

# The Encourager

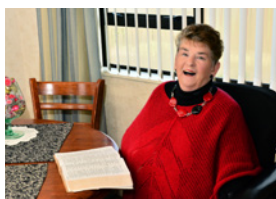
The magazine of Elevate Christian Disability Trust

Issue. 176 | March 2023

*In loving memory of Margie Willers*



# Contents



**4** Margie Willers – From Pain to Pearls



**8** Technology opens up new world for Marci



**9** Volunteer Spotlight – Heather Major

**10**



Get involved!

**11**



Elevate National Camp '23

## Welcome

Margie (Margaret) Willers, our co-founder, went to be with the Lord on the 7th of February 2023, aged 75 years. She lived her life in honour of God and in obedience to His call on her life. Margie impacted many people, through her speaking, writing, co-founding of this ministry and anyone she met. About the beginning of the vision of this ministry, Margie wrote...

“Upon graduation from Bible College, I was twenty-eight years of age – I’ll not deny the fact, I felt totally out of my depth for I was green as grass. Nevertheless, my wholehearted desire was to obey the Lord: to step out into new ventures to help others.

The prospect of beginning a work amongst disabled people absolutely blew my mind. I felt my weaknesses, my inadequacies. But I knew that God birthed something within my spirit. A dream. A vision that refused to die.

As I pondered that dream, I envisaged an inter-denominational organisation with a focus on evangelism. A Christian organisation with a focus on evangelism. A Christian organisation that would challenge and encourage and provoke disabled people to discover their greater potential; their own God-given vocations. To become people of destiny.

To me it was imperative that the Church and the community be awakened to the needs of disabled people. Likewise, that the Church be encouraged to embrace people who were ‘different’ - and that disabled have opportunity within the Church for utilising their spiritual gifts and abilities.”

We are grateful to Margie for obeying God’s calling, for her willingness to start when the vision seemed big, and the realities of her disability did too. She has left a legacy that will continue to impact many people. Not long before her passing we were able to interview Margie. An article about her life is included in this issue. May you be blessed as you read about Margie’s life.

### Blessings

**Kirsty Armitage | Director**

### Sign Up to our E-Newsletter

If you would like to sign up to receive our monthly E-newsletter you can do so by scanning the QR code or by contacting us at the office.



# Devotion



## Excel in Prayer

Jabez prayer: *“Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me...God granted him that which he requested”* –

**1 Chronicles 4:10 (KJV)**

Jabez' most important characteristic was that he was known as a man of prayer. First, he called on God to bless him. He desired God's very best for his life because if he was to be a blessing to others he must also seek God's blessing on his own life.

His love and devotion to God give him a vision of an enlarged coast, souls without God. He had a heart full of compassion to reach them. Is the prayer of your life, “Enlarge my coast and give me a harvest of souls?”

Jabez prayed for the touch of God's hand to be upon his life, guiding and directing him. “Oh that Thine hand might be with me.” Is the touch of His hand upon your life?

He prayed that he would be kept from evil so that he wouldn't be grieved. Evil in his life would not only bring sorrow to God, but also to himself.

God honoured his humble prayer life and granted him that which he requested.

“Above all he excelled in prayer”. If God were to record the most important characteristic of your life, would it be your faithfulness in prayer?

We are all called to prayer - let us excel and avail ourselves to this ministry. Jesus is alive - He hears and answers prayer!

**By Margie Willers**

*This devotion was taken from issue 15*



**Disability Awareness Sunday 2023**

This year Disability Awareness Sunday in New Zealand is on the **18th of June**. In the lead up to this event we will be sharing some resources with you via our e-newsletter.



## Margie Willers – From Pain to Pearls

*Please note that since this article was written Margie has passed away. We are deeply grateful for all she gave to this ministry and to the Kingdom of God.*

Sitting with Margie in a Care Home in Mt Maunganui I am deeply moved. The co-founder of CFFD (now Elevate Christian Disability Trust) is completely bed-bound, unable to sit at her computer, unable to do anything for herself. Her speech difficulties mean residential care situations are difficult, it's an endless struggle communicating with staff, many of whom only speak English as their second language. But this is not why I am moved.

Margie tells of the birth of CFFD and her story, a story that is as intricately woven into the beginnings of the ministry as Di's story is. From being called 'Rubbish' by one of her first teachers, to becoming an international speaker and writer, Margie's life is a testimony to the transforming power of God.

Margaret means "pearl", and Margie loves this picture of herself. Like her namesake, God has taught Margie to turn the sandy irritations of her disability into a beautiful pearl for His glory. Jennifer Rees Larcombe said it this way, "Margie is frequently being told if only she had more faith she would be healed. I can tell you from experience that it takes infinitely more faith to go on serving and loving God in a wheelchair than ever it takes to walk away from one."

Margie was born in January 1948 in New Plymouth,

after her mother endured a three-day labour.

The birth itself was complicated and the lack of oxygen caused what was later diagnosed as cerebral palsy. A thorough medical examination at 10 months revealed she had athetoid cerebral palsy, the most severe degree of disability a child could have.

In spite of the negative predictions and slow progress, her mother never gave up on her first child,.. She encouraged and prayed for Margie, allowing her to explore and create, believing she had a fulfilling future ahead. Her mother gave her the most precious gifts of all, her love and her time.

It became evident that Margie faced some painfully huge hurdles. Even though the medical profession's advice was to "put her away into an institution and forget about her," Her mother was determined to help her learn to read, write, run and dance! She believed her daughter had a meaningful future. After joining the Crippled Children's society her intelligence was quickly recognised and it was felt she would receive the best help by sending her to the Cerebral Palsy Unit attached to Rotorua's Queen Elizabeth Hospital. So, when Margie was four and-a-half her parents made the painful and difficult decision to send her there for therapy and schooling. The seven years were ones of rigid discipline but they prepared Margie for her future education and gave her a determination to succeed.



In 1959 she returned home and began attending Te Puke Primary School. Despite her difficulties with writing and speech, she soon proved she was as intelligent as her classmates. However, not all teachers understood Margie and her disability made for huge adaptations in an already busy classroom.

One teacher called her 'Rubbish', however later introduced her to a typewriter. This proved to be a Godsend, opening doors in reading and writing which her next teacher, Brian Dixon, capitalised on. He saw Margie's potential and focussed on achievable goals to expand her skills. This eventually led to computers, which has been such a blessing; enabling her to write emails, devotions, talks, and later her two books. A pearl has surely come from the so called 'rubbish.'

But Margie's dream was to be healed, to get out of her wheelchair, to be free of the restrictions of her disability, and to have a useful fulfilling ministry for the Lord. So when the English faith healer, Harry Greenwood, came to town, she and her friend Kathy went to his healing meeting. Here she had an amazing introduction to the power of God to heal and save souls. She also had a vision of a beautiful young woman standing on the stage wearing a beautiful yellow dress! Every part of her body was perfect and co-ordinated. Then she realised that woman was her! She had a microphone in her hand and was preaching a powerful message to the audience before her.

## *...As the years went by God gave Margie an unfolding vision of what this new ministry would look like.*

This encounter filled her with hope, and soon after led her to take a trip to California to hear the great healing evangelist, Kathryn Kuhlman. In March 1975, she flew to LA supported by her friend Molly, with her yellow dress ready in her luggage! Here she met up with her sister Helen. They attended two of Kathryn Kuhlman's miracle services with great expectations – but no physical healing. She went home devastated, disappointed and feeling a failure – she must have lacked faith not to be healed. It was so painful to pick up the pieces and face the future – still in her chair.

But God. He wasn't finished with her yet! He had new friends to encourage her and a new ministry for her to fulfil. Margie had known Di Willis for some years. Di was an Occupational Therapist who remembers watching Margie typing at a Paraplegic Conference. Di and Margie soon became best friends. After her disappointment in America, they became like sisters as Margie spent holidays in the Willis's wheelchair accessible home in Auckland. While





attending the Willis's church she met Joy Smith, a former missionary, now on the pastoral team of that church. Joy encouraged Margie to come to a place of surrendering her life, and healing, to God. Joy saw a picture of doors being opened by Margie's wheelchair; a revelation of the future ministry Margie would have. These friendships were part of God's healing process, bringing beauty from the ashes, pearls from the pain.

As the years went by God gave Margie an unfolding vision of what this new ministry would look like. He would use her as she was, with her talents and wheelchair, to open doors that would otherwise be closed. God answered her cry for how to do this through **Jeremiah 33:3**, *"Call unto me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you know not."* He led her to attend Faith Bible College, in Tauranga, as a student. This truly was a step of faith as Margie overcame the hurdles of adjusting to the limitations of her disability as she lived full-time on campus for 18 weeks. It was a learning curve for Margie, students and the lecturers, and by no means easy. But she was determined to prepare herself for the ministry God had called her to. It was to be a time of learning and revelation, and a further yielding to God's purposes for her life. Here she received some clear visions bringing healing of the past non-healing and revelation for the future.

One prophetic word was, "The church needs your voice. There are hundreds of people who still live in institutions. They are in wheelchairs... they are angry, rejected by society. .... They will not hear eloquent preachers....."

The disabled need a strong prophetic voice from their own ranks that will point them to Christ. .... You understand their speech. .... You can identify with them. God has touched your life. He has called you and chosen you to call others to follow the way of the cross. He wants you to be a voice to the church for the disabled."

It became so clear that Margie wrote, "My responsibility was to evangelise the disabled, and help the church to accommodate them, accept them, relate to them and develop their potential." She later wrote, "It was not to be a sympathy ministry but an empathy and answer ministry."

As Margie shared her vision with Di Willis, she discovered that God had laid a similar burden on Di's heart. Together they prayed, shared ideas and visited people with disabilities in their homes and institutions. Eventually they planned an event in Hugh and Di's home in Auckland for these folk - their first dinner party, just like the banquet described in Jesus' parable in **Luke 14**. They went *"into the highways and byways and invited the blind, lame, and maimed to come and dine."* The Willis's lounge was packed with people - some in wheelchairs, some with white canes, others with slow speech and awkward gait; all there to hear the vision for a Christian ministry for people with disabilities.

And so Christian Fellowship for Disabled (CFFD - now Elevate) was born, a fellowship of people so long rejected and ignored not only by society but also the church. Now they were being welcomed and accepted,

as Margie and Di began speaking to church groups, women's gatherings, Bible Colleges, and included in the life of the church. She would even return to Faith Bible College as a guest lecturer! (She was nominated as their favourite in 1991!)

Writing her autobiography, "Awaiting the Healer", was another step of faith for Margie. The aim of writing was not to receive accolades but to share with the church at large some of the realities of living with a disability. With her trusty Woody Woodpecker wand, she laboriously began tapping out page after page. It took her three years of painstaking effort, but in 1992 Margie received recognition from NZ Christian Booksellers' Association and won the Silver Award for that year.

Publishing her book was only the beginning of a demanding schedule with speaking and promotion of sales for the next 18 months. Her life's story was an outreach which lifted the bar for CFFD and the Christian Ministries for Disabled Trust (now Elevate Christian Disability Trust). Margie's season as a CMWDT trustee ended in 1990 because of her busy schedule, but as her audiences and readership grew, they gained insight and understanding of the scope of the work amongst disabled folk. People became extremely big hearted and financially supported the growing ministry throughout NZ.

Camps soon became a vital part of the organisation – both on a national level and in the regions. The National Camp at Labour Weekend at Totara Springs, Matamata, became a permanent fixture from 1983. Young and old, no matter the disability or denomination, all who attend have been impacted by these gatherings and Margie has been the speaker many times.

While living in Auckland, Margie had an opportunity to teach Bible-in-Schools. Cherry Lewis, a friend of the ministry, invited her to teach her class at the Carlson School for Cerebral Palsy in Mt Roskill. Cherry wrote to Margie, "You are leaving such an incredibly amazing legacy. Your life as a Christian woman of God is an outstanding example to us all. You once wrote about an outreach project giving you a joy-filled and faith-filled sense of purpose and fulfilment. She said Margie thrived having a project. One project has been painting: from pictures to Christmas cards to pottery and her beautifully decorated stones with a message.



*Margie and Di speaking in 1980*

Margie's second book "Undaunted Faith," was published in October 2004 and dedicated at her home church, Beatty Avenue Bible Chapel. This book contains 48 inspirational meditations, anecdotes and short stories especially for the clergy and those in Christian ministry. Margie shares from the godly wisdom she has gained on her own journey with disability.

She lived in the family home until 2018 with carers coming in each day to support her. For the last three of those years, her dear sister Helen was her live-in companion. The demands for Margie to be constantly on the ministry circuit plus attending camps proved to be draining, and slowly this took a toll upon her body, meaning she could no longer appear on the public platform. However, Margie continued to use her trusty Woody Woodpecker to type up her regular devotions and articles for this magazine, blessing many with her 'pearls' of encouragement.

Margie continues to be a shining 'pearl' as she witnesses to staff and visitors alike at the Care Home. Margie wanted to leave you with this encouragement from. ***Ecc 3:1*** *For everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven.* Through all the seasons in her life Margie has sought to bring glory to God, as she has allowed him to flow through her. In re-reading Margie's book, and in interviewing her, I've been so moved and reduced to tears at times. Her story truly brings glory to God as she submitted her life to Him in the midst of her trials. May you be inspired by her story and allow God to turn your Pains into Pearls.

#### **By Heather Vincent**

*Heather lives in Tauranga with her husband, Brian. They have both been involved in Elevate since attending National Camp in 1985. Her book, It's All Right Mum!, was published by Daystar in 2004.*

## Technology opens up new world for Marci

Musician and busker Marci Rota loves looking up song lyrics online and using YouTube to make her own playlists.

But rewind a year, and Marci didn't even have a mobile phone.

A friend asked her how they could keep in touch, which started the ball rolling on her technology journey.

She began working with Blind Foundation Adaptive Communications/Adaptive Technology Services Trainer Bavani Suresh.

"Bavani suggested that I start off with a basic smartphone, and that's how it started," says Marci.

From text messages and calls, her interest expanded into surfing the internet.

"One of the reasons I started doing it is because I'm a busking musician and I like to look up songs and their lyrics so I can listen to them and learn them from YouTube."

Marci also uses the screen-reading programme Talkback and sends emails and texts, makes calls, listens to the radio and makes playlists online of her favourite music.

"Marci is an amazing student," says Bavani.

"She picks up tips and techniques so quickly. She has now become a true techie."

Her new skills are especially helpful for the holiday season, as she is able to look up and learn Christmas songs to perform while busking in Manurewa a suburb in South Auckland.



Marci has been busking for about 10 years, playing the guitar and singing. She learned to play the piano as a student at Homai College, recently finishing piano grades six, seven and eight. For many years she enjoyed performing at the Manurewa Baptist Church.

She mostly performs easy-listening songs and seasonal music while she's busking, but loves listening to a wide variety of musical genres.

"There's so much now that I've got the internet and YouTube. My favourite genres are R'n'B, funk, jazz and classic rock, also a bit of punk, blues, reggae and soul, and I'm starting to get into a little bit of country music."

When she has the time, Marci also likes to sing karaoke.

Marci acknowledges other musicians with low vision for influencing her music journey.

"I'd like to give a big thanks to Allan Witana, Catherine Stevenson, Mark Laurent and Josie Kurie. They have been a huge support."

Marci encourages blind people or those with low vision to share their music with their local community.

**By Bavani Suresh**

*This article was originally published by Blind Low Vision NZ in their publication Outlook, Autumn 2017, and is used with their permission.*





# Volunteer Spotlight

## Heather Major

I have been involved with CFFD Waikato since the lovely late Edith Morris and her husband Noel hosted a hui\* at their house in February 2012 with Di and Hugh about CFFD Waikato being resurrected. The group had been in recess for 10 years as I recall and Athaline Morris (no relation) was the previous leader who had to stop due to her health. Andrea Buchanan and Monique Briggs were the first team to pray and lead, then I joined them later.

My late husband Glenn was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 1997. When Princess Diana died, Glenn was recovering from neurosurgery. The world was grieving but our little world had been rocked off its hinges.

When our daughter Rachel was born in 2002, Glenn had two days left of radiotherapy. A year later it became apparent he had some radiation necrosis, which for him meant things like speech, mobility and fatigue were affected. It was a new aspect of our journey.

My mum had heard of Elevate (or CMWDT as it was then) but I wasn't sure I could handle the idea of my husband being disabled and having a brain tumour. I heard a quote on the radio today and wonder if I was subconsciously thinking at the time that "the certainty of misery (cancer) was preferable to the misery of uncertainty (not knowing what the disabilities would be and how they would progress)". That fear didn't last long and going to camp was a huge education for me. Life is for living. Let's get on with it!

When Rachel was only a toddler, we went to our first Elevate National Camp. Di Willis (co-founder of Elevate) replied to my enquiry about camp, "Oh some people have had to pull out and they were in the lodge, so clearly you are meant to come." Rachel's now almost 21, so it seems a long time ago since that first camp. It was memorable because we were getting our heads around the idea of living with disabilities whereas before that we had been living with cancer. Glenn went to his eternal home in December 2011.



Heather Major and her daughter Rachel

***“We focus on what we can do, with each member of the group doing something to participate, and with Jesus at the centre of it all.”***

I have been leading CFFD Waikato since 2013. Annette Viviani joined me in 2020 to be my co-leader as my other jobs, minister at All Saints Community Church in Hamilton and part-time chaplain at Waikato Hospital, also keep my weeks full.

CFFD Waikato meets every second Friday at 11.45am. Lunch, fellowship and laughter, celebrating birthdays, discussions, praying for each other, singing and Bible study are all part of what we do. We also like to have visitors come and talk to us.

Marc Van de Laar, Cathy Harbour and I take turns to lead the Friday meetings. Marc plays guitar and often our friend Tom Kelly plays keys and Rentia DeVries does solos for us quite often.

Highlights for CFFD Waikato over the past few years have been when we hosted Canon Andrew White (Vicar of Baghdad), and when we went to Mt Maunganui on a bus and used the beach mats so we could go onto the beach.

I continue leading CFFD Waikato today, with Annette Viviani, because we are whānau. I can't imagine our group not being part of my life! We journey life together, with Jesus as our guide. We don't get hung up on what we can't do (e.g. I don't have much time with two jobs). We focus on what we can do, with each member of the group doing something to participate, and with Jesus at the centre of it all.

\*Māori term that means meeting

# Get involved!

## How can you be involved with Elevate?

There are many ways that you can become involved with Elevate Christian Disability Trust.

**Prayer** - Pray for the ministry, the people, the provision, the opportunities!

**Promotion** - Let others know about us! Give The Encourager magazine to someone who needs it today. Like and share our different Facebook pages and posts. Read our blog articles and share them with your church, friends and whānau.

**Practical** - Come and volunteer at the Drop-in centre, regional branches, national or regional camps or at the national support office in Onehunga.

**Provision** - by donation, automatic payment, sponsorship, bequest, or through goods and services.

Contact us at [info@elevate.org.nz](mailto:info@elevate.org.nz) to find out more or to register your skills/abilities so we can link you in to our next suitable project or event. Also, get in contact to find out where we have regional branches around New Zealand.

### Donate

To make a donation to Elevate Christian Disability Trust using a Credit Card please visit <https://elevate.org.nz/support-us/> or Internet Banking.

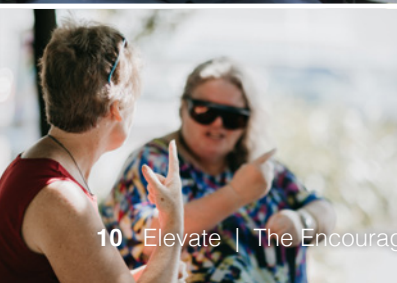
### Our bank account details are:

Elevate Christian Disability Trust  
Account: 01-0142-0029706-00 (ANZ).  
Please include your name and the word **“DONATION”** as a reference.

Donate



SCAN ME



### We would love to hear from you!

Have you been encouraged or impacted by one of our articles? Do you know someone whose story would encourage others?

Email us at [encourager@elevate.org.nz](mailto:encourager@elevate.org.nz)  
Phone us on **09 636 4763**

**COME  
CELEBRATE!**

# **Elevate National Camp**

**20th - 23rd October 2023**

Totara Springs Christian Centre

*We have an international guest speaker!*

***Sign up to receive National Camp Update emails!***

<https://elevatecamp.org.nz/national-Camp/>



**SCAN ME**

## Do You Want to Hear Some Good News?

**God loves you dearly!** John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

**He offers you salvation from the wrong things you have done!** Ephesians 2:8 “God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God.”

**You can belong to His family and have a fresh start!** 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.”

**God wants you to have hope!** Romans 15:13 “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

*If you would like to become a Christian (a follower of Christ) you could pray something like the following. Lord, I admit that I have done things that are wrong. Thank you that you have died to take away all my sins. Please forgive me. I receive your forgiveness now. I want to live for you, and live life with you, every day. Thank you for loving me. I receive your love. Amen*

**Did you pray this prayer?** We would love to connect with you and help you find a church to connect with. Feel free to email us at [prayer@elevate.org.nz](mailto:prayer@elevate.org.nz) or phone us on **09 636 4763**.

### 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:

- **CFFD** (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

173 Mt Smart Road, Onehunga, Auckland • PO Box 13-322, Onehunga, Auckland, 1643

Ph: +64 9 636 4763 • Email: [info@elevate.org.nz](mailto:info@elevate.org.nz) • Website: [www.elevate.org.nz](http://www.elevate.org.nz)

