



MARCH 2007 ISSUE 114

The **ENCOURAGER**

EVANGELISE EQUIP EDUCATE

Magazine of the Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust

DON'T tell me that it is impossible...



Mini-poster created by Isabel Lee

DEVOTION

Ted Wright, a keen supporter of the ministry writes:

I was reading Rita Snowden's book "Further Good News" and came across a passage where she described a church in front of which was a message in bold print for all to see and perhaps read;

WE BELIEVE EVERY MAN IS SPECIAL AND OF VALUE

We who are Christian surely believe this, and all of you in this ministry with people with disabilities are showing this by your compassion, love and caring for people who need it. Yes, when we think of it, every person is unique, no one else is exactly like us, and each one of us needs the love and grace of Jesus Christ to have a free and full salvation. What of ourselves who are far from perfect, how do we think and act? Rita Snowden says she talks to herself about herself. Worth considering is the verse:

I can never hide myself from me,
I see what others can never see;
I know what others can never know,
I have to live with myself and so
I want to be fit for myself to know.

We can never be perfect in this life, but we can become fully mature and please our Saviour, and find comfort in that ourselves. Shall I ask myself the question, what sort of person am I? Our Lord knows, and still loves us.
Have you ever come across the poem:

Alone I walked the ocean strand,
A pearly shell within my hand;
I stopped and wrote upon the sand
My name, the year, the day.
As onward from that spot I passed,
One lingering look behind me cast.
A wave came rolling high and fast
And washed my lines away.

Perhaps that can be the fate of some unfortunate people, that life is here today and gone tomorrow. But for us who know and love our Saviour, we have and hold life which is eternal and everlasting. We pass from this sphere of change and decay to that blessed place where we are ever with the Lord.

PASTORS AND MINISTERS... AND YOU TOO!

Have you set aside **Sunday 17th June** in your planning diary to bring disability awareness into your service? for this is **Disability Awareness Sunday**. Churches throughout the land will be recognising this in some way. It could be a few relevant contributions, or you could get in touch with the local CFFD branch and invite along a team.

The Trust has put out an excellent little booklet, "Ideas for Disability Awareness Sunday" for this day. There are 23 suggestions for a short slot and 14 for a longer part in the service. Some examples are testimonies, Braille readings, signed songs. You can have this booklet sent to you by writing or phoning the "Centre".

Many pastors do not receive "The Encourager", **so it is up to you, the readers of this magazine**, to have a word with your pastor to make him aware of this day, and offer to do something in the service if he requires this.

Some of the branches and ministries may already be planning a special service in your area. In Auckland this will take place at 2.15 pm on the 17th at Harbourside Church, Esmonde Rd, Takapuna, situated just over the Bridge. There are lots of parking spaces, and they are calling it "Celebrating and Honouring Diversity".

CAMPS IN 2007

Wellington CFFD	9 – 11	March at El Rancho, Waikanae
Torch National	12 – 15	April at Capenwray, Cambridge
Auckland CFFD	27 – 29	April at Carey Park, Henderson, Auckland
CMWDT National Camp	19 – 22	October at Totara Springs, Matamata
Christchurch CFFD	November	

PRAYER REQUIRED FOR

Ruth Jones who is undergoing treatment for breast cancer.

She also needs urgently a new computer to handle the Philippines sponsorship program. It will cost about \$1,000. Who can help her with this need? Please reply to the Centre.

Joy Gregory in Canada who has had many months of extensive chemo and radiotherapy, but sadly this has not been successful in stopping the spread of cancer. She is now back in her home.

Wonderful news was the awarding to Joy of the Doctor of Ministry degree from Carey Theological College. She had completed almost all the assignments before the cancer treatment started.

A MUSICAL TREAT AT THE CENTRE FROM A BAND FORMED BY TAIWANESE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



The band was set up in Kaoksiung City in Taiwan by the City Council. One of the counsellors accompanied the group, and is seen below giving the introduction





Members of the group on the trumpet, bassoon and keyboard



This Taiwanese lady, a pastors's wife who lives in NZ, acted as the interpreter

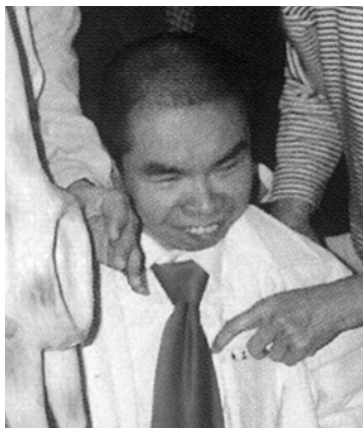


A blind singer who sang powerfully and with great feeling



This photo clearly shows how well they were received by our folk

EVERY DAY IN GREAT PAIN, BUT HE RADIATED JOY



John Lan, the leader of the Taiwanese group, was born in Taiwan 43 years ago. Quite healthy in his first two years of life, he was struck then by an undiagnosed fever which left him multi-handicapped, completely blind, his wrists dislocated and his facial nerves affected. Over the next 30 years doctors worked to counter the deterioration in his body, the deformation in his limbs and the severe arthritis that made all movement so difficult.

Despite all this John had a zest for life and came to know the Lord early in life. Every day he was in great pain, but he overcame the great setbacks in his life through his tremendous will power. The

doctors sought to rehabilitate his body functions by suggesting he practice using a jazz tom tom. John loved playing these drums, practiced for hours, pushing through the pain levels. His playing was incredibly joyful and he determined he would use it in the service of the Lord. Another activity he took to was sculpturing in ceramics, incredibly painful for his mis-shapen hands, but he never gave up on himself and came to attain a high standard of proficiency with the exquisite pottery he turned out. He saw that through this he could encourage and inspire others with disability to excel, and displayed his best creations in a building called "The Memorial Hall for Life Ceramic Art of John Lan."

In 1998 President Lee, the former leader of Taiwan, visited the exhibition and was greatly impressed by John's endeavours, the uninhibited joy in his playing, and his vibrant attitude to life. He was keen to make society aware of his accomplishments and asked how he could help. John replied that being given a fishing pole was far preferable to being given fish that had been caught. Concerned for his career future, the President was instrumental in getting the City government in 1998 to create a music band made up of people with disabilities. The object was to create job opportunities for those disabled ones who had a musical talent as well as showing their courage to society, thus awakening them to the talents of others like John. Since then they have performed in disability training and caring centres, hospitals, prisons and churches, as well as visits to mainland China, Indonesia and Japan. Keen to travel worldwide, they have just made a short tour of New Zealand. In their colourful brochure they described how for the remainder of his life, John was expecting to take the band to every school and prison nationwide, aiming to teach the

students to be grateful and thankful, to strive for a better life, and to inspire them to start afresh with a clean slate with the promise of a bright future. In all of this he successfully demonstrated the glory of his love toward life.

Sadly, John was not with the team. Just two weeks before the NZ tour he collapsed and died at a meeting. Despite this tragedy the tour went ahead, and his mother, who is vision impaired, came with the group. At a performance at the CMWDT Centre she said, "I looked after him throughout those 43 years. When he died I felt like dying myself. We had been together through so many dark and difficult times, and shed many tears. He so trusted in God. His heart for other people was great, he would accept and embrace others and always emptied himself.



John believed God had a great purpose in allowing him to suffer. I think life is like a book – what is important is not how thick the cover is, but the contents inside. John lived life to the full, he never complained, his smile was infectious and he maximized every second of his life. I find it sad that I never got a chance to say good-bye, there was still so much waiting for him to do for God. But he wasn't taken Home until he had played his part in 500 concerts in seven years. He had completed the mission God had for him. He had truly run the good race. But his spirit lives on. The seeds he has planted will continue to take root and bear much fruit and the mission will continue."

THE POOL AT THE CENTRE NEEDS REPAIRS

COSTING \$4,000 - \$5,000

Would anyone like to help with meeting these costs?



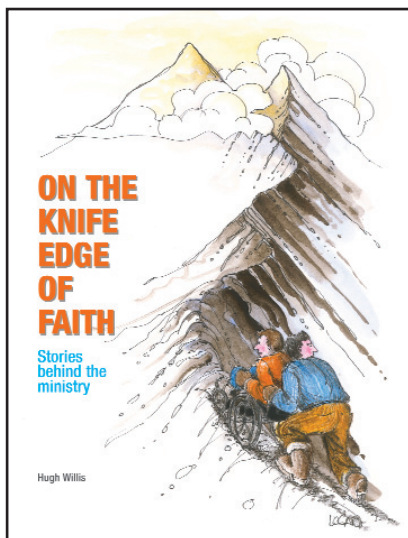
Karen Haakma, a long-time CFFD member from Thames, was surprised one morning when she saw this photo of herself in the Herald—an entry in the Herald Holiday Competition. Unbeknown to Karen, her mother had taken the photo. It didn't win the first prize, but what a way to cut the lawns!

ON THE KNIFE EDGE OF FAITH

This book is a collection of stories, most about a page in length, that tell different events in the first thirty years of the ministry, with intriguing titles such as the following:

Mary in the loo
Brought back from death's door
Like living in the eye of a hurricane
I don't want to have anything to do with you!
The love that flowed through the broom handle
She carried her husband on her back

- There are over 120 photos
- 200 pages in all
- The cost is only \$20



Please send me _____ copies of the book "On the Knife Edge of Faith"

NAME

ADDRESS

.....

.....

I enclose a cheque for \$_____ covering \$20 for each book, plus \$1 postage for each book in NZ. Postage to the UK and the USA is \$14 for one book.

WHAT A BRILLIANT IDEA TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF CMWDT

As we were about to print this edition a lady called, wanting to buy a book for her church library. We were staggered as we thought about the implications of this idea. "The Encourager" is sent out to nearly 4,000 homes throughout New Zealand. If one was to work out the number of churches in which these people worship, the number would be huge. If each of these churches was to be given a copy (by one person in each church) of "On the Knife Edge of Faith" the remaining production costs of "\$7,000 would be met, but **far more importantly these books would be taken out and borrowed by a vast number of people who otherwise would never know about our ministry.** There would be some who would be keen to be involved.

We are throwing the challenge to you.

For \$20 this is what you can achieve:

An opportunity

- To read what so many have described as a gripping book.
- To spread the word of our ministry
- To get new people involved – we are just reaching the tip of the iceberg as far as those with disabilities in New Zealand.

WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF THIS BOOK?

We have received many very appreciative letters from people who have read the book. Here are a few extracts from these letters:

- I want to say how much I enjoyed reading "On the Knife Edge of Faith" – very aptly named! It is certainly action packed and an amazing testimony of God's goodness, grace and provision when His people are walking with Him in faith.
- I couldn't put the book down. I straight away read it from cover to cover. It is a gripping account of God's wonderful leading in the ministry. Please send me five more copies.

*The measure of a life, after all,
is not its duration, but its donation.*

Corrie Ten Boom

A LIFE'S CALLING TO ROMANIA

Tammy picked up a copy of "The Encourager" on the counter in a Tauranga Christian Bookshop. She loved it, and so did her mother when she took it home, and Tammy quickly got in touch with the local CFFD branch. This led to her making a special trip up to Auckland to the Centre where she told our folk of her strong calling to people with disabilities in Romania, all this before she had to make a hurried trip back to Tauranga to work at her job that afternoon. Here are some excerpts from what she shared:



As a new Christian I wanted to do something of value for God, and God gave me a heart for orphan children. That was in 2000, and the next year I made a visit to the orphanages in Romania so I could help care for children that nobody cared about. In April last year I was at the Casa Luminii Day Care Centre that looks after children with disabilities from 5 to 18. There were approximately 30 children and they had a lovely girl, Anca, in charge. But in many of the orphanages, because of staffing levels, the children can be given a bath only once a month. The staff have no great love for the children, some treat their charges very badly, even abuse them. There are few wheelchairs in these orphanages, but what those children needed most was to be loved, and volunteers were their only hope of obtaining this.

But I discovered that their future was even more dismal. I was told that in Romania those with disabilities are not allowed to go to school, nor are they allowed to work. When they turn 18 and are no longer wanted by their families they are put into institutions where the level of care is minimal, where the ratio of helpers to disabled is approximately 1 to 20 ! These places are very smelly, and no wonder at that. Many have handicaps that prevent them walking and are placed in a cot. There they remain, day and night, they are not even taken out to go to the toilet. There often isn't enough heating.

Their cot is their toilet! The food they eat contains little or no meat. Their clothes are almost rags, and again they miss out on any semblance of what every human being needs – love.

I learnt of a number of parents with children approaching 18. In particular I think of a young boy named Dorel. Bright and intelligent, he had cerebral palsy, was 17, and was about to be thrust into a life of complete boredom, hopelessness and neglect.

His mother has said, "I have two handicapped children at home. I don't want him. He can't do anything for me. My son has no value to me, so I am going to put him in an institution." That just about broke my heart.

I prayed, "God, there has to be something better than this, and He gave me a vision of starting a house that would provide a positive alternative to the institutions, that these children would have a future, they would be in a godly environment, and would know God's love. You're probably thinking, "But won't this cost a lot of money? Yes it will, but God said He would provide. I would need to buy a house that would be user friendly. There's under two months before I leave in April, and the enemy is trying to thwart what God is doing. There are challenges in obtaining a long term visa. It is a life commitment. Romania will now be my home, not New Zealand. It is a land in which most of the people are poor with little money for food or clothing, but most people below 30 do speak English. It is a great challenge, but one I am looking forward to immensely.

Anyone who would like to help Tammy Andrew in her great project can get in touch with her at:

timtamz1@hotmail.com or 021 061 3160

Isn't it amazing that the Lord God Himself can love us personally

STEPS TO TAKE IF YOU WANT TO KNOW JESUS

1. Acknowledge you are a sinner. Look up *Romans 3:23*.
2. Confess your sins and tell Him you are sorry—He will forgive you.
Romans 10:9,10.
3. Tell Him you believe He is the Son of God, and you are turning away from your old ways. *Mark 16:16*.
4. Receive the salvation He has promised. *John 1:12*.
5. Thank Him for what He has done.
6. Find a Bible-believing church, and live for Him. This involves praying, reading the Bible, seeking fellowship with other Christians and reaching out to others.

***Know your internal strengths
And external barriers will disappear***

Fiona Thomas brings

A TESTIMONY OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

27 years ago I had chronic asthma and epilepsy that was hard to control, but not so bad as to stop me working and holding down a job. One afternoon, just after I had finished my afternoon shift as a nurse aid, it all went blank. What happened after that I can only share from what was told to me by friends and medical staff. I woke up in hospital. I felt so funny, different, tired, very tired. If you try to imagine what fried eggs must feel like after being flipped a couple of times, some hard, some soft, then dropped on the plate, that's close to how I felt like after a seizure.



What had happened was I'd gone into statis epilepticus, that is prolonged on-going seizures, and two weeks later I was told I had a right sided hemiplegia. I can't remember much else other than how glad I was that I had You Lord. I wasn't a strong Christian. But I did have a strong sense of being important to God. I couldn't start rolling off wonderful scriptures that helped me at this time, but what I did have were some wonderful Christian nurses, and a memory full of scripture in songs and hymns that went back seven years. That's how I think I coped. I felt close to God and knew really strongly that I wasn't alone. My family were not there for me, but Christ was.

After being in hospital for almost a year I moved to the Laura Ferguson Trust to rebuild my life. I felt I didn't belong there. It was the start of a long battle of accepting myself. I joined up with a Bible study group that was held in the lounge by Don Miller, a member of the CFFD as it was called back then. He and his wife took me to church and I met up with the formidable Di Willis at the CFFD meetings and camps. Di taught me where there's a wheel there's a way.

I went to live in the community and there were people from Mt Albert Baptist who visited me and later took me to church. I was full of self pity, but I gradually learnt to accept myself for who I was, because Christ told me I was fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139v14). It didn't matter if I wasn't meant to walk properly again, or if my seizures had a timetable of their own, or if I was reliant on a nebuliser, or that I didn't fit the mould of being perfect. What was perfect for me was who I was and not who I wanted to be. I started to let go and let God. That letting go took me seven years, but how I thank the Lord for His patience with me.

I can remember so clearly being in my kitchen. There was a huge sense of God's presence that day. He was telling me I was going to be ok. It wasn't a big booming voice or a whisper either, but I knew it wasn't me or my thoughts. It touched me so deeply I knew it was from my Father, my abba Father. I had much to learn, but He was patiently waiting for me to learn patience and acceptance. God was right there with me in my kitchen. My seizures improved, my walking got better and stronger. I said to God, "It doesn't matter if I don't get married, or if they say I'm unemployable. I'm Yours." My healing wasn't instant, it took a while, but it came in His perfect timing.

But I did get married. I am now a mother to three amazing kids, a wife to Kevin and an early childhood teacher, and I have been teaching in this area for over twenty years. I am no longer considered physically disabled, am healthier now than I can ever remember being, and have the peace that passes understanding, and the joy, joy, joy down in my heart. When my life is difficult and hard to bear I remember that He has given me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Yes Lord, I will rise up like the eagle and I will soar with You, for Your spirit leads me on through the power of Your love. I will never again get upset over what I think I haven't got, because He has shown me how much more I do have. I am still on a long journey of healing. God doesn't just deal with what we can see. He cares about all of us from our core to our skin. Praise be to God that He cares so much, and that His grace is sufficient for me and for you. Amen.



It was a great joy to Fiona and Kevin when their daughter, Amanda, was baptised at last year's National Camp.

THE CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS OF AUCKLAND CFFD AND CMWDT

Here are some excerpts from some of the contributions sent in for this big anniversary:

During a 'down period' this year (06) I picked up and read an older copy of "The Encourager".

Humbled! Inspired! Encouraged! *I continued on with my life.*

These three words sum up my on-going impression of earlier years attending camps and general involvement with people of varied ability.

May God increase this ministry manifold with gentleness and strength.

From the magazine typist

Congratulations on 30 years.

What a privilege to be a part of it!

Compassion, camps, caring, comfort, collating, chatter

Music, ministering, mirth, milestones

Worship, wonder, willingness, welcoming, warmth

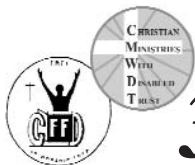
Diversity, drama, dance, desert, delightful, dedicated

Together, tears, typing, testimonies, triumph, trust

As a new Christian CFFD became my first Christian family. It provided opportunities for service and an opportunity to work out what it meant to be a servant of the Lord Jesus. It provided an opportunity to watch others more mature in the faith and learn from them. It provided fellowship and people to pray with and for. We had fun; we survived, laughed and cried together. I was baptised at National Camp.

CFFD was the place that I learned to be free to worship our Lord. At the present time I am serving in other places, but I think of CFFD as my home, the place where I grew up and was nurtured in my faith, a place where I felt free to fail, never condemned, but encouraged to learn from my mistakes and grow as a result.

How the ministry has **grown!!** I remember when we first went into the "new" centre in Mt Smart Rd how some people were wondering if we would ever manage to fill all the space! But, like the old centre, the walls soon started to be a little restrictive... I see the ministry like the smallest seed in the Bible (Matthew 13:31-32), growing and growing and growing – just like the church. So small, so fearful in the early days, but encouraged by God, and even more important, relying on God. As we sang at the dedication of the "new" centre: "He has sheltered us under His wings, and He planned every path that we trod. To bring us to Zion, His praises to sing.



30

CFFD has been my sanctuary – a place of love, caring, acceptance, growth and wonderful friendships. Thank you for sowing an incredible seed of transformation, a seed which has been nurtured with love through Jesus – and reaping a harvest of transformed lives. May God continue to expand, bless and develop this amazing ministry as it reaches towards the next 30th.

The first time I ever heard of Di and Hugh was when I was talking to a friend of Hugh and Di's daughter Jenny. She said she had got to know these wonderful people who did lots for those with disabilities, and were sooooo busy. So busy, that, when the phone rang, they didn't know where to find it – it was buried, they remembered not where, under piles of papers (all to do with being involved with disabled). She looked on in amazement.

What a joy to take Bible Studies with this lovely group of people. God gave me a dream in which I was collecting precious stones and jewels on the beach. When I awoke He said, "These are my special jewels, at CMWDT." How true.

Congratulations CFFD and CMWDT!

*I remember being **very** unwilling to even contemplate being a part of the camps, but now, 9 years on, I can't imagine life without the wonderful people I have met at the different camps and the many events. It has been a real privilege being a part of the 30th Celebration committee.*

I am addicted to anything regarding disabilities and special needs. In fact, I am like:

A street cop when it comes to illegal parking in disability spaces,

A building inspector whenever I visit new buildings, restaurants, theatres and motels to make sure they are wheelchair accessible,

A distributor of the magazine when anyone wants a good read or they need a touch of God's hand on their life

YES, I am one of the many that Di has converted! Praise God for meeting her at BCNZ – she has changed my life, and although I am not there physically, I continually pray for the ministry and talk about it as often as I can down here in sunny Nelson.

ONE SEVEN THREE

There is a resort I know, a place to escape,
With luscious bush and a pool with a gate.
CMWDT says the name,
And caring and loving is the name of the game.

Coffee or tea? What will it be?
This place is generous, it's the people you see.
A treasure of beautiful hymns are sung,
And lollies are provided when games are won.

When it is time to eat, there are tables for lunch,
And lives are touched while we pleasantly munch.
We study the Bible, and there are excellent speakers,
In science in school, you might see some beakers

There are so many friends, you can share a good laugh,
Disabled and abled; it's split half and half.
Jo's a bit of a rascal, she helps out the back,
You've blessed us Questies, we'll now stay on track.

There is a video library; it's Linda's domain,
Don't park in the runway, you must refrain!
With Di and Hugh, pioneering the way,
Each of us is fortunate to be here each day.

There's a Ford Transit, clean and white,
It put a smile on my face, to our delight.
Evangelise, Equip, Educate,
Summarises their outreach, there is no debate.

There is a special place in my heart for you all,
And please don't hesitate to give us a call.
I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will bless thee,
At Mount Smart Road, number One Seven Three.

*Written with love, from the 2006 Quest student group,
from City Impact Church, Janelle, Peter, Graeme and
Darryl*



JOANNA MARIE EDWARDS

Joanna is a young lady born with spina bifida, who has spent years going in and out of hospital. She says she even lost count after the number of operations went past 20. When she was born she was not expected to live, but her mother didn't listen to the words of the doctor and Joanna is now in her twenties. She was brought up in a Christian home, her mother a strong Christian, and her father one who comes to church on special occasions. In Joanna's words, he is on God's "still to do list". Joanna remembers as a young girl the first time she saw the Holy Spirit at work. A man, Peter Robertson, was visiting, and Joanna and her two brothers would watch in amazement what their parents were doing and saying, and they took bets with one another on issues such as "who would fall down first."



Now, when Peter Robertson calls, 50 percent of the time she beats her mother to the front! and Joanna is growing in her knowledge and experience of God.

She says, "I used to try to fit in with my contemporaries by wearing the same as everyone else. I started hanging out with the wrong crowds I used to think I had to talk and act as the others were doing, but it wasn't long before I noticed that as I tried to fit in with these other groups I started to become a lot like them. Fortunately I turned my back on these so called "friends", and God is teaching me that it's cool to be different. I know I'm not going through my life journey alone. I have Someone who cares for me. I can count on him 100 percent.

"Doubts have often flooded into my mind of how could God possibly use me, but I countered these by telling myself that He is God, and is fully in control. For years I've had a dream of working with young kids, and this has come to pass, and I'm now one of the leaders in my youth group."

As a result of coming to the Centre for two years Joanna says her relationship with the Lord has deepened, she can cope with everyday challenges better, and is now able to share her faith much more easily. She loves coming to the National camps and has kept in touch with the friends she has made there.

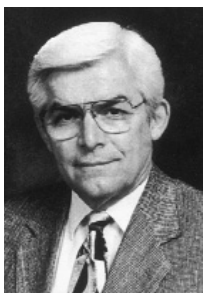
THIRTY YEARS OF CHANGE IN THE USA

Jim Pierson, Founder of the Christian Church Foundation for the Handicapped in the USA (CCFH) writes;

"In the last thirty years, the world has changed for people with disabilities. The concept of 'equality under the law' includes our fellow citizens with disabilities. The public's heart too has changed. Attitudes are more positive. The person with a disability is seen as a real person with typical needs and aspirations. Increasing numbers of churches are including people with disabilities in their programs. In 1986 CCFH opened the Riverside Christian Community, the first of a number of residential homes for adults with developmental disabilities. When the group home concept lost favour CCFH also started an Independent Living Program and it is rewarding to watch our residents developing in independence, self esteem, and ability to be a part of the community."

After Jim had visited a church in Tennessee, he received this letter:

"I am a mother of a special needs child who has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome among other things. Even though I live with you still opened my eyes to the fact that you adopted our son and have had a blessing to our family. I want



with him and learn much from him, things that I had not thought of. We have known him from birth. He is such a blessing to tell you a story about him.

"One night my husband, friend's house helping her do Christopher was quite chatty, want to ask you a question know you are my real mother,

Christopher and I had been to a few things. On the way home unusual for him. He said, "Mom, I about my real mother. I mean, I but....." Realizing he was being

very sensitive to my feelings, I interjected, "Chris, it's ok to call her your real mother, just call me your love mother. He thought for a minute and said, "No, I am going to call you my 'Christ Mom' and Dad you are my 'Christ Dad'". Well, we just about melted with such a warm and loving statement from our son. He proceeded to ask his questions about his real mother which we answered honestly. Later that night I was giving him his medication prior to bedtime. I asked him if I could give him a hug (something I have learned to do) and he gave me permission. I hugged him and told him how special it was to me and his dad when he referred to us as "Christ Mom and Christ Dad". He said, "Mom, it was your idea". I looked puzzled and he went on to say, "When you said to call you my love mother, well, when I think of love I think of Christ." I was overwhelmed by his insight. Here is a child who is 1 to 2 years behind his chronological age academically and struggles in many other areas. But he gets it! I shared this story with my daughter who is in college at the University of Tennessee and she said, "He gets it, Mom! He gets what really matters!" I could not ask for more.

"Church is Chris' favourite place because he is loved here and is accepted socially. Just as you said, that is something everyone wants. He is a part of this community here

at Boones Creek. I wonder how many "typical" people never really get it. Yet Christopher did. Yes, they can learn and YES they minister with us!"

BE NOT AFRAID

An article from Rhonna Sanford writing in "Horizons" magazine:

Throughout the year, groups come to Riverwood to do special projects for us. These projects involve everything from roofing to yard work. In a group from Indiana, there was one young man who was obviously nervous about being here. It was his first time to visit Riverwood, and it was his first time to be with people with developmental disabilities. When I went out to greet him, he said, "I'm nervous and afraid, so I will probably just work a lot and do a little visiting." I assured him by the end of the week his heart and perception would change, but he really did not believe me. Each day the group came to work, and at the end of the day I could see Bernie becoming more and more at ease. By the end of the week, Bernie was the one who was doing the most visiting!

On our last night together we had a time of thanksgiving, testimony, and prayer. It was at this time Bernie sat on the floor and said, "When I first came here, I was nervous and afraid. I did not know what to think or how to feel or even what to expect! While being here with you all, I have seen a glimpse of heaven." Before he could finish, Howard, one of our residents, went over to Bernie, squatted down in front of him and said, "Be not afraid for I am with thee. God loves us all. We are ALL children of God." The room was absolutely silent; you could have heard a pin drop. With that statement, Bernie stood up and hugged Howard with tears rolling down his face. Needless to say, there was not a dry eye in the room.

As they were loading up to leave the next morning, Bernie came over, picked me up, hugged me, and said, "You were so right!!! Thank you for sharing!" Often times, we let our fears keep us from receiving God's blessings. I am sure that there are things in each of our lives of which we are afraid. Generally, our fears come from not wanting to get out of our comfort zone. Howard's words to Bernie are words that we all need to take to heart: "Be not afraid. God loves us all. We are ALL children of God."

Every day I learn something from my special friends. God uses their simplicity to show me how to un-complicate my life. So come out of your "comfort zone" and spend some time with people with developmental disabilities. You will be amazed at God's lessons if you just take the time to listen and to learn. I can guarantee you that you will be blessed.

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?

At a fundraising dinner for a school that serves learning-disabled children, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a question: "When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does is done with perfection. Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do. Where is the natural order of things in my son?" The audience was stilled by the query.

The father continued. "I believe that when a child like Shay, physically and mentally handicapped, comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes in the way other people treat that child." Then he told the following story:

Shay and his father had walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, "Do you think they'll let me play?" Shay's father knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but the father also understood that if his son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of belonging and some confidence to be accepted by others in spite of his handicaps.

Shay's father approached one of the boys on the field and asked (not expecting much) if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and said, "We're losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning."

Shay struggled over to the team's bench and, with a broad smile, put on a team shirt. His Father watched with a small tear in his eye and warmth in his heart.

The boys saw the father's joy at his son being accepted. In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the right field. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as his father waved to him from the stands.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again. Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat. At this juncture do they let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game?

Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible because Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball.



However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher, recognizing that the other team was putting winning aside for this moment in Shay's life, moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least make contact.

The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly towards Shay.

As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher. The game would now be over. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game. Instead, the pitcher threw the ball right over the first baseman's head, out of reach of all team mates.

Everyone from the stands and both teams started yelling, "Shay, run to first! Run to first!" Never in his life had Shay ever run that far, but he made it to first base.

He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second!" Catching his breath, Shay awkwardly ran towards second, gleaming and struggling to make it to the base. By the time Shay rounded towards second base, the right fielder had the ball. He was the smallest guy on their team who now had his first chance to be the hero for his team. He could have thrown the ball to the second-baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher's intentions, so he, too, intentionally threw the ball high and far over the third-baseman's head. Shay ran toward third base deliriously as the runners ahead of him circled the bases toward home.

All were screaming, "Shay, Shay, Shay, all the way Shay." Shay reached third base because the opposing shortstop ran to help him by turning him in the direction of third base, and shouted, "Run to third! Shay, run to third!" As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams, and the spectators, were on their feet screaming, "Shay, run home! Run home!" Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the grand slam and won the game for team.

"That day", said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love and humanity into this world". Shay didn't make it to another summer. He died that winter, having never forgotten being the hero and making his father so happy, and coming home and seeing his Mother tearfully embrace her little hero of the day!

*Open your arms to change,
But don't let go of your values.*

TRAINEE STUDENTS NOW PART OF THE PHILIPPINES MINISTRY

A new development at Hebron has been students coming for their practical training and helping with the different activities. Jessie Rivera, a caregiver trainee from Fernandez College in Baliuag, was one of these. He writes:

"I went to Hebron on a Monday morning not knowing that it would be a life changing experience. It was enlightening and full of memories to treasure, a week that gave me an added purpose in life. Since childhood I never had a chance to play and talk to persons with disability until Hebron gave me the opportunity to serve and talk to them. I was assigned to children with a hearing disability. They are very intelligent and cooperative, full of ideas and dreams. The students are always ready to give me a smile, these I cherish and remember. In my short stay at Hebron I became emotionally attached to the students, teachers and the whole community. God made me realize that children in Hebron need to be heard - they have lots of ideas that deserve to be heard by others.

"The hardworking people in Hebron help the kids with disabilities realize and fulfil their dreams. Most specially, they bring them closer to God. They are the few that can hear the ideas and dreams of the children and make them into reality. Thank God, I'm also one of them now. I wish there will be a lot of us who can hear and be an instrument of God in making their views and dreams a reality."

Another student writes: "My name is Adonis Vizmonte, I am teaching Grade IV and V deaf students here at Hebron SPED school. I am really enjoying my work and I am very happy that God is able to use me to help children in the same situation as myself. As a deaf person I am able to reach out to these children, because I am able



to understand them better and they in turn learned well the basic sign language.

Each day of teaching at Hebron has inspired me and made me eager to go on with my work. I hope more activities in learning sign languages will be done with hearing people at SPED, so that these deaf children will be able to use and enjoy sign language and be able to express themselves more."

THE SPED CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

December 20 we had our SPED Christmas program with about 250 people attending. Now we have more students, we have more parents and guests too! It was delightful to watch our SPED students doing their Christmas items. As usual, these children were full of excitement because there were gifts, prizes, and foods distributed.



David Willis, son of our CMWDT Directors, visited Hebron at this time, staying here from Monday to Thursday morning, and was able to come with us as we looked for a place for our April staff retreat in Zambales province three hours away. David was not just one of our special guests at SPED Christmas program, he was also our imported photographer for that event! He also went with Ed one afternoon in a home visitation. David writes:

"I really enjoyed my visit to Hebron School. I was very privileged to be able to see and participate in the PCFFD Christmas show. I thoroughly enjoyed watching the items from each class. The effort that went into preparing the children for this was very apparent. One of the things that stood out for me during the show was just how much the children enjoyed participating. Every child had the widest smile I have seen for a long time. Thank you so much PCFFD for opening your doors to me. Hebron is touching many lives for Jesus!"

BUILDING HAS STARTED ON THE MCRAE CENTRE

At the beginning of February work started on the McRae Centre, which, when it is finished, will be by far the biggest building on the site. It will make many new ventures possible, one of these being the start of a high school for those who are deaf. Eight deaf grade VI students will graduate this March 2007. Four other graduates last year joined this class again because they don't want to be bored at home! These 12 students are very hopeful for a planned auditorium with high school classrooms to be built in the above centre. Please pray for the completion of the building (budget approx. \$NZ 300,000). We are also praying for a high school teacher for deaf and for the needed curriculum/materials in teaching deaf high school.

MARRED HE MADE IT AGAIN

by Brian Bailey

During your times of close fellowship and communion with God, have you ever caught a glimpse of or been able to visualise the infinite plan or design of the vessel God would have you to be – with all the potentialities for service? If so, perhaps you left the hallowed place of your vision and went out determined and persuaded that the vessel of honour you pictured so graphically would in the very near future become a living reality – no longer a beautiful theory. Days months and, for some of us, years have gone by, and we have, in a measure been submissive to the Master Potter. Occasionally we have recalled our vision and compared our lives with it. We were pleased to note that somehow there seemed to be a definite similarity. At last, we thought, our life was taking form and shaping up beautifully; that vessel of honour completed – the finished product! Then suddenly something happened, and our lovely vessel lay in a crumbled shapeless mass of clay, void of all form and order. The damage seemed irreparable and our courage was gone.

Even the lovely vision grew dim momentarily. Then it became very vivid and real, bringing with it a new and more crushing sense of utter defeat.

We felt faint and despaired of life. What had happened? Our vessel had been marred. There had been some "foreign substance" - a flaw in our clay, perhaps some work of the flesh of which we had not been conscious. God had sought to make us a vessel fair and useful, like the one we visualized, and had placed us on the "potter's wheel of circumstance". All went well until the vibration and movement of the wheel revealed an "air bubble", such as a stubborn and unyielding will, or pride, etc.

It was then that we crumbled. Does Jeremiah say that God took another piece of clay? No. With such tender compassion and faithful mercy, *"He made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter."* Known only to our Master Potter, He stooped and gathered up the broken and crumbled mass of useless clay at His feet, tenderly kneaded it together, and placed it again on the "potter's wheel".

Therefore, let us not be discouraged when the "air bubbles" are revealed. Instead, let us look to Jesus and be "confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Today He is patiently forming vessels of honour, perfect and without flaws – fair indeed to behold, and useful to the Master! By His grace let us allow Him to perfect that which concerneth us.

"Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there will I cause thee to hear My words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." (Jeremiah 18:2-4)

Fred Creba looks back at last year's National Camp

REAL LOVE

I have been in contact with the Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust over many years, supporting their work, enjoying reading the stories and contributing to 'The Encourager'.



I have often considered making the journey from my home town in Waimate to National Camp, and felt the Lord was saying that the time was right to come up last year. With support from my local church, I was able to make the trip up to Totara Springs, and was incredibly blessed by the worship, fellowship and speakers at National Camp. I was humbled as the Lord opened my eyes to see His presence in the love shared between those attending at Camp, and in particular the selfless way those in a caring role gave tirelessly of themselves to those who needed their help. I knew that this was real love – not love put on for show, and that these same people would be continuing to care for others next week after Camp, and in the time beyond. I saw the way that they did not draw attention to themselves, dressed respectfully, and treated everyone with honour and dignity.

On my return home I continued to reflect on this agape 'Christ-like' love so evident at National Camp, and the following words came to me in the form of a poem;

'True love' goes when things go wrong,
but real love stays strong
when things go wrong

The world's love ('True love') has strings attached, and is dependent on us maintaining our 'outward' beauty and meeting the demands of others – when adversity comes it doesn't last. But God's love is real love! It has no strings attached – He loves us unconditionally, and remains steadfast through any season. Three days after I received this poem I was blessed by the way that God confirmed this message to me. I looked in Radio Rhema's 'Word for Today' and read: "Many relationships thrive only as long as the parties meet one another's expectations, but when one falls short – look out."

One other thing that really impressed me at camp was one young disabled person who was up on stage being interviewed. His comment was, 'God is my judge'. I was humbled, touched and deeply impressed by the reverence and wisdom of one so young. I felt the Lord say to me, "He will stand tall in Heaven." This was one other moment from Camp that blew me away, and was very special to me.

WHAT HAPPENED TO BROKENNESS?

The other day I was listening to a tape of comments from three of my grandparents, - all of whom died in the 1960s or 1970s. Their voices unearthed long-buried but fond memories.

These sounds from the past reminded me of some other distant voices I have been listening to lately. They are the voices of dead Christians – writers of classic books and songs that we are close to forgetting today.

Their names are probably somewhat familiar to you: **Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, Charles Finney, Catherine Booth, Andrew Murray, Owen Roberts, Charles Spurgeon, Fanny Crosby, Watchman Nee, AW Tozer, William Seymour, Corrie ten Boom, Leonard Ravenhill, Fuchsia Pickett.** All of them could be labelled revivalists. All challenged the Christians of their generation to embrace repentance and humility. They understood a realm of spiritual maturity and a depth of character that few of us today even aspire to obtain. When I read their words I feel much the same way I did after hearing my grandparents' voices on that old tape. I feel as if I am tapping into a realm of spirituality that is on the verge of extinction.

What was the secret of these great Christians who left their legacies buried in their books? They considered humility, selflessness and sacrifice the crowning virtues of the Christian journey.

They called the Church to die to selfishness, greed and ambition. They knew what it meant to carry a "burden" for lost souls. They saw the glories of the kingdom and demanded total surrender. They challenged God's people to pursue obedience – even if obedience hurt.

Even their hymns reflected a level of consecration that is foreign in worship today. They sang often of the Cross and its wonder. Their worship focused on the blood and its power. They sang words of heart-piercing conviction:

My riches gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride
Forbid it Lord that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God.

In so many churches today the Cross is not mentioned. The blood is avoided because we don't want to offend visitors. And worship is often a canned performance that involves plenty of rhythm and orchestration but little or no substance.

We can produce noise, but often there is no heart – and certainly no tears. In the books Christians buy today you will find little mention of brokenness. We are not

interested in a life that might require suffering, patience, purging, or the discipline of the Lord.

We want our blessings – and we want them now! So we look for the Christian brand of spiritualised self-help that is quick and painless. We're running on empty. We think we are sophisticated, but like the Laodiceans we are really quite poor, blind and naked. We need to return to our first love but we don't know where to begin the journey.

These voices from the past will help to point the way. I've found myself drawn to reading books by Ravenhill, ten Boom, Murray and Tozer in recent days. I've even pulled out an old hymnal and rediscovered the richness of songs that I had thrown out years ago - because I thought anything old couldn't possibly maintain a fresh anointing.

I realise now that I must dig for this buried treasure. We will never effectively reach our generation if we don't reclaim the humility, the brokenness, the consecration and the travail that our spiritual forefathers considered normal Christianity.

The writer, J Lee Grady, is editor of Charisma magazine

A MISSION TRIP TO AN ORPHANAGE IN CHINA

Evan and May are bound for China! They will be visiting two ministries that work with people with disabilities in Tianjin, for 2 weeks from 29 Mar - 13 April. Their base will be the Prince Of Peace Children's Home which has 79 children, almost all with disabilities, and 54 staff. There they will be doing some staff training, as well as encouraging people with disabilities and their families. It was back in Dec 2003 that they first heard about this home, immediately felt a strong call to help, and now three years later the dream is about to be realized. They will also be visiting the Jian Hua Foundation.



Evan and May feel this will give them the opportunity to strengthen connections between the Trust and these organisations, a vision we all share in reaching out to people with disabilities. You can read about these ministries in China at: www.popsfoundation.org and www.jhf-china.org

If you would like to partner with Evan and May on this mission trip, you can send donations made out to them via the Trust address. The total cost of this trip will be \$4600, and to date \$2100 has been pledged. They have been amazed at God's generosity through people, and are looking forward immensely to the trip.

THIS WAS A VERY DIFFERENT WEDDING

Tim Donnell has been coming to National Camp for years. He has been one of the group of excellent young people from Windsor Park Baptist church, a church which has supplied such a large contingent of helpers each year. Tim introduced Louisa Forde to camp and she too loved the experience. Their friendship quickly deepened, and on 3rd January this year Tim and Louisa were married.



But this was a wedding with some huge differences. Firstly, they chose as their venue a regional park on an island in the Hauraki Gulf. Next, the ceremony was performed under a huge spreading pohutukawa tree. Thirdly, and most special of all, they wanted to have present as many as possible of the friends with disabilities they had made. Both have been members of the Auckland CFFD committee for the past year, and our ministry has been a special part of their lives. It took a huge logistical exercise to complete all the arrangements on the ferries, our vans and cars taking up much of the available space, and on a brilliantly fine day they became Mr and Mrs Donnell.



STOP PRESS FROM CANADA

(after the magazine went to the printer)

Today was the day that Joy Gregory was given her Doctor of Ministry degree from Carey Theological College and it was a very wonderful event. The church was full of her friends and well wishers, the largest group probably being Joy Fellowshipers, but there were folk from so many different walks of life. It was clear from what was said and done that over her years of ministry with Joy Fellowship she has impacted a multitude of lives, from the College professors to the severely disabled folk in wheel chairs in the foyer. The college recognized the high quality of her scholarship while a student and the significant contribution she has made over the years in her field of ministry. It was a time of great celebration in the midst of sadness, but the celebration prevailed.

Joy had her usual bright smiling face as she stood on the platform and looked out at the congregation, drinking in the event to the full. It was a lovely confirmation to her of the love and admiration in which she is held. Joy said that coming down the aisle in the procession was to her a taste of entering heaven as she saw all the dear friends filling the pews and the platform, all their faces filled with love.



DR. ZHANG XU - CALLED TO HEAL

Ten years ago, Dr. Zhang Xu was an orthopaedic surgeon in Anshan, China, with a bright future and a solid belief in his own power to chart his destiny.

But in May 1997, while serving the Chinese government in Yemen, Dr. Zhang broke his neck in a diving accident, forever changing his future with the diagnosis of quadriplegia. With his health and ability to practice medicine gone, Dr. Zhang sank into grief, agony, anger and despair.

Then Dr. Zhang met Joni Eareckson Tada in the pages of a tattered copy of her book, *Joni*, given to him in the hospital by a Japanese therapist. As he read about Joni's struggle from despair to faith, Dr. Zhang's heart was warmed and encouraged, and he immediately set about translating Joni's book

into Chinese with the help of his devoted mother. From his hospital bed, he dictated every word, and the manuscript was completed in only 45 days. His translation of *Joni* is now published in simple Chinese text by the Chinese government and is available throughout the country.

Through Joni's book, Dr. Zhang became hungry to read the same Bible that had changed Joni's life. His searching brought many Christian friends to his bedside. Like Joni, Dr. Zhang saw God's grace poured upon his suffering through these wonderful disciples, even as the Gospel began to renew his heart and mind.

A decade after his accident, Dr. Zhang is living out a high calling in Anshan. Since over 110,000 disabled people live there, Dr. Zhang has formed Bethesda Rehabilitation Ministry to reach and minister to the vast needs of this hidden disability community. Lacking mobility and locked inside apartment buildings without accessibility or elevators, disabled people in China are isolated from society, living in grinding poverty.

Since 2004, Joni and Friends has partnered with Dr. Zhang, sending Wheels for the World teams to provide the gift of mobility and the precious Word of God to hundreds of people with disabilities in Anshan. In 2006, Dr. Zhang's Bethesda Rehabilitation Ministry was officially declared an International Affiliate of Joni and Friends and that means that you in New Zealand, as a Joni and Friends partner, have a hand in bringing physical and spiritual mobility to thousands in China!



AN OUTING FROM THE “CENTRE”



Forty one walk the tracks cut out of the Awaruku Bush by Trust chairman Hugh Willis.

