

## *Fowey Fables – no.9 - March 2005*

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”(Isaiah 43:2) So began a recent letter from Jampani, a past student and now a pastor on the east coast of India before describing how he and his congregation survived the recent terrible tsunami, and their attempts to help their own people. For over a month the newspapers have been full of human tragedies, miraculous escapes and inspiring heroism. At this time the death toll is close to 300,000 but it is real stories not just numbers which bring the horror alive.

When Isaiah wrote these words they were part of many chapters which spoke in amazing detail of the coming of the Christ, how they would recognise Him and what He promised them. The guarantee was simple, His presence, love and power in the darkest moments. The water and the fire were both literal and figurative. Israel had walked through the Red Sea and the River Jordan. Elijah and Elisha had walked through the Jordan. Jonah had survived being thrown into the Mediterranean. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had known the Lord’s presence in the fire and come out unscathed. Countless others had nearly ‘drowned’ or ‘fried’ in adversity and persecution and the Lord had been there as they lived - or died. We may escape, or we may perish in an earthly sense, but we will know from His comforting presence that He will keep us for eternity.

Christians died in the tsunami, others survived but many also helped. Another letter, this time from Craig Greenfield, who with his wife Nay works among the poor in Cambodia, describes him going to Thailand to help by recovering badly decomposed bodies in the hope that their loved ones could at least identify them. No words can capture the sights and smells he faced. But he experienced the Lord’s presence amid the horror.

Last week brought its share of flood and fires for us. On Monday NZQA informed us we would be deregistered unless we gave grounds for appeal by the following day. On Tuesday our long time friend and next-door neighbour, Peggy Burton, moved from the home she had occupied for 51 years. On Wednesday we heard through his former wife and young son of the death of one of our past students, Martin Hemopo. On Thursday our beloved dog, Cindy, died. In all these threats and losses the presence of the Lord Jesus has been magnificent.

At the same time there have been exciting and fruitful times in which the Lord’s presence has been equally evident. Water Weeks involved about 90 young people and helpers spread over three camps in January. This year we were based on Dayspring III, our yacht Spirit and the rescue boat the trust purchased last year. They were probably our best camps ever. No-one drowned or burned. The Lord was in charge, gave us a great team and worked in people’s lives. It was such a worthwhile time that we are seriously asking how we might develop the programme from here.

The last term of Bible School was an experiment which worked well with two morning classes, one in Pakuranga and the other in Dominion Road, and evening classes at the Lodge. The facilities have been ideal but most important has been the warm encouraging welcome from both the churches who have made space available. Underlying their loving provision has been a sense of the Lord’s presence. We start a new term in two weeks with as usual a huge mixture of people from all over the

world. Some know the Lord well, some a little and others not yet, but all of them will come because of His drawing. The privilege of teaching them is priceless.

The website, [www.foweylodge.com](http://www.foweylodge.com) is finally functioning and will hopefully become an effective tool not only to offer teaching worldwide to those who cannot come to New Zealand or have been here in the past, but will also be a good means of keeping in touch. God can even be present in information technology!

The appeal process with NZQA will probably take weeks or months. On the face of it time and money are wasted but the reality is that it gives us opportunity to address more senior bureaucrats and hopefully, through them, some key people in government. The basis of our appeal is simple. Christian teaching is a vital need of our society and should be assessed differently. Jesus told us not to judge the behaviour of one another. Christian growth is about knowing Him, not it. Exams are therefore not an appropriate way to measure outcomes of our course. If the appeal fails we have the option of the High Court. Our only concern is that NZQA approval gives us opportunity for student visas for overseas students which we would be sad to lose. Already the Immigration Service under the direction of NZQA have suspended processing applications pending the result of the appeal. Two things are clear. The Lord is present and our conviction is that He does not intend us to stop.

In May we are planning a two week school at Muanicula in Fiji for local people as well as international students. We have talked about this for a long time but are convinced that now is the time to begin what we trust will be a regular programme. The facilities at Muanicula have developed a long way thanks to some great work teams. The circle of those in Fiji and outside who have a clear sense of what can happen there has enlarged. The relationship with local villages is wide open. Please come and help us!

The same suggestions are beginning to arise from other places overseas of short introductory courses in a country where past students are involved in ministry, Perhaps these could be held on a regular basis.

On Christmas Eve on NZ TV's Channel One, there was a delightful programme, in which we were all involved. The programme has been a regular feature for some time, called "Mucking In", in which friends come together to honour someone who has given much to the community by creating a new garden for them and the work they do. The very deserving recipients this time were Sam and Thelma Chapman who have been based in Otara, one of Auckland's neediest areas for the past 11 years, following the 11 years they spent at the Lodge. The programme witnessed beautifully to the love of God in action. He was undoubtedly present.

Nick is going to Australia this week for most of the coming year, for work, ministry and to explore his future. We are confident the Lord will be present in his plans. Pete is back to school tomorrow which for him means cricket and running. His relay team won a bronze medal at the National Athletics championship in December. Chris and I are ready for anything God has for us this year – because we know He will be present.

Love from all of us,        Tony, Chris, Nick and Pete

PS Since writing this two lovely things have happened. NZ Immigration have realised it is not appropriate to prevent our students obtaining visas so they are again processing them. Nick has found his dream job in Australia! He is teaching sailing to kids at a Christian camp in a National Park south of Sydney. The Lord is good to us!

