

Waikanae Refresher Weekend, July 9-11, 2021

“The Art of Communication” was the theme of this year's Refresher Weekend at El Rancho Christian Camp at Waikanae.

Twenty four members from all parts of the country, including seven from GCI Masterton, enjoyed a weekend where we explored a deeper understanding of our personal communication styles in order that we appreciate the gifts each is given for strengthening the relationships with others. The teaching was based on the “Transforming Team Communication” series from Giant Worldwide, who are working alongside GCI toward developing Christ-like leadership as part of our vision of “Healthy Church” underpinning living and sharing the Gospel into the world.



The weekend's focus began with opening up our personal communication styles, made up of five core voice types (“The Five Voices”): Nurturers, Creatives, Guardians, Connectors and Pioneers. Prior to arrival all participants had been asked to take an initial assessment to see which are their primary or natural voices. Across several sessions, Dennis explained the characteristics of each of the voice types, their strengths and challenges, and how these operate alongside and interact with the other primary voices. The aim from the outset was that attendees better understand their own gifts and communication styles, and how to maximise their collaboration with others.

Rex Morgan took a session covering the vitally important communication skill of listening, an art that when well practiced can greatly enhance our lives. He pointed out that although most of us consider ourselves good listeners, most actually are not so. There is a big difference between “hearing” and “listening”. Rex noted the importance of Concentration, Patience and Respect (using the acronym CPR) as key aids to better listening. Listening well takes effort and attention and requires deliberately holding back our reactions until the other person has finished. Deep listening involves listening to the heart and not just the words spoken. It is an act of love and caring, of giving the stories of others value, bridging whatever separates in order to connect deeply and establish communion.



Regrettably, Phil Baldwin, who was one of the presenters, became ill a couple of days before the weekend, so was unable to join us. However, using Phil's notes and PowerPoints, Dennis was able to step in and present the material that extended our appreciation of the power each voice brings and ways, both positive and negative, each engages with the others.

The material was presented in a practical and accessible way and members were excited to be enabled to know themselves better and gain insights into understanding others better,

enhancing team results. Breakout exercises included members splitting up into voice groups to discuss and validate their primary voices, and later a workshop aimed at practicing all five voices in a team setting to consider a proposed evangelistic outreach project and discover why having all

voices operating in teams is so valuable, enhancing and extending the leadership potential in the group.

The weather was fine across the entire weekend and the food was again abundant and delicious. Brenda Gordon, Dagmar Barnes and Sue Richards put together the usual scrumptious morning and afternoon teas and suppers. Lianne Trevarthen led us prior to evening, morning and afternoon sessions in worship. And we concluded by sharing Communion together, led by Brian Barnes.



El Rancho provides a serene rural environment, a perfect spot for a retreat. The accommodation, conference hall and dining room are only a few steps apart so members were able to spend plenty of time together, with lots of fun and fellowship binding us together in harmony.

Participants left Waikanae with a new spring in their step, alerted to fresh insights on what makes them tick and new tools to help in bringing harmony to future relationships as “the body of Christ grows and builds itself up in love,

as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16)

The board members stayed a further night for a meeting on Monday morning. In considering the latest financial reports, the trustees were happy to see that investment income has been tracking better than expected. Among other matters, in his Regional Director’s Report, Dennis outlined events planned for the remainder of 2021, and noted that he is working on identifying emerging leaders, particularly in the two focus churches, Masterton and Suva. There was discussion on some needed changes to the GCI-NZ Policy Register. The board agreed to supplement the congregational and personal donations of \$3,600 for pandemic relief in Asia, so an amount of \$5000 is being sent to the Philippine office for this purpose.

Les Evans updated the board on some outreach projects they have been operating recently in Invercargill. These include giving small gifts such as books and pots of honey, etc., to people they met randomly and as they felt moved. Each gift carries a “Pay it Forward” sticker and is identified with the name of GCI and the GCI website address.

Also, the Invercargill group is about to begin offering weekly free neighbourhood events including a barbecue and a Christian focused film. Prayers for the success of this programme are much appreciated. It is still in preparation, but Les and Kaye plan to launch the first event in the near future.



Board meeting at Waikanae. Unfortunately Jocelyn Best was unable to attend because of family illness.