



NOVEMBER 2010 ISSUE 129

The ENCOURAGER

EVANGELISE EQUIP EDUCATE

Magazine of the Christian Ministries with Disabled Trust



Margaret Thomson giving her message before communion at National Camp

Joni writes

FROM THE HEART

By now you've heard that some months ago I underwent surgery for breast cancer. Yes, it's a shock, and some wondered, Quadriplegia... chronic pain... now cancer? Isn't that a bit much? Yes, it's a lot. But then again...

I've met people with disabilities in Africa or India, and when I've witnessed their desperate plight, I've wondered the same:

Lord, how do they do it, bearing so many burdens?! I even have a photo of a disabled African man on the wall above my desk—this precious man is paralysed, covered with sores, lives in intractable pain and barely survives in his tiny lean-to hut with nary a medical clinic for miles. He inspires me to keep going—my problems are nothing compared to the way most disabled people like him live!



Something else inspires me. Ephesians 3:10: *"It's now God's purpose that, through the church, His manifold wisdom should be made known to the powers and principalities in the heavenly realms."* Translation? With this cancer, my life is on display; yes, before family, friends, and disabled people around the world (like that man in Africa). But mostly, my life is on display before millions of unseen beings who are intensely interested in my response to cancer. It's why you'll find me quoting The Apostle's Creed out loud these days, or reciting verses long-memorized, or singing (or speaking) as many stanzas of hymns that I can remember. I have to do this—it's the only way, (the best way) to keep this cancer in perspective. My husband, Ken, and I are in a cosmic battle and we are heaven-bent on making certain the unseen world (in front of which we are all on display) learns a thing or two about our great and wonderful God!

I have one more inspiration. It's you. So many supporters of Joni and Friends have sent heart-warming cards of encouragement and emails! And you have reminded me that now is the time to marshal my faith, remember needy people like that man in Africa, and keep moving onward and upward, following the Captain of Our Salvation. Jesus is the Lord of my life...and I can't think of a better reason to persevere than to continue to serve my blessed Saviour together with you for years to come here at Joni and Friends! Thank you for joining me in that exciting vision!

taken from a recent Joni and Friends Newsletter

CHRISTMAS EVENTS FOR THE BRANCHES

As this magazine is unlikely to be received before 25th November some branch celebrations will already be over, but these ones are still to come:

- **Wellington CFFD** Sat 27 Nov at St Mary's Anglican Church, Discovery Drive, Whitby 5-9pm with dinner at 6pm. \$25
 - **Auckland CFFD** Friday 26 Nov at Fairway Lodge, Takapuna 7 - 9.30 pm \$40
 - **Torch** Sat 27 Nov from 11 to 3.30. at "The Centre". Bring a plate for lunch. Bay of Plenty Torch and others will be sharing.
 - **Taranaki CFFD** Sat 4 Dec at Cobb and Co \$19 5.30 pm
 - **Hawkes Bay CFFD** Sat 11 Dec at Hot Chick, Napier 11.30 am \$10
 - **Joy Ministry East** Sat 27 Nov at St Columba 10 am
 - **Christchurch CFFD** Sat 11 Dec at The Groynes
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CAMPS IN 2011

- **Auckland CFFD** at Carey Park 18 - 20 March
- **Wellington CFFD** at El Rancho, Waikanae 4 - 6 March
- **Camp Connect** (Children's Bible Ministry) at Motu Moana, Blockhouse Bay, Akl following on from last year's first Kidz Camp 25 - 27 March
- **Torch** at Capernwray, Cambridge 14 - 17 April
- **National CMWDT** Camp at Totara Springs Matamata 23 - 26 October (This will be the 30th anniversary of our camps at Totara Springs)

Don't forget the Greg Laurie Crusade 24 - 26 June at Vector Arena, Auckland and the combined meeting for Hawkes Bay, Wellington and Manawatu CFFD branches on the 20 Feb.

MESSAGES FROM THIS YEAR'S NATIONAL CAMP

You can purchase messages from camp. Send \$10 to P.O. Box 13-322, Onehunga, and we will send out a CD which includes messages from:
Ps Geoff Wiklund - personal testimony and 'Stepping Out'
Ps Owen Wagener - Rebuilding the Walls
Testimonies of Anya and first time helpers

ACTIVITIES AT



The Slingshot, a new activity at camp, proved to be a real "hit"



Water through the pipes - an ever-popular team contest

NATIONAL CAMP



Craft activities are always very popular in the Joy Ministries group



Praise and Worship

WHAT CAMP HAS MEANT TO ME

Christine Berkers, a Lifeway student

This was my first year coming to camp, and it was incredible! The people there were so beautiful, both the buddies and the helpers. I met some amazing people I learnt so much from them. The best part of camp for me was seeing all the smiles, and it was so encouraging to see their relationship with God.

Julian Ramsden from Nelson

This was my first visit to the Totara Springs Christian Camp. Upon arrival it hit me, 18 years old, and for the first time ever, I did not stand out in the crowd. Nobody was staring at me. I was just another pebble on the beach. I feel overcome with happiness, and could almost cry tears of joy.



Ellen Miller, a YWAM student

God is so good. I want to thank God for how His glory shines in so many different ways. This weekend as a first time helper I had the privilege to serve God and people with disabilities. When I first heard we were coming to Camp I was so excited to see what God was going to teach me. This weekend God revealed to me that He uses everyone, no matter their appearance, to glorify His kingdom. I thank God that He made us all unique in His image so that we can tell all people about Him. Thank you for a fabulous weekend! God bless you all.

Dave Palmer, the leader of Christchurch CFFD

What impressed me most was the fantastic efforts of the young first-timers who pitched in as carers. You guys were all awesome and a credit to your generation. Thank you.

It was an enormous privilege for the 13 of us from Christchurch to be there. Last year we made the decision to come, and most of us booked our air tickets early in the year, which made it cheaper. We are very grateful to the Canterbury Community Trust who helped with funding. We also did some fund-raising ourselves. This meant that our branch was able to pay for the two Wheelchair taxi vans from Auckland to Matamata.

For some of us it's been a nice respite from the earthquake and its aftershocks. The fellowship, the fun, the weather, the new friends made, the old friendships renewed, and most importantly the presence of the Lord, made this a camp that none of us from the offshore island will ever forget.

I was incredibly apprehensive!!!

I came to camp as a first-timer, bringing along with me my first-timer expectations. To say I was nervous about camp is a bit of an understatement. I was in fact incredibly apprehensive about bonding with an individual I had never met who had a disability I had never dealt with.

I suppose I had constantly in my mind that I was here to be a servant, regardless of my comfort, and I would do everything in my power to serve in my best capabilities.

As it turns out, I have since learned a thing or two about the term “serving”. What I saw in terms of compassion, love, understanding and encouragement blew the top off anything I could have ever tried to create on my own. I found that in my measly attempt to “give” I was given so much in return by simply attending camp.

The encouraging words of my buddy Trish Harder comforted me when learning new things about her condition, and the friendships I made will stick with me until this time next year, at the next camp. The kindness demonstrated in this camp was something surpassing of age, culture, gender, and disability. It is unique to anything I have ever experienced, and I feel so blessed to have been a part of it, and to have received in my small giving something infallible and irreplaceable.

Rachel Balderston, Eastgate Christian Centre

Angela Boyson

(photo on right)

Wow! Camp was so inspiring for me as a helper. So many people disabled and able bodied all praising God. I could feel God working through me and everyone at camp. Everyone was smiling, no matter how tired we were. Camp was jam packed. Every minute of every hour there were activities to do, from worship to speakers to games to swimming and more!

My buddy Helen and I clicked, and I had an amazing weekend with her. She has been coming to camp for over 10 years and I learnt so much about God and living from her. I was so honoured and happy to be her buddy.



THE TRUST BRINGS ANYA OUT FROM RUSSIA



For some time Joy McRae has been telling us about the tremendous potential of a young Russian lady, Anya Tsybina, who despite having cerebral palsy persisted with her University studies and obtained after 5 years a degree in “Translating and Interpreting”. Anya spent 20 years in a wheelchair, but 8 years ago had the first of 4 operations, spread out over the following 4 years, which resulted in her being able to walk with crutches. As you will read on the next page Anya had become a Christian at an early age and she longed to share her faith with others with disabilities. Three years ago she started a Bible Study once a week in her own home with four others - all with cerebral palsy.

Hearing this the National Camp committee had no hesitation in investing many thousands to bring her out to New Zealand to attend the camp and to gain as much as she could through spending time at the Centre and visiting other key disability connections. Anya says she has picked up many ideas to expand her ministry in Russia, but pointed out she will need to start slowly and be guided by the Lord in the way to go. It comes as a shock to realise that until a law change came in just this month, those with disabilities have not been allowed to work in Russia and were expected to exist on a very meagre pension, and were not even allowed to start a course of studies.

From her helper Jess Kemp

WHAT ANYA HAS TAUGHT ME

My experience at National Camp was a special time. To be honest I was scared about coming to camp and didn't know if I even wanted to be there. But once I got there and met up with my awesome buddy Anya I loved every minute of my time. Anya opened my eyes to people with disabilities, and taught me that we are all just the same even if we look physically different. I felt so blessed to be there and to be invited into an environment that I had never experienced before. I had been thinking I would be counting down the hours for camp to be finished, but instead I found myself wanting time to slow down! I am so grateful for all the amazing friendships I made at camp.

ANNA TSYBINA'S TESTIMONY

Now it seems to me that I have been a believer all my life, but that isn't so. I'm from a non-Christian family. My grandad was an alcoholic, and my mum suffered from domestic violence for many years. My dad's family is also not that simple. Most of his brothers drink and even take drugs. My dad's mum had 9 children. My mum & dad are wonderful. Sure they haven't been believers, but they tried to live a good life. And one day God gave us a chance to know His Word!



It was a special boat trip for disabled children, and because I have had cerebral palsy from the age of 8 months I was there with my mum and sister. During this trip we met a nice, kind young girl, Natasha, who invited us to the Christian Student Centre and we went there.

The atmosphere at the centre was very special, warm, kind and friendly. I looked at this as a good chance to learn English because there were a lot of Americans there leading Bible Studies, and I didn't take The Word of the Lord seriously. I was 12 that time.

But several years later the Lord showed me His power, love and grace.

My mum got seriously sick, and the doctors couldn't find out the right diagnosis until the night when she was taken away by ambulance almost dying.

I could do nothing but pray, pray and pray. Only through doing this could I feel peace in my soul. My mum had the operation after which she recovered very quickly. That was the time when I asked the Lord to become my Saviour! And He began to work in my life.

I've now got the chance to get a higher education (that is very unusual for the disabled in Russia). And more than that - a most valuable Gift from God - the ability to walk with crutches! It's real - God's grace for me, because I have spent 20 years of my 25 in a wheelchair. Since I received this wonderful gift I decided to minister for God by preaching to people with disabilities and showing them His love!!! I believe God uses me in ways He likes so He can provide me with growth and strength. I am ready to do everything God wants me to do.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I SPONSORED A PERSON TO CAMP

Recently I made a last minute decision to attend a ladies conference where I heard Di Willis speaking about National camp. As I listened to her I was prompted by God to bless a friend at our church by paying for him to attend the camp as a helper. I discussed this with my husband, and we agreed we would do it - Little did we realise just how that \$140 investment would impact Steve's life.

Due to a severe stuttering problem Steve was quite fearful amongst strangers, and so it was a big thing for him just to go to camp without looking after someone else! When Steve returned from his weekend away we were delighted to hear how he had enjoyed helping at the camp, and how he himself had been hugely blessed by God.. Well thankfully I had been obedient to God, Steve had been encouraged to go, and God met him right where he was at, and changed him.

Jan W

STEVE TELLS IT IN HIS OWN WORDS

I'm really glad that I stayed at the camp as God used my coming to camp to shift my focus off myself and on to others, and yeah, a massive work was started in my heart. On Sunday night I went up for prayer to receive the Holy Spirit and felt nothing, then asked for prayer for fear, felt nothing, then decided to get someone to take me up to see Pastor Geoff as I knew God would use him to speak into my life – He did just that!

I wanted to be delivered from fear, and Pastor Geoff said God's love will drive out all fear. He then told me that I have problems with wrong thoughts because it's in my heart, but God's perfect love will clean that out too. He prayed for me and I felt God's touch yet again.

Since I have been back home I have made some radical changes, I have gotten rid of CD's that were not really very uplifting, have stopped watching some TV programmes 'cos they weren't very uplifting either, and am getting into the Word of God! I want ALL God has for me and more!

All in all, God used the camp to start a brand new work in me; He placed in my heart a love for people with disabilities. I have always accepted people for who they are, but have never been around disabled people before. Now, self pity is gone, pity parties are a thing of the past and are gone out of my life too. God is GOOD!!



Owen Wagener brought forceful messages



John Clark provided this treat for the children



Hannah Josephson was among those baptized at camp.

Here campers describe what the baptisms meant to them:

A real rich time in God, Always special

A heart changing experience

Amazing - my highlight of camp

It was great so many responding to God in this step

I watched them with inexpressible joy

The baptisms blew me away seeing God speak into their lives

Such a special time - very moving

FIFTY SEVEN CENTS



A little girl stood near a small church from which she had been turned away because it was “too crowded.”

“I can’t go to Sunday School,” she sobbed to the pastor as he walked by.

Seeing her shabby, unkempt appearance, the pastor guessed the reason and, taking her by the hand, took her inside and found a place for her in the Sunday school class. The child was so happy that they found room for her, and she went to bed that night thinking of the children who have no place to worship Jesus.

Some two years later, this child lay dead in one of the poor tenement buildings. Her parents called for the kind-hearted pastor who had befriended their daughter to handle the final arrangements.

As her poor little body was being moved, a worn and crumpled red purse was found which seemed to have been rummaged from some trash dump.

Inside was found 57 cents and a note, scribbled in childish handwriting, which read: “This is to help build the little church bigger so more children can go to Sunday School.”

For two years she had saved for this offering of love.

When the pastor tearfully read that note, he knew instantly what he would do. Carrying this note and the cracked, red pocketbook to the pulpit, he told the story of her unselfish love and devotion.

He challenged his deacons to get busy and raise enough money for the larger building.

But the story does not end there...

A newspaper learned of the story and published it. It was read by a wealthy realtor who offered them a parcel of land worth many thousands.

When told that the church could not pay so much, he offered to sell it to the little church for 57 cents.

Church members made large donations. Cheques came from far and wide. Within five years the little girl's gift had increased to \$250,000.00 - a huge sum for that time (near the turn of the century). Her unselfish love had paid large dividends.

When you are in the city of Philadelphia, look up Temple Baptist Church, with a seating capacity of 3,300. And be sure to visit Temple University, where thousands of students are educated.

Have a look, too, at the Good Samaritan Hospital, and at a Sunday School building which houses hundreds of beautiful children, built so that no child in the area will ever need to be left outside during Sunday school time.

In one of the rooms of this building may be seen the picture of the sweet face of the little girl whose 57 cents, so sacrificially saved, made such remarkable history. Alongside of it is a portrait of her kind pastor, Dr. Russell H. Conwell, author of the book, "Acres of Diamonds".

This is a true story, which goes to show
WHAT GOD CAN DO WITH 57 CENTS.

FURTHER BLESSINGS FOR JOY MINISTRIES:

Colin Winters writes:

When I originally sent in the article for the last Encourager, 'A Richness added to my church', I concluded with the words 'Watch this space – I don't believe we have seen the end of what God is doing yet.'

Well, in early August I was asked by two couples if the Joy Ministries leadership team would like them to take responsibility for the worship part of our meetings. 'Wow' I thought, 'God really hasn't finished yet.' Our leadership meeting a few days later was marked with praise and worship to our God who has been so wonderfully working for the good of Hawke's Bay Joy Ministries. Karen also said that she had someone in mind to ask about leading with the singing, backed by the three musicians we now have. A couple of days later she let me know that the young lady when approached not only agreed but was really keen!

So in the space of four months we have gone from no musicians, no song leader and no one to organise them – to three guitarists, one drummer, one song leader, and two couples to take responsibility for it all. PRAISE GOD!

Margie Willers brings an article on

WORSHIP



Worship magnifies God but what defines worship?

King Jehoshaphat was in a predicament. The nation was threatened with destruction by the invasion of three large armies. Jehoshaphat realised he could not save his people – he knew they had no hope – unless God intervened. As all Judah gathered before the Lord, the King confessed: “O our God, we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We don’t know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”

In that electric moment of despair a prophet spoke a message from God.
“Do not be dismayed neither be discouraged – for the battle is not yours but God’s. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions, stand firm, and see the deliverance the Lord will give you”.

How did the King react?

“Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord”.

The Bible records that whenever men of God, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, experienced an encounter with God in a spiritual visitation, they bowed their face to the ground in worship – they prostrated themselves; in actual fact they fell as if dead!

Allow me to question, is it possible that Christians today have a superficial understanding of worship? Worship is NOT a happy-clappy jig. True worship is the gateway into a deeper relationship with God – a walk of holiness.

There is another worship experience that comes out of quite different circumstances. Let’s consider a man named Job whose life was full of promising expectations. Suddenly, with shattering devastation, his whole world falls apart. Within minutes several catastrophes come crushing upon him, wiping out all his material possessions and killing all his children.

What did Job do? *“At this, Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head... Then fell to the ground to worship...”* 2 Chronicles 20:17 2 2 Chronicles 20:18

In spite of his emotional turmoil and devastation, Job knew God was in control. He

believed God had both appointed and approved the whole situation. Job's acceptance and attitude reveals his spiritual maturity. Both Jehoshaphat and Job fell with their faces to the ground and worshipped the Lord.

Worship is just as fitting and just as inspired when God destroys your dreams as it is when he fulfils them.

Allow me to share something from my own 'Faith Journey'.

I was born with severe Cerebral Palsy – the worst type. This life-time disability affects every part of my body including my speech.

My mental capacity is not impaired and I was educated to University level.

At twenty-five years of age the ongoing daily grind of overcoming physical challenges began taking an enormous toll on my life – the struggle to be productive in the workforce proved beyond my physical capabilities. I'd reached the end of myself. That's when I began searching – reaching out for the supernatural – for a physical miracle.

In my search I journeyed to America to attend Miracle Services conducted by the late Kathryn Kuhlman. Though I witnessed other people receive their 'healing miracles' I remained in my wheelchair without any improvement regarding my body's co-ordination or the clarity of my speech. Absolutely NOTHING! An enormous sense of failure overwhelmed me.

Sometimes our 'Faith Journey' isn't a road decorated with beautiful, fragrant rose bushes. Not being chosen for 'healing' took some spiritual processing.

What does one do when confronted with a God who's too big?

You may weep, you may say nothing – I can assure you there are times when God is too big to argue with.

Worship is not so much words as it is a spontaneous response of our heart, recognising our own smallness before a God too big to figure out. His ways are higher than our ways; His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

Worship is not so much words as it is a spontaneous response of our heart, recognising our own smallness before a God too big to figure out.

Job, crushed by a broken heart in his shattered world, was confronted by a sovereign God too mysterious to comprehend or figure out. Falling to the ground Job essentially declares that God can do anything He chooses! That's maturity. That's FAITH!

I'm not convinced, even today, that I have that spiritual ingredient to pray such a

prayer. Anything! Yet Job believed that God was in absolute control, and that he was nothing without God. Is that not true worship?

Let's consider Jacob, conniving, scheming old Jacob. He wouldn't bow to God's purpose. Often those who won't bow to His sovereign purposes and plan must be broken. As a result of his encounter with the angel of God with whom he wrestled all night, Jacob was physically disabled for the rest of his life. This is a puzzling outcome yet the Bible declares that it is far better to enter the Kingdom of Heaven maimed, blind or lame than to have two feet and walk into hell. God is sovereign. He cannot be shut in a box. He's a God of variety. Sometimes seemingly mature Christians have challenged me by stating: "The day I see you rise from out of your wheelchair – that day, I will really worship God."

To me, God doesn't have to prove Himself with the spectacular, yet so often we worship God only when He lives up to our expectations. We grow disappointed and discouraged when He doesn't seem to answer our prayers. We figure, we plan, we pray fervently! We even lay the groundwork for God. We try organising and manipulating Him, but then we cannot figure out why He doesn't co-operate. What's wrong? Can't He see our solution?

Too often we have our minds made up and we will not allow God's 'no'. He is allowed to say 'no'. He is allowed to say 'yes'. He is allowed to say 'wait'. Granted, God's Waiting Room is never easy. God is also allowed to say, 'Here is something different'. I know for I am, with all my physical disabilities', most certainly *something different* in His great eternal purposes! For me, faith is having confidence that God is acting for my ultimate good when He answers no to my prayers!

For me, faith is having confidence that God is acting for my ultimate good when He answers no to my prayers!

You may be a Jehoshaphat, excited, vibrant, and your mind boggling at the great God of wonders. Or you may be a Job, crushed with grief upon grief, knowing the wasted exhaustion of being completely shut in, with no doors, no windows, and I've known what that's like. Nevertheless, I also know that nothing, absolutely nothing, is wasted with God. Through suffering He turns difficulties into doors, victims into victors, and our battles into breakthroughs.

I believe God is searching for a people who will love Him, who will bless Him, and who will please Him regardless of blessing or lack of it – a people of maturity who will still worship.

I'LL NEVER FORGET THE DAY

No, it wasn't our usual weekend jaunt to the CMWDT National Camp. Due to various circumstances we were unable to make it last year, but we did manage to get tickets to André Rieu and his symphony concert. Johanna's mum phoned to enquire about train times to the city only to be advised there were no trains running this weekend. What about accessible buses? We decided we could stretch to a one way taxi trip, but we'd save that for our return journey. Sadly we couldn't locate Dale's Total Mobility card. Johanna's mum phoned two bus companies and was assured of their accessibility.

Well the fun and games started with Dale's loaned wheelchair having a mind of its own (it headed off on this tangent and that!). We got to the bus stop in plenty of time, dressed up for our evening out, only to be told, "You can't take 'that chair' on this bus!" Johanna replied it was a wheelchair, and yes she could get it on the bus. The bus knelt and the driver extended the ramp, but to our horror we couldn't get up the aisle of the bus. We headed back home in haste via the median strip on the very busy Lincoln Road, with Johanna huffing and puffing.

She found Dale's old wheelchair, transferred him, and we set off for the next bus, managed to get on and paid our fare, but what do you think happened next? We couldn't get this wheelchair up the aisle either.

A kindly Maori gentleman and his son and the driver 'heave hoed and lifted Dale in his chair up and over the seats into the accessible seating area. Just as the rider in the side car at the speedway has to lean into and out of the corners, that role was taken over by Johanna as she tried to keep Dale's chair in position from sliding sideways across the bus. Whew! Was Johanna ever glad that journey was over! But no, not quite, for the only other passenger now was a lady. "Don't worry, I'll get another driver", and as they carried it off the bus Johanna carried Dale! As she got him out and put him down, one of the drivers pointed at his feet - Dale's trousers were down around his ankles, and this was downtown Auckland! The trousers were pulled back up just as the chair arrived.

A dash along city streets with Johanna calling out in Dutch (André's home language) "Please move to the side so we can keep up our uphill momentum", and there, with the concert about to start, was a long queue. Ever resourceful, Johanna spotted a door 'Exit Stage Door' - the express route into the arena!

We enjoyed a fabulous evening being entertained by André and his fantastic musicians, and we had shown once again the truth of that famous statement – 'Where there's a wheel (and a will) there's a way.'

Dale Burdett and Johanna Brens

THE OLD FISHERMAN

Our house was directly across the street from the clinic entrance of John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. We lived downstairs and rented the upstairs rooms to out-patients at the Clinic.

One summer evening as I was fixing supper, there was a knock at the door. I opened it to see a truly awful looking man. 'Why, he's hardly taller than my eight-year-old,' I thought as I stared at the stooped, shrivelled body.

But the appalling thing was his face, lopsided from swelling, red and raw, yet his voice was pleasant as he said, "Good evening. I've come to see if you've a room for just one night. I came for a treatment this morning from the eastern shore, and there's no bus 'till morning."

He told me he'd been hunting for a room since noon but with no success; no one seemed to have a room. 'I guess it's my face. I know it looks terrible, but my doctor says with a few more treatments it will look different.'

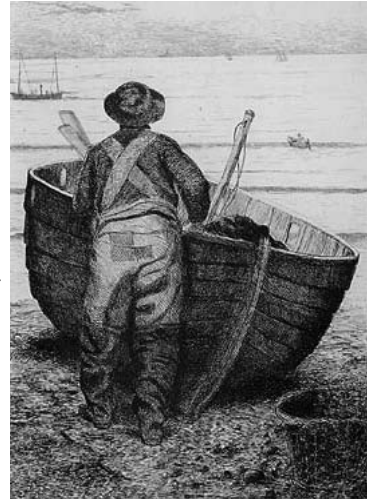
For a moment I hesitated, but his next words convinced me: 'I could sleep in this rocking chair on the porch. My bus leaves early in the morning.' I told him we would find him a bed, but to rest on the porch. I went inside and finished getting supper. When we were ready, I asked the old man if he would join us. 'No thank you. I have plenty, and he held up a brown paper bag.

When I finished the dishes I went out on the porch to talk with him for a few minutes. It didn't take a long time to see that this old man had an oversized heart crowded into that tiny body. He told me he fished for a living to support his daughter, her five children and her husband who was hopelessly crippled from a back injury.

He didn't tell it by way of complaint; in fact, every other sentence was prefaced with thanks to God for a blessing. He was grateful that no pain accompanied his disease, which was apparently a form of skin cancer. He thanked God for giving him the strength to keep going.

At bedtime, we put a camp cot in the children's room for him. When I got up in the morning, the bed linens were neatly folded, and the little man was out on the porch.

He refused breakfast, but just before he left for his bus, haltingly, as if asking a great favour, he said, 'Could I please come back and stay the next time I have a treatment? I



won't put you out a bit. I can sleep fine in a chair.' He paused a moment and then added, 'Your children made me feel at home. Grownups are bothered by my face, but children don't seem to mind.' I told him he was welcome to come again.

And on his next trip he arrived a little after seven in the morning. As a gift, he brought a big fish and a quart of the largest oysters I had ever seen. He said he had shucked them that morning before he left so that they'd be nice and fresh. I knew his bus left at 4 a.m., and I wondered what time he had to get up in order to do this for us.

In the years he came to stay overnight with us there was never a time that he did not bring us fish or oysters or vegetables from his garden.

Other times we received packages in the mail, always by special delivery; fish and oysters packed in a box of fresh young spinach or kale, every leaf carefully washed. Knowing that he must walk three miles to mail these and knowing how little money he had made the gifts doubly precious.

When I received these little remembrances, I often thought of a comment our next-door neighbour made after he left that first morning. 'Did you keep that awful looking man last night? I turned him away! You can lose roomers by putting up such people!'

Maybe we did lose roomers once or twice, but, oh! if only they could have known him, perhaps their illness would have been easier to bear. I know our family always will be grateful to have known him; from him we learned what it was to accept the bad without complaint and the good with gratitude to God.

Recently I was visiting a friend who has a greenhouse. As she showed me her flowers, we came to the most beautiful one of all, a golden chrysanthemum, bursting with blooms. But to my great surprise, it was growing in an old dented, rusty bucket. I thought to myself, 'If this were my plant, I'd put it in the loveliest container I had!'

My friend changed my mind. 'I ran short of pots,' she explained, 'and knowing how beautiful this one would be, I thought it wouldn't mind starting out in this old pail. It's just for a little while, till I can put it out in the garden.'

She must have wondered why I laughed so delightedly, but I was imagining just such a scene in heaven. 'There's an especially beautiful one,' God might have said when He came to the soul of the sweet old fisherman. 'He won't mind starting in this small body.'

All this happened long ago -- and now, in God's garden, how tall this lovely soul must stand.

'The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.' 1 Samuel 16v7

Jean Griffiths writes:

REFLECTING ON MY PILGRIMAGE

Season of Significance”, - this year has been very much that for me. An illustration of a butterfly confirmed how God was transforming me from the darkness of a cocoon, only to emerge into the light as a beautiful butterfly – God was working in and through me to new life and freedom. It had taken many years for me to accept my cultural identity as a Chinese person, and it wasn't until a plan to visit Hong Kong for an adoptee reunion in October, made me think the answer could be there. I did not want to miss this opportunity with my Shatin sisters.

After trepidation and fearfulness, I finally flew into the place of my birth. All that hesitation disappeared as I met up with my “sisters” at the hotel and a sudden buzz took over. It became a charged up atmosphere right from day one, and it was non stop go! We were like a huge magnet connecting as we met up with others, and a united bond was formed.

The best day was the day I had been waiting for all my life. We were going to visit the Home, my first 6yrs of it. As I looked up, I got the shudders and could not keep my eyes off it - this beautiful, now historical building which took precedence on Amah Rock as it overlooked the city. Now after many years I was back home. As we made our way to the bottom of the steep path and the only access to the building, the boys took over my wheelchair and bulldozed me up. I closed my eyes and imagined myself walking up this path many times as a little girl.

Once at the top I found my name and discovered that I had been found abandoned at Diamond Hill with my birth date as the 24 Aug, not 15 Aug, as I had always thought. Yes, I think I like the idea of being a few days younger. But I especially like the thought of being born on Diamond Hill. It made me think that my mum put me there for a purpose – she saw me as a precious diamond! For reasons of her own sadness and loss, she showed me her love. I realised I could have been left anywhere. Thank You God for that revelation.

The next stage of my journey was to meet up with the 2 missionary ladies that brought us up in the orphanage. Straight after the Shatin kids had left, Valerie and Wendy began to fulfil a calling to establish an orphanage for the disabled and special needs. I had followed their progress with newsletters from the last 10 years and was so looking forward to spending 11 days at their Home.



Jean with Valerie and Wendy

They took us in as their family, and once again I felt I was home. Over these few days they shared stories of Shatin, Mama, outings and events that happened. I was now getting more of a picture of my early days, which confirmed why I was so happy there. Mama had insisted we were to be a family, not an institution. I felt so privileged that God had directed my life right from the beginning with these wonderful women.

This was a trip I had to make, to finally have something tangible I could see, feel and grasp. As I reflect on this whole trip God has woven a wonderful tapestry of the people in my life, the joys, laughter, tears, the pain and struggles, but most of all knowing that God is the ultimate designer with a purpose, and the exciting thing is that its not yet finished. Do pray for people with vision to take over from Wendy & Valerie when the time comes.

BILLY

“God... chose things the world considers foolish.” 1 Cor 1:27 NLT

Writing about his time as a counsellor at a teen Bible camp, Tony Campolo says, “Boys have a tendency to pick on some unfortunate child. That summer it was 13-year-old Billy, a child who couldn’t walk or talk right. When the children from his cabin were assigned to lead devotions, they voted Billy in as the speaker. It didn’t seem to bother him. He dragged himself up to the pulpit amid sneers and snickers, and it took him a long time to stammer,

“Je.....suslovesme.....and.....I.....love.....Je.....sus.”

There was stunned silence, and when I looked around, there were boys with tears streaming down their cheeks. We’d done many things to try to reach these boys, but nothing had worked. We’d even brought in famous baseball players whose batting averages had gone up since they started praying, but it had no effect. It wasn’t until a special needs child declared his love for Christ that everything changed. I travel a lot and it’s surprising how often I meet people who say, “You probably don’t remember me. I became a Christian at a camp where you were a counsellor, and do you know what the turning point for me was? I never have to ask. I always know I’m going to hear – Billy!”

The Bible says, *“God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise”* (1 Cor 1:27,28). So when you find yourself focusing on what you can’t do, remember *His “power works best in (your) weakness”* (2 Cor 12:9 NLT). Just do what you can, and God will do the rest! He’ll crown your efforts with success.

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COLIN PYLE'S QUIET TIME ELECTIVE

At National Camp Colin Pyle and his family led "Hearing from God" one of the five main electives, and lots of enthusiastic comments came in from the 70 who were at this elective. Here are some of them:

Excellent practical approach through the ways given to encourage us to form the habit and continue with it.

Very interesting and helpful, especially the book that has been prepared. I think I can use it straight away since I've been struggling with my daily devotions.

It was great and many around me commented how much they really enjoyed it.

Absolutely brilliant. This was perfect for me and is an inspiration to get into a devotion each day.

I am very excited about this and plan to pass it on to our church.

Colin Pyle writes:

"I have discovered that for Bible Study to be effective the accent needs to be on people learning to hear what God is saying to them personally through the passages of scripture that are set down for them to read.

"Most churches, especially the big ones, have professional counsellors who do the counselling rather than Christians sharing and helping each other. At our group on a Sunday afternoon, as people share what the Lord has said to them, all sorts of hurts and problems can come out, and we share and pray with each other. During the week Kathy and the ladies are often on the phone helping each other. We have tried to encourage churches who have Bible studies, to first allow the folk to share their Quiet Times and to then have the Bible study. In our experience people don't continue to do their Quiet Times unless they have an opportunity to share with others."

Those in the Northland CFFD group (of which Ian is a member) are very enthusiastic about how this is working out in their own family's lives and this photo shows Roger Leather speaking about this on one of a number of occasions he and the Pyle family came to share this study form with those at our Centre. Also seen in the photo are Jacqui Gardner, Colin Pyle and Mark Grantham.



Roger says: "It was extremely important in our family. It got our two teenagers to grow into ownership of their faith. It got them to listen to God daily and to hear what He was saying to them personally, and this was such a help for them in this last year when they separately went out onto the mission field and had to cope with difficulties that arose through living in a very different culture."

Jacqui writes, "Last year when we first implemented it at the beginning of the year, with our middle child, who was 9, and struggling with reading, we saw a significant improvement, from being well below his reading age, to being well above, by the end of the year."

"We find that sharing every day what God has been speaking to us, gives our children a platform to share, and know that they will be valued for their input, and their interpretation of what God is saying to them personally. It helps them to gain confidence in hearing from God for themselves, and when joining with the larger cell group and sharing, this gives them confidence to share their insights into God's word amongst people outside their family unit. The insights they do have are very impacting on us as parents. It helps them to learn to take their turn in sharing in a group. It helps them to learn to pray aloud, and to give thanks every day for the blessings God gives them.

Also, the format of sharing daily around the dinner table adds cohesion to the family dynamics. We find it very valuable and helpful for the spiritual growth of our children, and ourselves, and would recommend this quiet time programme to any family or to individuals."



These photos, taken at the Centre, show three of our folk getting one to one help. Some do their quiet time at home, others are only able to get the necessary help at the Centre.

To find out more about this Quiet Time programme and get practical tips on how to have a Quiet Time and how to get entire families sharing together, including the children, you can go to Colin's website <http://walkingwithgod.com>

PCFFD REPORT

From Ed Salonga

I want to thank God for blessing me with strength and joy for ministries He has called me to do. In December, I will have been pastoring a church for two years now.

The opportunity to reach other people and especially some of those with disabilities for the Lord opened up for me and for my wife Monica. God's strength, grace, and joy filled our hearts and enabled us to continue in the ministries in spite of this requiring more hard work and the family needs to consider.

Some 2 years ago, we started to invite some deaf students to attend church with us. Monica and myself help interpret for them. Thank God for their interest and for the permission of their parents to allow them to go to our church. Initially there were about 6 to 8 regular attendees who were deaf, and now that has grown from 10 to 12 because they have invited other deaf. Also at times parents or brothers or sisters have come with them.



IRISH DELA CRUZ – a 4th year high school student who is deaf gives a brief story of who she is:

I'm a 21-year-old deaf student. I have two older sisters. I had not been a Christian before I started studying in the PCFFD SPED program in 2004. When I was a child, my family took me to church on Sundays once in a while, but I knew nothing about God or Jesus Christ because of my deafness.

I am very thankful to God that He has enabled me to develop my education through sign language at Hebron, and also for the spiritual things (the testimonies of their Christian characters) they have taught me. My teachers helped me to understand the love of Jesus and to acknowledge Him as my Lord and Saviour. By God's grace I am now attending a Christian church every Sunday where Pastor Ed and Teacher Monica lead. Would you believe, the church is within walking distance from our house?



Just these few months ago, our school head gave us booklets to study and answer. It gave me more understanding and clear steps of how to become a Christian, and I am hoping now that I can teach it to other deaf. Last October we each received a Bible in English. I am so thankful to have my own Bible and I am patiently reading it. You have to realise that most deaf people have difficulty reading with understanding since we have never heard the language in written symbols. The Bible is also very helpful to me when we have a Bible verse to memorize. I see very clearly that I am doing something very valuable to God when I invite other deaf to attend the church. Glory to God.



Deaf 4th Year High School students with their Bible, certificates, and booklets.

*The Will of God never takes you to where
the Grace of God will not protect you*

A SEASON OF SIGNIFICANCE

My journey with people with disabilities started after God prompted me to offer some respite care to our friends whose daughter, Gabrielle*, has Rett's Syndrome. Although I was terrified to do so, I took on the challenge, and cared for her for a fortnight. This was the start of a transformation in both my life and the lives of my family.

Over the years while working with this girl, and others like her, I have received so many blessings. God gave me new eyes to see with. These people inspired me, and I soon realised that their growth and success could not be measured against that of mainstream society. What was regarded as small and insignificant in our world, was greatly exemplified in God's world.

Back in 2005 our church was involved with the 40 Days of Purpose Campaign, and it was during this time that I heard God's call to do my teacher training. Now five years later, the passion to work alongside people marginalised by mainstream society hasn't died. In fact, it has grown stronger.

In reaching the final criteria for our teaching degree at Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, we were encouraged to visualise our birth, and to also visualise God placing His hand on us at that exact time and telling us what our life's mission and purpose would be. This was to be recorded in no more than two sentences.

I initially struggled with this challenge because I was focusing on building bridges rather than on crossing them. However, once I worked through this barrier I was able to compose my Passionate Creed. This was because God had placed some special people on my heart. These were the people God wanted me to focus on, and they had also the people that I had been closely working to for the previous decade. These people were "people with special needs".

The crafting of the words took me three years to develop, and the writing of this Passionate Creed was an important component towards my attaining my teaching degree and in the discovery of who I am. Here they are:

***I cross bridges to connect with hearts and souls of people
often marginalised by mainstream society.***

As we journey alongside each other, we also learn from each other.

These words are very significant to me because they summarise the call that God has placed on my life.

Lorraine Wilks
* names have been changed



Lorraine brought Gabrielle to this year's National Camp, and she so loved it, particularly Saturday evening where she dressed up as "Belle of the Ball".

CELEBRATING CATHY DOBSON'S LIFE

Cathy has been involved with our ministry since early days when she first came as a 16 year old school girl to the meeting with Dean Houston from Ireland.(see photo on the right).



She has recently been the Taranaki CFFD Chairperson and has been to every Torch Camp as well as meetings in Auckland when that was possible. Shirley Jamieson of Wellington describes her well when she writes, "When I think of Cathy I think of laughter, singing, music, and the joy of living. I remember her at Torch Camps typing at speed, tapping out Braille songs for others to read; answering questions on obscure names in the Bible that no-one else knew on Quiz night; and singing – often singing or playing her flute or keyboard. I loved to listen. Her faith in God was strong, inspiring those around her to trust in him too."

SETARIKI FINALLY MAKES IT TO CAMP

Setariki, leader of a church for people with disabilities in Fiji, lost his sight when, aged 17, he was injured in a school rugby game. He was sent to New Zealand to have three operations, but none of these were successful. He has been wanting to come to camp for nearly 20 years, and this year he finally succeeded. When asked to share he spoke to the Camp of what his guide dog has taught him over the years.

He said, "I can't see him but I have learned to put my complete trust in him. I know he will guide me safely from one place to another."



More and more over time we have learnt communication skills in relating to one another. I see this as a beautiful picture of our walk with God. We don't see Him, but we know we can absolutely trust Him. He will safely take us from one place to another. We too can learn communications skills in relating to Him. We can speak to Him in prayer and we learn to listen and hear the answers He gives back. "We need to tell our friends about what a wonderful friend this God is who we worship and adore. We can give Him our life and He will look after it."

Electives



Quiet time with God



Paying the price



Edith Morris's group



Rebuilding the walls of your personality



The young dudes group



Kidz

First Night Helpers Meeting



Nick Booth, the head nurse for camp



Hamish, in charge of security



Demonstrating how to transfer



How to operate mechanical hoist



Going over all the aspects of helping

GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

When our daughter Melanie was young she had episodes of illness when she could not eat, so she had to go into hospital to be fed by a drip into a vein.

One such episode occurred during a very hot summer. Melanie had reached the point where she could not even drink water, and because children dehydrate quickly we knew that she would have to go to hospital very soon.

It was our custom to pray with the children when we put them to bed, and as we tucked Melanie up that night we prayed for a miracle, so we would not have to admit her to hospital the next day. Full of faith, we woke the next morning, expecting that Melanie had been healed and would be able to begin drinking again. However, her tummy was still very sore, and putting anything in it would make it worse. She did not want to go to hospital –she knew that process was painful and unpleasant - but she could not bear to have a drink. We kept praying, but it did not seem as though God had a miracle for us at this time.

Melanie was lying on the sofa in the lounge, when she called out to me “Mum, there’s a dog at the door!” Sure enough, there was a beautiful white, fluffy Samoyd standing on our back deck, looking in at Melanie through the open door. We were amazed, because we had never seen a Samoyd in our area, and our garden had a fence right around, so we wondered where it could have come from. It stood there panting, and Melanie realised that it must be very hot with its long fur coat, so she asked me to give it a drink. She loves animals and could not bear to see it so thirsty. I agreed that it needed some water, and I pointed out that she needed a drink too. I told her that I would give the dog a drink, if she would have a teaspoon of water. Even though her tummy was still very sore, Melanie agreed, so that the dog could be looked after. Melanie had her teaspoon of water, the Samoyd had a drink, then it jumped over the wall and out of sight.

A couple of hours later the dog was back at our door. We gave it a drink, and Melanie had another teaspoon of water. In the afternoon the Samoyd returned yet again. A teaspoon of water every couple hours was not enough to keep Melanie out of hospital so this time I asked her to have two teaspoons. She agreed, for the sake of the hot and thirsty dog.

That Samoyd kept coming to our back door, several times a day, for the next few days. Each time we gave it a drink while we gradually increased Melanie’s fluid intake and rehydrated her. When she eventually tolerated some dilute soya milk we knew she was out of danger, and we never saw the dog again.

I thank God that He gave us our miracle, but the lesson that I really learned was from Psalm 139, verses 1-3, where it talks about how well God knows us - how He understands our thoughts and all our ways. God had given Melanie a love of animals, and He used it to bring about her healing. He didn't just heal her, He showed us how well He knows us and how much He loves us, in the process.

Linda Tagg

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SEEN AT NATIONAL CAMP

