

# The encourager

THE MAGAZINE OF ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST

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# The best vitamin for mal

## CONVICTED BY GOD'S WORD

Jacqui Gardner

*As I read Exodus 16, God spoke very powerfully to me in v8.*

*"The Lord will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread in the morning, because He has heard all your complaints against Him. Yes, your complaints are against the Lord, not against us." (NLV) In the midst of all the miracles the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron. And God said, "They complain against I, the Lord, not men." How often do we complain against our circumstances, blaming it on people. "Oh woe is me! They are making my life so difficult! Not enough money! Too many lumpy footpaths! Too many drunken parties!"*

It is so easy to complain about people. But God says we are actually complaining against Him!

As I considered this verse last week, it reminded me of another verse that I always found so challenging: Philippians 4;14 and 15. "Do all things without complaining or disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless children of God, without fault in a wicked and perverse generation, in which you become shining lights in the world."

Note, it said, if we complain it is not against man but against God! The children of Israel found it

so hard to trust God for their daily needs, even though they had just seen Him do the most amazing miracles. So when we complain against God, it is because we are not trusting Him. Again I am reminded of the scripture Proverbs 3;5-6 *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths."*

If we acknowledge our Father God, who really does want the best for us, He will direct our paths, our journey, even if it seems almost unbearable! In 1 Corinthians 10;13 we are promised that "God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but with the temptation He will provide a way of escape, that we will be able to bear it. "So even if it seems unbearable, losing a job, unexpected bills, tragedy that leads to disability or even death, God will not tempt us beyond that which we can bear. Like the children of Israel who complained, not against man, but against God, let us make the effort to trust Him, repenting when we slip up.

I'm so grateful that Jesus became man so He would understand our weaknesses. I trip up so often, just ask my husband or children! I complain against family members



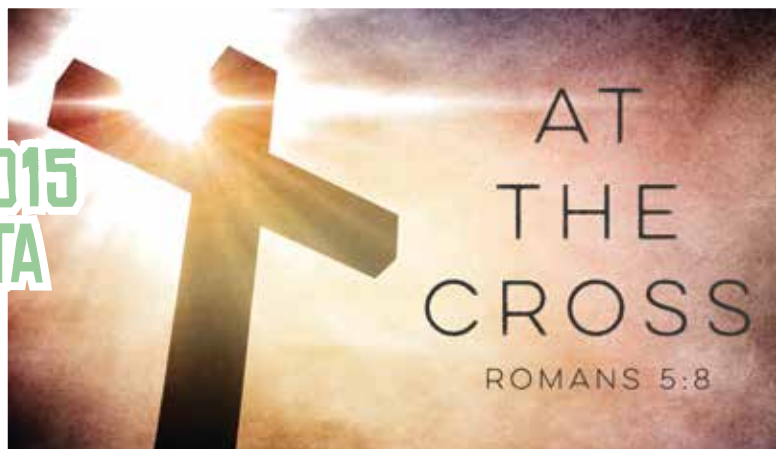
who leave obstacles in unexpected places! Or the council who leave broken footpaths where my cane gets caught, and of course because I'm such a Speedy Gonzalez, it rebounds into my hip before I have time to dislodge it! OUCH!! And I complain when standing around at church after the service, and no one comes up to talk to me. We who have visual impairments don't have the ability to catch someone's eye, so often people forget to come and talk with us. But we have the choice to remain joyful, to smile and pray, and be a shining light in this wicked and perverse generation.

So I say again, let us attempt to avoid complaining, but demonstrate our trust in God who will direct our paths and will give us the ability to bear all He leads us through, so we can be blameless and innocent children of God, shining like lights in this wicked and perverse generation. ■



# making friends is to be one

## NATIONAL CAMP 23RD – 26TH OCTOBER 2015 TOTARA SPRINGS, MATAMATA



*The Camp Theme is:*  
**At the Cross**

### **COST OF WEEKEND:**

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

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

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

**REGISTER WELL BEFORE THEN!**

**YOU CAN NOW REGISTER ONLINE!**

Registration forms are available to download from the Elevate website.

Email: [elevatecdtcamp@gmail.com](mailto:elevatecdtcamp@gmail.com)

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

**Camp is a great opportunity for people with disabilities and volunteers. We need you!**

Start saving now. You can use respite care hours.

A first-time-helper at National Camp 2014 wrote, *"I'd like to challenge anyone and everyone to come and experience this life- changing effect that this camp will have on you. And if you aren't able to come yourself, then please sponsor someone who really needs to be here so their lives can be changed into all that God would have them be."*

## DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY

### 21ST JUNE

**HAVE YOU PLANNED  
SOMETHING FOR YOUR  
SERVICE? ASK YOUR  
MINISTER.**

Ring the Centre on  
**09 636 4763** to get the  
booklet:

*"Some IDEAS you  
might find helpful  
for DISABILITY  
AWARENESS SUNDAY"*





"The greatest mistake we make is living in  
- John C. Maxwell

# The Global Access Conference, Joni and Friends USA

## Di Willis writes:

I liked the subtitle they used, "*Where Disabilities and Possibilities Meet*".

Throughout the conference the accent was on showing the gifts and talents of people with disabilities, not what they can't do but what they can do. The three main days were centred on Christ, Church and Community.

Two main areas that struck me were **Humility** and **Servant Leadership**.



Both

were displayed in Joni, of course, and all the leaders, and particularly Doug Mazza, the CEO of Joni and Friends, and Steve Bundy. Both were drawn into this ministry having very disabled sons, and

both are highly skilled men.

I heard so many amazing people such as George Dennehy who gave his testimony. He



has no arms, but plays the guitar with his feet.

Another was Christopher Duffley, 13 years old, blind and autistic, whose goal is to share God's love through inspirational songs.

Jeff Mc Nair was one of the most outstanding. He works with people with intellectual disabilities, and they have become part of his life. He walks the talk! Through scriptures he showed that his people are indispensable in the Body of Christ, and he has such a simple visual way of presenting the Gospel.

We met Coco from The Cameroons. He is blind and was thrilled when we asked him if he would like a Braille Bible, and since returning to the Centre, Elevate has sent one off to him - a massive package made up of 33 books and 13 boxes. And weighing a ton!

**Kirsty Anderson writes:** The Conference was packed full of refreshing insights, challenging teaching and inspiring discussions. It would be impossible to share everything



with you but as I have reflected there were three words that stood out for me: **friendship, community and humility**.

Among others, both John Swinton and Jeff McNair talked about friendship and the need to create spaces where it can develop. Someone at the conference also said that 'community is not just being with people like you.' Being in the same space as people who are different from us creates an opportunity for fears to be torn down and for friendship to develop. Are we creating spaces where people with disability can develop

friendship with others? Are we creating spaces where people without disability can develop friendship with people who do have a disability?

One particular statement about friendship really stuck with me. It is this, that real friendship is more than just spending time within that space. When a true friendship develops it expands to sharing every aspect of life. John Swinton said that 'to belong is to be missed', and that 'when we learn to be guests as well as hosts we will have community where all people truly belong.' Giving and receiving hospitality is essential to community and friendship. Are we receiving as well as giving hospitality?



in constant fear that we will make one."

Maxwell

Humility was a word I heard repeated during the conference. Kathy McRenolds shared that humility brings unity. Another speaker shared of the importance of acknowledging our own brokenness and problems. Pastor Shawn, whose church hosted the conference, shared that humility starts at the top, and that Christ is the greatest example of this.

### **Mental Illness:**

The experience of mental illness is a transition from orientation to disorientation to reorientation. I could write a page or more on what John Swinton shared. I especially recall what he said about names/labels "Being diagnosed with mental illness steals your name and your story. Diagnosis is important for medical professionals

to properly provide care and support, but in society a mental illness becomes the identity of that person...so-and-so is depressed or Schizophrenic. Does this happen for an illness like measles? Do we say someone is measled?" ■



This is an important conference for church leaders and all who are concerned to belong to communities in which depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other mental health challenges are not denied but acknowledged with love, care and friendship. For further information and registration go to **[www.laidlaw.ac.nz](http://www.laidlaw.ac.nz)** or contact **Fiona Sherwin** on **09 8367878**.



The Drop Box is a profoundly moving documentary film about Christian love in action, human dignity and self-sacrificial care. It tells the story of Pastor Lee, a Korean husband, father and minister who set up a drop box on the side of his house so that desperate Korean mothers could leave their new born mainly disabled babies to be cared for, rather than to be abandoned and die on the streets of Seoul. **This film is for pastors and leaders to take back to their churches re "The Sanctity of Life".** Premiere Auckland 18th June, Christchurch 21st June. Contact: FOCUS ON FAMILY 09 360 3259



**6 - 8 August 2015**

**Carey Baptist College, Auckland**

What does it mean to really forgive? How do we forgive? This conference will give you a richer appreciation of the breadth and depth of forgiveness. **For further information and registration go to [www.carey.ac.nz](http://www.carey.ac.nz)**



*In the middle of diff*

# Transcending YOUR TRIALS



After learning through ultrasound that my third child was diagnosed with Down Syndrome and a potentially fatal heart defect, after praying for the remaining five months of pregnancy that God would heal my unborn daughter's heart and allow her to be born without a cognitive disability, and after giving birth to our sweet Sarah Hope only to realize that God chose not to answer either of those prayer requests according to my plan, I was desperate.

**D**esperate for a do-over, desperate to escape my new reality, desperate to know I had not been rejected by the God I so loved.

Sarah was born on a beautiful summer day and quickly started dying. She went from the delivery room straight to the neonatal intensive care unit where we then played a waiting game like nothing I had ever known before. How many days could Sarah survive before open heart surgery became imminent? Every day we waited allowed Sarah's veins, arteries, and tiny newborn heart to grow, thus increasing her chances for successful surgery. Wait too long, however, and a new lease on life would pass her by.

The critical turning point in Sarah's story came when she was six weeks old. "Sarah has decided she'd like to have heart surgery now," was the compassionate way her cardiologist let us know we couldn't prolong things one day longer. Our heart-wrenching situation was about to get even more complicated.

Consent forms were signed, Sarah was dedicated to the Lord in the hospital room, and I prepped myself for an all-night prayer vigil that would lead to Sarah's early morning surgery. Holding my precious child in my arms, encumbered by all of her life support tubes and wires, I pleaded with God. "Save her, Jesus. Spare

Sarah's life. Carry her through tomorrow's surgery. Carry me through this, God. My strength is gone. How can I go on one more day like this?"

It was then that Sarah's nurse walked into the room. She started shutting off monitors and unplugging Sarah from the various machines she had been connected to for all six weeks of her fragile life—machines I thought Sarah needed to survive. "I think you and Sarah should go for a walk, Mrs. Amick," said the nurse as she handed me a pager. "You can go anywhere you want in the hospital, just be back within 20 minutes." Her eyes finished her explanation.

I understood. Sarah could make it for 20 minutes without medical intervention. I also understood why Sarah's nurse was extending such grace. There was no guarantee my daughter would live through the next day's events, and I had never been given the blessing of holding her without hospital equipment between us. If Jesus decided to take Sarah home to heaven, this would be my one and only opportunity to love on her flesh to flesh.

I held Sarah close to my heart and decided I'd be back before the time limit was up. As I headed toward the elevator I realized I had no idea where I was going. All I knew is that I was being given the gift of escaping

# Difficulty lies opportunity



Sarah at three months

the hospital room that had confined my baby and me for what felt like forever. The elevator door closed off contact with the nightmare I was living,

and – wanting to get as close to God as possible—I pushed the button to the hospital’s highest floor.

Stepping out onto this unknown territory, I was met by floor to ceiling windows. The view was stunning; Boston’s skyline at midnight is a light show illuminating countless souls needy for the one true God. I suddenly felt very small. Alone. Invisible. Numb from weeks and months of heartache, the only prayer I could whisper was, “Jesus”.

Enter the presence of the Lord. God’s voice spoke directly to my core. “I see you,” He said, taking my breath away, and in that moment everything changed. The God of the Universe sees me and sees this dying baby in my arms. In the middle of this sea of confusion, El-Shaddai took time to meet with me at my point of desperation and set the record straight. He wasn’t simply watching from a distance, hands limp by His side. God Almighty was actively working in my situation to work all things together for Sarah’s good and for the ultimate good of our family, and because of that—because of Him—I knew that from then on I could do this.

My circumstances were still hard. Sarah would still have open heart surgery in just a few hours, and even if that surgery was successful, she would still have Down Syndrome. Meeting with God on the top floor of that hospital didn’t miraculously change my daughter’s diagnoses, but it did deliver the miracle of a changed perspective. My situation was no longer desperate. It was hopeful, my vision renewed.

Joni Eareckson Tada has lived with Quadriplegia ever since her diving accident 48 years ago. She understands our inherent need to trade in our human perspectives for God’s point of view. “Life is hard,”

confesses Joni. “Trials are not for our pleasure; they are for our profit. Once you accept this truth,” she continues, “you transcend it. Once you have eyes to see Jesus Christ carrying you through your trial, monumentally heavy burdens become easier to bear.”

The Lord met Hagar in the desert. He gave her His perspective on her circumstances, and she was able to face her trials with new confidence.

The Lord met me on the top floor of a children’s hospital. He spoke to my broken mother’s heart, allowing me to see my baby’s health crisis and my baby with new eyes. The One who sees me brought me to a spacious place where I was able to transcend my own hopelessness, and that is what made all the difference.

What hard thing are you dealing with? It may not be Down Syndrome or a heart defect. It may not be Quadriplegia or the agony of rejection, but every one of us suffers trials of one sort or another. Life is hard. Life can be lonely. Conflicts and crises can leave us feeling isolated with little or no hope for better days.

The glorious truth that transcends all these scenarios is that God sees you. He sees you on your knees in prayer for your family’s situation. He sees the sacrifices you make for the good of your ministry. He sees you facing one trial after another in a manner that blesses His Name, and He wants you to remember He is with you through it all. He will remove some of the obstacles in your path, and He’ll ask you to walk through others, but through thick and thin God is by your side. The same Jesus who transcended death itself will lift you up to transcend whatever trial that is taunting you today.

As we begin to greet another new year, how about we also welcome in God’s perspective on the hard things in our lives? That will help us see each new day with the promise of better things to come. It’ll give us a glimpse of the God who sees us in return.

*“Reprinted from ‘Just Between Us’ magazine ([justbetweenus.org](http://justbetweenus.org)), Spring 2015 issue. Used with permission.”*

*Shauna Amick, M.Ed, who met Di at the conference, serves as the Director of Joni and Friends New England with an outreach to the disability community. ■*





# Talking is sharing, b

## The encourager

THE MAGAZINE OF ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST

ARE YOU ENCOURAGED BY IT?  
DO YOU PASS IT ON?  
DO YOU GET INSPIRED?  
DO YOU LEARN FROM IT?

**THIS IS AN APPEAL TO OUR READERS - OUR FUNDS ARE RAPIDLY DIMINISHING!**

"The encourager" is given out to over 6,000 people, yet **only one in ten has made a donation in the past two years.**

**We desperately need funds to cover this and many other costs.** Thanks to those who have already contributed. With donations dropping off in the past two years we appeal to any of our other readers who have not contributed to play your part in supporting this ministry.

Every little bit is so helpful to the ministry, whether it be a one off donation or automatic payments. You can deposit into our bank account here: **01 0142 0029706 00**

Or you can send your donation to:

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



## A Challenge

BY MIKE POTTER

Over the last seven years since I had my spinal cord injury I have been asking, "What is God's purpose for disability?" I acknowledge that despite our limitations, people with disabilities have contributed greatly in all facets of human life - Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, Sir Murray Halberg, Helen Keller and Joni Eareckson Tada just to name a few. After my surgery in France I read most of the New Testament in three weeks looking for God's purposes in what had happened to me. Initially I wanted to know about healing.

I learnt that Jesus didn't heal everyone at the pool of Bethesda, Peter healed a cripple who Jesus could have healed any time over the previous three years, Trophimus was sick, so was unable to go on mission, and as far as we can tell, he wasn't healed either!

In the Old Testament, Isaac was blind, Moses had a speech impediment, Naaman was leprous. There is a long list. Disability was understood to be an undesirable part of the human condition. Sadly, people are judged by their disability rather than their ability, but that





# ut listening is caring

is part of our fallen human condition too. It doesn't make it right.

I concluded also that people were healed and are healed in God's timing. Having a broken body or a disability is part of being human. We live in broken bodies in the sure hope that one day they will be renewed, and this hope comes from our belief that Jesus has forgiven our sins. A spinal cord injury is serious, but it's not the end of the world. Having a disability is not a barrier to following Jesus.

God's mission and purpose in this world includes everyone. Regardless of our limitations, abilities and disabilities we are all invited to participate in God's kingdom. Through my studies at Carey Baptist College I reflected that many people with disabilities have a leadership role to play, including ALL marginalised people in the community of God, not just people marginalised by disability.

We also have a role to play in addressing barriers to participation in society. Even addressing physical barriers like steps and kerbs that prevent many people from being included in and finding belonging in their community is bringing the gospel to places we live in.

One of these physical barriers I encountered has been at playgrounds. I couldn't find a local place that enabled me to push our kids on the swings from in a wheelchair. I prayed about it a lot and determined to see what I could do to make the new playground at Sir Barry Curtis Park more accessible so that everyone can use it.

I approached our local residents and rate payers group, made presentations to our local board, and talked to Auckland Councillors and to urban landscape planners. They all thought it was a great idea, but nothing happened till I met a council officer in charge of parks and reserves and gave him a turn in my chair at the playground. Today there are now three new ramps at the park, one to make exiting the mobility parking safer, and two to enable anyone to access the swings and slides.

I've met people with disabilities who have given up on trying to improve access in this country because of the effort required, as well as some who have grown cynical because nothing seems to change the social barriers and stigmatisation attached to disability. Hearts and attitudes seem to be the greatest barrier at times.



In my brief experience of disability we bring change by persevering in embracing God's community, like He perseveres with us, and advocate for change in grace and peace.

I love the deck and ramp at our church, built to cover the old concrete steps that I was pulled up and down in my chair for four years. The ramp and deck preach God's message of inclusion to our community, welcoming playgroup mums with prams, wheelchairs and crutches. This new accessibility proclaims Luke 14, inviting all who feel short of God's acceptance to join in too. Now all this happens when people with disabilities in our midst seek to bring changes, when we persevere in going places where there are barriers, and people with disabilities have a vision for a world where all of creation is included regardless of limitations, disabilities, injustices, and everything that marginalises.

Limitations and disabilities are part of our human condition. God accepts us regardless of our limitations and disabilities, and invites us through His Son Jesus to participate in the restoration and renewal of His world. As followers of Jesus, each of us has the opportunity to be leaders where we are, bringing inclusion and belonging for the poor in spirit, oppressed and marginalised, including people with disabilities.

I pray that you have been encouraged to make a difference in the places you fellowship and the communities you live, work and play in. ■



# "There are two parts to the Gospel"

## Torch Camp

### BLOWN AWAY BY THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST

By Julie Nichols

Hello, my name is Julie. I am from France and came over to New Zealand to study in Capernwray Bible School in Cambridge. I have had the privilege to help out at the Torch Camp in April, and to meet all these amazing people who were mostly completely blind. I have been blown away by their faith in Christ and their genuine love for others. The Lord has taught me so much through them!

One of the things that struck me the most was the time of worship. Seeing them getting up, even though they felt unbalanced, so willing to worship their God and honour Him has been incredibly empowering. People lifting up their hands in praise and worship to God, because of their genuine and incredible love for Him! They worshipped God with no fear of what people might think, or no pressure of what others were doing, but with freedom and out of love from their hearts. I have also been amazed at their attitude of thankfulness, giving praise to God for everything, and constantly thanking all the people around them. I remember one blind lady praying to God and thanking Him for "the perfect body that He had given them." Tears filled my eyes as I realized how grateful and thankful she was. Even though she couldn't see, she was still thanking God for her "perfect body"... It was really humbling as well, and got me thinking a lot. How thankful am I, me who can see and walk by myself? So often I take things for granted, and it was a great reminder that actually everything I have or I am able to do is only because of Christ and His amazing grace towards me. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 *"Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus"*. These people lived out this verse so well.

The last thing that really inspired me was the fact that they were willing to meet people for who they are, not for what they look like. There was a pure and genuine love to get to know others and to fellowship with them, that can too often be hindered by appearances and judgment for the sighted people. It was really humbling, and really inspiring. I had applied to work at this camp and serve and give of myself, but I have again been blown away by the reality of how much we actually receive when we give. Our God is good, and big! All glory and praise to Him forever! ■



Taking part in a Passover meal



Everyone contributing answers in the team quiz



The walk in the park is always special



## His disability was a *gift from God*

He was pronounced dead at birth, but miraculously survived. Though he struggles with cerebral palsy, Christopher Coleman today knows his disability was a gift from God.

Dr. David Jones untangled the slippery umbilical cord that had wrapped around the baby's neck. It was a breech birth with twins, eight weeks premature, and the delivery was not going well. The fetal monitor indicated a dangerously low heart rate only moments earlier, and he knew one of the twins was dying. He clamped the cord and suctioned the infant's mouth and nose, hoping against the odds that he could kick-start life into the tiny boy, but there were no vital signs. He glanced over to the nurses as they coached the 27-year-old mother through more contractions. He shook his head, but his eyes said it all. He placed the lifeless baby on a steel table at the back of the delivery room and mentally noted the time. It was 8:21pm, October 20 1973. Christopher Coleman was pronounced dead at birth.

As a nurse placed a sheet over the tiny body, Dr. Jones turned back to the mother on the table. The second twin was coming legs-first too, but he knew this baby's heart rate was more stable. "At least she'll have one of them," he thought.

Dr. Robert Wiener, a first-year resident at the hospital, hurried into the tension-filled delivery room. He was scrubbed and gowned, ready to assist. "What do you have?" he asked, as another nurse helped him with his surgical gloves. "One dead, another almost out," Dr. Jones answered, without looking up. The mother screamed through a final push as the second baby emerged. "She looks good," he said, handing her to a nurse. But Dr. Wiener wasn't watching. He was standing over the table in the back, doing everything he could to resuscitate the baby who had been declared dead. Christal Coleman's wails filled the room with the sound of new life. A nurse gently blotted the mother's face that was dripping with sweat, but no one said much. Linda Coleman had heard the doctors talking. She knew one of her babies was dead. She sobbed, exhausted, while the twin that survived was being readied for the Neonatal ICU.

And then they heard it, almost in disbelief. There was a second cry from the back of the room. Christopher Coleman had been revived and was struggling for air.

"My God, that baby's alive!" one of the nurses gasped. The medical team rushed both babies to the critical care unit where they were hooked up to oxygen tubes and an array of beeping monitors. Neo-natal specialists examined both babies thoroughly over the next three hours. Christal seemed fine, even though she weighed just over five pounds. But the doctors were grim-faced as they made their second assessment: Christopher had gone for at least fifteen minutes without breathing, and had undoubtedly suffered extensive brain damage. He was already in the grip of seizures that caused his tiny body to convulse. If he survived, he would be severely retarded and seriously crippled.

A team of doctors described Christopher's brain injury to his mother later that night. Her son was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, a result of lack of oxygen to the cerebrum. It's the largest portion of the brain, controlling higher mental faculties, sensations and voluntary muscle activity, they explained. Christopher would never walk, talk, move or even think for himself, the neurologist said.

"You should think about placing him in a facility that can care for the severely retarded. It would probably be best for him, and the rest of your family, too," he said. "You need to move on with your lives."

Linda Coleman wiped her eyes, swollen from tears and fatigue. Placing her helpless son in an impersonal institution was not an option she would ever consider. "I could never separate my twins," she told the doctors. "They're both coming home with me. No matter what it takes, I'm going to raise my babies."

Her husband showed up at the hospital the next day.



# "Faith means trusting in advance what

- Philip J

Their marriage had been strained for several months, but now it was rapidly fraying. He took one look at his frail son, surrounded by tubes and monitors, and turned away. A crippled and mentally retarded child was more than he could handle. He walked out of the hospital and out of their ten-year marriage. Linda and her seven children were on their own.

But against all expectations Christopher survived. He takes up the account at six as he remembers the blank walls:

"I stared at those walls for hours while I sat, strapped like a prisoner in my wheelchair. I couldn't walk, I couldn't talk and I couldn't move. All I could do was sit where the aides put me, usually facing the corner or off to the side where I wouldn't be in the way. I got to watch what was going on in the small classroom now and then, but mostly it was endless hours of the wall. No one talked to me. No one even wiped my nose.

"I was six years old, enrolled at the Special Services Center, a state-run school for the disabled. It was an hour's bus ride from home, but it seemed like a million miles away from my family who loved me. I cried inside. I just wanted my mama who had cared for my every need. I sat helplessly, usually soaked in my own urine and mess. I often sat in my soiled clothes for an entire day, embarrassed and frustrated. I tried to express my needs for the toilet and I must have smelled terrible, but the teacher and her aides just ignored me. To the aides, my efforts to communicate were heard as mindless grunting. There wasn't much they could do with me. They had other children to watch. To them, I was just a vegetable in a wheelchair.

"An aide would take me outside during recess if the weather was nice. She would park me in a shady spot on the playground while the staff ate their lunches or sipped coffee. Then it was back to the wall—dirty, scuffed and devoid of anything stimulating, until it was time for the long bus ride home. I'm disabled. I thought. I deserve to be ignored. Mom never knew how badly I was treated at the school. I couldn't talk, so I couldn't tell her what was really happening. The aides always explained my mess as "an accident while he was on the bus ride home." The only times the staff cleaned me up were when they knew my mom was coming for a visit, or when the principal stopped by the classroom.

"Mom worked two jobs to provide for her seven children. We lived in a small, cramped mobile home in Gonzales, Louisiana. She would get us on the school buses by 7:30 in the morning, and then work all day cleaning homes and offices. I came home from school about 3:30 in the afternoon. Mom was always waiting to meet me.

"As soon as the driver lowered me from the special education bus, Mom would wheel me into our home, clean me up and dress me in fresh clothes. She always had a hug and a smile for me, and she made me feel like a prince. Mom would fix dinner for all of us before heading back to work as a restaurant cook, where she worked until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. My brothers and sisters took turns caring for me while Mom was working. She came home every night exhausted, only to do it all again a few hours later. I don't think she ever got much sleep, even on the weekends. We were all in church on

Sundays. Mom was as devoted to her faith as she was to her children. Somehow, she kept it all together.

***Included here with permission and to be continued in the next Encourager.***

***Editor's note:*** A brief account was given in a previous magazine, but I felt this full account from Christopher himself was just too powerful not to be included here

## Do You Know God?

If you have never experienced God's inner peace, perhaps you have not met His Son. Jesus came into the world to make peace between you and God by dying on the cross to bring you into a right relationship with the Father (Rom. 5:1). If you will accept Jesus as your personal Saviour, all your sins will be forgiven, and He will give you His peace (John 14:27). You can use the following prayer or your own words:

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

AMEN





## MARIA TECH'S STORY

Maria was part of the team from the Centre that made the outreach to Warkworth recently where she gave her testimony. She was born in Lucena City in the Philippines where she trained to be a registered nurse graduating in 1975. It was while working in a hospital that she became a born again Christian, and soon was involved in prayer meetings, Bible studies and going out church planting with her church. A month after graduating she married an electrician, and he too became a Christian. They had two girls, but sadly he left her after 7 years. The three moved to Australia, then New Zealand and oscillated between the two countries before settling in NZ.

In 2013 she went on a trip back to the Philippines to visit her mother who had Alzheimers. and on the day she arrived she suffered a stroke soon after completing a five hour road journey. Amazingly she had been working as a nurse with stroke patients and asked to be taken straight to hospital where she spent 21 days in the ICU ward. Maria's life was on a tight rope, but as she totally surrendered to God's plan for her life, her faith grew, and she escaped death. She was fitted out with a wheelchair, but could walk with a tripod, and returned to New Zealand where she now resides in Elizabeth Knox Home. Here she takes part in the Bible studies, and was invited by a friend to come to the Centre which she immediatly loved. Last year she found National Camp an incredible experience, and she now comes regularly one day each week to the Centre, and is a great witness for the Lord.

She lists these three scriptures as especially meaningful to her:

- *Matthew 11v28. Come unto Me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*
- *Prov 3v6. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.*
- *Peter 5v7. Casting all your cares upon Him for He cares for you.*

## A SPECIAL MEETING FOR CHURCH REPS



Church reps play a key role in connecting the Trust with their own church, and over 30 came to a meeting recently where ideas were shared and a very informative booklet given out. On one page "Some ideas on what you might do" included

these three which are something that EVERYONE OF US can do in our church.

- Encourage people in your congregation to get to know people who have a disability.
- Encourage and support others in the church to welcome people with disabilities and their families.
- Embrace other people in your church who have a disability, and encourage them to participate, helping them find out how they can contribute within the church.

The National Camp music video to the Matthew West song "Hello, my name is" we pray will be on the website soon.

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.

*"When everything seems to be going against you,  
turn and take off against the wind."*

Leslie dela Ganar writes:

## CFFD PHILIPPINES RETREAT CAMP 2015



**T**he theme was "Full of Hope" and the theme verse: *I know the plans that I have for you, declares the LORD.....plans to give you a future filled with hope. Jeremiah 29:11 (GW)*

God is so awesome! He provided everything for the camp – guidance, efficient team, finances, wisdom, strength, etc. There were 90 people in the camp (49 with disabilities, 9 caregivers and 32 staff/volunteers).

The encouraging messages of Di and Kirsty were translated into Tagalog, and after every session the group leaders gathered their members and had reflection about the topic they heard, then counselling and prayer.

We also had Fun Night wearing a bit of Hawaiian costume (This is the first time that we had a theme of costume for a Fun Night). The whole Retreat Camp was not only focussed on the spiritual aspect, but we had also socialization so that the people with disabilities would learn how to mingle with one another and develop self-confidence. We noticed that the second time campers are now more confident to talk and share their testimonies in front of many people. It seemed they are no longer frightened.

The key note speaker was Rev. Pastor Dulcisimo "Jhun" Berioso Jr. He contracted polio when he was five years old, and uses his knees to walk. He is a charismatic person with a passion for disability ministry. Aside from pastoring a church, he has a prison ministry, and leads a Bible study in the Legal Department in his town.

We were so amazed by the outcome of the retreat camp, many souls believing and accepting Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. We really felt the touch of the Holy Spirit, especially on the last day of the camp when we had prayer for deliverance, blessings and inner healing. The new and old campers both experienced God's amazing touch. They were blessed, encouraged, enlightened, felt the love of God, and received inner healing, and they were excited for the next camp.

Gil, aged 52, contracted polio when he was three months old, and this was his first time to attend the camp. He received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour at camp. He now has an intense hunger for the Word of God and would like to read the Bible and change his not-so-good life style.

One lady camper involved in witchcraft attended the camp and heard God's word. When the Pastor called the campers to come to the front, she had a conviction to go forward, and allowed herself to be prayed for deliverance and inner healing from the Holy Spirit.

Maricel, a PWD (people with disabilities) leader from Paombong town said, "The three day camp taught me much. Disability is not a hindrance to being happy. Staff are so encouraging. Now, I am more eager to share God's Word and more encouraged to share this hope to more people with disabilities. I am so thankful to God that He gave us this wonderful experience. To God be the glory."

*Many thanks to the ELEVATE people for all their support, and those who gave and prayed for the camp especially to the people who donated at the National Camp in New Zealand.*



ainst you, remember that the airplane  
d, not with it." - Henry Ford

## A branch of PCFFD is born in Davao City



Dianne Bayley had the idea of contacting Pastor Rod Bicaldo (crutch user and well-known to us) now living down south in Davao City, to suggest holding a one day program to encourage PWDs down there. He was very much interested, and gladly accepted it. We sent our tithe monies from you in New Zealand down to Pastor Rod who got very busy, prepared his programme and suggested calling their group PCFFD DAVAO CHAPTER!!!

In April they held a meeting with the theme "Promoting Unity among PWDs in Davao City". There were close to 30 persons (Pastor Rod seen on the right with crutches), suggested to the group they establish the chapter under the umbrella of CBM – PCFFD. The group was very willing to be part of the idea. They vowed to attend and participate in the next activities of the branch, and even suggested reaching out to other Barangays in the near future.



### Three boys are in the school yard bragging about their fathers.

The first boy says, 'My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a poem and they give him \$50.'

The second boy says, 'That's nothing. My Dad scribbles a few words on piece of paper, he calls it a song and they give him \$100.'

The third boy says, 'I got you both beat. My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a sermon and it takes eight people to collect all the money!'

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# Camps in New Zealand and the Philippines



AUCKLAND CFFD



THE KIDZ CAMP



WELLINGTON CFFD



PHILIPPINES CFFD

The Philippines CFFD group wearing Hawaiian costumes.  
Read about it on page 14

