

**Disability Contribution** made by two Kiwi writers to an anthology launched in the USA 1st May 2017.

The book is called **A Child Laughs - Prayers for Peace and Justice** and is available from Philip Garside Publishing.

Disability is both a personal and a political reality. In the past, people with disabilities were seen as those who needed 'doing for'. Our lives weren't run by us, our stories weren't told by us. We were seen as the recipients of charity, not equal participants in our own communities. But we're changing that. Around the world we are now speaking with our own voices and claiming our equal right to participate. We're adding our unique perspective on what it means to be human, offering back our insights to those who have ears to hear.

- Trish

### **A personal prayer/poem**

#### THE CARRIER AND THE CARRIED

I don't notice your disability anymore. .... It's

*just something you carry with you, she said.*

....

I carry it with me  
like a handbag  
swinging loosely by my side  
pick it up  
put it down.

A handbag  
I never lose  
and never replace.

I carry it on me  
like a cotton shirt  
on a summers day.  
Wind easing its finger  
between skin and fabric  
billowing it out  
pulling it too  
playing at separation  
but the buttons hold tight.

I carry it in me  
channels  
carved deep  
by a river  
always in flood.

I carry it through me  
like the weight

of a name  
for a child never born.  
A presence  
and an absence.

I carry it with me  
on me  
in me  
and through me.

I am the carrier

and I am also  
the carried.

A blue tear  
filled with gold.

Despite its pervasive nature disability is only a portion of the person. Each one of us is less than perfect. Impairment is everywhere. But, a beautiful soul can reside in any body.

– Rosalie

#### **Public Prayers** (Approach)

Loving God,

We acknowledge that regardless of health,  
attitude, appearance or status,  
we are people marred by imperfections.

Grant us the strength to manage our infirmities  
with wise caring, good humour, and gratitude.

Help us use whatever we have to become  
more insightful to the conditions of humans,  
and more attentive to matters spiritual.

Save us from falling victim to self-centredness

- a malaise that preys on the fit and the unfit  
that left unchecked is more soul destroying  
and more binding than any physical aberration.

In the loving of others may we find perfection. Amen

#### **Public Prayers** (Intercession)

God of goodness, gaps, and glitches  
help us to see each other for what we are.

God of struggles, strengths, and strategies  
help us to cope with what we have.

God of difficulties, disabilities, and delights  
help us find joy in who we are.

God of individuality and invisibilities,  
enable us to understand how life is harder  
for some than it is for their peers;  
Give us a readiness to ease difficulties,  
remove barriers, and create level  
playing fields.

Bless us with the will to appreciate  
the courage, creativity, and skills  
required to live with impairment;  
along with the discernment to realise  
impairment is merely a fragment  
of personhood.

Empower us all to live in fullness,  
valuing what we have,  
and knowing we are loved.

At this time we direct our thoughts  
and prayers towards those who  
suffer life-blighting hidden disabilities;  
And, we think of those who are:  
Crippled by accident or illness;  
Deaf to the sound of voice and music;  
Blind to the beauty of form and colour;  
Rendered mute by malformation or disaster,  
and those disabled by frailty or malfunction.  
May they experience the love and care they need  
and may we be instrumental in loosening  
the shackles of their dis-ease.

We pray also for those who are:  
Blighted by ego;  
Crippled by fears;  
Deaf to pleadings;  
Blind to injustices;  
Rendered mute by apathy;  
and disabled by bitterness.  
May they experience the love and care they need  
and may we be instrumental in loosening  
the shackles of their dis-ease. Amen

*A story for children of all ages*

### **The Tiny Town of Tontevoc**

The tiny town of Tontevoc nestled in a sunny valley beside a sparkling river. It was surrounded by green fields backed by snow capped mountains. Everyone lived in a warm house and no one went short of anything they needed. Instead of enjoying the good things they had the children of Tontevoc School were discontent. Each child thought some other child was more fortunate.

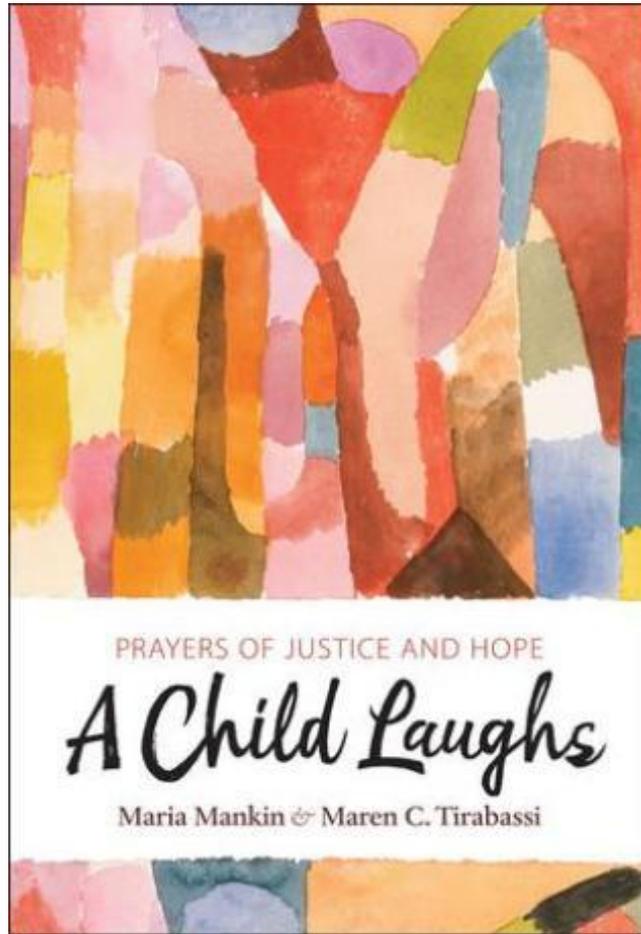
One child owned a pony and another had a magnificent tree house. There was a girl who could run like the wind. Her brother could sing like angel. Their cousins were exceptional at tennis. There were twins who looked alike and often argued. A boy who painted beautiful pictures lived with his grandmother. The family of four played boisterous games and got to sleep in bunks. The cleverest girl in the school wore thick glasses. Her sister was very pretty. One child lived in a grand house and had many toys. And, there was a boy who limped and had to use a crutch.

One day the Wise-woman of Tontevoc visited the school holding a bunch of floating balloons. She looked carefully at each glum face then instructed the children to follow her to the field behind the school. "I can see you are you are dissatisfied with your lives. These balloons can help you be who you want to be." The balloons tugged on their strings as if they wanted to be free. "When you have each put your name on a balloon I will let go of the strings. While the balloons are floating you must think very carefully about what you want and who you would like to be. After a while the balloons will come down. Whichever balloon you choose to hold will become yours and you will become the person who owns that name. You will look like that child and live in that child's house and that child's family will not know you are really someone else."

As the balloons rose above the trees the children jiggled with excitement. Soon they would be pretty or clever or talented, live in a grand house or own a pony. But the balloons kept bobbing above the trees and the children kept thinking. Being a tiny town everyone knew something about everyone else. Some families didn't have two parents and some had only one child. Others had teenagers or pre-schoolers to put up with. One father was known to get drunk. The rich girl had a nanny and seldom saw her parents. The twins got to thinking that they would miss each other terribly. The boy with the crutch thought about his baby sister who made him laugh and how his parents read bedtime stories. His grandparents, who lived next door, showed him interesting things and they all hugged each other.

When the balloons finally drifted downwards the children ran, frantically searching for names, and grabbing at balloons. The boy with the crutch felt a great fear. All the others could run faster than him. When he reached the last hovering balloon, oh joy of joys, it had his name on it. He looked around. The other children were clutching balloons as if their lives depended on them - and each was thinking the same thought.

The boy with the crutch smiled and a laugh of joy welled up inside him. This spread to all the other children who were reaching the same conclusion, being loved and valuing that love is the most important thing in life.



A Child Laughs -- Prayers of Justice and Hope  
(edited by Maria Mankin and Maren C. Tirabassi) Pilgrim Press, May 1, 2017

A child's laugh should be the butterfly wing, the ripple-maker, for all the world. There are many children crying — we hear them echoing from news media. It is time to pray the change of the world in children's laughter.

MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED themes and issues crucial to hope and justice were crowd-sourced to create this collaborative anthology of fifty-two reflections from seventy-seven writers in eleven different countries. These writers offer background, prayers, liturgy, and questions for action and reflection, and now invite readers— both individual and small groups—to join the community.