

Rotorua Retreat 2023

The tranquil setting of Willowhaven Holiday Park on the shores of Lake Rotorua was a delightful venue for our September 14-17 retreat. Over 40 members from throughout New Zealand participated in a series of discussion sessions based around Michael Frost's book, "Surprise the World", which outlines five habits of highly missional people.



After an opening praise and worship service with communion, Phil Baldwin led an introductory discussion around God's calling, how he supports and enables us in our mission, and the kind of people we must be to live out the gospel life and share it



with others. Phil encouraged us to carefully consider practical ways in which we can be involved in our local communities. Quoting the proverb "you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar" he challenged us to look around our neighbourhoods and ask where we can make a difference by spreading some honey.

On Friday, Rex Morgan led a discussion on two simple and practical habits, that of blessing or encouraging others in word or deed, and that of eating with others. As we cultivate these habits, we build relationships with others that can eventually lead to questions being asked as to why we are so generous and hospitable. But even if we're not asked, we're still engaged in "Kingdom Work", making the world a better place.

On Friday afternoon the group enjoyed lunch and a walk through the amazing thermal attractions at Waimangu Volcanic Valley. A two hour downhill walk took us through a spectacular series of craters, geysers, hot water springs and terraces, steaming rocks cloaked with brilliantly coloured microbes, unusual plants and a wide array of birds.





Three car loads of our Filipino brothers and sisters from GCI Masterton arrived on Friday evening for the weekend sessions, beginning with a tasty BBQ dinner at the hall.

On Saturday Peter Lindop covered the habits of listening to God and learning from God. Off the back of a short video by Bill Johnson, Peter encouraged us to maintain a heightened awareness of the presence of God in our lives and to walk

intentionally in the identity and authority Jesus has given his people to go out in his name and share the gospel.

On Sunday Dennis Richards rounded the retreat messages off with a sermon entitled “Sharing Our Faith”, focusing on the fifth habit, “Sent”. He asked the question “What must the Church change in order to be more missional?” We were all encouraged to move on from focusing upward and inward to focusing outward also. “Church isn’t something we do, it’s who we are,” Dennis concluded, before David Wong led a closing communion service.



The weather was predominantly fine and sunny, with a little rain on the first day or so. Each evening we were treated to gourmet suppers put on by Brenda Gordon, Dagmar Barnes and Sue Richards, followed by videos and further discussion.

Overall, it was a relaxing and refreshing event with lots of time to fellowship and



consider the spiritual food on the menu. It was an ideal opportunity to retreat from our everyday lives to take stock and recharge our batteries for the next steps in our journey of “living questionable lives”—lives that result in others asking why we do what we do, as we seek opportunities to share the gospel with those who dearly need to hear it.

