning" routine in "Conductive Education" for over three years. As a result of the time spent together toughing it out in our "basement gymnasium" she and I have a close, enduring friendship today.

Although I never learned to walk independently as a result of my therapy programme years, I did learn something about walking dependently in relationship with Jesus. Times of physical and emotional exhaustion were an inevitable part of my weekly routine as I became involved with physical endeavours and faced increasing social isolation. Although I was surrounded by people during many hours of the day, I lacked age-appropriate friendships and was often lonely. I needed and sought after Jesus Christ to be my friend, Saviour, and consistent companion amidst all of my teenage turmoil. I was further encouraged to trust Christ as my personal Lord and King when I quit physical therapy at age 15 and my parents enrolled me in a local Baptist academy.

My high school years were very difficult ones for me as I felt few people knew me or understood what I was all about. I couldn't play sports, but I was fortunate to have teachers who nurtured abilities I had in history, English and foreign languages, and a choir director who acknowledged my love of singing. I became a member of my local Christian church through profession of faith the summer following my high school graduation in 1992.

In the decade between 1993 and 2003, I spent a great deal of time trying to figure out who I was and what God had created me for. I pursued many different venues in my quest to fulfil what I felt was a God-given calling to be a missionary teacher. I earned three different degrees (associates, bachelors, and masters), studied at three different institutions of higher learning, and lived for various lengths of time in three different Spanish-speaking countries (Mexico, Peru, and Honduras). All of my combined experiences have contributed great threads to the fabric of my life today. I am very grateful for God's gracious providence shown to me time and time again in this

of struggle but the presence of God



Amie doing exercises with Conductive Education

extended period of my journey with Him. In the midst of my travels and adventures, God has allowed many marvellous people to leave their mark upon my life, and I continue in friendship with many of them at present.

God confirmed to me that His plan for me was not necessarily leading me to traditional classroom teaching in the way I had long been thinking. Although each of my teaching efforts had been met with some degree of success in the past, I began to realize I was definitely being called in a different direction. My persistent stubbornness kept me from seeing what others had been noticing in me for quite some time, but suddenly my blinders were lifted. I still wanted to influence, but my focus was off. I still wanted to instruct, but my current setting was not right for me. I began to see the gifts God had entrusted me with were not necessarily limited to use in one particular mission field or one particular social-geographical sphere.

By the time I was thirty years old I believed beyond a shadow of a doubt God had called me to service through counselling and personal discipleship ministries. I was still to be a missionary teacher, but not exactly in the manner I'd always expected. I was still to be a lifelong learner, but the boundaries of my classroom were much different than I had anticipated.

I never envisioned that I would end up living near Grand Rapids again, but here I am! It has taken me much time to confront the reality of living with my parents after being independent during other periods of my life, but God knows what He is doing. After a prolonged period of unemployment, despondency, and soul-searching He has given me a part-time job at a local mission agency which helps marginalized children in developing countries gain access to Christ-

centered education. In addition to my job as a child advocate, I also advocate for people with disabilities in my church region. I'm a prayer-warrior, an auntie to four growing boys, and a Bible study leader within my local community.

My spiritual journey to this point in my life is one marked with many Ebenezers or pillars of remembrance. I now recognize testimony is not just a "one-time deal"; it has a progressive nature. God journeys with us over time and continues to reveal Himself to us through multiple and diverse circumstances.

My-ever-developing story reminds me God is faithful in spite of the challenges which confront me from day to day. Many times in my daily life, I have been tempted to give up and give in; I have been challenged beyond what I knew I could bear on my own. In moments of intense physical, emotional, and spiritual weakness, I have been sustained by the perfect strength that He and He alone can provide. He continues to teach me all the resources belong to Him and are to be used for His ultimate glory. He continues to show me I belong to Him and must live my life in such a way that brings Him praise and honour. He teaches me about abiding, honesty, and obedience. He instructs me in confession, forgiveness, dependence, and grace. These lessons I will continue to learn until I reach my eternal home in the glory of His forever presence.

"Continue to reside in Him, being shown that apart from Him, I can do nothing"
(John 15:5)

(Di Willis met Amie in the USA at the Joni and Friends Conference).



Amie with her mother



Life is fragile,

HOW DO WE GET THE MINISTRY TO MOVE ON TO ALL THAT GOD HAS PURPOSED FOR IT?

- We need to get in touch with many, many more people with disabilities.
- We need to get many more helpers to provide the help needed at camps and meetings.

How do we do this?

YOU WHO ARE READING THIS ARE THE KEY!

If you believe in the worth of what we are doing, then you need to tell others about the ministry.

When you finish with your Encourager why not give it to someone who just might be interested in it. It's always helpful to suggest one outstanding article for them to read, and if this hits the mark they will probably want to read more.



We are only too happy to send you extra copies to give away, but make sure you do give them away. You can give it to people you do not know. Always carry one copy of the Encourager wherever you go.

IT'S NOW OVER TO YOU!!!!

Reminiscences of a Blind Person (Kathryn Stevenson)



You'd be surprised what happened when I got a new eye.... "Can you see more now?", "When are you getting the other eye done?", and "Do you take it out at night?" were some of a range of amusing questions people asked when I received an artificial eye 5 years ago.

I was having breakfast at a gathering and discovered I'd put water, not milk on my serial – why, because the white doily under the glass jug 'shone' through the water making it white just like milk.

Changes on the Elevate Trust Board

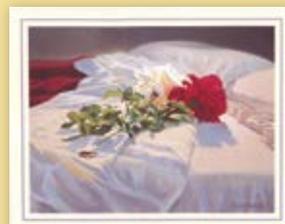
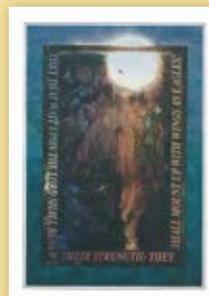
We so appreciate the input from Alan Pace who has resigned after 6 years on the Trust Board, and his place has been taken by John Fox, and earlier we welcomed Adam Doudney onto the Board.

Your Help Needed

Our Drop In Centre is in need of a free-standing double sided whiteboard. If you are able assist either through donation or sponsorship, please contact us: [National Support Office 09 636 4763](mailto:NationalSupportOffice@elevatedt.org.nz) or info@elevatedt.org.nz

GRAHAM BRADDOCK CARDS

You have another opportunity to buy Graham Braddock cards. Packets of ten include one or more of five different paintings (shown) along with two of the Trust cards which depict Jesus talking to a group of people with disabilities.



I WISH TO PURCHASE

..... packets of cards @ \$12 per packet = \$.....

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

This price covers postage and packaging
Send to: PO Box 13-322 Onehunga, Auckland

Sent in by Haydon Bailey....

Dont You Quit

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high,
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh

When care is pressing you down a bit
Rest, if you must, but don't ever quit.
Life is strange with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns

And many a failure turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out
Don't give up though the pace seems slow
You might succeed with another blow.

Success is failure turned inside out
The silver tint in the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are,
It might be near when it seems so far;

So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit
It's when things seem worst
That you MUST NOT QUIT.

Do You Know God?

If you've never met Jesus He is at this moment knocking on the door of your heart. He longs to have a personal relationship with you. In fact, He died for your sins so you could have fellowship with Him now, and spend eternity with Him in heaven. All you have to do is open the door and invite Him in as your Lord and Saviour. You can use the following prayer or your own words.

Lord Jesus, I believe You are truly the Son of God. I confess that I have sinned against You in thought, word and deed. Please forgive me for all my wrongdoing, and let me live in relationship with You from now on. I receive You as my personal Saviour, accepting the work You accomplished once and for all on the cross. Thank You for saving me. Help me to live a life that is pleasing to You

AMEN

"I will persist until I succeed. Always will I take another step. If that is of no avail I will take another and yet another. In truth, one step at a time is not too difficult... I know that small attempts, repeated, will complete any undertaking." - Og Mandino

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Bible Friends - Wanganui		
Louise Rostron	rostrons@extra.co.nz	06 344 5955
THRIVE - Greerton Bible Church, Tauranga		
Bronwyn McCurran		07 541 3943

Book of Remembrance

Well, actually there are now two books containing photos, short descriptions and articles of every one of 400 who have now died, having played a huge part in bringing the ministry through to where it is today. With great difficulty we have squeezed photos of nine of the 400 onto the front cover. How we honour and so appreciate the magnificent input of you all. It was Brian Ferguson's wife Jean who embroidered both front covers of the Books of Remembrance.



Brian Ferguson

First Chairman of Auckland CFFD and later on the Trust Board. A great helper right from early days. Very involved in everything – driver, Mr Fix It, reconstruction of the old Centre and the recording studio. It was always: you ask – it will be done!



Bev Everton

Left a tetraplegic from a car accident with a very young family. It was Bev's meeting with Di Willis which sparked the start of the meetings in private homes. Was one of the first Trustees. Very active in prayer, great wisdom and a talented speaker.



Cathy Dobson

Blind. Was at that very early meeting with 11 wheelchairs crammed with 42 others into a room. Loved playing music and very talented singer. Lots of fun. Became Taranaki CFFD Chairman. Who will ever forget her impersonation of Di Willis?



Keith Lornie

A helper with a slight disability. He loved people, and was very involved with Auckland CFFD. Always ready to do whatever needed to be done. A great servant's heart. He loved visiting and Bible studies.



Don Miller

Only one thumb on each hand and no feet. The first Trust Treasurer. A brilliant singer – a tape was made of his songs. Seemed destined for a huge role in the ministry before a tragic accident cut this short.



Clive Kempe

Cerebral Palsy. Few could understand his speech, but he was determined he would go to National Camp, preach in church and start a CFFD branch in Whangarei, and he did all these things!



Jenny Congdon

Cerebral Palsy. Along with husband Brian, started the branch and was a legend in Christchurch CFFD. Very involved in all areas. A good speaker, and very talented musically.



Charlie Dixon

Another spastic quad. Who could miss seeing the huge JESUS IS LORD taking up the complete back of his wheelchair? A real character. Became a Christian through the ministry. He loved talking about the Lord.



Wayne Roberts

As a rather wild teenager suffered a car accident which left him as a spastic quad. He became a Christian through the ministry. Very involved in CFFD activities, and he loved the National camps.



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: \$

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