

# The encourager

THE MAGAZINE OF ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST

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*Great  
interaction  
between Lani  
Va'a and Jeffrey  
MacLean*





This photo and the others, at the top of the following pages, were all taken at the Wellington CFFD Camp

*I always prefer to believe the best of*  
- Rudy

# God doesn't make mistakes

written by Ruth Beale

**F**or many of us we may wonder about this statement that God doesn't make mistakes.

We look at our disabilities and say, "God, what happened surely this was a mistake?". We may have been born with our disability or had an illness or accident. This has disrupted our lives completely, learning to cope with wheelchairs, crutches or whatever aid we may need. We feel like we are different and maybe not accepted by society because of the way we look or maybe the behaviours that the disability produces. But nothing is a surprise to God. He knows our struggles, and He doesn't make mistakes. We are created in God's image, and He loves and cares about us. We see only the reverse side of the tapestry of life but God sees the full picture, so we have to trust Him that He knows best.

While lying in a bed in a third world hospital in the Philippines thinking each day that I was going to die, I had lots of time to ponder on what had happened to me. "Lord, you brought me to the Philippines to minister to those with disabilities, and now only eight months later I lie here so sick, unable to do anything for others, and barely able to look after myself. Lord, has there been a mistake? God I don't know why this is happening to me, but I trust you, and I know that You don't make mistakes."

Now let us look at an example from Scripture about a man who could easily have asked God what are you doing? But at the end of the story we see that God was certainly in control. Let's look at the life of Joseph. In Genesis 37 we read in verses 2 - 11. Joseph's brothers hated him, they made a plan to get rid of him. Verse 28. Joseph must have wondered what was going on. He could have asked God why is this happening to me? Joseph was sold to traders who took him to Egypt, and there sold to Potiphar, an official of Pharaoh.

In Genesis ch 39 Joseph prospered. Potiphar was really pleased with him and put him in charge of the household. But it wasn't long before trouble came. Potiphar's wife took a liking to Joseph, she wanted him to go to bed with her. Joseph fled from this situation leaving behind his cloak. Potiphar's wife made up a big story that Joseph had tried to rape her, but that she screamed and Joseph fled and she had the cloak as

proof. For this Joseph was thrown into prison. Joseph may have wondered why this was happening to him. He was innocent and yet he found himself in prison. He could have asked, "Isn't this a mistake God? I didn't do anything wrong."

Verse 23 tells us - *"the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did."*

Joseph had been in prison two years before it came to Pharaoh's attention that Joseph could interpret dreams through God's guidance. Pharaoh had some disturbing dreams, and Joseph was able to interpret them. Pharaoh then took him from prison and put him in charge of the whole of Egypt. Genesis ch 41 v 41. So things seemed to be really good for Joseph. He was in charge of gathering all the grain to store up, as there was according to the dream going to be seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine. In ch 42 we see the brothers coming to Egypt to buy grain as the famine was severe. Joseph recognised his brothers but they didn't know who he was. Joseph spoke roughly to them and accused them of being spies.

Ch 42 V 21 says " The brothers said to one another, surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen. That's why this distress has come upon us." The brothers recognised their mistake and acknowledged it. Joseph could have said, "Oh good, now I can get my revenge on my brothers for what they did to me". But we don't see this at all.

Genesis Ch 45 Joseph makes himself known to his brothers, not with hate but with love and forgiveness. Verse 2 says "Joseph wept so loudly that all the household heard it". Then we see the whole family shift to Egypt where there is plenty of food for them and their livestock. Then we come to Genesis Ch 50 and Jacob, Joseph's father, has died. The brothers were afraid that now their father was dead that Joseph would take some revenge on them. But Joseph said to them in verse 20, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."

So we see God doesn't make mistakes. He has a plan for each of our lives. We may not be able to see the reason why bad things happen to us, but be assured that God is still in control, and He doesn't make mistakes. ■





# Elevate National Camp 2018

## “What’s in me, for you”

**19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> October**  
**Totara Springs, Matamata**



Our communities are full of people in need, physical, emotional and spiritual. As Children of God we are called to not only consider our own needs but the needs of others. You are a unique blend of strengths and abilities, created to do good works. Most importantly, you have Christ in you. You were made to have an impact on the lives of those around you. We would love for you to join us as we explore what’s in us for others.

*“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’* Matthew 25:40

## Registration is now open

**Register online or contact your local branch.**

Please register early to ensure you don’t miss out. There is limited accommodation, particularly for those needing higher levels of assistance.

## Camp Fees

**Adult: \$200**

(early bird price of \$185 applies if paid in full before the 19<sup>th</sup> August)

**11– 14 year olds: \$130**

**5-10 year olds: \$90**

**0-4 year olds: free**

## Enquires and Updates

Phone: 09 636 4763

Post: PO Box 13-322, Onehunga, Auckland 1643

Email: [nationalcamp@elevatedcdt.org.nz](mailto:nationalcamp@elevatedcdt.org.nz)

If you haven’t been before, National Camp is a life-changing experience for both campers and helpers. We would love you to consider joining us. Sign up to receive email updates leading up to National Camp - go to the National Camp section on the website. If you’ve been before you’ll want to come, helpers we need you.

## Change in Allocation of Helpers

Over the years it has been a blessing for many people attending our camps to be provided with helpers. The camper/helper relationship is foundational to how our camps function, and we will continue to provide volunteer helpers for campers needing general support and basic assistance.

Due to changes in Health and Safety requirements and the level of training needed to safely provide assistance, we now require campers with a higher level of care to bring their own caregiver, appropriate friend or family member. This includes campers with complex care needs, those who use a hoist to transfer, or those needing significant assistance to transfer.

This decision was not made lightly as we are aware this may make attending camp more difficult for some people. Application can be made for assistance towards caregiver camp fees if required. If you are unsure if this change affects you, please contact us on [nationalcamp@elevatedcdt.org.nz](mailto:nationalcamp@elevatedcdt.org.nz) or phone 09 636 4763 to talk to Di or Kirsty.

National Camp is the highlight of the year for many people. Both campers and volunteers come away impacted by the weekend. Last year Robert told us “This is the best camp I have ever been on. Love in action and a sense of God’s presence.”



*A good character is the best tombstone  
Carve your name on it*



## DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY

17 JUNE

Disability Awareness Sunday is a day to celebrate, to raise awareness and to encourage people affected by disability.

Do contact your minister to ensure they will include a portion of their service on that day. A great aid the church can make use of would be showing one or two videos we have just finished creating. They are impacting, and we believe they would leave congregations inspired and moved.

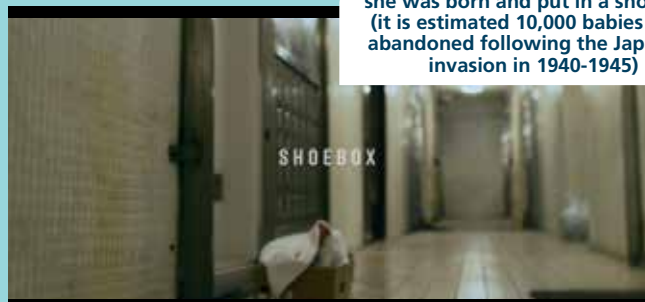
Another aid for your minister would be for him or her to ring our Centre 09-636 4763 to have sent our booklet "Ideas for Disability Awareness Sunday", or to Visit our website for resources and ideas on how your church could mark Disability Awareness Sunday, and to sign up to receive our Disability and the Church emails.

.....  
*Our new stories are out now! Available to watch for free from our website [www.elevatecdt.org.nz](http://www.elevatecdt.org.nz)*

### 'INCLUSION REQUIRES US TO BE *INTENTIONAL*'

There are few things in life worth achieving that just happen. Most things require us to be **intentional**. Building better relationships involves us purposefully working on them. Getting fit means we deliberately make changes to what we eat and how often we exercise. It's the same for being welcoming and inclusive of people who are affected by disability. It doesn't just happen. We need to be **intentional**.

"Shoobox" Jean Griffiths tells how she was born and put in a shoebox! (it is estimated 10,000 babies were abandoned following the Japanese invasion in 1940-1945)



"Three Feet Below" Evan Clulee tells how he lives life in a wheelchair three feet below all those around him.

## IDEAS OF WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY

1 If you have a person with a disability in your congregation, or a family with a child with a disability, get them to give their testimony, or tell how they cope with God's help, or interview them. (Some may have a hidden disability such as epilepsy or mental health issues.)

2 Someone who is blind or visually impaired could read from a Braille Bible a portion, or someone could sign a portion to a deaf person.

3 Get someone to interact with the congregation, asking them questions such as, how would you cope with a wheelchair in your house, or going into a restaurant, etc

4 Interview any medical folk in your church: nurses, doctors, physios, 'OT's about their experiences with people with disabilities.

*e, those who loved you will remember.  
hearts, not on marble*

## Our Staff at the Centre



### **Mariana Onofia shares of her role:**

I am the Office Assistant at the National Support Office, the headquarters for Elevate.

I was born and raised in Auckland and have lived my whole life here. I am Samoan, and live with my mum and two sisters. I accepted Christ as my Lord and Saviour early in high

school, and have been walking with the Lord ever since. I came to Elevate in August 2013 as a volunteer. By then I had completed a course in Administration at UNITEC, and was working at a call centre. I was completely new to Elevate and what it was about, and since I volunteered on a Friday, for the rest of that year I didn't know about the Drop In Centre or the kind of people involved in it. People with disabilities and disability issues had little to do with my everyday life. I went from volunteering on and off on Fridays to being the Office Assistant at the National Support Office, working Tuesdays to Thursdays during the NZ school calendar.

The best thing about my role is the variety of things I get to do; it's definitely not a traditional workload. The core of my role (other than assisting others) surrounds "The

Encourager," like compiling the Mailing Lists (i.e., putting mailing details together for who gets the magazine and where it's to be mailed to) and producing the audio version of it for the Blind, Visually Impaired, and Print Disabled onto a disc. I also do the mail-out of the Every Day With Jesus devotion for the Blind and Visually Impaired. A really fun thing I get to do is exercising my creative skills when I'm given special projects of thanksgiving to do (like creating Thank You cards on behalf of the ministry).

Of all the camps Elevate and its many ministries put on, you'll definitely find me at the National Camp. I've gone without fail to every one since I started working here. It's a great camp that always reminds me of the Drop In Centre, but on a major scale. I like that I can assist with preparations leading up to camp as well. I am privileged to be at Elevate, and I appreciate every day I am here. I can be myself, and am surrounded by such warm and kind-hearted people who love the Lord so much, and what is more important to me, I get to observe as a model what life-long obedience to God's Word and His will can accomplish in one's life-time by serving under Di Willis. I love being at Elevate, and am humbled God has placed me here.

**NOTE It is your donations that enable the Trust to pay Mariana and the other staff who are all so essential in running the Centre.**

## What a call at the Centre led to

**Leota Naufahu, Missie Sitauti and Teuilla Wolfgram are three prayer warriors or prayer intercessors**, and when Leota visited the Centre on a Thursday she was thrilled to discover it was the day of prayer for all sorts of prayer requests.

The other two soon joined her, and when they realised the need for volunteers they increased their visits to two days, sometimes bringing with them lots of different food they had made. When Di asked them if they could go out visiting, they quickly accepted the call, encouraging the folk from the Word of God, praying with them, and often taking something in their hands such as flowers, fruit, light finger food or drinks.



## Vacancies

at our Elevate National Support Office  
based in Onehunga

### Handyperson/Van Driver - Part-time

This paid position is 21 hours over three days a week (tue/wed/thur) during the school term. Role includes: gardening, handy/fix it jobs, and van driving.

### Coordinator for Day Programme - Part-time

Maternity Leave Cover for 12 months.  
We are seeking a person with good facilitation and Bible teaching skills. Experience of teaching people who have a disability is desirable but not necessary. This paid position is three days a week (tue/wed/thur) during the school term.

Applications close 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018  
For more information about the roles visit  
[www.elevatedcdt.org.nz/vacancies](http://www.elevatedcdt.org.nz/vacancies)

Send expressions of interest and CV to  
[lovetowork@elevatedcdt.org.nz](mailto:lovetowork@elevatedcdt.org.nz)  
Call Kathie Mob. 021 119 8842 Ph. 09 636 4763





*Treat everyone with politeness,  
not because they are nice*



I have a concern for reality, that we don't bury our heads in the sand. God's people are not exempt from suffering. It is an integral part of our spiritual journey. Life isn't one hilarious roller-coaster ride. Everyone experiences trials and testing. It may be radical surgery or terminal illness, financial ruin, ridicule in Christian ministry, sexual abuse. It could be one of a thousand other things. Now, in those critical and desperate situations, how does a person connect with God? How do we discern His plan – His purpose?

Sometimes it is difficult for us to foresee the fulfilling of His purpose in our life, especially when troubles crowd in upon us. Allow me to ask, is it sin to clench one's fist and scream, "God, why did you allow this to happen?" God allows our 'whys' when we ask with an open hand, not a clenched fist. A clenched fist demonstrates anger – and rebellion. An open hand expresses SURRENDER.

One of my favourite Bible characters is Job. I have drawn enormous comfort and encouragement as I've pondered the intensity of his struggles, heartaches and hardships, his striving to be understood, his prolonged questionings, and his demands for answers. By delving into Scripture, I've discovered a number of thought-provoking principles that God wove into the fabric of this man's life and character, and my own faith has been both stretched and strengthened.

Let's look at Job chapter one verses 1 to 20. The first characteristic to note is that Job was a man of perfection. He was a man that God said was blameless - absolutely blameless! Now, that was God's description of him – not mine, not the neighbour's. It's God's! Job was no hypocrite. He was a man of deep moral and spiritual calibre and character, and God said: "there's none like him." What a reference! Yet God did not mark out for Job a life of ease to acknowledge his achievement. There was no problem with sin that we know of, so the spotlight focused in on self. Was Job perhaps a self-righteous man? Could it be that God wanted to spotlight this and deal with it? We are not told this, and we are speculating, nevertheless there are some valid thoughts to be drawn.

Paul writes for us, in Philippians Chapter 3 verse 10. *"That I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings."*

## Part One

# THROUGH FIRES OF ADVERSITY

**By Margie Willers** - who has Cerebral Palsy, and is Co-founder of the Ministry.

In God's university of adversity the books are bumps and the colours are black and blue. Isn't it true, that in adversity we usually want God to do the removing job, when His aim is to do the improving job?

Allow me to suggest: What we learn to overcome here on earth is preparation for ruling and reigning in eternity. Let's not fantasize – Heaven is not about sitting on fluffy-candy floss clouds, playing golden harps. We are going to a higher calling: to rule and reign with Christ. Now, doesn't that blow your tiny mind?

*even those who are rude to you  
ce, but because you are.*

And, in Romans Chapter 8 verse 17, we read: *"I also share in His glory."* We tend to enthusiastically "Amen" the sharing in His glory, but we are much more cautious when it comes to the fellowship of His sufferings.

In reality, few of God's people are prepared to walk through fires of adversity. The majority of us can't actually handle a toothache! To know God in His holiness and the perfection of His purposes was something Job was required to know – and we need to know it too!

Job is tested in specific areas: It is useful for us to bring Job's example into our own specific circumstances. I live in Te Puke, a town which has been modestly described as the Kiwifruit Capital of the World. How would any farmer around me react – how would you react - if someone came racing in and said: "There's just been a thunderbolt and it's wiped out all your kiwifruit?" Within minutes, financial prosperity turns to ruin. It's every kiwifruit farmer's nightmare. But that's not all. You're just in recovery from that crushing blow when someone else arrives with the news! "Lightning hit your house and your kids are all dead"! Imagine the loss, the grief, the emotional suffering! And, it's not over. Next – another person rushes in: "Your car, your truck have just been written off, and everything apart from your wife has gone!" More anguish! Total devastation! How in the world would a person keep their sanity? Is it fair to suggest that Job experienced mental suffering?

**We tend to enthusiastically  
"Amen" the sharing in His glory,  
but we are much more cautious  
when it comes to the fellowship  
of His suffering.**

What would you do? The majority of us would jump up and down demanding answers from God, while others would start cursing and rebuking every devil they could think of. I admire Job's tremendous composure in spite of utter chaos. What did Job do? He bowed his head and in the FIRE OF ADVERSITY he worshipped. Let me tell you something, you will gain far more progress if you will bow your head and worship than you ever will by rebuking demons.

Now, let's consider Job Chapter 2 verses 6 to 10. The first harrowing events had affected everything outside of Job. However, with this next testing, it was his body that God permits Satan to touch. His flesh is covered with boils. A more accurate diagnosis might be a type of elephantiasis. With this skin disease the body suffers great swelling – grotesque deformities, and boy, does he stink? He looked hideous and he smelt repulsive. Can you picture him sitting in poverty on a heap of ashes? Imagine him picking up some sharp object to scrape himself. He's trying to feel some relief.

His wife comes out. Any comfort here? Compassionless! The merciless woman looks at him for some moments and then suggests: "Why don't you curse God and die?" Job refused. Understandably, for Job's wife enough was enough. She's so embarrassed by the whole situation, all she wanted was for him to get it over and done with. Take note: in prosperity our friends know us, but in adversity we know our friends. Sadly, the Christian army is often the most noted for shooting its wounded.

Job's positive response to his wife's capitulation is "Shall we accept good from God and not trouble too?" He knew that a life of ease is neither the expectation nor the plan. In this situation, Job accepted everything that came to him as being from the hand of God. God was in absolute control. He still is. Nothing comes to us without God's approval. Job's pain-filled tragedies were both appointed and approved by God, although Job's friends thought they knew better. He experienced trial and testing because he was a godly man. And what did they say? "Job, you've sinned. Things like that don't happen to good, upright people. You've blown it somewhere. Brother, time to confess that sin." In some cases this diagnosis could well prove correct, but for Job it was completely wrong. It was because he walked with God that he was given this unique test of faith. The devil's argument was that if everything was taken from him, then he'd curse God to His face. God said: "Oh no he won't. There's much more to his character than that. He's a man of integrity!" And therefore God allowed the situation to happen. ■

**Part 2 will be in the next  
"The Encourager"**





## Celebrating 10,000 Wheelchairs

*Taken from Vital Link Magazine*



**Under darkened skies and working through a power cut, the Ghana team of Through the Roof\* had the thrill of fitting a young man with Wheels for the World's 10,000th wheelchair.** The recipient, Andrew, is 24 years old and has been disabled since childhood when he had convulsions which left him unable to walk. He lives with his mother, who was delighted that he would no longer have to crawl over rough grass and pot-holed roads. - a wheelchair which was rescued from landfill, repaired at Parkhurst Prison Workshop, and transported five thousand miles to help restore Andrew's dignity. What an amazing practical demonstration of God's love.

Since the first Wheels for the World trip to Albania in 1998, donors' support has brought chairs to 10,000 people, mobility aids to 12,000 more, and changed the lives of over 20,000 families, plus extended communities and churches, reaching 40,000 people with the Gospel. Sometimes, the scale of the need can be daunting, but 10,000 people who have found new freedom through the work donors have made possible are 10,000 reasons to keep pushing on for another 10,000 chairs!

They have been working with the Light Outreach Foundation in Tema since 2003, but this is the first distribution to the Central Region of Ghana and the Ashanti people around Kumasi. The team travelled to four centres over five days, and it was obvious that the need is huge as they distributed 128 wheelchairs, 4 buggies and 166 mobility aids. There's lots more to do in future visits, but for each recipient and family, it's a life-changing gift.

That gift of a wheelchair will make a huge difference to Obour who fell off his bicycle while cycling to work on the family farm 20 years ago and sustained spinal damage. He's been looked after by his brother and

family ever since. When asked what difference his wheelchair would make he replied, "I shall not have to stay out in the rain and get wet, as I can push myself to shelter." Apparently the previous day he had been carried into the compound to sit in a chair, but when the sudden rainstorm started there was no one to move him, so he got very wet. His brother said that both had been given freedom, as Obour would no longer need carrying. His name means 'stone', but the radiant smile that broke out as he pushed himself for the first time was anything but stony!

Although at the start of the distribution the most-needy were obvious by their absence, by the end, many clients were being carried in by family members, or crawling on the ground as news spread.

The team was excited to see local pastors with such a thirst for the Biblical principles of disability. This was partly due to having the same pastors all week, giving everyone time to establish meaningful relationships. One pastor was well known for leading missions and running crusades with an emphasis on praying for miracle healings. However, having worked with us for a week, he humbly acknowledged there was a need for practical intervention, and that he had been touched by witnessing how the gift of a mobility aid could also be in God's plan.

Dora, a 35 year-old lady who contracted polio when nine months old, told the therapist how her new wheelchair will give her opportunities she has never had before. When asked if there was anything the team could specifically pray for, she brought the team member to tears, asking that "her nature would continually be evermore changed into the nature of Jesus". It's humbling to see this lady, who had suffered so much all her life, having such love for Jesus. ■

*\*Through the Roof is a sister organisation to Elevate in the U.K.*





## GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE PCFFD CAMP

Our theme this year was “Trusting Him” with inspiration from Proverbs 3:5

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.**

As we were preparing for the Camp we completely entrusted everything to God. We kept on praying for the Camp to be a successful one for God’s glory. And the Lord granted our request. The HOLY SPIRIT touched everyone during our sessions. We witnessed and felt God’s amazing favour for all the campers and staff. The speakers delivered the Word effectively, and the campers testified that God’s messages really touched their hearts. We were able to evangelize and minister to believers in strengthening their faith. There were 98 participants – campers and staff, all part of the victory of the Camp.

- The activity - Slogan Making Contest with the theme Trusting God. People showed their creativity and talent. The winners were the deaf group (photo on right).



- Very meaningful discussion on the Camp theme, “Trusting Him”, with the Pastor encouraging everyone to trust God in His governance, attributes and His promises.

There were many great testimonies, such as the following from Lorenzo Alpay (a cane user/had polio) - My Christian wife brought me to her church many times. I used to sleep during the worship service, and when it was testimony time I would escape because I was afraid the Pastor might call me to testify. But now, I am confidently willing to share my experiences. I have learned so much from this Camp. Before I thought I was already saved because I had not done anything wrong to my neighbour, had been faithful to my wife, had served my fellowmen, and not expected anything in return, but I see that was not enough to save me. Here I learned the true meaning of Salvation, how I could be saved and be with God, and have an eternal life, and I accepted God as my Lord and Saviour. I learned the importance of forgiveness, allowed God to heal all my brokenness, asked forgiveness from Him and to forgive people who had hurt me. I also learned to entrust my life to Him and trust in His promises... And I will apply in my life all the spiritual things that I have learned. I am so thankful to Pastor Reynold Malinao who preached clearly the Word of God and to all the PCFFD team. ■

### Camp Highlights

- On the first night our blind pastor Reynold Malinao (seen here) preached clearly the salvation message with his personal testimony on how he got to know the Lord. One third of our campers were first timers and mostly are not yet Christians.

- In one morning session, the topic was “Forgiveness”. Many were enlightened about the

importance of forgiveness not only to forgive others who wronged them but to forgive themselves as well.





*Though no-one can go back and  
can start now and make*

## PRABHU & NANCY RAYAN

*India Fellowship for the  
Visually Handicapped (IFVH)*

Prabhu was brought up by missionary parents in Chennai, India. He accepted the Lord at the age of 16. After completing his Postgraduate studies, he went to Bombay, intending to go to Canada, but on visiting one of the slums he heard God's call. Leaving everything, he started working among the slums.

Nancy was born to Christian parents and grew up in Bombay. She accepted the Lord at the age of 18 and dedicated her life to full time ministry. After completing her Master's degree in English and a Bachelor's degree in Education, Nancy was teaching, when she met Prabhu, and they were married in 1980.

It was in one of the slums in Bombay that Prabhu met a blind man, Param, and led him to the Lord; and it was during his baptism that Prabhu heard the Lord asking him, "Today, Param is added into My Body, but where are the millions of people with disabilities in My Body? In obedience to this call, he started the ministry among people with visual disabilities in the year 1980, calling it the India Fellowship for the Visually Handicapped, and extended it in 1990 to all people with disabilities, and also to other countries

Since then Prabhu and Nancy have been sharing the vision with church leaders through seminars and workshops, and also training those who wish to work among people with disabilities. The vision has impacted more than 82 countries. Personally, they have pioneered and initiated this ministry in 43 countries. They also pioneered the production and distribution of Braille Scriptures in all the Indian languages through the Bible Society of India, and are now spearheading the same in other countries. The curriculum they have written was recommended by the late Dr John Stott to be used in all the Bible colleges. Their desire is to see every person with disability reached with the Gospel of Christ, and every church inclusive of people with disabilities. They are excited to see pastors reaching out to them with a change of attitude, as well as people with disabilities reaching out to their peers when they have accepted the Lord Jesus. Two key sentences they proclaim:

"The Gospel is not disabled that it cannot save people with disabilities" and "their rightful place is in the Church of God!"

Here are two of the testimonies in one of their recent newsletters:

*Persecuted, but cannot withhold the happiness I have received!*



### **Abhilash Kumar Gautam:**

I was born with visual disability in a non-Christian family in Uttar Pradesh. I came in contact with Premraj, who gave me a Braille Bible and as I began reading, God's Word worked in my heart and I stopped participating in the

worship and rituals practised by my parents. After seeing my attitude, my parents started persecuting me and destroyed all the Braille Scriptures. They did not provide me food for a few days. So I fled from home and stayed in the house of my friend for a couple

of weeks. During this hard time of persecution, I had no Bible to read, so I requested Premraj to make arrangement for a Talking Bible. I met him personally in Delhi. He taught me from the Bible for three days and provided me a talking Bible in January 2018. I had been listening to it carefully, and it also enabled others to listen to it during my bus and train journey. God's Word touched my heart. I accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord in Feb 2018, and took water baptism on 1st April 2018. During my baptism I felt some light flashed upon me from Heaven. Now I am very much happy in my spirit, and have received boldness to stand for my faith in Christ Jesus. Henceforth, I shall be a witness for Jesus Christ to my friends.



*make a brand-new start, anyone  
or a brand-new ending.*

## *I lost both eyes, but that cannot erase the joy in my heart!*



**I am Abhinandan Paswan** from a staunch non-Christian family in Bihar, North India.

I was born with perfect eye-sight, but lost my sight in an accident when I was studying in class 7. On that fateful day I was playing with

my aunt on the terrace of our apartment and fell on a pillar with iron rods hitting my face.

On the spot, my left eye ball was gouged out, and my right eye ball was severely injured. In spite of treatment, my right eye was damaged and had to be removed.

Somehow I managed to study up to 10th class in my home town. Later in the year 2014 I went to Delhi for continuing my higher secondary education. Premraj Nanda (IFVH North India Coordinator) met me in my hostel and shared the Gospel.

I had no peace, and had tried many times to end my life. It was at this time Prem invited me to attend the Gospel Retreat, where I understood the meaning of life and the way to eternal life. I began to read the Braille Bible which I received from Premraj, and was convinced that Jesus Christ is the only God, and received Him in my heart. I began to attend a nearby church regularly.

The Holy Spirit worked in me and I took immersion water baptism in the church I attended on Easter Sunday 1st April, 2018. After baptism I felt liberated in my body, newness in my mind and peace in my heart.

## *“The parts that seem to be weak...”*

Paul describes the Church as the Body of Christ, *‘not made up of one part, but of many ... God has arranged the parts, each one of them just as He wanted them to be’* (1 Cor.12). However, how is this divine arrangement worked out when one, or several, of the parts has a learning disability? Autism? Down Syndrome?

### **Donna Jennings shares her thoughts...**

This is a question that we as parents and our church leadership in Windsor have been asking about my son Micah who is nine years old, has autism and severe learning disability. One of the most difficult aspects of parenting and caring for Micah has been including him appropriately in church. As we have been plunged into the world of learning disability and developed good friendships with other families, it has become clear that church is not always a place that welcomes and embraces people who are different - even this different. Where are the men, women, boys and girls with learning disabilities in our churches? If they are present at all... are they merely among us physically, or are we bringing them to Jesus at an appropriate level, helping them be befriended and loved, empowered to serve God in their own way?



Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 12 that *‘those parts which seem to be weak are indispensable to the body and deserve higher honour.’* He uses a form of the Greek ‘TIO’ - to honour, to lift up, to give value. Micah, in his disabilities, with his complex needs and dependency on others, because of his obvious weakness, Paul states is *‘indispensable’* to our church body at Windsor .

So we his parents, our friends and church leaders have been asking - not only how we can bring Micah to Jesus, minister to him, but also how he, because of disability can minister to us, bring us towards Jesus. How can we move from reading the Bible TO adults and children like Micah, towards reading the Bible WITH people like Micah - and in doing so, refresh and deepen our grasp of the Christian faith and what it means to be church together. Asking, how do we



## Don't resent growing old. W

recognise and honour Imago Dei in a non-verbal child or adult with complex needs? How does a person like Micah, who has few words, engage with THE Word?

My search to understand Micah's identity in God's sight, has led to my involvement in an organisation called TIO. TIO seeks to see Christian communities enriched by the inclusion of people with disability, through teaching, research and advocacy. We have been invited to many churches and parachurch groups around Northern and Southern Ireland to help people think through a theology of disability, and to support churches who need support as they work through 'inclusion' of individuals and families like my own, and explore their ecclesiology in light of learning disability.

My own church Windsor, has begun a journey with us, seeking to include Micah and several others with similar needs within our church body. Stepping beyond our church boundaries with a vision of building inclusive bridges into parts of our community

otherwise excluded from church life, Windsor has set up a support/respite group for families like our own. There is huge potential for local churches to demonstrate Kingdom values, and to be enriched themselves by the intentional 'lifting up' or honouring the many children and adults like Micah living in our communities.

The Inclusive Gospel demands inclusive churches. As we seek to live out inclusive Gospel communities with families both in our congregations .. and those outside ... it is helpful for Baptist churches to have some of these questions on their radar.

If you have any interest in networking with TIO and other Baptist churches on these issues, or would like some information or support, email Donna.Jennings@omfmail.com or Ian Dickson: [ian@tioassociates.org](mailto:ian@tioassociates.org) ■

*Taken with permission from the Irish Baptist Churches magazine*

*In the last issue of the Encourager, Sze told of the amazing steps that followed the realisation of a dream God had planted in her heart 25 years ago of setting up a disability ministry in Malaysia. Here, she tells their latest story, highlighting God's most recent miracle:*

## A Tale of two families



*Once there stood a vacant, but strategic shop lot, perched on the hilltop of OUG Parklane, Kuala Lumpur. Two tenants had moved in, but neither had stayed long. Little did anyone conceive that God had already planned to transform that reserved space into a "lighthouse", a "city on a hill", the Promised Land for His very special children... and this is how that marvellous plan was to include our family.*



You are about to read a tale that has only just begun, a story we are privileged to live out, and this is the way it came to pass...

My husband, Hock Cheng, shown here, could not ignore the gentle nudges he had been sensing for months now, the restlessness in his spirit that some unfulfilled dream lay around the corner. He had not only heard, but oftentimes retold the stories of God at work in another's life – miracles of faith and

provision that had happened to someone else. He longed to boast of "God Stories" in his own life. And he got precisely what he asked for.

In an ordinary upper room of a church building, fourteen young adults of different abilities had been working: a polite soft-spoken young gentleman with autism, a demure, smiling young lady with Down Syndrome, a pair of identical sisters, who in spite of learning challenges, had bright enquiring personalities... each individual a valuable member of the STAND family, special in his or her own way. On every workbench, a basket of straws awaited to be packed and sealed into narrow plastic bags – a mundane task, yet demanding concentration and precision from every trainee. And thus, it had been for the past six years since the inception of STAND - a production workshop for young adults with special needs. But here and now, in 2017, the paths of STAND and Hock Cheng would cross, and the destinies of these two families would be divinely redirected and fulfilled.





You see, one day the STAND family caught Hock Cheng's attention, and there and then God planted His big dreams for each of these young lives into Hock Cheng's heart. Why not elevate them to a whole new level?... from a production workshop to a

social enterprise?... from packing straws to making pies?... from trainees to employees, able to earn a living for themselves?... from people with disabilities to God's signs and wonders, overcoming great impossibilities? As for Hock Cheng... from directing missions in a church to heading a social enterprise for young adults with special needs in the marketplace?... from meeting people in his office, to creating exotic recipes in the commercial kitchen of STAND? As for our family... from a somewhat predictable and comfortable life, to a bumpy, yet exhilarating journey of faith that would radically change the way we know God, and experience the life of faith He beckons us to live?... Amazed? Indeed the work of an amazing God. Impossible? By no means, for with our God, all things are possible!

Today, that vacant lot now thrives with families finding new meaning to life. Christmas carols ring out through the premises as busy fingers painstakingly mould pastry into pies. ***The store has God's fingerprints all over it and at long last, Hock Cheng is able to proclaim stories of his very own experiences:***

- *How God has provided beyond expectation!*
- *How a kindly landlord was willing to let us occupy his shop lot at a sizably reduced rent, even when someone else had offered him much more for it.*
- *How God had called a young chef who owned her own bakery, into full time Christian service in a church. She had heard about STAND and selflessly offered us all her equipment, which turned out to be two thirds of our wish list! When the lorry arrived with freezers, oven, cooling racks, baking trays, mixer, it felt like Christmas in August!*
- *How the timely closing down of a popular food court in Malacca provided us with the exact remaining items on our start-up wish list, complete with special delivery right to STAND's doorstep!*

- *How a successful kind-hearted interior designer lent her time and expertise to give our shop front an extreme makeover.*
- *...and many more such divinely orchestrated connections at just the right moment!*



It would be a lie to only tell stories of triumphs, for punctuating these accounts of faith are the sleepless nights and early mornings on our knees before the Father... for aren't we all human beings who waver in our trust, yet thankfully, beloved children of an ever faithful Father? He understands the frailty of our faith, which is not unlike the crumbly pastry that disintegrates in our fingers even when we try so hard to get it to hold firm... and yet, He chooses to surpass our expectations and surprise us anyhow!... by sending us angels in disguise, who came to stand with us in our hour of need, lending a hand, a utensil, an offering, a word of encouragement, a prayer, a valuable piece of advice and a listening ear, and placing orders even when our pies had a less than perfect appearance... each one of you has been a personal touch from God, a sign of His favour, a reminder that He is indeed Jesus whose name is called Immanuel, GOD WITH US, and that all we need to do is to take the next step and trust Him for the future we cannot see.

Last, but not least, we wish to pay particular tribute to two great heroes in our lives: Hock Cheng's dad, whose nod of approval was what we treasured immensely; he humbly offered to be our security guard watching over STAND. Even at his frail age of eighty-five, he still desired to be a part of what he knew God had birthed. Sadly, he bid us farewell on the 29th of September, 2017, before we could show him the dream come true. We miss him so much. And my Dad, who could never resist throwing himself wholeheartedly into new ventures, and who himself, as a young man, had run his own bakery - how appropriate it was, that dad's company undertook most of our renovation work at STAND. How he would have loved to have been an integral part of this endeavour!

Both our dads, still cheering us on from the gallery of heaven, as they continue to inspire us, the way they always have... ■



# Nothing ahead of you is bigger or stronger Eph. 6



## THE 20 DOLLAR NOTE

A well-known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20.00 bill. "In this room of 200" he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up.

He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you, but first, let me do this. He proceeded to crumple up the \$20 bill. He then asked, "Who still wants it?"

Still the hands were up in the air.

"Well" he replied, "What if I do this?"

And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe.

He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty.

"Now, who still wants it?"

Still the hands went up in the air.

"My friends, we have all learned a valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it. Because it did not decrease in value.. It was still worth \$20.

Many times in our life we are dropped, crumpled and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way.

We feel as though we are worthless.

But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. Dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to those who **DO LOVE YOU**.

The worth of our lives comes not in what we do or who we know, but by **WHO WE ARE** and **WHOSE WE ARE**. You are special, Don't **EVER** forget it.

### **AND YOU ARE SPECIAL TO JESUS IF YOU HAVE GIVEN YOUR LIFE TO HIM**

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 wrong-doings, 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**

**1. Do contact us.**

**2. Get into a Bible-believing church.**



We had a great visit at the Centre from Len Kingston and the 36 he brought from Crossroads in Sydney, Australia.





## MICHELLE, AS OTHERS SAW YOU

We were greatly saddened when 44 year old Michelle Alexander, regular attendee at the Centre for close on 20 years, was promoted to Heaven. She also attended Joy Ministers, National, and CFFD Camps. What she gave to others comes out strongly in these heartfelt tributes:

*I loved her sparkling eyes*

*She was enthusiastic in all she did*

*She would clap her hands with excitement and never complained*

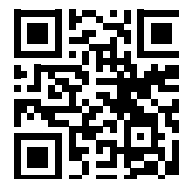
*She was so bright and cheerful*

*I loved her joy every time Jesus's resurrection was mentioned*

*She always made me feel loved and was so excited to see me*

*One of these people who leaves footprints in your heart for ever*

*She would light up the room whenever she came in*



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



Attention all those who have changed their email addresses **PLEASE** tell us your new ones

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<b>Kumbayah - St David's Presbyterian Church - Palmerston North</b> Ann Bennett		06 355 2818
<b>Bible Friends - Wanganui</b> Louise Rostron	rostrons@extra.co.nz	06 344 5955
<b>THRIVE - Greerton Bible Church, Tauranga</b> Ray Harvey	ray@eol.co.nz	027 284 9433



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# Fun at the Camps

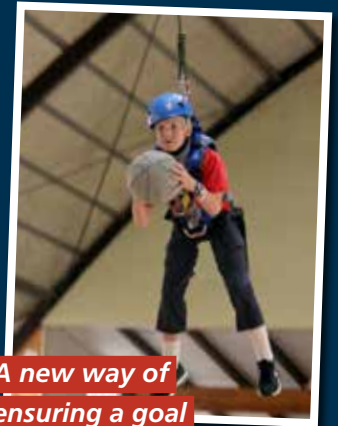
## Emmanuel



*Fun on the hydroslide*



*An uplifting experience*



*A new way of ensuring a goal is scored at basketball!*

## Kidz Connect



*This girl made a superb bee outfit and a book about about bees*



**Bugs Galore**  
Kids Connect 2018

## Wellington



*Fun and participation during the outdoor group activities*



**We welcome your enquiry**