

September 2011

# the **+** helper

Fear.. Worry.. Anxiety..



**The Magazine for Women**  
Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

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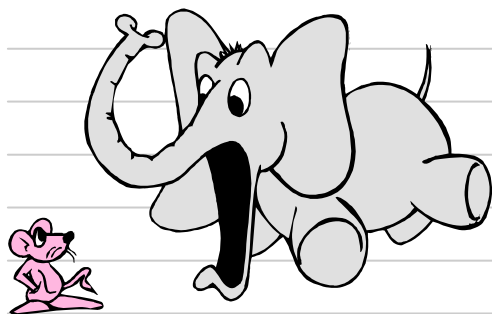
coping with

*Loss*

*Sexual Abuse*

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## Editorial

Riots in England; shooting in Norway; bloodshed and political turmoil in a number of Middle Eastern countries; famine in the Horn of Africa; volcanic eruptions and ash clouds; widespread floods and mud slides; tornadoes and earthquakes; unprecedented snow in many parts of the world, including here in New Zealand; financial uncertainty and fluctuating share prices; rising cost of living; high unemployment – the list of catastrophes or near catastrophes in the world goes on and on. “What will be next?” we ask.

The prospect of disaster striking is enough to make the strongest heart fearful and worried. Yet in the face of such uncertainty God’s Word comes to us saying “Do not fear.” He wants his children to stay calm amidst the storms of life – be they storms caused by earthquake, death, illness or financial loss. Finding peace in the storm is seldom easy. Recently when wrestling through a particular issue troubling me I turned to a number of Bible verses dealing with the subject of fear. What leapt out at me was the reason God gives for not being afraid – “**For I am with you**”. David puts it well in the familiar 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, *I will fear no evil, for You are with me.*” Trusting in the God who is personally present with us is the key to overcoming fear (and grief, guilt and a host of other debilitating emotions).

The kind of trust we need was vividly brought home to me while re-reading the well-known historical series by Bodie Thoene, *The Zion Covenant* recently. In one of the books in this series there is the story of an old freight ship loaded with Jewish families desperately trying to find a safe haven away from the claws of Hitler. A ferocious hurricane sweeps down on them tossing the boat mercilessly like a cork on the sea. While the men battle to try and keep the ship afloat, the women and children stay below deck in their hammocks. One

mother, Maria, holds tightly to her new born baby, Israel. This is how the story goes: “*Little Israel still had not opened his mouth to cry. He cooed and now turned his mouth towards Maria’s breast. ...Israel had lain untroubled in the midst of the night’s terror. Maria lifted her blouse and let him nurse. To eat; to sleep an untroubled sleep; to wake and never know the dark fear of death that surrounded them. Maria smiled. It seemed strange that she could smile now, but Israel nursed and looked at her with eyes so trusting and content that she had to smile back at him*” (Vol. 3, p. 378). What a beautiful picture of trust!

Jesus demonstrated this same lack of fear in the midst of a storm while crossing the Sea of Galilee on one occasion. While His hardy fisherman companions panicked, Jesus slept on, trusting completely in His Father’s care. “Where is your faith?” He said to His scared disciples after calming the storm. While the disciples may have trusted *in Him*, they certainly did not share *His faith*. That’s the challenge that faces us – trusting God in the same way Jesus did so that we can share His peace.

In this issue of *The Helper* we have stories of women who have grappled deeply with issues of anxiety, grief and guilt and how they have found God in them. We deeply appreciate the courage they have shown in opening their hearts to us as they have. As you read what they have written we hope you will be strengthened in your walk with the Lord.

Thank you for the helpful feedback we received from many of you in response to our survey earlier in the year. We hope we can incorporate your ideas into future editions.

On behalf of *the Helper* Team,  
- *Nola Young*

*Ladies*

# Living Free from Fear



Fear creeps into my life. I think that behind a lot of my fear is a fear to completely surrender to the Lord, afraid for what He might do or allow in my life. It comes back to the fact I really rely on myself; I want to be in control. Do I have faith, do I trust the Lord, and can I give my children, my husband and myself into God's hands?

Here is an excerpt from my diary written for my son Peter: *"On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1999, a lovely spring day, Dad went to visit a grower, Mum, together with the 2 girls, was baking a chocolate cake for Father's day, Christian and John were in their bedrooms for a rest and you, Peter, were in the shed, where Uncle Joe was potting up some orchid plants. You were 2 years and 1 month old, an energetic outdoor boy, who was always on the go, exploring, climbing and happy to be by himself. On that particular afternoon during one of our checks if you were okay, Sarah couldn't see you in the shed and started to look around for you. Then Mum came out of the house and saw Jessica standing in the shed and heard that Sarah was looking for you. Because you are quite keen on cows, I walked to the paddock behind the greenhouses, but you were not there. On the moment I turned around to run back, Dad came driving up the driveway and saw my face and knew immediately I was looking for one of the children. I only had to say 'Peter' and he knew enough. He jumped out of the van and ran straight to the pond in Uncle Joe's garden and there he could see just a tiny bit of your jumper floating in the water. He screamed and jumped in the water and grabbed you. Mum heard Dad's scream and came running, barefoot over the stones downhill to the pond, where Dad gave you to me. Dad said he is dead. I gave you a big shake and pleaded to you to come back, put you on the grass and started C.P.R. Sarah, who had looked in the pond before and couldn't see you, ran to Uncle Joe and said: 'Peter is dead'. When Uncle Joe came, he cried to the Lord and thought as well that you were dead. Dad rang to get an ambulance".*

The Lord did spare Peter's life in a miraculous way. The ambulance came pretty quick, within 8 minutes. By then Peter had vomited a little bit. The ambulance people took over from me, cut his clothes open and gave him oxygen and decided to

call a helicopter to bring him to Middlemore Hospital. It took them several hours to get his temperature and oxygen levels up again. By 10.30pm Peter was ready to be transferred to Starship Children's Hospital and so started the waiting game. How long had he been in the water? How long had he been without oxygen? How and when would he wake up?

In only a few days, Peter was well enough again to come home. It all went so fast. We were so happy to be reunited again and it felt almost like nothing had happened. We thanked God and praised Him for His wonderful work. Over time I realised that a few things had changed. I was a worried Mum. It became an obsession to have all my children close to me. When they were all in bed I allowed myself to relax, only to find myself in a battle again the next morning. I taught the children to tell me where they were playing and to tell me if they went somewhere else. This wasn't realistic of course, but I told them time and time again and explained why, which probably put more fear in their hearts and in my heart than actually did any good.

A year after the accident I became more and more tired and started to have nightmares. I had become a stressed Mum and fear had taken its position in my life. One Wednesday morning during the Bible study I cried out to the ladies from the church and a wonderful lady took me aside and helped me to see that I had to grieve for what happened a year ago. I had pushed away the shock I had felt, the pain and the loss. I felt guilty whenever I felt low, as I told myself I didn't have a good reason to be sad as my son was saved and instead I should be very thankful and joyful. The lady also suggested writing out different Bible verses to do with fear and reading them aloud before going to sleep. This was such a help and I started to feel better.

Peter is now almost 14 years old. He can't remember anything and he never had a set back or any dislike for water. Praise the Lord! At quite an early age he testified that Psalm 18:16 was his favourite verse; "He reached down from on high and took hold of me; he drew me out of deep waters".

Throughout the years, we have had many occasions where we have 'lost' a child somewhere on the property and although I get still a horrible feeling I know now better how to respond. Sometimes I go out and start looking, but often I stay inside (knowing that there are many who are looking) and pray to God to help us find the child and that fear would not creep in. It is so easy to be run by fear, but I know that it is not from God. So we need to be on the guard and if I feel overwhelmed I read those scriptures out loud again. There is power in the Word!

- Helma Sonneveld (Helma & Gus along with brother Joe run a very successful orchid growing business.)  
Covenant Presbyterian Church

# Learning to Trust

Learning to trust in the Lord – some days I think I have made progress in this only to find myself back in the place of relying on my own strength and seeking to find my own solutions to life’s challenges.

For many years I have known, memorised, and even embroidered Proverbs 3:5-6, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he shall direct your paths.”* These are wonderful words but I don’t always find them easy to live by. In fact, I’m not sure I fully know what they mean. What is God asking of me here? Does He really mean *all* of my heart, in *all* of my ways, *all* of the time?

Several years ago I read a book called “Trusting God Even When Life Hurts” by Jerry Bridges. Bridges writes that to be able to trust God we have to believe that He is completely sovereign, is infinite in wisdom and perfect in love. We need to have confidence that He is who He says He is and that He can do what He promises to do. Through the years I have learned that it is only as I grasp these great truths about God in the depths of my being, that I can indeed trust Him with all my heart in every circumstance of life.

Often I find it can be the little things of life that trip me up more than the big issues. When a last minute interruption happens as I am about to go out the door for an appointment, my instant reaction is to panic or even get angry, certainly irritated. Or when I’ve lost something, I become so consumed with trying to find it that I lose all sense of calm and quietness of heart.

But God has also used bigger issues in my life to help challenge me in this area of trusting Him – or having complete confidence in him as one author puts it – rather than giving way to fear, unbelief or trying to do it my way.

Finances have always been an area of challenge especially as in our family I usually handle the day-to-day running of the books. Through our married life, my husband Andrew and I have sought to live by the principle doing what we believe is God’s will and trusting Him to provide the necessary finances to make this possible. When we were initially asked to go into full-time ministry the salary drop was considerable and mortgage rates on our first house were at an all time high of 21%! From many perspectives (including that of our parents) it looked a crazy thing to do, but we believed that God was calling us and we went



forward in trust. And God never let us down. Certainly it was not always easy but all necessary expenses were always met on time.

Shortly after accepting that call to full-time ministry it was proposed that we should go overseas to gain experience. At one point it looked as though this trip was not going to be possible. The couple who were going to fill in for us in the church were suddenly unsure that they could come. We also needed to buy a different house more suitable for ministry. Our senior elder told us to go ahead and do the first thing first. No sooner had we signed the contract for a new home, which took all of our financial resources, than

we received word that the couple could come. But now we had no money!! How amazing it was to stand still and see God provide in ways that we would never have dreamed.

Through the years, decisions such as sending our children to a Christian school for the first stages of their education always took a major step of faith. How could our budget possibly stretch to include that? For me, to be a stay-at-home mum, care for the family, and be involved in the ministry of the church as well, was important. Yes, it meant we didn’t have many of the

extras that others had, and that budgeting had to be carefully done, but what we did genuinely need we never lacked. God was faithful. Our children learned alongside us that He could be trusted to meet practical needs.

In 2007, as we were preparing to go on sabbatical to the USA for 6 months, we were again faced with financial challenges. How were we how to pay for such an event? As I thought of this I often found myself anxious. Where would the funds come from?

As I was wrestling with this I came across this quote: *“Worry is most often a prideful way of thinking that you have more control over life and its circumstances than you actually do”* (June Hunt). As I let this sink into my heart I

*We need to have confidence that He is who He says He is and that He can do what He promises to do.*

realised the underlying cause to my worry was *my* pride, my unspoken belief that *I* could sort things out. Once again my independent nature was surfacing. Instead, I needed to repent and trust God, for certainly I had no way to solve this problem and worry was not going to help. Now that I was where God needed me to be, He began to work and we saw ongoing wonderful provisions that met all our needs.

Probably the greatest challenge in my life to trust God, however, has come in connection with health issues. In 1997 and the years that followed I was afflicted with a debilitating illness that left me incapable of looking after my young family ranging from 3 to 14 in age. The many dreams that I had of the 'things' that I would do with my children and the skills I would pass on were suddenly stripped from me. What would happen to my children? How would they be provided for? Did God really have a plan? Again *all* I could do was trust and hold tight to the truths that I had believed for many years. Growing bitter, angry and worried was no solution. Putting them into God's hands was, although that wasn't always easy. Looking back, I can see how God wonderfully cared for our children during those years. From where I stand now, I would not trade the spiritual growth that occurred in my life during that time, tough though it was.

Then in this past year, just when I thought that some of my health struggles were past (after major surgery to correct a longstanding problem), I found myself yet again plummeting into illness. This time it took several weeks of wrestling with God before I finally regained peace in my heart and a sense of contentment and quiet trust in what God was doing. Again He was giving me a fresh opportunity to embrace His gift of suffering and through it to learn important lessons. I found a number of hymns helped me regain spiritual balance along with portions of the Scriptures, especially Romans 8. I can now say that this last period of illness has once more been a time when I have grown into a deeper relationship with God and experienced more of His goodness, love and care.

I can not know at this point whether the Lord has secure finances and restored health ahead for me. But I can say with confidence that His way will be best and I want no other. I think of Jesus, who in his final hours before arrest and betrayal said to his disciples, "*Shall I not drink the cup which my Father has given me?*" (John 18:11). In this He showed complete trust and submission to the will of His Father. As one of his followers, that needs to be my way too.

- Nola Young  
Wyndham Evangelical Church

# Booklist

## Suffering

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Christopher Ash     | Out of the Storm: Grappling with God in the Book of Job        |
| Jerry Bridges       | Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts                             |
| Joni Eareckson-Tada | When God Weeps   |
| Alda Ellis          | Beyond Breast Cancer   |
| Elyse Fitzpatrick   | A Steadfast Heart: Experiencing God's Comfort in Life's Storms |
| Nancy Guthrie       | O Love That Will Not Let Me Go                                 |
| Nancy Guthrie       | Holding onto Hope: A Pathway Through Suffering to God          |
| Mary J Nelson       | Grace for Each Hour: Through the Breast Cancer Journey         |

## Grief

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Mary Beth Chapman         | Choosing to See  |
| Pablo Martinez & Ali Hull | Tracing the Rainbow: Walking Through Loss & Bereavement      |
| Matt & Beth Redman        | Blessed Be Your Name   |
| Naomi Reed                | My Seventh Monsoon: A Himalayan Journey of Faith and Mission |
| Jerry Sitzer              | A Grace Disguised  |
| Pam Vredevelt             | Empty Arms   |
| Sarah Williams            | The Shaming of the Strong: The Challenge of an Unborn Life   |

## Sexual Abuse

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Dan Allender              | The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse                 |
| Lindsey & Justin Holccomb | Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault                  |
| Diane Langberg            | On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing For Survivors of Sexual Abuse |

## Fear, Worry & Anxiety

- |                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Linda Dillow      | Calm My Anxious Heart            |
| Elyse Fitzpatrick | Overcoming Fear, Worry & Anxiety |

All these books are available from Betterway Books  
Email: [betterwaybooks@paradise.net.nz](mailto:betterwaybooks@paradise.net.nz)

# Magdalena

In 2007 I set off from NZ with my family for a big adventure; we started life as OMF missionaries in Japan. Our first task after settling the family was full time language study, and I willingly buried my nose in my textbooks each evening. Four months into our new Japanese lifestyle though, everything changed. I found I was unexpectedly pregnant with our 5<sup>th</sup> child. I was delighted, but had to screw up my courage when it came to telling my fellow missionaries: you're not supposed to conceive during language study!

However, with their help I fitted in antenatal appointments with daily study and ongoing family life, sick bowl in hand! My mind was still focussed on Japanese studies, but the Lord in His wisdom had other important lessons for me to learn. At my 19 week scan I learned that our precious baby had died. I would need to come back to hospital after the weekend to be induced. It was a very long and difficult three days. I really struggled with the thought of letting go of this little one inside me, who was mine and belonged to me. I was also filled with a dreadful fear of labour, of delivering a dead baby, and of having to do it all in a foreign country. I had been in Japan just nine months and still had only basic phrases.

Martin immediately sent out an email to friends and family and many responded with words of comfort, with verses and with reassurances of prayer for us. In the midst of my inner turmoil I felt carried by the prayers of many and was enabled to go into hospital.

Japanese culture is so very different from our own and hospitals are no exception. We were forewarned that I wouldn't have any access to any form of pain relief as this is viewed as bad for mother and baby. Martin however secretly popped me strong period pain tablets to try to ease my pain even a little! The Japanese view of the doctor, ('sensei'), seems to be so different to a western approach of 'patient-centred' care. You don't ask questions or seem to have any choices. During examination you are required to take off your clothing from the waist down, and sit in a huge chair with back and arm rests but no seat. The chair is then elevated and tilted backwards whilst your legs are spread apart ready for an intimate examination. If you've kept your eyes open there is a curtain in front of your face presumably to stop you from feeling embarrassed! However it is difficult to anticipate when someone is going to touch you when you can't see them. Despite having given birth four times previously this was a horrid experience and left me feeling extremely powerless and vulnerable.

Going into delivery suite was one of the hardest things I've had to do. I was in agony struggling with a sense of knowing what I had to do whilst everything inside me resisted.

Filled with such a deep fear the Lord brought to my mind a children's song: "When I am afraid I will trust in you, my God whose word I praise", which I sang over and over in my head.

My labours have always been long and drawn out and this was no exception. I was asked to lay on my back on a hard clinical table, which was very painful for me but the greater agony was within and I really battled to let go of my darling tiny baby. I reached a point of exhaustion and cried out to God to come and help me let go of her in my heart and hand her over to Him her maker. I asked Martin beside me to pray over me as I was really struggling and had 'run out'. He prayed out loud and a short time afterward the doctor delivered her little body.

Martin brought her to me, a tiny, beautifully formed little baby. My little baby's body, her person I never got to meet. Then the nurses took her away and I returned to my room empty in body and heart.

I wasn't prepared for the bizarre sense of elation following labour along with the natural hormonal changes, my milk coming in, engorgement, and weeks of bleeding along with a horrible ache of no baby to hold and feed. A few days later, with the loving help of a fellow missionary Martin went to cremate the baby's body according to Japanese custom and law.

Martin says: "My friend Pete drove me the crematorium, as I nursed the little box containing Magdalena's body on my knees. Snow was still on the ground – it was the end of April. We waited our turn in the queue at the crematorium, and were soon shown into a big ante room for the pre-cremation rituals. We asked for all the Buddhist statues, incense and paraphernalia to be removed, and held a very simple service – just the two of us – taking it in turns to read from Psalm 139 and Lamentations 3, and praying prayers of worship and thanks to God.

Our time was quickly brought to a close, and we were moved through to the cremation 'hall' – a long line of high tech 'ovens' – and Magdalena's tiny body, in her little box, was surrendered to the flames. The cremation process is purposefully slow and carefully planned so that the body is burned to ash but the bones remain. We were called back to the cremation hall approximately 45 mins later to collect what remained. In the casket were some tiny fragments of bone and we were given chopsticks to ceremonially pick out the bones and place them in an urn – such is the Japanese custom. The staff at the crematorium were unfailingly polite & respectful – and probably very curious: it can't be often they see two European men attend alone to cremate a baby."

The weeks and months that followed were very dark days for me. Waves of grief and deep sadness, expressed with tears became my daily reality. Expectations to return to language school seemed to increase my sense of grief and loss. I cried everyday for at least a year. Many people offered words of comfort, but I longed for a deeper lasting comfort that I knew could only come from the Lord himself.

During that time I read an enormous amount. Books about grief and stories of others who had had similar experiences. I read and re-read Bible passages like the raising of Lazarus to understand Jesus' reaction to death and his compassion for those who grieve. I read hymns which helped express my sadness and gave me hope in the Lord's ability and desire to help my hurting heart. I set aside some days of prayer and fasting and wrestled with the Lord, praying, pouring out my heart and pleading with him to answer my prayers in a way that I really understood.

I was met by what felt to me to be a wall of silence. I so much wanted communion with God and I felt only His silence. I was bewildered and stuck. What more could I do? The silence began to upset me more than my loss. Like many others I had read about and know personally, I longed to hear the Lord guiding and speaking with me deep in my heart. Martin helped me through this difficult time by making a point of keeping up with our regular Sunday night prayer times together. He joined me in praying for the prayer requests that really mattered to me and entered in to wrestling in prayer on my behalf. Many times I would start praying and literally cry my prayers. I am so deeply thankful for having a faithful prayer warrior for it was through keeping on praying and not giving up that I was lead to the right place. Together we reminded ourselves of the promises written in the Bible about God; who he is, who his people are and how he works in this world. All the

truths I knew and believed about the Lord beforehand have become so much more a living experience in the days since I lost my baby.

I am constantly amazed at how the words of the Bible express my own experience of life. Lamentations 3: "I am a man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath... even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer... he has made me dwell in darkness... he has pierced my heart..." But it doesn't stop there. "Yet this I call to mind and therefore have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail... The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him... it is good to wait quietly... Let him sit alone in silence... for men are not cast off from God forever. Though he, (the Lord), brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men." So "I will say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.'"

I have been experiencing the Lord's compassion and gentle healing in my life in many tangible and loving ways. Slowly the dark shadow of grief has lifted and I am able to see a whole host of answers to my prayers and able to give thanks with a grateful heart that the Lord has never left me at any moment or in fact stopped speaking at any moment.

I do so look forward to the day I can see and hear Him face to face, which I know to be a certain reality. In the meantime I will wrestle on like Jacob and not let go until I have that blessing. I am still learning and God is still speaking!

- Sam Seccombe

*Covenant Presbyterian Church (currently serving in Japan with OMF)*



# Uncovering the *unspeakable*

## Facing Sexual Abuse

Whichever way you look at it, sexual abuse is a difficult subject. Many struggle to comprehend how such an act could be committed against a defenceless child. Some even deny that such a problem actually exists. However the statistics speak for themselves and consistently show that one in three girls and about one in six boys are sexually abused before the age of 18 years. This abuse does not come primarily from strangers. The majority of perpetrators are known to the child, with many being family members.

These statistics also surface in our Christian communities with allegations of childhood sexual abuse often surfacing decades after the initial event. A common response has been one of silence and cover up. This has the effect of perpetuating the damage, increasing the pain and allowing perpetrators to continue unchecked.

So what is sexual abuse, what damage does it do, and what hope can we offer?

### *Uncovering the unspeakable*

In 2 Samuel 13 we read the very sad story of Tamar raped by her half brother Amnon. The Divine Author has given us here a glimpse of the heart-wrenching details and implications of sexual assault; "...Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house, a desolate woman." The sexual abuse of Tamar represents one end of the continuum where an older family member abuses a younger and more vulnerable family member.

Sexual abuse can be defined as *any act, visual, verbal or physical, where an older person uses a younger person without consent for their sexual pleasure.*

A sexual abuser will often take time to 'groom' the child as a lead-in to the sexual abuse. When it does begin the child usually has no understanding of what is happening but will feel discomfort, fear, and/or disgust. The older person exercises power over the child, rendering the child helpless to stop the abuse. One reason a child does not tell anyone what is happening is that threats of harm by the older and more powerful abuser has the effect of maintaining the victim's silence, often for many years. Under such circumstances sexual abuse can go on for a long time without being exposed.

### *Making sense of the damage*

When we think of personal damage we often think in terms of something broken or destroyed, like a broken leg, or other damage at a physical level. However, emotional damage resulting from trauma, was first documented when soldiers returning from war suffered from 'shell shock' and were unable to function adequately in their lives as emotionally healthy people.

In sexual abuse, the emotional damage goes to the very core of our personhood, often resulting in a well of deep and abiding shame, with no part of who we are and how we act left untouched. One author has spoken of this comprehensive effect as 'taking the image of God in a human being and smashing it'.<sup>1</sup>

Andrew J. Schmutzer in his scholarly article *A Theology of Sexual Abuse*<sup>2</sup> shows the extent to which the image of God in man is marred by sexual abuse. He shows how this damaging effect relates not only to the image of God, but also the creation mandate, and human sexuality; in short, all that it means to be human. It's not just that trust has been broken, but rather that sexual abuse results in a profound inability to make life and relationships work as God intended. In this sense, the devil has achieved a master stroke setting up an inner, but not well recognised device, which guarantees relational failure.

The internal and external outworking of sexual abuse is well documented. The internal damage includes all that goes on at an experiential level: shame, guilt, fear, anxiety, difficulties in relationships etc. These difficulties will eventually work their way out into external symptoms which includes depression, compulsive disorders, physical problems, sexual dysfunction, and much more.

Another way in which the internal damage becomes more obvious is in the way in which a person relates to others. Dan Allender in his book *The Wounded Heart* speaks of styles of relating which in essence become like masks to cover the pain of being sexually abused. For some it may be living as a 'good' person but without offering any substance; "the light is on but no one is home". For others their sexuality is worn as a garment offering a relationship that promises little. Or others may develop a tough exterior where they go through life caring little for those they hurt along the way.



This is the lot of a person, man or woman, who is subject to the ravages of sexual abuse. What is the way forward for those caught up in such trauma?

## Putting the pieces back together

As Christians, the beginning of our hope is found in Genesis 3:15, and realised ultimately in Jesus Christ, with the promise that he would bring a crushing to Satan and a final end to sin and its effects.

For the sexually abused this journey can be long and hard. It starts by going back and bringing into the light that which has been kept secret. It means opening the locked doors and speaking out the truth about *what* happened. It means owning aspects of childhood relationships previously seen as acceptable. At this point a person may begin to feel high levels of anger as she/he faces the fact that someone so close could betray their trust and do so much harm.

But then some will ask “Why do I need to bring this into the open, won’t it cause more pain?” The answer to this can be seen in the response of Adam and Eve after the Fall when they tried to hide what they had done. The effect was loss of fellowship with God, broken fellowship with each other and a tendency to blame the other. In sexual abuse, covering over the truth is like covering over a wound and pretending it doesn’t hurt. The effort involved in pretence leads to living a lie. But with the truth comes an ability to face the internal struggle. When the secret is told it begins to lose its power.

Facing the internal struggle involves understanding the harm done; in what ways have life and relationships been damaged by sexual abuse? And how has this damage been worked out in life? As these issues are faced there is one place we can go with confidence – to the Cross where our shame is fully dealt with. This can then bring us to a place of grief.

Grief is a very appropriate response to sexual abuse because of its effect on the heart. Grief does not seek revenge rather it entrusts itself to a God of justice; “Do not repay anyone evil for evil...Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord” (Romans 12:17-19; also James 4:9-10 and Matthew 5: 4). Grief enables a person to face the extent of harm done while protecting from the need to seek revenge or find relief through compulsive behaviours.

Grief is also an appropriate response for the church. We are called upon to “weep with those who weep.” The

church can be a place where people can tell their stories of abuse and be supported. Here there is an opportunity to go to the throne of grace to find help in a time of need. “You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry...” (Ps. 10:17).

In the gospel there is hope of restoration. Redemption comes with the promise of healing. At some point change begins to happen when lies give way to truth, and pretence becomes authenticity, and gospel grace becomes part of the mix of shame and fear, guilt and sorrow.

A recently published and very helpful book reminds us that, “God extends his compassion and his mighty, rescuing arm to take away shame...Jesus took on your shame, so it no longer defines you nor has power over you” <sup>1</sup>

## A personal story

I have lived with the effect of sexual abuse nearly all of my life. At one stage I was consulting with several doctors for the treatment of chronic fatigue. Gradually I became aware that I was struggling with depression and anxiety. During this time the details of my own experience of sexual abuse began to surface and I started to bring into the light of day that which had been buried for four decades. Over time I came to understand what sexual abuse had done to me. I began to see where the roots of anger, and need for control, were found and to turn to the LORD for his grace in my need. My weeping was turned into joy and I did find hope in the Valley of Achor (Hosea 2:15). There are days now when I know myself to be a wounded person but I’m thankful that the LORD is able to take that woundedness and use it for his glory, as his strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

- Margaret Reynolds  
Covenant Presbyterian Church

<sup>1</sup> Langberg, Diane Mandt (1997) *Counseling Survivors of Sexual Abuse*. P. 39

<sup>2</sup> Schmutzer, Andrew (December 2008). “A Theology of Sexual Abuse: A Reflection on Creation and Devastation.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 51, No. 4 p. 785

<sup>3</sup> Holcomb, J. S. & Holcomb, L. A. (2011). *Rid of My Disgrace*. Crossway

# An Antidote to Anxiety

Whenever the subject of anxiety is raised I immediately think of two biblical texts – Matthew 6:25-34 and Philippians 4:6-7. Both condemn anxiety and offer antidotes to it. In this article I want to reflect briefly on the Matthew passage.

Matthew 6:25-34 is part of what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Some refer to this sermon as “the manifesto of the kingdom.” Matthew had earlier noted that Jesus began His ministry announcing the “nearness” of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 4:17, 23); here he records Him delivering key principles for life within the kingdom. And one of those principles is that we should not worry: “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear” (6:25).

These words about worry or anxiety, then, relate to kingdom life. They are not a general remedy applicable to everyone. They have meaning for those who through confidence in Jesus have entered into life under the rule of God. As citizens of God’s kingdom, children constantly under His watchful care, they shouldn’t let themselves be crippled by worry over the practical necessities of life – “what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear” (6:25).

The first reason Jesus gives for this is that life is “more important than food” and the body “more important than clothes” (v. 25). Viewed in terms of life within God’s kingdom that is certainly true. God calls us into His kingdom not to be obsessed with food, drink and dress but with His eternal purposes – with His great plan for the universe. What we eat and drink and wear is still important but it cannot be the centre of our concern. “The pagans run after these things,” Jesus says to His disciples (v. 32), “but you must not do so. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them,” and that should be enough to set your hearts at rest.

If further assurance is needed, He goes on to say, look at the way your Father cares for the birds of the air (v. 26) and the lilies of the field (v. 28). The birds don’t sow and store up food in barns; instead, your heavenly Father feeds them through His providence or control of nature. Similarly, the lilies of the field don’t labour or spin, yet they are clothed with a splendour that outshines the royal garb of King Solomon. Now if God should take care of birds – which are of less value than you are – and if He should clothe with such glory the grass of the field – which is here today and gone tomorrow – “how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith” (v. 30).

Jesus’ point is this: If God in His kingly rule over nature should make such lavish provision and be so deeply



concerned for these lesser things (birds and flowers), how much more He will care for His children. And if that is the case, worry doesn’t make sense. It shows that we don’t really know and trust our Father.

What God wants for us as we live under His kingly rule is to devote ourselves to “His kingdom and His righteousness” (v. 33). We are actively to seek these things. The spread of His kingdom (rule) among people and in every sphere of life is to consume us. We are to make it our goal and prayer that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven (6:11). If we make that our priority, Jesus assures us, then “all these things [food, drink and clothing] will be given to you as well” (v. 33). God wants us to be free from concern over the practical necessities of life. “Immerse yourselves in the interests of my kingdom,” He says, “and I will look after these practical things for you.”

We can liken this to the promises of practical support usually made to ministers of the gospel when they are called to pastor local churches. The “call documents” used on such occasions generally include an assurance of adequate income to free the prospective pastor from care about worldly necessities. The recommended call form for our Grace Presbyterian Church puts it this way: “That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations

[occupations], we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ a year... and other benefits such as a manse, retirement, insurance, vacations, moving expenses etc..." In other words, the congregation extending the call is saying, "We want you to be free from practical cares so you can devote yourself to ministry, and to enable that we are going to provide these various things."

Jesus is saying much the same thing in this passage. In the kingdom, you don't have to worry about practical necessities of life – at least, not in the sense of letting these become a source of crippling anxiety. Instead, concentrate on doing what God gives you to do and He will make sure these other things are taken care of. That doesn't mean they will fall into our lap without effort or income-earning work. Jesus is not saying you can "opt out of the work force" and become lazy or irresponsible. He is simply saying the burden of

responsibility for these things is taken away from you. Your Father will carry it for you.

Nor, we should add, is this a promise that no earnest Christian will ever go hungry, naked or homeless. That has happened too often to deny. His words here tell us that even in these situations we need not be anxious. Our Father is with us even in the most desperate of circumstances, and if He chooses to extend His kingdom through our suffering and death, then we may be sure that He will give us the grace we need to walk that path. Easy words to say, I know. But they are what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he declared that he could do "all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

- Andrew Young  
Wyndham Evangelical Church

## A story about Mrs Sary

Mrs Sary was born in 1951 in Kratie Province, Cambodia. Her parents were rice farmers. She had four brothers, two of whom have died. She attended school to the end of seventh grade and then went home and worked with the family on the farm.

Mrs Sary got married in 1970. She lived through the Pol Pot regime and then the family moved into Phnom Penh (Cambodia's capital city). In Phnom Penh they were a rich family, but they had many troubles and a difficult life and so they became very poor. During this time, a friend kept telling them about Jesus, but for three

years she and her husband would not listen. Finally, they turned to Jesus and believed. Even though the family was now very poor, Mrs Sary says that the Lord gave her great peace and she was 'sabai j'et' (happy in her heart).

Their local pastor saw their difficult life and invited them to join his Christian community. So, they put up a roof shelter and moved onto a plot of land with several other families. Mrs Sary had a small shop and her husband was a 'moto-dup' (motorbike taxi) driver. In his spare time, he managed to gradually build a simple house and the family became more comfortable. "God blessed us a lot." Mrs Sary remembers really enjoying the friendship and support of the other Christian women in the community. They lived there for five years, and she and her husband and some of their children grew in their walk with God. During this time her husband went to Bible College to study. At the end of his study, her husband was called to evangelise in Bantey Meachey Province and they moved to Poipet in 2006-2007. Mrs Sary found it very difficult to leave her Christian friends in Phnom Penh, but she now has another group of Christian women who encourage each other and pray together every week.

Mrs Sary's desire, through telling her story, is to encourage women everywhere to:

- Look to Jesus so you can know His love and peace.
- Meet regularly with your Christian friends and pray together. When you do this, you can correct and encourage each other from the Bible and grow in Christ Jesus as He blesses you.

Her favourite verse is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life". She often sings Christian songs in her heart as she works.

Mrs Sary, to me, is an example of the woman in Proverbs 31. She lives her life for God in her family and in her community. She quietly and lovingly supports her husband and son in their work for God and constantly encourages them. She is a source of strength to her neighbours. She glows with peace from God. I praise God and thank Him for the privilege of meeting her and being sisters in Christ.

- Mary Webb  
Grace Church Christchurch



*The Pastor's Wife*

# Dealing with the BIG 'C'

When asked to write this article, I accepted the assignment as an opportunity to reflect on the goodness of the Lord in bringing me through five cancer diagnoses and eight surgeries over the last eighteen years.

The goodness of the Lord is still true, but my faith is again tested with the Doctor's call to tell me that the latest blood test shows concern about my liver function. Here we go again – is it a cancer secondary? Since my last surgery, a bilateral mastectomy for breast cancer, I have had three follow ups for possible secondaries, but so far that is not a diagnosis I have had to face.

So how do I cope with the fear, anxiety and worry? Well, honestly I do all three in varying amounts at each phase! Yes, I **pray**. Yes, I **share with close understanding friends**, and I **read**.

During my last big surgery, my home church friends (Covenant, Auckland) gave me a book of devotions contributed to by our women. Their short, often personal reflections, as well as scriptural promises, were uplifting and sustaining to my spirit during a time when it was difficult to concentrate. In the four and a half years since then I have filled every page of that book with additional material copied from helpful books and insights from my own devotions.

I also ask for help. During this present episode I rang a retired doctor friend. She accompanied me to the latest specialist appointment. Even without a medical background, having a family member or friend is a great support and they can listen in and help you remember the conversation. They can pray for you at the time and after too. I'm grateful for the uncertainty right now as it forces me to realize how easily I imagine the worse case scenario and worry. For some personalities I think that is common, and if we cast it on the Lord I don't think it is all negative. For myself, fearing the worst has actually helped me cope with some of it when it has happened.

The longer we live the more illnesses we are likely to experience and more of our peer group will also face life-threatening diseases. That is just part of living in a fallen world, and we ought to praise and thank the Lord for every birthday! Past generations lived much shorter lives and often their fatal illnesses were not diagnosed. Today there are so many medical tests and procedures, and many of us are faced with frequent medical appointments which make us feel we are more ill than well and can create difficulty in trusting that the Lord is in control. I'm learning to thank God for my medical care more often and believe that it is part of the Lord's purpose and His over-ruling good care of me. My experience of the New Zealand medical system is that once you have had a cancer diagnosis every ache and pain, and any slightly abnormal test, is investigated thoroughly. Looking at it logically, it is not something we should get all emotional about. But being emotional beings many of us do. For those of us who know the Lord, there is something much deeper. As we read the Scriptures each day, many parts will come so much more alive. Shortly after my last operation, I was reading Psalm 27 and found reassurance in verse one "whom shall I fear?...of whom shall I be afraid?" and verse 13: "I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Some parts didn't seem to apply to me but then I imagined the references to evil, enemies etc. as the warring cancer cells!

Twice I have felt the Lord speak to me more directly and dramatically. Once I had to have a needle biopsy which proved difficult. The staff were very kind and offered me a cup of coffee. I was sitting drinking and feeling a bit sorry for myself when I noticed printing half-way down the inside of the mug: "God cares for you."

Another time, I was at the surgeon receiving rather bad news, but planning to go on to work afterwards. I did go to work, but that very morning while I was opening donation envelopes from the

mail at my workplace, instead of the usual cheques or card details, a bookmark fell out – nothing else. I looked at it – "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7. There were no hand-written words but it was printed by OMF, the very mission with which our family served in Asia and still did in NZ. It was almost as though the Lord Himself was sending yet another assurance of His love and presence with me.

None of us know the span of our lives. At each big operation that I've faced I've prayed for God's mercy to spare my life so that I could ..., and each time God has mercifully allowed me to begin a new phase of my life with thankfulness and purpose. I almost feel guilty that even now I find reasons why I plead to God to spare my life! We are all sinners and self-centred, but deep down I'm so thankful for all God's goodness and blessing that I more readily submit to His plan for my life.

- *Ronalda Warner*  
*Covenant Presbyterian Church*

P.S. No further news since the last medical tests, but Good News from the Lord: Philippians 1:22 "If I go on living in the body this will mean fruitful labour for me", or as a recent translation puts it: "If I continue to live... my work will produce more results".



*Ronalda with Carolyn Baird as 'Daffy & Dilly' on Daffodil Day!*

# Waihola Girls Camp

In the July school holidays, several girls from the Christchurch GPC went to Waihola Girls Camp. Snow fell heavily the day they travelled down and the girls had quite a scary drive. Here are their impressions of the camp and their trip. We, as a congregation, are very grateful for the efforts of Waihola and their camps. Our girls enjoy their experiences there and often return with a new 'lift' to their Christian lives.



We were told that we were going to camp a bit later than planned because our camp leader hadn't arrived yet due to the snow. Most of the girls arrived the next day.

The camp was really fun. I liked everything (but I did get tricked into eating chicken heart. Yuk! I didn't really like that!). It was loads of fun playing games upstairs.

I met lots of new people and now most of them are my friends. There were around 22 girls at the camp and around 7 leaders. I enjoyed camp so much I am most definitely going to another camp!

*By Amy M*

Driving to camp was scary when it started to snow. Once we finally arrived in Dunedin Mrs Ross decided to let us have a break to recover. So we had a snow ball fight and went to MacDonalds! The thing I enjoyed the most at camp was playing Mafia and having the Talks with Aunty Sarah. Everyone in my cabin was really nice to me I really liked camp and the leaders I had, called Aunty Emma and Aunty Maddy. I think I want to go again next year. I might want to go to Girl's summer camp next year too.

*By Taiwo*

The day I drove up to the campsite, I was really excited. It was going to be new friends, new games, new times and new beds. (The beds there were very warm and snugly!) The thing that the camp never leaves out is the power of the Lord. Each day we had cabin devotions before breakfast and later a camp Bible study time. As a camp we learned about Jesus. At the end we had a quiz about what we learned. For a correct answer we got a lolly. We also got to watch a movie and have cabin plays on the last night.

When we left I was sad because I missed my new friends and I missed one of my favourite holiday spots

*By Rebecca Ross.*

... By the time we reached the motorway going into Dunedin it was beginning to snow harder, and all the girls including me had a turn praying for safety, while Mum was driving...It was very dangerous and we became silent with fear. Rebecca read from Psalm 121, and it was the most comforting thing I had heard all day. There was much praise and thanks to the Lord as we came safely off the hills into Dunedin. It took a while to sink in what we had just accomplished, and we were amazed by God's constant protection. It was the scariest thing I have ever experienced and I hope to never do it again. It was a miracle that we made it through the motorway. I will never forget the way God protected us and the way he guided us through the snow.

*By Anna Ross*



# In Brief

## News & Prayer Points from around the Country

While not all our congregations feature in this edition, please still be faithful in praying for them in their work of the Kingdom as well as those listed below. We trust you are encouraged by what you read, gain new ideas for what would also work for you, and are helped to pray more effectively for each location.

### Northern Presbytery

#### MANGERE

##### Providence Presbyterian Church

Providence ladies meet every month to study the book of John. It has been encouraging to meet together before the Sunday service. In July we had a lovely Indian lunch after church to praise God for the granting of permanent residency to an Indian family in our fellowship, after a long and prayerful wait. On August 27 we have another church wedding. The church ladies are organizing the afternoon tea for Keith and Ingrid. We are giving thanks that Jo and Tua have a new baby son, Tobias.

##### Prayer:

- Please pray for Megan Levi as she runs our playgroup each morning Monday to Friday. Pray for more families to come from the local community.
- Pray also for our monthly couples' Bible study which is being attended by some of our young marrieds.
- Pray also for safety for our church property as there has been a lot of vandalism lately.

#### MANUREWA

##### Covenant Presbyterian Church

- Give thanks for the recent opportunities ladies had to meet with Sam Seccombe and Kate Ure to learn more about life and culture in Asia and how to pray effectively for gospel witness in this area.
- Pray for the last monthly meetings for Spiritual Mothering groups during September/October that they may encourage women in different seasons of life to encourage one another in Christ.
- Pray for the next women's Presbytery event on 24<sup>th</sup> September – a teaching seminar based on "Lies Women Believe and the Truth that Sets Them Free" by Nancy Leigh DeMoss.
- Pray for the Light Party planned on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October, that many of the neighbourhood children would come along with their families.

#### TAKANINI

##### Trinity Presbyterian Church

- Please continue to give thanks and pray for the youth, many of whom have difficult family lives.
- Pray for wisdom and leading as we search for a new pastor.

#### GISBORNE

##### Grace Church

Community Outreach Dinner: Grace Church Gisborne held its annual community dinner a bit earlier this year on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August. We aimed to seat a total of 80 guests, and were blessed to have 70 turn up on the night. There was a very diverse range of people this time, including a table from the local IHC community.

Everyone pitched in at 10am Saturday morning to peel, slice and prepare the food. The vegies were cooked hangi-style in a steamer, and the wild pork roasted. Steve & Eva Panapa were our guests again, and Steve gave a talk based around 'Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.' While some of the kids were a bit rowdy at times, it was pleasing to see the adults listening intently. Pray that the Lord would water the seed and see it germinate and bear fruit.



### Central Presbytery

#### NEW PLYMOUTH

##### Grace Community Church

Greetings from Grace Community Church - New Plymouth! A lot has happened since our last item in *The Helper*. We have regrouped and started regular Women's Ministry meetings again. In October 2009, when Cindy Jonkers, who had started the Women's Ministry together with Michelle Landreth left for her home country, South Africa, the ministry was left floundering. However, after ongoing prompting and encouragement from some ladies and with promises of their support and prayers the ministry was "relaunched" in February 2011.

Well, like most of you, I am wondering just where 2011 has gone. Every year seems to go faster. For our Women's group it has gone in a blur and flurry of lively programmes, a busy church life and very busy family lives.

# In Brief

In **February**, the theme of our programme was all about women. After some enjoyable ice-breakers, 5 ladies each had the opportunity to share about a special woman who had made an impact in her life. This was followed by a message on the special characteristics of the **Proverbs 31** woman. All in all, it was an inspiring evening.

**March** saw us doing a foot spa programme where we pampered our feet with relaxing foot scrubs, soothing massages and moisturising foot balms. We shared some funny, some serious, some profound and some challenging quotes on feet. After this we pampered our souls with a message around Isaiah 52.7 - "How beautiful on the mountains, are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation".

**April** had us doing some exercises with an experienced personal trainer. This was when we found out how unfit we really were. On this evening we were blessed with a visitor of 81 years of age, the mother-in-law of one of our regulars, who came dressed in her track suit and joined in with the exercises! Our message for the evening was based on running the race found in Hebrews 12.1 "...and let us run the race marked out for us." Other than encouragement to run the spiritual race until the end, we also learnt a lot about the first and ancient Olympic Games.

Our next meeting was a cooking demonstration by Nicholas, one of our Asian adherents and a chef at the local PIHMS School of Management. It was a lovely evening for young and old. This night we had a first where a Nana, a mother and daughter/grandchild attended. It was no surprise that it was also our biggest attendance. Food and cooking still remains a popular draw card!

Our **July** meeting was happily sacrificed to spend time at the church's winter week-end retreat at a local camping site where we had Peter Collier of Christchurch share an uplifting series of teachings on leadership from the book of **1 Samuel 8** onwards.

Although feedback from our ladies has been very encouraging, positive and supportive, the challenge of keeping our women's meetings interesting and spiritually challenging continues. We welcome any ideas from other Women Groups and from items in *The Helper*.

Please pray for our group that as we build stronger bonds with one another we will be able to go out as a united group and start projects that will get us more involved in the local community.

*Southern Presbytery*

**DUNEDIN**  
**Grace Bible Church**

Since the last *Helper* we are delighted to have welcomed new babies; Logan Gray, boy number three for Azriel and Melissa; Fola Shittu, boy number two for Peju and Lanre; and Allegra van Gelderen an early but sweet arrival of a girl for Simon and Meaghan to join big brother Thomas.

A challenge for us in 2011 is our shrinking building! Or we should say that the Lord is blessing us in ways that mean the existing space is a challenge. We have been praying for wisdom and for provision of a new space for us to meet in for Sunday worship. As a temporary measure we are running a children's church during the entire service time to free space in the main hall for the new people that are coming. We are very thankful for the dedicated team of workers that put a lot of energy and enthusiasm into running this each week.

We are having to farewell the 2011 CCP team from Tennessee Tech that have been here as part of a Summer Mission Trip. They have spent time in study and discipleship as well as serving us through friendship evangelism opportunities on campus. We give thanks for their time here, their encouragement to us and their cheerful enthusiasm as they ministered here.



Christian Youth Camps winter camps are another place we have had women busy serving and a number of our young people attended. This proved to be a challenge with the rearranging of circumstances first with no snow on the skifields and then a lot of snow right on the ground in Waihola!

#### **Prayer:**

- Give thanks for the birth of new babies and the many young children in our congregation.
- Give thanks for the Sunday School workers as they run Children's Church.
- Pray for the provision of a bigger building for Grace Church to meet in.
- Pray for the CCP team as they return home and for continued fruit from the relationships and the contacts for Christ they leave behind.
- Give thanks for the opportunities for the gospel to be shared at the CYC Winter Camps and pray for the Lord to continue to be at work in the lives of the campers.

# Nicky Bray: offers HOPE

On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July, ladies from churches across the Northern Presbytery gathered together for a night of food, fellowship and encouragement hosted at Redeemer. The evening began with a time of mixing and mingling over coffee and dessert along with some beautiful music by Alisa Willis and Ann Harkins.

Deana Watson, the first guest speaker of the night, spoke about scrapbooking and how it can be used as a creative tool to preserve family memories down through the generations. Deana also had some examples of her family scrapbooks on display for people to look over afterwards and draw inspiration from to create their own.

Nikki Bray then shared snapshots from her life story of how God has been at work through the good times and the bad. Beginning with her difficult childhood, Nikki spoke on living through a number of painful family separations which resulted in her finding it difficult to trust people and doubting whether marriage and family life could ever really be good. Nikki's life turned around, however, when she met some

Christians during her first year at university who embraced her and it was through them that she came to know Christ. God was also at work in changing Nikki's views on marriage and family life, as she married in her early 20's and is co-director of FamilyLife NZ with her husband Andy.

Since then Nikki has experienced many ups and downs in her faith - most notably her husband's ongoing health struggles and the passing to glory of her beloved daughter Natasha (who died in the 2008 Mangatepopo tragedy alongside her teacher and five classmates). Yet even in these darkest of times, Nikki shared how she has come through them by God's grace and strength while learning to 'never doubt in the darkness what God has taught you in the light'.

The unexpected twist to the evening was the revealing that Deana and Nikki were in fact mother and daughter. A wonderful demonstration of the grace of Christ at work in restoring a relationship.

- Priscilla Camp  
City Presbyterian Church



*Alisa Willis & Ann Harkins play for the ladies during dessert*



*Nikki Bray shares her life and testimony*



*The ladies have a look at some amazing scrapbooks*



*The Northern Presbytery Women's Committee.  
From left: Barbara Papesch, Michelle Willis, Shirley Smith, Rita Williams,  
Shona Rakete (also Ann Harkins)*

*The Helper is a publication of the Christian Education and Publications Committee (CE&P) of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, through its Women's Sub-Committee. Comments or inquiries are welcome and can be sent to:*

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