

# The encourager

THE MAGAZINE OF ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST

Issue no 151. June 2016



## Disability Awareness Sunday



On Sunday June 19<sup>th</sup>





PCFFD

*It's not the number of years in yo*

# A Devotion

BY COLIN CHITTY

**L**ife for me as a young boy growing up in a small rural community was fairly normal. I loved sport, particularly cricket and rugby. Two days before starting college, at the age of 13, life as I knew it changed when riding pillion on my brother's motorcycle. We were hit by a car and I suffered serious injuries that nearly took my life. The result was the amputation of my right leg, known as a hip disarticulation. In other words, no right leg.

From that day forward I saw life through different eyes. I experienced the very best and worst of humanity, especially at college, because I was now different. I was disabled. Time away from home learning to walk again on a prosthesis. Being told all the things I wouldn't be able to do.

In my late teens the most significant event in my life was to happen, when I discovered my Creator, and my Saviour, Jesus. I was here on this earth as the result of a Creator, not a big bang. A Saviour who loved me and went to extraordinary lengths to restore relationship with me. He had a plan and a purpose for my life, even though I hadn't worked that out.

Psalm 139:14 says

*"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well."*

And Philippians 4:13

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

Since that day I have removed the word "can't" from my life. After leaving school, I worked in the automotive



industry for seven years where I met my lovely wife Anne. We bought a dairy farm and milked cows for 25 years, raising two amazing kids - Sam & Hannah.

In the beginning I thought my disability was a disaster. I was now different to everyone else. But since meeting Jesus I now see life and people through different eyes - His eyes. You don't have to go far to see someone who has challenges far beyond your own, and with that the amazing support network they have.

I have been given amazing opportunities to speak encouragement into the lives of many, many people. Sometimes in a hospital, sometimes on the street, and also through the church Anne & I now pastor in our community.

We still have our farm although we no longer milk cows, and I love to spend any spare time fishing, scuba diving, shooting, watching motorsport and yes – riding motorcycles.

With Jesus Christ there is abundant life no matter what the circumstances. ■

## Important Advance Notice

### THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELEVATE MINISTRY

**Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 7 - 9 pm**

City Impact Church, Mt Wellington, Auckland

**EVERYONE IS INVITED**

All those who have played a part in the 40 years, we want you to come and be a part of this celebration. The Centre will also be open from 11am to 2pm.

Please arrive from **6pm**, esp wheel chair folk, to start at **7pm**.

Please bring a plate for supper.

our life, but the life in your years



# NATIONAL CAMP

21<sup>ST</sup> – 24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2016 | TOTARA SPRINGS, MATAMATA

'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.'

Hebrews 13:8

Unchanging Love Eternal Faithful  
GOD Mighty Saviour  
IS...

## REGISTRATIONS ARE NOW OPEN.

As this is our 35th National Camp you will want to ensure you get your forms in as soon as possible.

**PRICING:** \$180 adult (\$170 early bird)

\$120 11-14 years old

\$85 for 4-10 years old

**THEME:** "GOD IS ....."

Every year we have campers and helpers who require assistance to cover the cost of camp. So would you consider sponsoring someone to attend camp?

Contact the camp registrar for further details at [elevatecdtcamp@gmail.com](mailto:elevatecdtcamp@gmail.com)

Richard Goh - Phone 09-444-3062

118B Sunset Rd, Unsworth Heights,  
Auckland 0632.

## INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER:

Becke Medina is our guest speaker from the USA! Having led a team in Africa for 10 months and directed the children and youth programmes at her church, Becke lives a life not limited by her birth defect. Her confidence to step into whatever God leads her to comes from knowing who God is and that she is His. Becke says "Because of who I know He is, I know who I am."

*One person said,  
"I didn't want to leave that first camp I went to. I just cried. There was so much love and acceptance. I have been to so many camps since." Do Come!!*



## DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY - 19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2016

This year we are working on an exciting new video for **Disability Awareness Sunday (DAS)** and we can't wait to share it with you. The video will be made available on our website, alongside our existing DAS resources.

Contact Kirsty Anderson (Ministry Liaison) for further details 09 636 4763

**Have you planned anything for that day?** Ask your minister, even 1-2 mins, would be great, so many ideas you can do – or you can use another Sunday.



PCFFD

# Good advice from trees - Stand tall and proud

## HAS GOD LIMITED HIS POWER



Scriptures. The subject, "Has God Limited His Power?" frequently sparked fierce debate with theologians. Allow me to unpack some thoughts on this curly question.

Let's ponder 2 Corinthians Chapter 4 vs 6-7.  
Here, we discover the limit is within the framework of 'we' Christians who are so weak. God has limited His power to weak people. *'For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who said, 'Let your light shine out of darkness, made His light to shine in our hearts to give us the light of knowledge of the glory of God. In the face of Jesus Christ we have this TREASURE IN EARTHEN VESSELS - jars of clay - to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us'* ...

Now, those words blow my tiny mind. We are common clay Jars. God hasn't chosen the best. One of the limitations on God's power is US. We are nothing more than earthenware jars. Despite that, God has given us a priceless treasure – We CAN shine His LIFE and LOVE to a world around us.

God's primary work on earth today is not a work of power but of LOVE. We must recognize, POWER WITHOUT LOVE IS FUTILE. Love is the key. There's no doubt God could win the world through POWER. God could go 'woof' and blow us all into His Kingdom – there's no limit to God's power, yet He has chosen not to demonstrate it that way.

**O**ver the decades it's been my privilege to have attended several Bible Seminary forums. These open-to-the-public sessions offered a wide spectrum of topics. I'd sit totally engrossed. The rich stimulus of Biblical interpretation ignited a fire deep within me – a passion for searching the

God's prime work today is LOVE in and through His people. The Bible records: 'Prophecy is only temporary – Gifts and tongues will cease – knowledge shall pass away'. These are ONLY PARTIAL. All this suggests there's a limit on what God is doing today, and what God is going to do in a coming day.

Let's be honest: Some of you are wrestling with disappointments and questions - trying to fathom reasons as to why God hasn't come through the way you anticipated. God's upset your 'FAITH-APPLECART', and you're absolutely gutted. Everything you believed Him for lies in tatters. Utter ruin. I'll affirm: Life ain't fair! And, sometimes we've good reason to hurl questions such as "Where in this world is God? Doesn't He care? Doesn't He see my solution to the situation?"

Recently, I discovered some interesting words in 2 Corinthians 4 v 18 where we read of '*a puzzling reflection in a mirror*'. Imagine looking into a lake that is perfectly still. Visualize the beautiful reflection. Have you ever watched the breeze blow across such a lake? Suddenly ripples surface the water. The breathtaking reflection you saw just moments ago has disappeared – it's become distorted.

This is like the day and era we are now living in. We are NEVER going to have all the answers. I grapple with this, particularly about 'healing'.

I don't understand why God touches one person's life in a dynamic way and does NOT come through the same way for another. Why some people experience so much sorrow, pain and tears while others don't. I don't know why millions are dying with starvation across in Ethiopia, while we here in New Zealand, are blessed with an abundance of food?

Part of faith is: Living for God and trusting Him when we DON'T have all the answers! Now, isn't that spiritual maturity?

2 Corinthians Chapter 12 verses 7-10 is another



by Margie Willers

section of Scripture I recommend we plug into. It hones in on the Apostle Paul's 'thorn in the flesh', much debated by theologians. I've heard every outrageous view-point, but whether his 'thorn' was physical or spiritual to me is irrelevant. There's no denying Paul battled a troublesome issue. He wasn't complaining about a mere toothache! Paul most certainly was NO wimp! I suspect 'the thorn' not only disadvantaged him in public ministry, but also very probably his dilemma imposed huge embarrassment. Three times he begged 'the thorn' be removed. Surprisingly, even though the apostle was renowned for operating in the SUPERNATURAL realm, God gave a definite 'NO' – and that was that! But Paul responded with a positive attitude and outlook. HE REJOICED.

God is allowed to say 'NO'. God is allowed to say, 'YES'. He might even say "WAIT". I've learned He can also come through with, "Here is something different".

FAITH IS: When I am left with shattered plans, believing God has far greater.

The Christian's pilgrimage isn't about a fairy tale faith. I'm certain, for myself, it's taken a greater depth of faith to remain in a wheelchair and have the desire to keep on living than to rise up and walk away from my wheelchair. FAITH isn't getting what we desire... it's allowing God to bring to fruition His ultimate plan and purposes in one's life.

### **SOMETIMES GOD REMOVES A CIRCUMSTANCE BY HIS POWER. AND SOMETIMES GOD TAKES US THROUGH A CIRCUMSTANCE BY HIS POWER.**

When we go through overwhelming circumstances God is testing the substance of our faith. We can choose to be angry, rebellious, embittered. Or, we can emerge from our 'trial and testing - **DIFFERENT. DEVELOPED, AND DYNAMIC!**

(to be concluded in a second article)

## How to find Jesus...

Do You have the peace in the midst of storms that Carleen in pages 12 to 14 has?

You can if you turn to the Lord Jesus.

1. *Confess any sin you have (everyone of us does wrong things)*
2. *Ask Jesus to come into your heart and life as Saviour and Lord.*
3. *Thank Him, and tell someone that you have become a Christian.*
4. *Get a Bible, start reading it and begin praying.*
5. *Find an active church and tell others about your new faith.*

## We are so Grateful

In 2014 and 2015 for the 12 months ending in March, the Trust funds fell by huge amounts each year, so much so that we were considering whether or not we should reduce the number of Encouragers to just three a year. This did not seem the right way to go, and we are delighted to report that thanks to many very generous donations our income has almost covered our expenses in this latest 12 month period. Thank you all so much.



"I suppose the hardest part to accept is the not being able to get around"



PCFFD

*Our goal should be to focus not on what man*

# A Father's Perspective

**O**ur son, Torian was born June 4th, 2014 with a very serious health condition. He had countless seizures throughout his life, sometimes as many as 300 or more in a single day. More often than not, with each seizure he would stop breathing and turn blue. He did this from the day he was born until the day he died, 15 months later.

He was almost completely motionless, rarely moved his arms or legs, and when he did it was usually because of another seizure. His eyes did not track, and it seemed he looked right through you. The doctors were unsure if he could see at all. He was almost completely deaf in both ears. He did not communicate as healthy babies do, not even with facial expressions. He almost never cried, but when he did we were thrilled just to hear him make a noise.

He did not reach out for things, never learned to crawl, and couldn't even lift his head from his pillow. He had extreme difficulty swallowing his own saliva and needed to be suctioned with a suction machine on a regular basis, especially when he got sick (which happened fairly frequently). He could not eat by mouth, but was instead fed through a tube that was inserted through his nose going down into his stomach. When he was first born he breastfed semi-successfully for a short time, but that joy was short lived.

## *He was Loved*

What else can I say about my son Torian? I could tell you that he was loved. He was loved by my wife, myself, and each of our children. Early on, my wife and I were concerned that eventually our other children would grow resentful of Torian for the time and attention he received from us. We thought they may be upset for the week long hospitalizations he received throughout his life. We thought they would feel deprived for all the fun things they missed out on because it was just too difficult to go places with all the machines he needed.



Little Torian

But they never showed any resentment whatsoever. They loved him and cared for him as only big brothers and a big sister could do. Every day they woke up and said good morning to him, squishing his chubby little hands or legs as he replied back with his little grunt or sigh. He made the same noise when my wife placed her cheek up against his cheek. It was a happy sigh, as if to say "Aw Mom," or "Thanks, guys, for loving me."

## *He Smiled*

From these noises we could tell he understood more than some thought he did. My wife noticed that whenever she gave him a warm bath or rubbed him over with warm coconut oil that the sides of his mouth would slightly turn up. This was how he smiled. We saw him making this little smile countless times throughout his difficult life.

As time passed on, we eventually started speaking to him, saying things in what we imagined as Torian's voice. For example:

"Boden, could you bring me my suction bag?" or "I'm very handsome" or "I just pooped in my clean diaper and now my mom has to change me again, hee hee hee."

Or we sang for him in his voice:

"I am a baby, as cute as can be, There's not many people cuter than me."

Or, "Me and my dad, we do lots of things together; me and my dad, me and my dad." (Deb tried to exchange the word "dad" with "mom").

# *What does to us but what God will do through us.*



We will never forget these things. Neither will we forget his long hair that made one long natural curl up on the top of his head. Neither will we forget his big long yawns, or him stretching his legs and pointing his toes. I will never forget my wife smelling and kissing on his feet all the time, and trying to get the other children to do it too. We will not forget him squinting his eyes, shrivelling his face, lifting up his upper lip, and showing his big toothless gums (we called this the Gum Show). Neither will we forget his "Turtle face" that he sometimes made.

## *He is Missed*

The day he died, my wife and I could see his health quickly declining. We decided to move him from the couch to our bed and lie down with him. Grandpa Bolstad came over early in the morning to see how he was doing and took our garbage to the dump. While he was gone, the rest of us continued to lie in bed with little Torian, reading from the Bible, singing hymns, and praying with him. His breath became even shallower until he stopped breathing for almost a minute, then took another breath and did not breathe again. He died in my arms as I held his little hand.

I miss him immensely. We all miss him more than words could describe. He was an absolute joy in our lives. Some people may wonder how we could love someone who was so difficult to care for and seemingly had so little to offer in return. But he had love and we felt it continually. This should come as no surprise to those who have wisdom, for our son, little Torian, was knitted in my wife's womb by God Himself, and made in His image, just as all children are. The Bible tells us that "God is Love." If God is love and He made our son in His image, then it should be no surprise why we would feel such love from a boy who could do so little.

## *We have Hope*

How do I continue without my son Torian? We know our son is already enjoying eternal life with Jesus Christ and all believers who have passed before him. I know this is the promise Jesus gave to all those who put their trust in Him. He was the promised sacrifice to reconcile us to God. God never

wanted death and suffering to enter His world. Death and suffering exist because our ancestors, Adam and Eve willingly chose to rebel against God by disobeying the one command that He gave them. They brought death into the world. We bring death to the world by our sins.

God, in His love, didn't destroy humanity then and there, but promised that one day He would send a Saviour to save us from death and hell. The man known as Jesus of Nazareth was that Saviour and lived in Israel about 2,000 years ago. He was God turned man, for no one other than God could have fulfilled the requirement of living a sinless life. Jesus willingly allowed Himself to be hung on a tree as our substitute. He suffered death as the final sacrifice for Adam's sin, but three days later rose from the dead so that we could one day live in paradise with Him. This is the hope I have for myself and for my family, including little Torian. This is the reason I can continue to live my life. Without this hope there is nothing but fear, depression, and in the end eternal suffering for those who choose to ignore God's free invitation to His home. One day I know that I will see Torian again, and he will be a happy, smiling little boy, running around, talking and laughing, enjoying pleasure unimaginable. I look forward to that day, as does my family. I hope you do too. ■

*Ethan and Deb Bolstad, Stoddard, Wisconsin, USA*

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*Included with permission from Above Rubies*

*[www.aboverubies.org](http://www.aboverubies.org)*





*In business, as in life, your chances of being run over*

PCFFD

## Serena Leong's Testimony

I am sure that you have heard it said that living in a garage does not make you a car. But I thought it did. I grew up in a Christian family and have been attending church since day one. I knew all the Bible stories taught in Sunday school and our family said grace before each meal. That makes me a Christian, right?

So one day when I was around 12 years old, I met some kids at the beach doing beach evangelism. I told them that I was a Christian, which I thought I was. One of the boys was very persistent – he asked me where Jesus was in my life and that got me very uncomfortable as I could not answer him.

His friend dragged him away. He yelled the answer – that Jesus should be in my heart. That night I asked my mom about it and she told me that I must have my own relationship with Christ and I must ask Jesus into my heart. So I did that on my own – no fancy prayers or anyone to witness the event.

After that, I began reading the Bible and having my own quiet time with God. I always wanted more and when I was about 14, I got water baptized. That year I went for a church camp and was taught about speaking in tongues and baptism in the Holy Spirit. However the church was not ready for this teaching, and it was swept under the carpet.

I wanted the baptism of the Holy Spirit, so I asked God for it on my own. I believe God only gave me one word in a tongue (later He gave me more), but that kept me searching. I found a Bible teacher who was willing to teach me from the scriptures about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This Bible teacher later became my husband.

We went to Wellington after we got married – stayed there for about a year, then went back to Singapore for about 10 years before the Lord called us back to New Zealand.



We arrived in New Zealand on 12 March 1999 and this time decided to settle in Auckland rather than Wellington. We came with three sons and had a daughter in New Zealand.

After my daughter was born, I felt that my balance was not quite right. I was referred to a neurologist who diagnosed me as having spinocerebellar ataxia type 3. Well, this condition is not life-threatening nor painful – just annoying and limiting.

Initially, I could still drive and used a walker but after a bad fall I got into a powerchair. My powerchair is for home use and I travel with a manual collapsible wheelchair. I am not working, and because I live very close to Church, I can powerchair myself there for volunteer events (usually with the retirees).

I lost my license to drive as I was a hazard on the road, but it was about the time I got into a wheelchair, so it worked out fine. It was at this time that Di Willis invited me to National Disabled Camp. I have been to camp once and got to know the wonderful people at CFFD. I have also been to all their North Shore meetings and special events when I can.

I am still expectantly waiting for the Lord to heal me, but even if He doesn't in this life, I will always trust Him, for he knows what's best. We all go through trials and tribulations. ■

*You are doubled, if you stay in the middle of the road.*



## Bible Studies that provide a Solid Foundation for Adults Living with Intellectual Disabilities

by Tait Berge

When perusing resources in any Christian bookstore, prepare to be overwhelmed with Bible study choices. But what if you have an intellectual disability? How do you learn about Jesus? Are there studies for this population? Mary Jane Ponten, the Executive Director for Mephibosheth Ministry, shown on the right, and her friend, Elsie, visited a local Christian bookstore in the USA to find out.

Mary Jane has cerebral palsy and can be easily identified as someone who lives with an intellectual disability. Using it to their advantage, Elsie asked the clerk if he had a Bible study for her friend. "She reads at a second grade level," Elsie said. The clerk scratched his head and led them to the children's section. Mary Jane stomped her foot saying, "I'm not a child!"

Immediately Mary Jane stopped and apologized. She told the clerk that she was doing research on the availability of Bible studies for adults with special needs and wanted to confirm her theory that there was very little for them. The clerk searched his files but did not find anything. Mary Jane is working to change this. She has been writing Bible studies for adults with intellectual disabilities for many years. "People living with intellectual disabilities need the Gospel presented to them in an appropriate way," Mary Jane explains. "They don't want children's books."

Ponten has written more than forty Bible studies. Most are in a 13-lesson series, while some are stand-alone books. She has also written training manuals and inspirational books.

The cornerstone study, called, *I Want To Know*, is a 96-page beautiful book that takes students through the basics of the Christian faith. It is divided into four sections:

- *Who Am I? – My Identity in Christ*
- *How Does Jesus Want Me To act? – My Attitude*
- *What Does Jesus Want Me To Do? – My Behaviour*
- *Where Will I Go When I Die? – My Eternity*



Each study is in simple language and uses Scripture from The English Version for the Deaf, a Bible that translates the Scripture using concrete language. The sections have activities, such as puzzles, to reinforce the lesson being taught. Many students are non-readers but do know the alphabet and can match letters with symbols. They can do the work – which makes them proud, then the assistant will tell them what they have written. There are also activities students can talk through with a partner.

Besides graphically tailoring the studies for the target audience, a lady Carol has also taught the Bible studies and experienced them first hand. She is passionate about empowering folks to come to know Jesus and who He really is, and then to grow and serve Him.

Carl Brown, who was the graphic artist, says, "The wonderful thing about disability ministry is the total gambit of abilities within a group we call 'disabled adults'. Some may be very bright, but unable to verbally express themselves, some may be deaf or hard of hearing, have personality disorders that are part of their disability but prevent them from learning in a traditional format."

Mephibosheth Ministry, located in Colorado Springs, is well known in disability ministry circles. Its mission is to train churches to not only accept people who have disabilities but also help them understand how people with disabilities can serve in their local churches.  
[mephiboshethmin@comcast.net](mailto:mephiboshethmin@comcast.net) ■



PCFFD

# Never look down on anybody who looks up at you.

I'd rather be dead than disabled...  
but my perspective changed

Jean Swenson, who Di Willis met in the USA, writes:

**On March 16 I had the opportunity to testify at a Minnesota Senate Hearing against a bill that would have legalised physician-assisted suicide in Minnesota. This is what I presented:**

*"I'd rather be dead than disabled."*

I consciously remember thinking that thought several months before I was severely disabled in a car accident. In 1980, I had taken a group of teenage girls to see a young quadriplegic named Joni who painted beautifully by holding a paintbrush in her mouth. Though inspired by her talent, I remember telling the girls, "I could never live as a quadriplegic."

Several months later my neck was broken, and I, too, became a quadriplegic, completely dependent upon people and equipment. About four months post-accident, I sank into a depression that felt like a black hole with no way out. I thought my life was over and I wanted to die. At that point, I definitely felt I'd much rather be dead than disabled.

Thirty-five years later I'm still paralysed, but I can honestly say I'm grateful to be alive. If assisted suicide had been legal in 1980, and people had taken seriously the statement before my accident that I could never live as a quadriplegic, or my cries after the accident that I wanted to die, I might not be sitting here today.

## WE NOW HAVE THE FULL RANGE OF CARDS OF MARGIE'S PAINTINGS



Send to: PO Box 13-322 Onehunga, Auckland.  
Enclose a cheque for \$..... or pay in the Trust Account 01-0142-0029706-00 NB Add your name



Jean soon after her accident

When people see death as their only option, we need to help them. If healthy, able-bodied people are suicidal, we provide support. We don't let them jump off that bridge and we certainly don't push them off.

We need to show the same compassion to those with physical challenges who are struggling with suicidal thoughts. In addition to good psychological and spiritual support, we should provide sufficient medical care, including rehab and pain management. ... And we need to give it time.

However, I'm not advocating the use of extreme life-supporting technologies. My mother and both of my grandmothers died peacefully at home, with no attempts to artificially prolong their lives.

I believe life is to be chosen over what some would call "death with dignity." There is nothing dignified about deciding someone's life is not worth living. If a patient has a need, let's address it. Our goal should be to eliminate the problem, not the patient.

### I WISH TO PURCHASE MARGIE WILLERS CARDS

The cards are \$2.50 each. For postage add \$1 for two or \$2 for three or more.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

List here the numbers you would like, and if you want two of any add x2

.....

.....

## Friendship at the Core of Disability Ministry

Kirsty Anderson, Elevate Ministry Liaison Officer, writes:

We all desire friendship. It is an important part of life regardless of our ability or disability. Two years ago Manurewa Baptist launched Embrace, a ministry with people with disabilities. It was this importance of friendship that stood out to me when I visited recently.

Throughout the evening people showed love and genuine interest in each other. Particularly so during "victories and challenges", a time of sharing and prayer in small groups, which is a regular feature of the meeting. One of the attendees, Joanna, says, "I love Embrace lots, it's so fun. I love to get to meet new people, make new friends and play games."

Julia Osman who heads up Embrace feels that it is great that through Embrace, people with disabilities are able to contribute and be part of a service that is designed specifically for them. She enjoys seeing everyone learning about God's Word and fellowshipping together.

## HOW WE WERE SO BLESSED BY THESE YOUNG PEOPLE

They arrived armed with buckets and sponges, when they left, the building and windows were sparkling. Last month, we were blessed to have a group of young people volunteer their Saturday morning and their fundraising skills. Mission 48 is an Alliance Churches annual event where youth raise funds for mission organisations, serve a local mission group and fast for two days. The night before they arrived I had the opportunity to join them for a portion of their all-nighter to share with them about Elevate and the work we do.

Despite being hungry and sleep-deprived, the youth were enthusiastic to tackle the Saturday project. While the youth scurried around we also had two builders



It has been a privilege to see the beginning stages of this ministry and to be a sounding board for Julia as it is developing.

We would love to hear about other disability ministries/groups/meetings around New Zealand. Often people will ask us what is available in their area so they can get involved. Please contact Kirsty Anderson if you would be happy for us to add your group/meeting/ministry (however small or informal) to a reference list. We would also love to know what we can be doing to support you.

Anyone interested in attending Embrace can contact Manurewa Baptist Church.

.....

completing odd jobs around the building that had piled up. It was a great hive of activity.

Volunteering is a great practical way to give to others. Whether you have a specialised skill or are willing and have time to give, there are always opportunities to serve.

In the couple of hours the youth were there they accomplished something that we needed done and hadn't been able to do ourselves. Do you have time to give? Do you have a specific skill or talent you would be willing to volunteer? Our branches throughout NZ and our centre in Onehunga rely on volunteers just like you.



*We would love to hear from you!*



PCFFD

Talking is sharing, b

# God's Grace has Brought me



I was born in 1970, a very happy, healthy and contented baby. Then at age ten months I contracted Bacterial Meningitis (H IB) which turned into a high grade infection, pneumonia, double pneumonia, and then full blown meningitis. My parents knew something was radically wrong straight away but were told they were just being too fussy, and through a number of very unfortunate events I was not given the necessary treatment. After nearly two weeks in the local hospital I was rushed to Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne by road ambulance, 4 hours away.

On arrival, a lumbar puncture was done, but by then it was all too late. The blood supply in my brain was affected with a blood blockage which caused a stroke. It was the prognosis though that was the real issue and was very grim. I was in a very critical condition that initial night and for many weeks, and if by small chance I did live (only a 5% possibility) I would have massive brain damage, be totally dependent on care givers for the rest of my life, have very limited

intellectual capacity, so I wouldn't walk or talk. My body also had total right-sided paralysis and other major life-threatening issues. Prayer groups were immediately set up from family, friends and complete strangers who heard my story and knew prayer was needed.

While the Lord gave the specialists and doctors the wisdom, abilities and grace to know what to do and guide their hands, He was the one working overtime behind the scenes to save my life, allowing those around to witness the miracle of my survival. After a four month stay they sent me home in callipers saying there was nothing more they could do. I am so thankful to my parents who with their faith in the Lord, their dedication, total sacrifice and unconditional love sought out the best holistic medical help available and pursued the hard regimes needed, enabling me to talk at three and walk (with a limp) at four. The meningitis aftermath was extremely physically challenging. Epilepsy (ages 10-18) was a major part of my teens as well as mini strokes (from 15 on) and chronic pain from Scoliosis which I still have. Physio was a necessary part of my day. The Lord by His mercy and grace enabled me to be determined, to endure and persevere, and these have been needed for me to get through what was now my life.

I gave my life to the Lord at a yearly beach mission camp when I was six. I knew 'my Jesus', as I called Him, died for me on that cross, and that I was to cling to Him

at all times, no matter how hard life was, and that He lived in my heart. I rededicated my life to the Lord at age 13 at a yearly Easter camp. At this age I was at a point of really wondering what the Lord was doing, and struggling with all He stood for due to all of my personal difficulties, and the Lord helped me understand His ways to a point where my awareness of His presence deepened. I learnt that I had a very important choice to make. I could either hate my life and/or despise God because of my daily struggles, or I could embrace my life in a more positive way, work with the limitations the Lord had allowed me to have and by His grace learn to adapt by accepting my life as it was, and gaining all my strength through Him. I was also challenged greatly by the issue of 'looking different', and this was very hard for me to overcome as a teen. My physical disability was very visible back then, especially my limp, balance issues and the paralysis in my right arm and hand. I wasn't able to do what other children could do in the 'normal' way, and that was hard.

Accepting that I couldn't do anything on my own without His help was a light globe moment for me, and that's when my heart started to change! The Lord not only allowed me to have these challenges but was now bringing me through them in the most amazing way, comforting me like never before, and having an awareness that nothing can separate me from His love. I started to read His Word daily and I began to realise what I had been missing,

# Through

by Carleen Durand

and that was a closer, more intimate, relational walk with Him. My ongoing personal walk with the Lord after confirming my faith at 15 has truly been a gradual one and head knowledge verses heart acceptance has not been an easy transition. During my teens I learnt more about sin and what it really meant to be a committed Christian, how I was to resist the evil one, to fix my eyes and thoughts on Him, that I could take refuge in the Lord and TRUST Him always, give Him all my burdens, just be still before Him, being thankful and praying at all times, and finding peace through my trials.

It has been a life filled with fun, laughter and smiles though, even through the hardships, tears and physical pain. From an early age I was greatly blessed to have wonderful friendships, life-long friends who cared for me, and to them nothing about me or my disability was an issue. There were always some others at school that bullied and teased me which was very hard, but knowing the Lord's peace because He was in control became my lifeline. I became very involved with extra-curricular activities that I was told I certainly wouldn't be able to enjoy and/or do, but I mastered them through perseverance anyway: ballet classes (helped with my mobility so I did this from ages 3-16), horse riding, swimming, Girl Guides and many others.

Music though has always been a real outlet for me; I began playing the glockenspiel at age 8, and later mastered the trumpet, cornet and French horn. I played these in many

varied situations such as church, town and school bands, and the French horn and glockenspiel professionally at weddings, funerals and Christmas services. Singing and voice training were important parts of my life. I had to learn to adapt and improvise as I worked out a way of doing all these activities. Not being able to use my right hand in the normal way has meant that I've had to do everything one-handed, even with finding instruments I could play. Often it took me twice as long to do things. However, with the Lord's help and encouragement of others, the difficulty of doing tasks diminished, and it allowed me to actively pursue two handed activities the one handed way.

Another issue was that of schooling; the original specialists/doctors thought that I would have to go to a special school. This wasn't the case though, and I thrived intellectually both in regular primary school (first girl in year 6) and also in regular high school (the top academic stream). I then continued tertiary education at Deakin University obtaining a B.A. Degree in Disability Studies. After graduation, I worked in the Government as a Disability Case Manager for 2 years before being promoted into Disability Policy, Management and Development.

I continued with part time study while working, obtaining a 2 year Diploma in Professional Counselling while also having 4 major bone surgeries on my right arm and hand. The last 15 years I've worked at home on Disability and Mental Health related projects



while still dealing with the ongoing difficult health concerns, including mini strokes, chronic pain and fatigue. I am a strong advocate for promoting positive awareness of all disability and mental health issues, especially when it comes to creating lasting change by looking at everyone's ABILITIES with real understanding from the community towards individuals and their families.

My most recent challenge which has taken me into the unknown these last two years has been dealing with an aggressive form of breast cancer, first with the initial life changing operation and then 15 months of the gruelling treatments at age 44. Again, persistent individual and group prayers were set up globally, which were instrumental in me even being able to finish the treatments, and I am so very thankful for the support. The big 'C' has changed me in every way imaginable, and I have had to learn to again live in a new way. I now deal with long term, ongoing, extensive chronic nerve pain, flare ups of lymphedema, and continuing fatigue from the incredibly harsh and extremely toxic treatments that went through my body.



PCFFD

# The most foolish person in the world is that person instead of being thankful

My cancer experience has certainly given me a brand new understanding of just how GREAT His saving grace and sovereignty truly are, and what commitment and love really means with a Godly man by my side. The Lord will continue to take my husband Jonathan and I on this journey of life together, showing me personally and us as a family unit His way forward, showing deeper glimpses of His nature and plans for us. I must say it has been an interesting life so far, my disabilities and illnesses don't define me and make me the person I am. It is the Lord's doing, moulding and making me in to the woman He desires me to be, learning to become more Christ-like in character every day by His grace alone and His ongoing help.

It has been a lifetime of growing in God and will continue to be. It's all too easy to question His plan and to ask why all these difficulties are happening and to allow my sinful thoughts to go down a slippery path to nowhere, which happens more than I would like, but the Lord always gently brings me back and sets me straight again, thankfully quite quickly.

It's when I am at my lowest that I truly have to stand firm in my faith even though I don't see what is ahead of me, realising everything He has brought me through has a reason for growth in Him. Every trial, whether it is physical or living for the Lord, is yet another opportunity to allow Him to show and teach me His greatness through my adversity and

weaknesses, and to be a witness to others. I can walk with my head held high knowing I'm a child of the living God, and He has given me all I need to live a godly life.

My Lord and Saviour has sustained me through my life 24/7, and by coming to the cross daily, I know how incredibly faithful He is, and how *His grace is all sufficient* (2 Cor 12:9-10).



A very recent photo



**Ken Miller tells of a camp where**

## ONLY THOSE WHO HAD NOT BEEN BEFORE COULD COME!

### The Philippines CFFD Camp

In life we make right and wrong choices. Well recently I and my daughter, Marlene visited Hebron in the Philippines , temperature 47 to 50°C (wrong decision), and

attended two camps, one a Christian children's camp and a camp for the special needs (right decision).

The special needs camp was extremely well organised by Leslie dela Ganar and helpers. It was run on similar lines to our Labour weekend camp, but with some differences such as sleeping on thin mattresses on the floor, (no way to fall out of bed). Although there were many differences, the fellowship and contact with each other was very precious as the camp was for people with special needs who had never been to a special needs camp before.

After arriving at camp, because few knew others, it wasn't long before there were many groups being

formed and new friends being made which I know will last for years. It was amazing to listen to a foreign language and to feel and see on the campers, the impact of the profound messages, and to see their response in the singing and prayers.

The fancy dress evening was very rich with the ideas and dress-ups presented. The last half day of camp was held at a resort with different types of swimming pools (from spa to wave pool). For some it was the first time in a swimming pool, scary but rewarding.

*p.s. This camp was free to the Filipino campers as many would not be able to afford even the jeepney (bus) fare to be able to get to camp, let alone pay for camp. We at our Labour weekend camp at Totara Springs collect and send a donation over to the Philippines to help to provide for part of the camp. How about you saving and/or donating more at camp this year so that we can PAY FULLY for their amazing camp. This will be an act of sharing God's love with our Filipino Christian campers. God Bless you all.*

on who complains about what he does not have,  
and for what he does have.



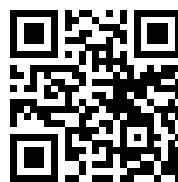
**Heydon Bailey** who has cerebral palsy, is passionate about sending out the love of Jesus to lots of people and has developed a ministry where he sends out to those on his email list outstanding devotionals and articles he comes across. Here is one of those he sent through to us:

## Deep Inside

Sourced from Timeless Truths

Are you in trouble?  
Deep inside  
Is there something wrong  
Not quite right  
Tangled up, confused?  
Is there fear that hurts  
Or anger that is hard and cold?  
Maybe just darkness  
Because no one knows about it  
And you don't want them to see  
How you really feel  
Really think  
Something you are hiding  
Deep inside  
Do you have that kind of trouble?  
But Someone does know  
Every thought and feeling  
Is written in His book  
He wants to banish the wrong  
And make everything right

Because He cares  
Because He is goodness and love  
And deep inside  
He wants you to be that way  
Because that is how  
He designed you to be  
Not a failure  
No, not a fake, either  
But like He is  
Pure in heart  
And loving what is right  
Because that is true happiness  
And He wants you  
To share it with Him.



Did you know that we can email you when the latest Encourager magazine is up on our website? To sign up, scan this QR code, phone us or update your contact details on our website.

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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
THRIVE - Greerton Bible Church, Tauranga Bronwyn McCurran		07 541 3943



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# Camps around the Country

A real highlight of the Wellington camp was the visiting youth worship team from the Hope Centre on Saturday night.

They came to serve and were totally overwhelmed at the presence of God at camp. They are all very keen to come back next time.



The water slide was a favourite at Wellington camp



The Wellington camp



Enthusiastic participation at Kids Connect



Acting out a drama at Auckland camp



Joy Ministries celebrated their 21st with a camp and dinner



Early morning prayer at the camp



Debbie Kennedy



In Auckland 40 from the Centre walked one of Hugh Willis's tracks, plus a concrete path on the other side of the river.

Debbie Kennedy was one of the speakers at the Joy Ministries dinner. It was Debbie who was instrumental in starting up Joy Ministries after she returned from a Faith Bible College assignment to Joy Fellowship in Vancouver, Canada, and was so moved by what she experienced there.