

THE

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ENCOURAGER

The magazine of Elevate Christian Disability Trust



**BIG
CHANGES
IN THE
MINISTRY**



See pages 3, 4 & 5 for more!



I cried out, "I'm slipping!" But your unfailing love, O Lord, supported me.

Psalm 94:18 NLT

As a woman with a physical disability, I am very familiar with the sense of being unsteady on my feet and the fear of falling. Sometimes, there happens to be a good friend nearby, and seeing that I might be in trouble, they rush over to help me and hold me up. In that moment, trusting, I can relax in their care, and ultimately, become steady on my feet. The same is true as we walk closely with God day by day and learn to trust Him completely. Yet in the realities of life, there are so many different ways that we can still slip and fall by the wayside. For instance, sadness, depression, anxiety, pain and negative emotions are all unreliable friends who seek to steer us in the wrong direction. But the Bible tells us that we have a friend who sticks closer than a brother. His name is Jesus. Now, in John 11, the story tells us that Jesus had a best friend called Lazarus. He lived with his sisters, Mary and Martha. One day, Jesus received a message from the sisters that Lazarus was very ill and that He must come at once. Yet Jesus was not concerned, because He knew that although there was going to be a time of hardship for the family, their brother would be fully restored to them. He explained to His disciples that there was no need to panic, or rush there. This tragedy had happened so that people could witness the wonderful works of



God in a miracle. So He delayed His journey for two days. Sometimes through extreme distress, we wonder where God might be. We have called to Him, but He doesn't appear to be listening. Yet this is not true. He is always nearby and knows exactly what our situation is. As the psalmist says, when we cry out, his unfailing love supports us. Whatever the circumstances, He is close at hand.

Arriving at the family home Jesus is welcomed by Martha. She tells Him that she believes that if He had been there Lazarus would not have died. And even now, if He were to ask God, her brother would return to them. So she did believe that Jesus was a holy man who had influence with God. However, when He tried to explain to her that He was the resurrection and the life, the creator of life, and that He could show her the miracle of God's power, she couldn't quite get it. There was no other way, but to demonstrate it. Jesus went to the grave and demanded that the stone be rolled away. At first Martha protested, saying that it was too late. Lazarus had already been dead four days. It is never too late for God to be able to help us in our deep need. If we allow Him, He will come into every one of our circumstances, no matter how bad they are.

"Lazarus," Jesus shouted. "Come out!" As Lazarus walked out of the tomb, Jesus told family and friends to loose him from his grave clothes. God does the amazing miracle of giving us new life. Good people that surround us, help us to move forward so that we can grow and live a fulfilling life. Your unfailing love, O Lord, supports me 24/7.



Perhaps this **Disability Awareness Sunday** you could interview someone in your church who has a disability. Maybe you could speak on Psalm 139. Maybe they could speak on Psalm 139. Maybe you could also share how lockdown has affected them. **Resources, videos, images and ideas are available on our website now.**

This Disability Awareness Sunday is being celebrated on the third Sunday in June i.e. 20th.

Do something in your church, If you need ideas, ring the Centre **09 636-4763**

CAMPS 2021

*Camps intended for this year.
Please take note and put in
your diaries.*

Wellington CFFD	Waikanae	12-14 March
Kids Connect	Auckland	19-21 March
Auckland CFFD	Auckland	26-28 March
Christchurch Day Camp	Christchurch	10 April
Emmanuel Family Camp	Matamata	16-18 April
Joy Ministries National	Matamata	21-23 May
Elevate National Camp	Matamata	22-25 Oct

TO GOD BE THE GLORY GREAT THINGS HE HAS DONE

A HUGE CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP.

Di co-founded the Trust with her husband, Hugh and Margie Willers back in 1976. Since then she led the organisation up to what it is today, impacting thousands of people over the past almost 45 years, and extending it throughout New Zealand and overseas. We thank God for the dedication and commitment of both these two, to people with a disability, and to this organisation. Di will continue to be involved with the organisation both as a Trustee and as an ambassador of the organisation.

Kirsty is taking over as Director - see page 4.



Many tributes were paid in emails for the part they played in New Zealand, such as these three.

“ So awesome that Hugh and Di took hold of this vision On The Knife Edge of Faith, and look where it is now! Started in Auckland, spreading around New Zealand, and then started in the Philippines. Also started a Ministry in Fiji. It is great to see that Kirsty Armitage has caught the vision and is stepping in to the role to lead it forward.

“ We salute Di and Hugh for their faithful service as God's servants to one and all over so many decades - the countless lives they've touched will only be known in heaven.

“ Sorry to hear of your official retirement from Elevate, but so glad you will still be involved in various ways. You have both done an incredible job, and been so faithful and encouraging to many. We very much appreciate your friendship and your drive and enthusiasm.

and we received this email from MacKinly in Malawi. He wrote;

I can't stop here without saying something about Di Willis and Hugh, they are our back bone of serving among people with disabilities. They have such a humble and loving heart for the organisation. The year I knew them, they increased my faith, love and passion to serve among families and individuals with different disabilities. They have planted a lot of seeds worldwide, and some of its fruits we have seen in many lives, and some are still in soil, and we believe in a few days, months, years to come we will see these fruits ready to be served to others. They left such a legacy in Malawi Central Africa. We pray that God will continue to give words of wisdom to keep on mentoring Kirsty and others who have a heart of servanthood.



Kia ora Koutou.

My name is Kirsty Armitage, although many of you will know me as Kirsty Anderson. I recently got married! With the announcement of my new role as Director of Elevate, which starts in May, I thought it would be timely to share a bit about myself.



My involvement with Elevate started when I was 17 years old, volunteering for the first time at Elevate National Camp. The Wiklund's invited me to attend with them, and I haven't missed one since! Our family had been through a lot of changes the year before when my Dad, John Anderson, had a brain haemorrhage. Journeying alongside him through the months of rehabilitation and therapy I was impacted by the therapist's significant input into Dad's life, and our family's lives. This led me to train as an Occupational Therapist. Following study, I went on to work for seven years in a Child Development team.

Growing up with parents who served in children's and youth ministry, volunteering at camps and church has always been a part of my life. My first mission trip was with my mum, Lyn Anderson, to CBM in the Philippines, where I was also able to spend some time seeing the disability ministry there. Since then, I have visited specifically to spend time with the team who are involved in the disability ministry. My Mum continues to work for Children's Bible Ministry, and I love being able to work with her supporting their camp, Kids Connect, for children who live with disability.

In my work as an Occupational Therapist, although I loved working alongside families I was becoming ever so frustrated with the rigidity of systems and processes. People don't fit neatly into categories and boxes!

With an unshakable desire to have a more eternal impact in people's lives I resigned and went to America to do a short internship with Joni & Friends. As well as practical hands-on disability ministry experience, we completed their Beyond Suffering course that explores the Christian view on disability ministry.

These roles and experiences have taught me invaluable lessons and have laid a foundation for my work with Elevate Christian Disability Trust. I have been on staff at Elevate for eight years. Initially my role was three days a week, focusing on supporting churches and National Camp. This has grown and evolved over time to now be full time encompassing many other aspects of the ministry, including Emmanuel Family Camp, volunteer training, writing resources, school visits and speaking engagements.

I am excited for this new role to see what God has in store for Elevate Christian Disability Trust.

This ministry has a significant part to play in seeing God's Kingdom advance both in New Zealand and around the world. I long to see many more people filled with faith, hope and love through our ministries and resources. It is only by us working together that we can achieve what God has entrusted us to do. I am looking forward to this next season and hearing from many of you.

Thank you Hugh

After 43 years, Hugh Willis will be stepping down as Editor of The Encourager Magazine.

The first edition was just two pages of typed words, published in December 1977 under the title Newsletter No. 1 Disabled Christians' Fellowship. The newsletter was written by Margie Willers, typing each letter with a mouth-stick firmly between her teeth. Margie is still very much involved with The Encourager Magazine. Margie heralds how a new Christian Fellowship was established in Auckland, as "God gave us the vision to reach out with love and ministry to the handicapped."



It all started on the 18th of June, earlier in the year, when Hugh and Di hosted a dinner party at their home. Thirty folk attended. Some names mentioned in that very first Newsletter are still very much part of the Elevate whanau, such as Patricia Harder and Margaret Thompson. Fifty copies were run off.

Many of you may not know that Hugh and Di still do all the preparation for the magazine at their home in their spare time. Today we are up to Encourage Magazine issue 170, with 5,400 copies printed. Hugh Willis has spent countless hours sourcing and editing stories that encourage and educate people. He must have written hundreds of articles and taken a thousand photos. Hugh was also the main person to discuss the production of the magazine with the printing company and sharing his

input in the lay-out for each page.

In his own words Hugh wrote: "We so need the Lord to breathe life into the magazine. It's not any cleverness on my or any other person's part that leads to an edition of the magazine that speaks vibrantly to people about how God has moved, as they read the stirring accounts of people with disabilities. We are so dependent on the Lord to bring the right articles across our path. Early on I had to make a decision. Should I hold some articles back so we had something for the next issue? I didn't do this, and the Lord has never failed to supply a series of articles from all sorts of sources – articles read in a magazine, a testimony sent in, a tape I had been listening to, something from the internet, an email, or excellent quotes heard in a sermon, seen in a magazine or sent in by someone."

A message for Hugh?

We would like to put together something to thank Hugh. If you have a message of thanks for Hugh or a testimony of how The Encourager Magazine has impacted you, please send these to info@elevatedt.org.nz or phone us at the Centre on 09 636 4763.

Changes for The Encourager Magazine

Thank you to those of you who filled in our survey last year. This has given us some great feedback to help us plan for the future of the Encourager Magazine and we have loved reading about how The Encourager has and continues to impact. We will be using this information to look at how we can best continue to Encourage, Educate and Equip through this magazine. One change that is happening this year is that we are reducing the number of issues from four to three. The next two issues will now be published in July and November.

Are you a writer?

Are you interested in contributing to future issues of the Encourager Magazine? Are you a writer? Do you blog, write devotions, or perhaps work in journalism? If you are interested in submitting an article or devotion please email us for a submission guideline.

Email encourager@elevatedt.org.nz



LIFE'S RAILROAD

Margie shares an insightful meditation from Psalm 37. Recorded in St. John's Gospel - Jesus declared,

"I AM COME THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE - LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY. A LIFE BEYOND THE ORDINARY!"

Yet, in reality, the majority of Christians grapple with despondency, disillusionment even despair with the 'faith-journey'. We claim to have a strong connection to an almighty God. We can live a victorious life. We can rise above extreme difficulties - and depression. So, what is defeating our living a victorious life-style!?

Allow me to invite you to take a train ride. Let's climb aboard the Canaan Ball Express. This train is bound for the 'Promised Land', known as Canaan to the Israelites. The land which you are going to possess is not like the land of Egypt. Egypt was a place of stress, sorrow and struggle. But Canaan was the place of God-given success, self-worth and spiritual growth.

Likewise, as with the Israelites, we've embarked on a journey heading toward a Heavenly destination. God is our conductor... He will bring us through. However, I caution you concerning 'turn-offs' we need to avoid. One of the earliest passengers on this train was the Psalmist, David. Some people read on trains, but David spent his time writing, and he left a good volume of his work behind when he arrived at his station. One piece of inspirational writing was Psalm 37. It's about the destiny of the wicked and of the good, and brought encouragement and hope to many of God's people. Consider his opening line: "Do not Fret yourself because of evil people, and don't be envious toward wrong doing". He directs our attention to the first turn-off.

FRETVILLE

This is an early station on the journey. Many people everywhere are fretting. What about? David unlocks one reason within the same sentence - ENVY. "Oh I wish I had her stunning body. I wish I owned a magnificent house. Oh man, look at that sports car -

what I wouldn't give to own that sail boat – WOW! There are three suburbs in the township of Envy – Jealousy. Resentment. and Doubt. Now, is it not true we often view the grass looking greener on the other side of the fence. We want what someone else has, we feel negatively toward those who have what we so desire, and we doubt that our own position is what it ought to be. In essence, we doubt that God knows what is good for us.

Verse " 7." It reads, " Fret not for him who prospers in his way." No matter what our gifts are like or how much our possessions have expanded, it's all going to one day be a bonfire. The things that survive a fire are those things that flames cannot touch, such as attitudes of mind and gracious outlooks. The next turn off is back up the page a little way. David has numbered it verse 3. " TRUST IN THE LORD ". He writes, " AND DO GOOD." What's the opposite to trusting the Lord? Allow me to suggest - UNBELIEF, a side track which heads us to a little town called

WORRIVILLE

Surprisingly many Christians dwell in this area. They ask God's blessing, but they delight in being worry-warts! I wonder, do you realise that worry is a sin? Often it's rooted from feeling inadequate to cope. This is not uncommon. Regardless of our circumstances Christians never need to worry. Easier said than done! Try visualising the following: Say someone dumped a truck-load of dirt outside your front door. It's a gigantic problem if you've only a teaspoon to remove it with. But if there's a friend down the road with a bulldozer, that solves the problem. The resources are as big as the situation.

Worry says to God, "You're a liar!" because His Word states: "ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR THOSE WHO LOVE GOD." Worry says, "You don't know my situation. You certainly don't know my mother-in-law or how small my pay packet is." But Paul writes, "My God shall supply ALL YOUR NEEDS according to His riches in Christ Jesus."

Christians have the tremendous privilege of orientating ourselves toward God who is the source of

our ongoing supply. It's imperative we focus our eyes on the Lord and not on the channel by which we are supplied. Our dependence must be on Him.

Psychiatrists explain that worry leads to various problems. These include inferiority complex – poor self - esteem – resentment - anxiety - timidity – a sense of social rejection and depression. Jesus said: "Take a day at a time." Next time you are tempted to complain, ask yourself " What would I exchange for what I have?" You'll discover the scales always tip in favour of God's blessing.

The third turn off as we travel the Canaan Ball Express is noted in David's margin – verse 4. " Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart". About now, the train is chugging into another station....

WISHINGTON

What's the opposite to delighting yourself in the LORD? I figure it would be delighting yourself in " things", wouldn't it? I'm both astonished and grieved by people who've great potential for Christian service who are continually living in Wishington.

Wishington? Where's Wishington?" Oh, I wish I had that person's musical abilities. OH, I wish I could go on a cruise ship holiday... How come the man of my dreams can never be found when I'm awake? Oh how I crave her body. OR I wish I could attain those faith levels. Let's be real - If God's the God of the miraculous, then why doesn't He heal me?' When we are living in Wishington, we can become extremely vulnerable to filling that empty void with substitutes outside the will of God. And life is too short to live outside the will of God. I'm learning from experience that my desires never catch up with my wants. The joy of the Lord is right now, and it's surely not found in things.

Thirty years in public ministry proved an awesomely, amazing adventure in the purposes of God. However, I came to the realisation that lasting fulfilment is not found in "ministry". The fact – and the challenge - is that as we foster and develop a deeper relationship with God, it is He who expands the breadth of our ministry.



Some years back I became a part of an experience that has proved indelible. I found myself surrounded by people who desired to be in a particular sphere of Christian service. For some reason this had been denied them. They crouched at my wheelchair, their hands gripped its rubber tyres – and I grappled with strong emotion as they wept. Through their sobbing, these were the unbelievable words they choked – “Margie, forgive us for being so jealous of this chair – and the ministry it represents” – Jealousy of a wheelchair? Now, that sounds utterly absurd! Allow me to share the following parable. It’s about a school of animals... .. a duck, a rabbit, a squirrel and an eagle who were all required to learn running, swimming, climbing and flying. They all worked most earnestly at the skills of the others, until each was reduced to a level of mediocrity in their own field and none of them excelled at anything. The Apostle Paul wrote: “the body of Christ has many members with varying functions”. God has given unique abilities to each person, however, we must not fail to recognise that with these, each person also has special limitations. St. Paul also wrote: I would NOT boast except in regard to my weaknesses. I figure Paul is challenging us to face up to our limitations – there are certain things we cannot master. It’s a fact of life! In verse 13 of Philippians, Paul shares how he’d learned to be content whatever his circumstances were. If God demands something from me I CAN DO IT, regardless of my circumstances and situation. He will enable me to achieve it but He does NOT impose

upon me something that’s beyond my ‘do-able’. Never forget: God promises to provide all OUR NEEDS – not our wants, neither our wishes. God is a practical thinking God who is outworking His purposes for good in our lives. Therefore, let’s pursue realistic and obtainable goals. Christians are never going to have an impact upon a watching world if we are constantly leaning on fences gazing at greener pastures on the other side. We need to prove to them there’s something greener in our lives than ‘things’. I agree, sometimes God doesn’t seem fair. I don’t know why one person seems to live a financially-blessed-hassle-free-charmed life whilst another experiences trial after trial. I do believe that the outlook is more important in comparison to the view. An omnipotent God works His wonders in a multiplicity of mysterious ways. We can become SOOOOO self-centred - grizzling - grumbling - whining wimps!

Happiness does not come from getting what we don’t have. It comes from an appreciation of what we DO have.

End of part 1.

DO YOU KNOW JESUS?

Often we know **ABOUT** Jesus but we don’t **KNOW** Him.

There are three reasons why you need Him

1. You have a past. You can’t go back, but God can. Read Hebrews 13:8. God can wipe the slate clean and give you a new beginning.
2. You need a friend. Jesus knows everything about you and wants to be your friend.
3. He holds the future. In Jesus you are safe and secure. See Jer 29:11-13

If you want to become born again, ask the Lord for forgiveness, and to come into your life. Jesus is the same today yesterday and forever.



you don't understand.

Forsaking all I trust Him

Faith is not knowing
what the future holds,
but who holds it

True: Faith goes into
operation when there are
no answers -
Elizabeth Elliot

Feed your faith, and
your doubts will starve
to death

Faith is taking the first
step even when you
can't see the whole
staircase

Faith ends where worry begins,
worry ends where faith begins
when man's power ends -
George Muller

Faith means trusting in
advance what will only
make sense in the future -
Philip Yancy

Lord, give me strength in my
weakness, faith in my fear, and
power in my powerlessness





My Journey Into *Suffering*

Wrestling with God



Just over 10 years ago, Timothy Lee survived a serious mountain bike accident. Now living with tetraplegia, he has learnt a lot about suffering and grief. He shares here his developing theology around suffering.

One of Rotorua's popular attractions is luge riding. After a short adrenalin rush down the hill, you reach the chairlift, and it's a long slog uphill compared to the trip down. On reflection, we often think suffering is the shortest part of the ride, and the greater portion of the journey carries little drama. The reality is the other way around, as Job discovered.

"When I lie down, I think, 'How long before I get up?' My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope" (Job 7:4,6 NIV)

In order to survive this arduous journey, we must wrestle with the God who doesn't cause our suffering, but He allows it. Here are my top seven 'experienced theologies' in response.

1

Suffering identifies us as followers of Jesus.

A few years after my accident, I was feeling distant from God. Not able to escape the daily grind, I felt depressed. My wife encouraged me to look into the stages of grief. Coupled with some pointers from a counsellor friend, an ongoing calling in pastoral work, and a curiosity for answers in Job, I've found renewed endurance in life. "The terror and wonder of the book of Job is that God slowly allows Job to walk through the stages of grief and dying, while

admittedly holding his feet to the fire."

Yes, in this world we will always have trouble (John 16:33) – largely due to the brokenness of humanity to sin and the choices we make. We are also subject to natural laws that bring flooding, quakes and diseases. However, suffering also identifies Christians with Christ. [W]e are...heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory (Romans 8:17, NIV) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21, NRSV)

2

Suffering causes us to exercise our prayer muscle.

Technically, I shouldn't be alive, given the trauma to my head. The physicians told my family that if I did survive, I could be on a ventilator for the rest of my life. After initial surgery and the second attempt

to bring me out of an induced coma, I came to, and eventually breathed on my own after 42 days in ICU. I know people prayed, for which I am eternally grateful. F B Meyer saw that in his life experiences “the greatest tragedy of life is not unanswered prayer but unoffered prayer.” We are called to persist in prayer and to give thanks, knowing that God is accomplishing His purposes through the power and intercession of His Spirit. (See Romans 8:26 and 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; James 5:16).

3 **Suffering challenges us to trust God and to discover His kindness toward us.**

We’ve been blessed by others’ generosity. God’s opened unexpected doors and my ministry has become more itinerant, though I’m firmly planted in our church community. I live with fatigue, yet God’s given me a voice, a story and the privilege of connecting with many people. I often hold back my tears when listening to the plight of locals who live on the streets, but I’m humbled by their spiritual maturity and buoyancy in life. They give to me as much as I give to them.

God is always doing the right thing by us, though we may not see it till after the event! Or as Neil Ormerod put it, “Providence can only be recognised looking backwards, with the eyes of faith; seeing the care of God in the midst of suffering.”

Providence in Hebrew speaks of three things: God’s oversight, His availability to visit, and active involvement in our lives. I encourage you to sit with this Scripture:

“You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in Your providence watched over my spirit.” (Job 10:12, NIV)

4 **Suffering enables us to help others with their troubles.**

To paraphrase Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, God comforts us so we can comfort others and help them to endure their suffering. I believe the only reason God’s kept me alive is to encourage others. Not a week passes by without opportunity for me to do that. During lockdown, my neighbour asked if I could take his wife’s funeral. After sharing with family and neighbours at the back of his house, family followed the hearse down the driveway. With lips shaking in grief, my neighbour said, “Thanks Tim, you’ve made my day.”

“Hiding wounds gives a pretence that life is perfect. Licking wounds requests sympathy. Learning from wounds gives us the knowledge to help others.” Despite my trauma, it’s a privilege to travel a journey with others.

5 **Suffering is a platform to reach the lost.**

I’d be lying if I denied ongoing grief and frustration. One morning, I was looking up at the bush line where I used to ride and jog. I felt God clearly say, “Timothy, do you want to run more than win the lost?” Talk about being hit over the head again with a four-by-two! In my heartache, God was challenging me not to lose His heart for my community.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us...We always carry in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. (2 Corinthians 4:7, 10 NIV).

We are cracked pots, not crackpots! Paul says the treasure of God cannot be contained from shining out of our broken lives. All the more is our mandate to share the good news. “Suffering failure, loneliness, sorrow, discouragement, and death will be part of your journey, but the Kingdom of God will conquer all these horrors. No evil can resist grace forever.”

6 **Suffering gives us a broader understanding of healing and the well-being of life.**

I believe in the all-powerful God who is able to heal through the provision of Jesus’ work on the cross. I wouldn’t be here otherwise! But I cannot demand healing. Some doctrines teach that Christians should be materially wealthy, physically healthy and happy. I don’t buy that – neither does God. Our walk with Him is one of mystery – an uncompleted puzzle. So, we need to reconcile the tension between suffering and the well-being of life.

I’m content and I find a sense of well-being in helping others, to weep with them, to pray for and mentor them, to give leadership to them. That’s a meaningful story, and it fulfils something of who I am, even if I can’t walk to the letterbox. “We can flourish, even though we sometimes suffer, if our lives can be invested with meaning.”

But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for



My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Corinthians 12:9-10, NIV).

7 Suffering leads us to see beyond our struggles to where hope is found.

God has provided our needs in multiple ways. Despite having to wrestle with ACC on occasion, it serves me as a world-class system. Each day has its frustrations, but I'm not digging a hole; rather, I am looking to God! As Romans 5:5 tells us, hope will not disappoint us. God didn't take away Job's struggles. He parted the clouds and gave him the ability to see beyond them.

My flesh may be destroyed, yet from this body I will see God. Yes, I will see Him for myself and I long for that moment (Job 19:26-27, CEV)

God has covered me with darkness, but I refuse to be silent. (Job 23:17, CEV)

"My life is not about me – this is the great and saving revelation that comes only from the whirlwind, and we're never ready for it." (See Genesis 50:20; Jeremiah 29:11; 1 Peter 1:6-7; Revelation 21:3-4)

Conclusion...theology in formation

On the day we moved from alert level four to level three, Dr Ashley Bloomfield alluded to the words of theologian and philosopher Soren Kierkegaard: "We live our lives forwards, but understand them looking backwards." If COVID-19 has taught us anything, the world is crying out for release. As God's people, the ecclesia, we have increasing opportunities to lead lost sheep toward fresh pastures, a place to belong to (turangawaewae), and hope beyond grief and despair. I'm a weak shepherd, reliant on the daily support of others, but I can see God's hand of grace in the fabric of my life, and I'm fulfilled inasmuch as He sustains me. "I know that you can do all things; and no plan of yours can be thwarted." (Job 42:2, NIV)

Kia kaha.

Included with permission from an article in the New Zealand Baptist magazine.

Contributor: Rev. Timothy Lee

Timothy has pastored in Baptist churches for over 20 years. He has a number of community roles as missional pastor at Rotorua Baptist Church, and is also transitional minister at St John's Presbyterian Church, Rotorua.

We remember Heydon Bailey

Margie Willers taught him in religious education sessions for children attending Carlson school. In her words Heydon "packed up his earthly tent and moved to his heavenly abode." He soldiered onwards and upwards - pursued making his unique mark for Kingdom purpose. He was always interested in the well-being of others, was caring, compassionate, and a man of unforgettable inspiration. He dreamed a God-dream vision. He prayed and pursued his passion to be in an army, and did so in the Salvation Army.

Ann Mintram taught him for many years at Carlson School. He was God's silent soldier. For 50 years he was not able to communicate verbally, but did so by moving his head to the right. He was so intelligent, faithful, persistent, reliable, and so patient. He was



Heydon at his baptism

dependent on people for everything, but made cards, sent emails to his cyber flock, like Ann, every day, and to many other people. He gave his life to Jesus which changed him to encourage others in their faith.

Heydon came to National Camp several times. He was baptised there, and kept in touch by email sending articles that were inspiring, and some were printed in The Encourager.

COVID-19 Health Update

from Joni Eareckson Tada

As you know I've been struggling with COVID, and I thank you for praying me up and out of it. Although, I don't know, maybe you can tell my lungs are telling me I'm not quite in the clear.

Being a quadriplegic, it was so hard to breathe, especially at night in bed. And when I was told I had COVID, I thought this is a death sentence, but my disability had already taught me how to carry even this cross for when I trusted Him to see me through, even if it did, yes, mean death. When I gave it all up to Him I could feel God take gentle firm possession of this strange affliction and begin to do a work in me. It was as though the Lord pressed me "Joni, do you believe Me, that I will never leave you or forsake you? That I am your ever present help in this trouble? That doubting Me only makes things worse?"



Do you believe My grace is sufficient? Whether I take you home or assign you to remain, do you trust Me? And in the dark in bed, I cried out, "Yes, Lord. I believe!" and then in the ensuing hours and days, I felt this wonderfully odd calmness and almost indifference to how much it might hurt or how it would end, and I felt perfectly still under the hand of God. He pulled me close into His shelter and I felt myself resting in the shadow of the Almighty, and it felt blessed.

G. D. Watson once wrote, "When the suffering soul reaches a calm, sweet carelessness, when it can inwardly smile at its own suffering, and not even ask to be delivered, then it works its blessed ministry. Then the cross you carry begins to weave itself into a crown. When we give our suffering over to God and sink ourselves into His will, He will make every pain work its divine purpose in our lives." I trust my words are helpful to you today, if your suffering is, to you, a complete mystery, I pray you'll embrace God with wilful thanks, finding hope in your hardships.

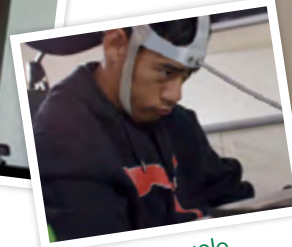
Article written by Manuele Teofilo

Our video "My Dream's Alive" was featured on The State of Faith by Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN).

This video tells the stories of Bonnie Pascoe, Manuele Teofilo and Olivia Shivas. You can watch the video on the flagship program, Praise, which aired on 18th February 2021. You will also hear other testimonies of people from Australia, New Zealand and Antarctica. Also featuring explanations of how the Christian message arrived in these regions and its impact today. We are grateful for our partnership with Symphony, and the amazing films they produce for Elevate. Now one of our videos has been picked up by a global broadcaster, TBN which promotes our story across the globe. It is a privilege to have some Elevate stories included in the series telling the story of the impact Christianity has on people's lives in New Zealand. We encourage you to follow along with The State of Faith exploration of Christianity and see God at work not only in New Zealand, but worldwide! The State of Faith is a multimedia exploration of the history, cultural impact and significance of Christianity



Bonnie



Manuele



Olivia

on today's society. Each week, The State of Faith is exploring how a specific world region has been impacted by Christianity. The journey will include important investigations into the roots of Christianity in the area and powerful stories from the present-day. Through three unique television series, The State of Faith seeks to answer these questions and more:

How did Christianity arrive in this area?
How has Christianity shaped the culture of this land?
How is God at work in this region today?

Go to www.thestateoffaith.com for more information, and on how to watch.



Kia Ora, my name is Kim Clark, also affectionately known as **Kimbo.**

This is my testimony.



Background

I was born in Auckland, New Zealand. I was born with two older sisters and an older brother. My Dad is NZ European and my Mum is NZ Maori/European. When I was born by c-section, I had to be resuscitated. I couldn't breathe. My body was floppy, and doctors didn't know why. I spent most of my first year of life going in and out of the hospital.

Eventually, I had a muscle biopsy and the doctors examined my muscle to find I had a condition called Centronuclear Myopathy. This means the nuclei in the cells are abnormally located in the center of the cell, and this causes muscle weakness. Doctors had little information about my condition. There were a lot of unknowns for the doctors, and so then too, for my family. Even though there were unknowns, I think this was great for my parents because it meant my life wasn't limited to what the doctors knew, and therefore what I would be able to achieve. They themselves didn't know my limits, and so this gave my parents freedom to find out my limits on their own.

Outlook

From day one, growing up with three older siblings, in my house, "you can't" was never spoken over me.

Growing up with three older siblings, I did what they did, and I was given the same opportunities albeit in a modified capacity. My parents went out of their way to include me in everything we as a family did. Even now, if one of my siblings wants to go to an event, trip or show, they always check to see if the rest of the family doesn't want to come along too. We move as a pack and no one gets left out. **My parents have brought me up saying that nothing is impossible.**

Disability

When it comes to disability, for me, I never say "I'm disabled". When I speak, I purposely say "I have a condition called C.M.", "I have an impairment.". For me, "disability" is just a negative label. If someone tells you they're disabled your thoughts aren't going to be "they can achieve anything" it's more likely going to be the opposite.

One of my biggest dreams is to live in a world where all people with impairments are seen as having potential. To live in a world where no one is discounted because of their abilities or inabilities. **If I will do anything in this world it will be to work towards changing people's perspectives so that when people see an impaired person they will see what they can do before what they can't do.**

Faith/Jesus

I have been involved in church my whole life. When I was born there was so much support for my family from people at church. People would cook meals for my family and would look after my siblings while my parents were in the hospital with me. My church family was always there for me and my family. I'm so grateful for them.

I went to church every week and learnt about Jesus. When I was 11, I attended an Easter Camp where I gave my heart to Jesus and made Him Lord over my life. I wanted to be a part of His family and be His daughter. Over the years my relationship with Jesus has grown deeper and I have come to trust Him in everything I do. When I'm going through hard times, I remember that He holds everything together, and so I need not worry about anything.

One might ask questions around being in a wheelchair and "how are you so positive?" I would say that I am positive because in God's Word it says that "I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and His workmanship is wonderful". This tells me that when God created me the way He did, He didn't make mistakes. I believe God made me so that I might be an encouragement to you.

means you can, as long as ever you can.
Nesley

Life

With the help of my family, my friends and Jesus I have been able to achieve so much in my life. I have lived life to the full. Even when people don't build ramps to footpaths, my siblings lay their feet down so I can roll over them as a ramp and get up bumps. Such a sacrifice. **With the help of my family, my friends and Jesus** I was able to complete my degree in Applied Management from Manukau Institute of Technology. My major was in Accounting, but from working as the Disability Representative at MIT for three years of my study and advocating for people who otherwise would have missed out on opportunities, I found this way more enjoyable than the actual degree. People who have impairments have something to offer to society, and I long for the day

when all people know this and see their abilities first. **With the help of my family, my friends and Jesus** every difficulty I've faced in my life I've been able to overcome. I've had to deal with so many people who first off say "no you can't". **With the help of my family, my friends and Jesus** I can say "how I can". Without the help of my family, friends and my Jesus I would have nothing.

I believe in JOY and I believe that true joy comes from Jesus. Difficulties WILL come in life – even God says they will, and we have a choice in how we respond. For me, I choose joy. I choose to be grateful for what I have and thankful that God walks beside me in my difficulties.

Choose
JOY.



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

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Bible Friends - Wanganui

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THRIVE - Greerton Bible Church, Tauranga

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There was a great gathering of combined branches at Palmerston North on November 20 attracting participants from Wellington, Hawkes Bay, Palmerston North, Whanganui, Masterton and New Plymouth - Vanessa Creamer and Debbie Ward were the speakers.



WHAT IS ELEVATE CHRISTIAN DISABILITY TRUST ALL ABOUT?

We are an interdenominational parachurch organisation.
We run meetings and camps throughout NZ.
We have four groups:

- **CFDD** (Christian Fellowship for Disabled) mainly for folk with physical disabilities.
- **Joy Ministries** mainly for those with intellectual disabilities.
- **Emmanuel** for families with children with disabilities.
- **Torch** for those who are blind or visually impaired.

We have a Centre in Auckland which is our main office, and where we also run a **Drop In Centre** three days a week. We welcome people with disabilities, volunteers and family members.

"We
welcome
your
enquiry"

NATIONAL SUPPORT OFFICE

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