

The

encourager

THE MAGAZINE OF ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST

Issue no 146. March 2015



*Great interaction
between helper and
buddy at National Camp*

*Disability Awareness
Sunday 2015
-see also page 11*

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pastors about
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A great spiritual
journey**
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PLUS:

Inspiration

Information

and much more



christian disability trust



Each new day brings

CONTENTMENT

Mitchell Aiken

When I was a teenager I became unwell. Given a diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, I was soon so tired and sick that I could barely manage any part of a normal life.

As the months turned to years I watched my entire life fall apart due to a condition with no known cause or cure and seemingly no hope of recovery. What is a person supposed to do when life is like that? Why did God not want me to be happy?

The world would tell us that the goal of life is to be happy, and that happiness comes from things we have, and things we do. But it offers no good answers to those who are denied the chance to have and do.

In Philippians 4:11-12, Paul writes: *"I am not complaining about having too little. I have learned to be satisfied with whatever I have. I know what it is to be poor or to have plenty, and I have lived under all kinds of conditions. I know what it means to be full or to be hungry, to have too much or too little."*

Paul is saying something quite different. You can be content right

where you are. Even if you don't have much. Even if it's hard to do anything. This contentment does not mean you have to be happy about the difficulties in your life, but it does mean you can be happy in spite of them.

It is a hard thing to face limitation and suffering with a smile on your face. But Paul knew the secret that makes it work, and he tells us in verse 13: *"Christ gives me the strength to face anything."* With God's strength we can find peace, and even happiness, in the middle of difficult circumstances.

Looking back, what I find even more interesting is that this contentment opens the door to so much more. It frees you to have a conversation with God that doesn't consist of begging to be freed from circumstance. It frees you to enjoy the good things you have without being overwhelmed by the fear that they might be lost. Whatever tomorrow brings, you can be content there.

It is not an easy thing, and I struggled with the idea of contentment through many years of illness. As I gradually became more content despite my own circumstances, I was more capable of looking outside myself and seeing that others were suffering too. I spent less time worrying about how I could help myself and more time trying to find out how God would want me to help them. I went looking for contentment, and found that it led me to a life focused on sharing God's love.



Fifteen years after my illness began I moved to Auckland to work with Elevate. My health was still causing me difficulties, but it no longer mattered. I was at peace with the challenges of daily life and I could keep my attention on the task God had set before me. In my time here I have served in various roles, including being at the Drop-In Centre in Onehunga, the Library there, and with the committee for CFFD Auckland.

If you feel stuck in your circumstances, maybe the solution is as simple as asking God to help you be more content with what you cannot change. Then you will have more opportunity to look outward and see what else is going on. God has plans for all of us.

His plans for my life continue. I have seen considerable improvement in my health this past year, and I am now beginning training to become a pastor through Carey Baptist College in Auckland. ■

OVER 1000 AT THE **2015 GLOBAL ACCESS CONFERENCE** RUN BY JONI AND FRIENDS



Di Willis writes:

*What an amazing Conference!
What a privilege to go – three
and a quarter days crammed with
worship, plenary, workshops, panel
discussions, net-working every other
minute, and communication to the
“n” th degree!*

It was Incredible! People had come from 50 countries and 37 US states. There were some 150 people with disabilities and over 100 pastors. Such unity all under Jesus, and all having the same vision of disability ministry.

The last worship session was like heaven! Joni, shown on right, took part in two major sessions, and Nick Vujicic was there for one, as well as an array of talented leaders in the disability field.

Above you see this stunning five metre long painting by Hyatt Moore of the Luke 14 Banquet that he started and finished before the end of the 3¼ day conference. After quickly taking photos of participants with disabilities arriving for the Conference, Hyatt then included each one in the scene above in which Jesus is depicted moving among the ones invited to the Banquet.

And the result of the Conference – an injection of enthusiasm and encouragement to continue, and for all of us to reach out to people with disabilities. A fuller account will follow in the next Encourager. ■





"Life is 10% what happens to
- John

A word to pastors about disability ministry

Tait Berge writes,



Disability ministry is not a program. It's accepting people with disabilities for who they are and recognising

they have the same opportunity to know and serve the Lord as anyone. It starts with sharing the Gospel, discipling and trying to answer hard questions, all the way to helping find a place to serve the Lord.

Disability is not one size fits all. Each church must do what is best for their people. I can't give you a step-by-step plan to include people with disabilities at your church.

You don't need one. When I want to serve at my church, the answer is always, "Let's see how we can make that work." I can however, suggest several areas your church can welcome people with disabilities. This is not a complete list, but a starting point. The first involves an exercise I often do with kids. I show them a nice crisp dollar bill and ask, "what can we do with it?". We could buy a candy bar or a Coke for example. Or maybe put the dollar in the offering. Then I crinkle it up. I ask again, "What

can you do with this?" I get the same answers.

"Well" I say, "That's how it's like with God. We are just as valuable to Him if we are a new crisp dollar or if we are crinkled. Our worth to Him is priceless." It's true isn't it? God loves us just the way we are. People with disabilities are people first and their disabilities come second. That's why I always write, "people with disabilities" and not "disabled people". We should focus on the person first and the disability second. Whenever Jesus encountered people He healed, He always saw the person first and talked directly to them (see Mark 2:5). Jesus knew the person needed his full attention. His example is something we can follow when welcoming people with disabilities to church.

People are people first. Look beyond their disabilities and begin developing a relationship. Using your normal voice, talk directly to the person, not to his/her helper. It's all right to shake hands and give hugs. From day one at my church, people saw me and got to know me first. People wanted to be friends because they genuinely wanted to know me. Once that happened, they dealt with my disability as it became an issue, such as getting my chair into

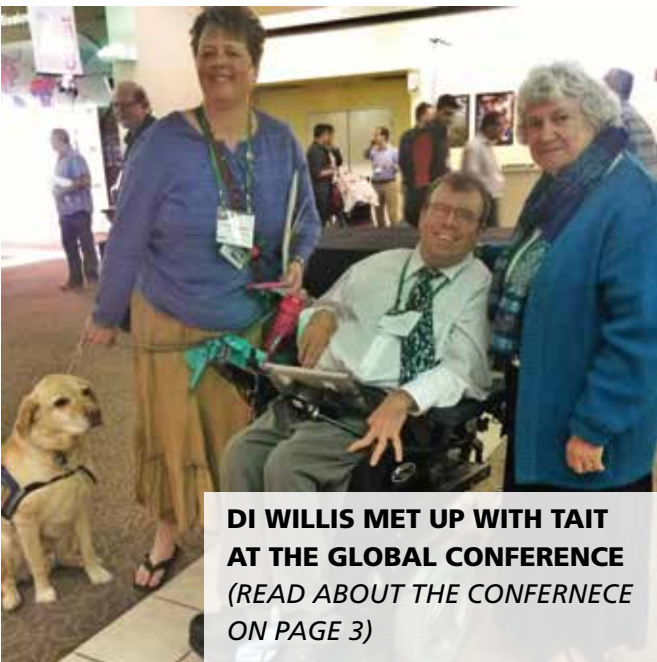
People with disabilities are people first and their disabilities come second. That's why I always write, "people with disabilities" and not "disabled people".

homes or helping me with a plate of food.

Secondly, your building doesn't have to be perfect!. Of course, building codes must be met, but that doesn't mean ramps have to be everywhere, including to the pulpit. Don't let accessibility issues keep people from attending or serving. The sanctuary at my church isn't special. I park my wheelchair by a pew and sit near friends. I read Scripture in front of the altar. I'm not picky, because I'm there to worship and serve the Lord, which is more important than being in a fully accessible building. When I taught Sunday school, the class met in the basement and there was no elevator and so I had to go

me and 90% of how I react to it."

C. Maxwell



**DI WILLIS MET UP WITH TAIT
AT THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE**
(READ ABOUT THE CONFERENCE
ON PAGE 3)

around to an outside door. I didn't even give it another thought—I just wheeled myself around.

Building issues can be easily solved using a little knowledge and creativity. Friends build ramps so I can enter their homes. An automatic door opener helps, but the absence of one shouldn't keep people from attending. Although accessibility issues are important, friends and the Lord are more important. My friends do whatever it takes to make sure I'm included.

Thirdly, one question church leaders often ask, "What do you need from me?" The best you can do for your flock with disabilities is be willing to learn from them. You may not understand their daily struggles, but you understand the Lord is good. Sometimes ministry is just showing up. Your people with disabilities may just need you to show up and be Jesus with skin on.

Fourthly, advocating is another place to help. People fear what they don't understand. Now that you have a better understanding of people with disabilities, I hope

you're able to talk to your staff and equip them. Help them develop a welcoming environment for people with disabilities into their areas of ministry.

One word about money—it's tight. That's why I don't advocate for an expensive disability ministry. Like anything, you can spend as much or little as you like, but the key is people. Get to know people with disabilities and ministry will happen, with or without money. People with disabilities and

their families have needs, and I encourage you to walk alongside on their journey, but what they really need is love. They need godly men and women to walk with them. My best interactions with my pastors over the years had nothing to do with my disability.

And lastly, I have tried stressing that the eyes of my friends and mine are focused on the Lord. I challenge you to do the same. This may seem insulting to hear, but how often do we forget. When younger, I didn't want anything to do with people with disabilities. I wasn't like them, though I had cerebral palsy. I was so much better. God had to change my heart before I could work with them. As long as my eyes are on Him, I can see people with disabilities as people, but the moment I take my eyes off Him, I see a disability. This is why my church works. We see people, not disabilities. We see the Lord, not faults. When focused on Him, anything is possible. ■

The Alleluia Alphabet

Although things are not perfect
Because of trials and pain,
Continue in thanksgiving
Do not begin to blame.

Even when the times are hard, and
Fierce winds seem bound to blow;
God is forever able,
Hold on to what you know.

Imagine life without His love,
Joy would cease to be.
Keept thanking Him for all the things
Love imparts to thee.

Move out of 'Camp Complaining', for
No weapon that is known
On earth can yield the power, that
Praise can do alone.

Quit looking at the future,
Redeem the time at hand,
Start every day with worship,
To thank is His command.

Until we see Him coming
Victorious in the sky,
We'll run the race with gratitude
Xalting God Most High.

Yes, there will be good times, and yes,
some will be bad, but.....
Zion waits in Glory....where none are
ever sad!



Faith ends whe

LOTS HAPPENING IN JO GROUPS A

TAUPŌ



*Sandra & Lauren
at the Taupo branch*

Every year we have a service on Palm Sunday and focus on why Jesus died for us, and in the 4th term we always focus on Christmas.

For Easter last year we were each given a small wooden cross and we placed red hearts on it to represent the blood and love of Jesus. We also shared communion together and set up a beautiful communion table with lots of candles and red hearts. For Christmas we made shortbread in the shape of a heart and wrapped them up in pretty cellophane. Our talk was based on the fact that Jesus was a gift to us and so people were encouraged to give their shortbread. They were also challenged to give it to someone that they might not normally give a gift to-maybe someone lonely or sick.

In term 2 we used the themes from the camp in Ohope and talked about God's creation. Each person was given an A4 photo of Lake Taupo with the mountains in the background. On the photo we printed the scripture 'God looked over all creation and He saw that it was very good!' Then we placed stickers of animals, birds,

fish, stars, moons and passport photos of each of us on top of the background picture.

Term 3 we continued with the theme of creation but this time we focused on caring for God's creation. People brought their pets and amongst the cats and dogs we had two rats and a kid (baby goat)! The kid wore a disposable nappy and had a wonderful time during afternoon tea wandering amongst the tables and eating anything that dropped onto the floor! The focus for this service was to help people understand that because God cares for His creation then so must we. We talked about things like recycling, pollution, caring for and about each other as well as our planet.

For each service we work hard at spiritual formation/ application rather than just teaching stories from the Bible. Each service we take up a collection for disabled people in East Timor, and we continue to pray for others as well as ourselves. Two of our people were baptized this year.

Wendy Emsley

HAWKES BAY

2014 was a fantastic year. We had some awesome services, we really encourage the guys to all get involved, so have anyone who wants to sing, come and stand up front



JOY MINISISTRIES AROUND THE COUNTRY

The guys all love this and often we have a huge group up front. We have had some plays and a puppet show which have been very entertaining as well as informative.

We did have two special social nights: Joy Ministries has talent and a 10 pin bowling fundraising night. Both were very successful and everyone is keen to repeat them. It also meant we could take a bus to camp, which was wonderful. We made a card, for a craft, about a cheerful heart being good medicine. This too was very popular.

We have adapted our afternoon tea time, from being a "free for all" to having it served. This has been wonderful, almost 'cafe' like, which pleases everyone, including staff who were concerned about folk overindulging. We thank God for this amazing opportunity to build into people's lives sharing the good news of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We look forward to what 2015 will bring for His Glory!

Karen Spurgeon

WHAKATANE

Meredith was baptised at a Sunday morning worship service shortly before Christmas. Her testimony touched many in the congregation, and was without doubt a highlight for the church as a whole for the year.

With not a few handkerchiefs being found useful at one point, and much laughter expended at another. Meredith is such a personality. Wanda put together a Christmas play based around the song "Te Harinui" for the Joy group to perform. This helped contribute to our church's celebrations of the gospel coming to New Zealand's shores on Christmas Day, 1814. The play went down a treat, with all participants performing well and the congregation appreciating the Christmas story told from a different perspective from within a New Zealand context.

Throughout the year we have been working through a series called "Heroes of Faith" and are still only half way through. Each hero or heroine gets their name added to a large cloth wall hanging which hangs

permanently in our Joy room at church once their story has been told and celebrated. A Joy member colours the name once it is added. There is not a little excitement in the air as members wait with anticipation each meeting to hear of the new heroic character, and perhaps then get the opportunity to act out their exploits and accomplishments with sometimes, a little too much vigour. What fun!

Wanda Hughes

Wanted! A NEW TREASURER

With Hugh Willis retiring after 25 years as Trust Treasurer, there is an URGENT need for an accountant (e.g. a retired one) to work voluntarily from home, overseeing the financial operations of the Trust. The receipting of donations and the balancing of all bank statements will be handled by others in the Trust office.

**Contact the Centre, attention Hugh Willis,
Ph: +64 9 636 4763 or
Email: info@elevatecdt.org.nz**



We don't change God

**BOOK
REVIEW**

Life,

In Spite of Me

Extraordinary hope after a fatal choice

17 year old Kirsten was in despair.

“What’s wrong with me? Everyone else seemed to be able to handle the burdens, the struggles of life, better than I could. All I wanted was to be happy. To have the perfect life I always thought I had when I was a kid. But my arms had grown tired from trying to hold my fantasy world together. Lately it seemed I couldn’t do anything right. I wasn’t there for my friends and family when they needed me. I was doing horribly in school, and I’d become a worry to my family. Now I was ‘grounded’ (by my parents) until further notice.

“And then there was the pain that ran even deeper than that. Memories too painful to think about. I pushed them back below the surface, as I had for months. In the past year I’d started smoking, drinking and partying with my friends on the weekends, futilely trying to escape the pain.”

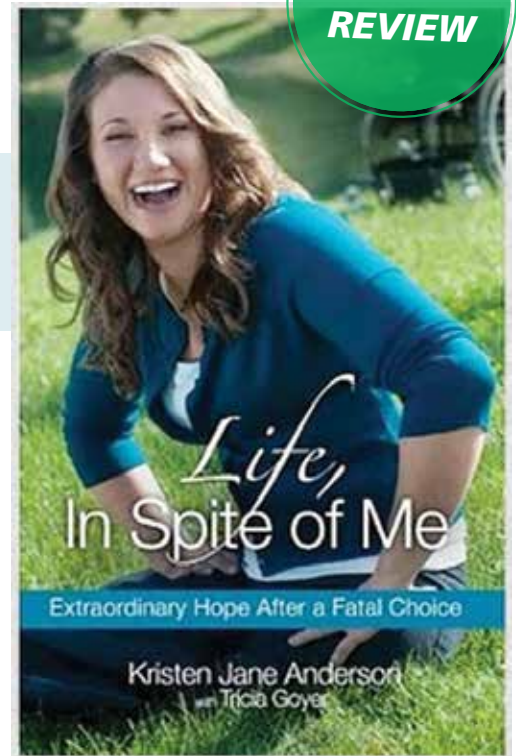
As she struggled with her thoughts she heard the whistle of a train approaching. Determined to end her life she jumped up, moved towards the railway line and placed her body between the

tracks with her legs hanging over the rail. The train was soon upon her. The wheels sliced off her legs. Amazingly, her body was not sucked up under the train as almost always happens.

It’s very compelling reading and beautifully told. It’s thrilling to read how God became so real to her in the months and years that were to follow. How He helped her cope with horrific pain. nerves that continued to transmit the same messages of trauma that they had that night, trouble sleeping at night, throwing up almost daily as if they were reliving it. But what makes reading this book so much more special are the notes she puts in throughout addressed to other young people struggling with suicidal thoughts, such as the following that appears early on in the midst of the description of the desperate attempts to save her life.

IF YOU’RE STRUGGLING WITH SUICIDAL THOUGHTS:

“I know how you feel. Life is harder and more painful than you ever thought it could be. You’re not sure if it’s worth it, but I’m telling you there is so much to live for---more than you have ever experienced or imagined. Somehow, I hope my story will show that to you.

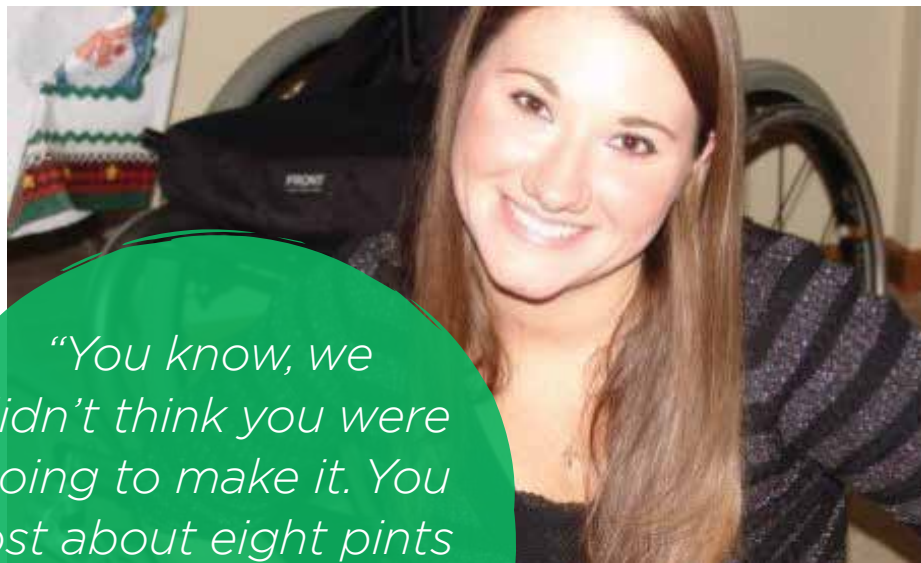


“Please don’t give up. You are not alone. There is a God who made you, and He’s not as far away as you think. He is always near. Wherever you go, whatever you do, He will be with you. He loves you, and He wants to comfort you, heal the hurt in your heart, and carry you through this life. Let Him in.

“God has an amazing plan for your life, even if you don’t have a plan for yourself. He has hope for you, even if you don’t have hope for yourself. He loves you immensely, even when you don’t love yourself. And He sees beauty in you, even when all you see is a mess.

Suicide is never the answer. There is too much to live for. Keep fighting. Please don’t give up. Reach out for help. You won’t regret it. Your heart can be filled with hope, just like mine and so many others have been.”

And God's message changes us



"You know, we didn't think you were going to make it. You lost about eight pints of blood. People are supposed to die after they lose five"

Months and months later Kirsten met a paramedic who had treated her that night. He said, "You know, we didn't think you were going to make it. You lost about eight pints of blood. People are supposed to die after they lose five. When I first saw you, I was shocked you were still alive. I've seen people die from far less serious injuries. There's no doubt that God saved your life that night, because medically... well, medically your survival was impossible."

"And now look at you. You're standing, walking. I wouldn't have imagined that would ever happen. You don't know how big a miracle. They tried to bring in a helicopter, but it was too foggy. Instead they did something I hadn't seen beforehand and I haven't seen happen since. They radioed in and had all the intersections

between where you were and the hospital blocked. A drive that normally would have taken forty five minutes took only eight minutes. I think we were all so surprised you were alive that we wanted to make sure we did all we could. God kept you here for a reason, Kirsten."

The book concludes with these words from Kirsten who as time went on determined to help others like herself to discover how God could turn their lives around when all seemed lost:

"After my appearance on the Oprah Winfrey show I knew things would change, but I couldn't have guessed how much they'd change. At the time there were a handful of volunteers helping me correspond with people, but after the show aired a week later, hundreds of emails started pouring in from people all over the world."

"Some were from people who were hurting, who were struggling with suicidal thoughts. Others

were from people who wanted to thank me for sharing my story and encourage me in my faith, life and ministry. As I read through the emails, one in particular stood out. The subject line read: YOU SAVED MY LIFE. It was from a young man who wrote that he had been planning to kill himself the day my Oprah interview aired. After his mom left for work, he walked into the room to turn off the TV. He had a gun in his hand.

"As he reached for the remote, he heard me talking about my attempt at suicide and how Jesus had changed my life. He listened as I explained that I want people to know that God loves them, that there's a reason they're here, and that there are things they're supposed to do here."

'I decided then', the young man wrote, 'that I wouldn't take my life. It's like you were talking right to me. Thank you.'

"And as I lay in bed that night, the subject line of the young man's email replayed in my mind. YOU SAVED MY LIFE."

"The story I had once been ashamed to tell was now giving people extraordinary hope. Only God could do that. My story helped save another person's life – only because God had first saved mine. **Life in spite of me.**" ■

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This book is published by MULTNOMAH books and is written by: Kristen Jane Anderson along with Tricia Goyer.

.....



Leo Buscaglia once said: “
How you live it is

GIVING AND RECEIVING IN THE MISSION FIELD

Jean Griffiths writes:

At the 2014 Auckland Camp we listened to a number of people at the camp talking about their calling as a missionary amongst our CFFD folks. This had nothing to do about disability, it was about people who were willing to give of themselves to serve others.

We heard about:

Mark Grantham selling chocolates to sponsor five World Vision kids.

The dangerous trek that Grant Allely (shown below) made in his wheelchair delivering Bibles into a communist country.

Ruth Beale having a huge responsibility in running the Philippines CFFD sponsorship programme.

Tim Tohemotu outreaching in the streets with drug, arms and other outreach organisations etc.

Michael Stoneham with the Prayer Station in the city every Friday night, where people are ministered to.

Kirsty Anderson joining up with Joni & Friends to minister in Haiti.



I then talked about being on the receiving end of someone else's missionary work and commitment. I started by telling a little about my background.

I was first discovered in a shoebox abandoned in a park in Hong Kong at two or three days old. This park was aptly named Diamond Hill. I have pondered on the name since finding this out six years ago. Firstly, I was intrigued that a park was named in English as a lot of them have mainly Chinese names, so I felt that God wanted me to discover this one day. Secondly, “Diamond” spoke to me right away – it was like God telling me I was His diamond, His precious jewel, and that this diamond would be found. AND Yes I was found!

From there I was taken to a police station and placed into a babies home. This was a Christian orphanage which was run by an English missionary who took in abandoned babies so as to give them a settled life. Two other English missionaries joined her, and they were totally dependent on faith and prayer, believing that God would provide for every child's need. My first six years were of limited memories, except for the love I received. We were given a good education, Bible teaching and were well disciplined. I know



that through the prayers and teachings, this was the foundation to my Christian walk. However, I would not come to know this until well into my adult life.

At the age of six, my life was completely upturned. Possibly believing I was on a holiday, five of us young girls, wide eyed and cautious, were suddenly

This life is God's gift to you. your gift to God.

despatched to new families in NZ. I was put into the hands of a big male figure and taken away forever. Apparently I bellowed and screamed days on end for three weeks. I didn't know this was to be my new family, I was never told. I couldn't understand them, and I was very frightened. In fact I was very traumatised. The only thing that made me stop screaming temporarily was an ice-cream!

However, I was learning fast, adapting into a new culture, new language, new food and new family. Unfortunately, identity issues arose and I struggled accepting my ethnicity as a young teenager. Even though I was brought up with wonderful parents, I never felt a belonging or even part of the family.

I think I started searching for my roots without realising, and this stemmed into finding my roots and identity in Christ. In fact, at that time, I was totally ignorant of a salvation or a relationship with Jesus. But when an opportunity arose, I just accepted – there were no questions, no doubting or what have I done now. I think I was just ripe for the picking. As I was driving home, I was bubbling inside. I couldn't contain the joy. I couldn't wait to get my hands on a Bible. I knew this was for real, and I was excited. I had become a Christian at 28 years, and it dawned on me that the foundations had already been laid many years ago by those English missionaries. They had prayed for me in that Home and now it had come to fruition way down the line. I'm sure that without that I would not know the Lord now.

Since knowing Christ, I have an understanding of my purpose in life, why I went through a time of difficulty, and why things happen the way they do, but also knowing there is a calling for each one of us to be used for God's glory.

So I can only encourage each one to make a difference by witnessing, serving, being there for one another, praying, being practical, and remembering that through these you will have made an impact on one's life. You may have just planted a seed, you may be in their watering season or the harvest period, or you may actually see the transformation. It may not show until years later, but no matter what, that is missionary work! ■

Disability Awareness Sunday 21st June

Advance notice to all churches to prepare to do something on that Sunday or on another Sunday, to bring Awareness to the Body of Christ about including people with disabilities and using their talents.

YOU ONLY YOU TO BE ADORED

By Yvonne Hammond

*What is it all about I say?
Why am I here? I sometimes pray.
I often look at me and sigh.
I feel so weak and wonder why.
You wanted me here on this earth,
But You dear Lord can see my worth.
You had a purpose just for me,
You knew exactly what would be.
So help me give You glory, Lord.
You only You to be adored.*

This was the last poem Dr Yvonne Hammond wrote or rather dictated before she died. She was an amazing lady of God who was behind and involved in our ministry for a very long time. She suffered greatly with myasthenia gravis, cancer and other illnesses and the poems were born out of suffering. We are giving away copies of her second book, "He is Altogether Lovely". If anyone would like a copy please let us know. A donation would help our ministry.





Stumbling blocks are st

FROM AUTISM TO PARKINSON'S— A GREAT SPIRITUAL JOURNEY IN MY FAMILY'S CHRISTIAN FAITH

By Julie Nichols

On August 18, 2000, my life would be forever changed but for the better, although I didn't realize it at the time. Sam, my youngest child of three, was born with respiratory distress and placed in a neonatal ICU for two weeks. As I looked at this beautiful child, I realized my life would never be the same, but to what extent or how, I didn't know.

From day one at home, Sam had serious feeding and breathing problems. The doctors attributed his struggles to collapsed lungs at birth. Sam spent his first year in and out of hospital.

At the end of Sam's first year of life, he was definitely better, but he still struggled to breathe and eat properly. As we prepared to move our family and Grant's business to New Braunfels two years later to be closer to my parents, our family attended a family reunion and saw an older distant cousin who had an Autistic daughter. Within five minutes of observing Sam, she said, "Your son is Autistic, get him diagnosed and treated ASAP." We believe the Lord's hand was in this reunion to show our family the truth about Sam.

Grant and I took Sam to several doctors and a developmental pediatrician who gave us a diagnosis



of autism six weeks after moving to New Braunfels, Texas we, right before Sam's third birthday. He prescribed 25-30 hours a week of Applied Behavioral Analysis, 2-3 hours a week of Speech therapy, and two hours a week of occupational therapy.

I asked Grant, "How will we pay for this?" At that time very few insurance companies paid for these therapies except for speech therapy. In order to pay for the therapies, Grant and I liquidated all that we had, including his business. We were happy to do it because we knew it was necessary for Sam's future. Grant was then offered a job in the cooperate world with wonderful medical insurance that he still has today after ten years. Sam received 30-35 hours a week of therapy on average the first year of his diagnosis and then 25-30 hours a week of therapy for 4 more years. In order to survive financially, the Lord provided a teaching job for me in a special school while Sam's therapists came in and provided services. This was the start of my 12-years of ministry in special education and graduate training that would lead me to a ministry as a dyslexia therapist later on. I commuted to San Antonio from New Braunfels and enrolled Janie and Dru (our older two children) in a nearby school. When Sam reached first grade, his doctor thought he was ready for a regular classroom setting with outside special education supports and therapies. He is still in regular education with supports, outside therapies, and tutoring today in the 8th grade.

The summer before Sam's 12th birthday he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, was baptized, and shared his testimony which is a miracle within itself. Little did I know that my own life would radically change once more. Several years prior to this, I suffered from extreme fatigue, muscle cramps, and anxiety. A month

before Sam's baptism in November of 2012, I noticed a muscle twitch in my right thumb, and then it stopped. Then I felt as if I was developing arthritis, but all blood tests came back normal for this. As tremors developed in my right hand, and I noticed problems with my balance, I knew something was terribly wrong. Tremors became constant with my right hand when it was a rest. Doctors such as rheumatologists and neurologists couldn't figure out what was wrong with me.

I was screened for Multiple Sclerosis, had many other blood tests done, was misdiagnosed with Fibromyalgia, and was also hospitalized twice. Walking assistance with either a walker or a cane became necessary due to the fear of falling and severe pain. In December, I developed more unusual symptoms such as involuntary limb movements and extreme slowness in daily activities. On opening a book, my eyes went directly to a misdiagnosis scenario about a woman who had been diagnosed with fibromyalgia but really had Parkinson's because tremors were not a symptom of fibromyalgia.

I believe this was the Lord showing me the truth about my Parkinson's in black and white. I then researched Parkinson's, typed up a detailed list of symptoms and shared them with a friend who has Parkinson's and he too suspected Parkinson's. After this I saw a brilliant neurologist in Houston, and he also suspected Parkinson's Disease, but suggested a trial of Levodopa to help confirm the diagnosis. The night before I tried the first dose in January, I couldn't walk down the street to our community mailbox without a walker. After the first two doses, I walked without assistance and all shaking stopped for the first time in three months. I knew without a doubt that I had Parkinson's Disease at that point. A few days later, the neurologist in Houston confirmed the diagnosis, as did a local neurologist soon after.

James 1: 2-4:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

I think my diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease has been good for Sam and my other two children because it has required all of them to do more for themselves and help

with chores more in their teenage years, especially Sam. Today, Sam is holding his own in all regular classes with very little support.



He is an acolyte in the Anglican Church, is in the Boy Scouts of America, he plays the saxophone in the band and has two close friends for the first time. He initiates and plans on his own which is very new. ■

CAMPS COMING UP SOON

20-22 March	Wellington CFFD	El Rancho, Waikanae
27-29 March	Auckland CFFD	Carey Park, Henderson, Auckland
16-19 April	Torch Camp	Capernwray Bible College, Cambridge

Would you prefer to receive "The Encourager" by email rather than a printed copy? If so please let us know and we will make the change.



If you would like to help with our costs you could send a donation to: ELEVATE P.O Box 13-322, Onehunga, Auckland 1643
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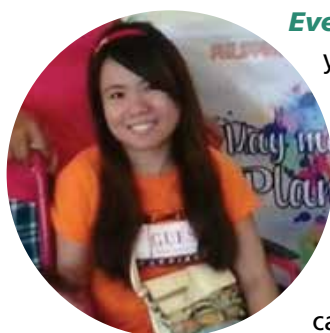


Kindness is the oil that tal

CHANGED LIVES AT THE PHILIPPINES CAMP

Lesley de La Ganar writes:

Glory and thanks be to God that He has been using PCFFD Camp to evangelize and to minister to people with disabilities. Like the Bible said in 1 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV) - I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. I found it overwhelming to see how the Word of God planted in their hearts has since been growing.



Evelyn Sarmiento is 26 years of age, came to our camp last May. This was her first time. She could not walk due to cerebral palsy. She accepted Jesus as her Saviour and Lord at camp. After that there have been changes in her

life such as: She has learned to pray always and to trust God whenever she and her family have a problem. She is also growing not only spiritually but socially as well. She told me that before, she was so shy and kept silent amongst many people, but when she was in the camp she became friendly, and has learned that faith is not like a charm. You have to help yourself. These messages have been stoked in her mind and heart.



Wilbert Rebite, 31 years of age, was also a first timer at camp. He acquired his disability because of a vehicular accident that caused damage in his spinal cord when he was 19 years old. He has a hard time in walking. He kept questioning God why it was happened to him. He did not even pray. He had a negative

thinking towards his disability. But when he attended the PCFFD Camp and heard the message of the Lord, his attitude towards God and life changed. He has now positive thoughts about his condition. He has an acceptance of what happened to him. He became prayerful, and knew that all things work together for good and God has a purpose of what is happening to us. He released the forgiveness to the man who was the cause of his accident. No more bitterness in his heart. He is now communicating to the Lord through prayer and thanking Him always.

NEEDS:

- Urgent need for TWO STAFF WORKERS WHO NEED SPONSORSHIP, 24 year old Radjohn Sanchez - a teacher of the deaf who comes from a poor family with both parents struggling to find permanent work, and Jessielyn Enrile a SPED Pre-school teacher. Your sponsorship will pay for her housing costs, food, clothing and transportation costs.
- Provision for Christian radios (for people with disabilities who are stuck at home so that they can hear the word of God) . It would be wonderful to give them a pm (Portable Mission) It has only one station, that is the Christian station, so they have nothing to do but to listen to it. The price of a PM radio is 15NZD. Donations for these can be sent through Elevate.
- Ruth needs someone in Wellington with **Mission Vision and expertise** (not necessarily in CFFD) to help manage the PCFFD Sponsorship scheme. Contact her by writing to: ruthpaul.beale@paradise.net.nz

PRAYER ITEMS

- PCFFD Camp on April 28 – 30, 2015 – Please pray that this camp will be used by God to extend His great love, to touch and to minister to people with disabilities.
- Laptop for PCFFD official activities/programs



Radjohn Sanchez

What will heaven be like?

Dale Burdette has been involved with our ministry from his very early days, He had Athetoid Cerebral Palsy and was totally dependent – an amazing young man with great faith and a wicked sense of humour. Johanna Brens devoted much of her life to helping him in numerous ways, even to the extent of raising the finance for a van of his own – a beautiful partnership between a helper and her buddy. Sadly, Dale went to be with the Lord last June after a long struggle with his illness, but not before his mother had sent us this poem with Dale's thoughts on the Home he was so soon to be in. We are thrilled to be able to include it here:



**What will heaven be like I hear you ask?
Is it just halos and harps, sitting on clouds?
For me heaven will be like this:**

**Running free in grassy fields barefoot.
Climbing big trees and swinging on their
branches, swimming in oceans, splashing and
feeling the waves uplifting me.
And talking to God.**

**Heaven will be crossing the crystal river,
cleansed in its healing waters, seeing my loved
ones waiting for me, cheering me on and waving
excitedly as they watch me run to join them.
My Gran- my Da-My old friends-The Pitts, Aunt
Betty-Aunt Audrey. And look, there's my friend
Frieda!
And talking to God.**

**Heaven – my home. My mansion will have lots of
stairs, and I won't have to wonder how I will get
up them. I will bound up two to three steps at a
time, I will slide down the banisters-yahoo!
And talking to God.**

**We will walk together and He will tell me again
how much He loves me, when others saw only
a body, disfigured and unable to do the things
others took for granted, He saw me - the real me
- not just a body, but a spirit and a soul.**

**In the dark hours of my life on earth, He would
comfort me, Now the dark hours have gone and I
am talking to God.**

I can talk! I can walk!

**I would rather walk in the valley with my hand
in the hand of God than dance alone on the
mountain-tops**

*Dale found Jesus and He gave him
eternal life. Do you know Him? Do
you know peace with God? If not,
write to Elevate (contact details on
page 16) or contact your nearest
church or ministry. Also read, John
3:16 in the Bible.*

HOW FAST DO YOU GO THROUGH LIFE?

A young and successful executive was travelling down a neighbourhood street, going a bit too fast in his new jaguar. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars, and slowed down when he thought he saw something. As his car passed, no child appeared.

Instead, a brick smashed into the Jag's side door. He slammed on the brakes and backed the Jag back to the spot where the brick had been thrown. The angry driver then jumped out of the car, grabbed the nearest kid and pushed him up against a parked car shouting, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing?"

The young boy was apologetic. "Please, mister....please. I'm sorry

but I didn't know what else to do," he pleaded. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop."

With tears dripping down his face and off his chin, the youth pointed to a spot just around a parked car. It's my brother, he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up".

Now sobbing, the boy asked the stunned executive, "would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the driver tried to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. He hurriedly lifted the handicapped boy back into the wheelchair, then took out a linen handkerchief and dabbed at the fresh scrapes and cuts. A quick look told him

everything was going to be okay. "Thank you and may God bless you," the grateful child told the stranger.

Too shook up for words, the man simply watched the boy push his wheelchair-bound brother down the sidewalk towards their home. It was a long, slow walk back to the Jaguar. The damage was very noticeable, but the driver never bothered to repair the dented side door. He kept the dent there to remind him of this message, 'don't go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at you to get your attention!'

God whispers in our souls and speaks to our hearts. Sometimes when we don't have time to listen, He has to throw a brick at us. It's our choice to listen or not.

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Bible Friends - Wanganui		
Louise Rostron	rostrons@extra.co.nz	06 344 5955



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