

Waikanae Refresher Weekend, March 7-9, 2025

"A House of Prayer" was the theme of this year's Refresher Weekend at Waikanae's El Rancho Christian Camp.

30 members from all over NZ, including 6 from our Masterton Filipino congregation, enjoyed a stimulating and challenging exploration of the importance of prayer in Christians' lives. After dinner together on Friday evening, Dennis Richards led an introductory session launching out of Jesus' statement that "God's house is to be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13). "We are that house, so prayer must be an important aspect of our lives, and we are here to improve our prayer lives", Dennis stated. He concluded the session by showing a short video by Tom Wright on "How Should I Pray?"

Saturday began with another session by Dennis, on the Lord's Prayer as an outline for our prayers. In the ensuing weekend presentations Phil Baldwin covered the topics of "Worship in Prayer", and "Prayers of Lament", and Rex Morgan spoke on the areas of "Intercessory Prayer" and "Praise in Prayer". On Saturday evening there was a Q & A session addressing questions submitted by the attendees.

Throughout the programme there were a number of opportunities for members to pray individually and in small groups on specific aspects of prayer. For example, after explaining how the lament psalms (which interestingly make up the largest class of psalms) show us that it's never wrong to cry out to God in our pain, Phil asked members to write their own lament prayer, based on a situation important to them. Rex asked members to meditate and pray through one of the Psalms using a meditative prayer format known as *lectio divina*.



El Rancho provided a great environment for this topic, a serene rural location surrounded by trees and meadows. Lots of rabbits were spotted around the camp at dawn and dusk, and birds joined us in the hall during some of the sessions. Several members enjoyed the lovely riverside walk to the golden stretch of sand and outstanding views of Kapiti Island at the nearby Waikanae Beach.

The weather was fine throughout, with temperatures reaching 23° on Sunday. As always, the morning and afternoon teas prepared by Brenda, Dagmar and Sue were the ideal centrepiece for hearty fellowship, and the meals at the El Rancho dining room were plentiful.

Dennis wrapped up the programme with a final session underlining the importance of prayer in our personal relationships with God, and reminded us of the GCI-Australasia Vision Prayer. We are told to "devote yourselves to prayer" (Col 4:12) and to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kind of prayers" (Eph 6:18), and God tells us that he "inhabits the praises of his people" (Ps 22:3). The sessions ended with an intercessory prayer for Jim Wood, suffering from Parkinson's disease, and the whole group coming together to pray for Sue Richards, currently undergoing a health problem, before David and Marilyn Wong led us in a Communion service.



Many members later commented on how helpful it had been to focus on this vital topic for an intensive weekend. Here are some of the comments received in emails afterwards:

"Wow, what a weekend. Thank you for helping us to learn more about the different aspects of prayer. Instead of just mere words to God, there is now a more focused, open, deeper and faith filled dimension in our prayers. Using Psalms as our book of prayers and

guide, prayer is now not a burden but as sweet incense offered to God. We also appreciate being able to put into practice what was shared in each session with personal and corporate prayers for our growth and benefit."

"We felt that this past weekend at Waikanae was a landmark event. Thank you for all the effort that went into it. The topic of course was excellent and timely, but what stood out was the spirit of intentionality, and maybe even a sense of urgency in the face of world events. It was very special."



"As always Waikanae was a truly uplifting experience. It is so good to be able to spend time with one another learning more about God and the way He wants us to grow. As was stated more than once during the weekend, prayer is a huge and vitally important topic and over the weekend we have barely scratched the surface. Thinking about how much Jesus valued



and indulged in prayer to His Father tells me that I need to grow a whole lot more in this discipline and develop a closer relationship with my Maker and Provider.

"Having the Prayer Retreat for the whole weekend was a stroke of genius. We will put all of what we took away into practice in our prayer life to our very approachable great God. We all were so very privileged to be able to spend time together in prayer and fellowship. We would be very happy to go to a prayer retreat again sometime. Thanks so much for the organisation and thought put into this very successful retreat."



"This year's subject about prayer was an eye opener for me and I didn't want the weekend to end... With all the learning that we are partaking in I am feeling more close to the Godhead than ever. Only through practicing prayer do we actually get closer to God and form a relationship of any kind with Him. This is our contact with God."



"It seemed to me that all the preparations made for an inspiring set of messages and time to deepen our practice of prayer. The inspiration that led to prayers for Jim Wood and Sue Richards demonstrated to me that the Holy Spirit had indeed been working through our time together on the weekend, and that we were attentive to the voice of the Spirit."

The board members stayed on a further night for a regular board

meeting followed by the Annual General Meeting on Monday morning.

The regular meeting included discussion of the new requirements of the Charities Amendment Act 2023, which include the obligation for the board to review the Constitution and Policies every three years.

Dennis tabled his Regional Director's Report and Rex submitted the financial accounts as at the end of February. The 2025 budget was approved. Rex has stepped back and is currently working half-time for the church, with Anthony Dady now being employed half-time as well. The intention is for Anthony to take up full time employment, but this needs to wait until he completes his current course of study, and then obtains a new visa. It was agreed to reinstate the practice of inviting an observer to each board meeting in future.

Mikolai Kicul attended the AGM on a Zoom link. The AGM included the tabling of Peter Lindop's Chairperson's Report, which is attached. The audited Annual Performance Report required by the Government was signed, and will now be sent to the Charities Services Department for publication on their website. Discussions included the proposal to hold a board retreat later in the year, something the NZ Board has not done before.

A comment from Brian Collins sums up the weekend: "A really worthwhile time of fellowship and spiritual growth."

