

## 2018 Waikanae Refresher Weekend

Over 40 eager participants gathered at El Rancho Christian Camp February 16-18 for another invigorating “Waikanae Weekend”.

Our guest speaker this year was Dr Franco Vaccarino, a senior lecturer at Massey University who is an expert in the field of intercultural communication, working with university groups in several countries, as well as serving as an Anglican minister in Palmerston North.



Franco led us on a fascinating journey of cultural discovery, starting with the intercultural encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, and the parable of the good Samaritan, from a culture so different to that of the Jews. He explained that our culture includes our whole way of looking at the world, our identity, how we think, feel and communicate. Each of us has an individual filter in our mind that always perceives everything from our personal viewpoint. In other words, as Franco tellingly stated, “We don’t see things the way *they* are, but the way *we* are.”

Franco’s style was warm and engaging, laced with humorous but practical examples, and constant interaction with the audience. The concepts covered were very helpful in encouraging us to reflect on our personal culture, the way it shapes us, and how to best interact with other cultures.



At least 20 members of our Masterton Filipino congregation made the effort to be there, despite their heavy workload in the busy part of the beekeeping season, when early rising and long hours are the norm. This provided a meeting point of two differing cultures, which was an ideal setting for discussion around understanding cultural differences. It was generally felt that the weekend formed another very helpful step forward in the integration of these two cultures in GCI NZ.



After a series of 4 workshops, it was “time for action”, with Franco splitting the gathering into small groups to consider steps GCI can take in the future to implement the principles covered. The results were then shared with the whole group and the session closed with everyone determined to change their lives by taking on board the insights gained at another fruitful weekend.

The weather was cloudy but mild throughout, and many enjoyed the customary walk to Waikanae Beach, viewing a delightful sunset over Kapiti Island. The meals were up to their usual sumptuous standard, and the afternoon teas and suppers put on by the Wellington ladies were, as usual, “to die for”!

National Pastoral Team and Board members stayed on an extra night for meetings on Sunday afternoon and Monday morning.

The NPT agenda included the upcoming visit of four Fijian youths to Wellington for leadership mentoring with Louis Smith, the NZ visit of incoming GCI President Greg Williams followed by the Australian Conference in June, Festival 2018 which will be in Waikanae October 10-14, and a debrief on the just-completed Refresher Weekend.

Among other things, the Board considered the state of the church’s finances and the pastoral situation, reviewing reports submitted by Rex and Dennis.

It was noted that our investments had performed well in 2017. Our expenses are currently much higher than our income from contributions, but the investment income has enabled us to sustain the work we are now doing. In 2017 the Church was able to contribute to outreach efforts including \$6000 for Nepal flood relief, \$4000 for the Indian ministry to attend the denominational conference in the USA, \$1500 for the Falam Chin discipleship course, \$1000 for Project Hope in NZ, \$700 for SEP in the Philippines, \$3000 for a new water tank in Vanuatu, and \$11500 for airfares and materials towards Les and Kaye Evans’ trip, planned for May this year, to repair the earthquake-damaged church building at Rory.



Following the regular board meeting, the AGM was held, approving the 2017 Annual Report prepared by our auditor, which will now be published on the Charities website. Peter Lindop’s Chairman’s Report summarising the year of 2017 will be sent to all members along with the Festival letter, around the end of February.

