

Waikanae 2017 Refresher Weekend

Forty members met in fine and sunny weather for a wonderful Refresher Weekend at El Rancho Christian Holiday Park, Waikanae, February 24-26. This was the 14th such programme, and they are still getting better every year!



On Friday 24th the National Pastoral Team met in the morning and the Board in the afternoon. The Board AGM marked the retirement of Maureen MacDonald, who had been a Trustee since the establishment of the Board in 2002, and prior to that for 3 years on the National Advisory Council. Maureen's wise input and diligent service has been greatly appreciated, and the NZ churches owe a debt of gratitude to her. One of the main reasons for Maureen's retirement was to enable the younger generation to be more involved, and the Board was pleased to welcome Jocelyn Best as a new Trustee. The 2016 Annual Financial Report was accepted, and this will now be posted on the NZ Charities website.



The Refresher began with a Mihi (formal welcome) led by Louis Smith. Dennis Richards then outlined the progression in the topics covered in previous Refreshers, and Kerry Gubb gave an introduction to the material to be covered in the weekend. Then came the customary magnificent banquet-like supper catered by Brenda Gordon and the ladies of the hosting churches.

In the weekend sessions Kerry opened up the meaning of Philippians 2:5-9, focusing on the way Jesus emptied himself of his rights of deity and exploring how this might play out in our life of becoming Christ-like. We were treated to a deep and meaningful contemplation of the nature of the "self-emptying God" and how we can "let this mind be in you". Laced with Kerry's inimitable sense of humour and lots of audience participation (especially from Chris Hoskins), the stimulating sessions brimmed with insight and inspiration.

As usual the meals together in the dining room were excellent and the teas and suppers catered by Brenda's team were superb.



A Saturday evening stroll to view the sunset at nearby Waikanae beach has become an annual pilgrimage for several of us, and others sat and talked for hours.

Some of our new Masterton congregation were able to participate in the weekend, and the Filipino youth added a special flavour to the worship music team. Dennis announced that the Masterton congregation is hosting a seminar by visiting minister Larry Hinkle of "Odyssey in Christ" on the weekend of May 19-21. Any interested members nationwide are welcome to attend this seminar entitled "A Deeper Walk", focusing on spiritual formation practices that enhance a more personal and intimate relationship with God. More information will be forthcoming, and can be accessed anytime at <https://www.odysseyinchrist.com/>.



The programme ended with two presentations. Board chair Peter Lindop thanked Maureen for her long service to the Board. Since it would have needed a trailer to transport her gift of a large garden bench-seat to the hall, she was presented with a photo of the item, and the real thing was delivered later (see picture).



Finally, Rod Matthews read out some of the tributes made by scientist colleagues of Dennis Gordon on his recent retirement from his position at NIWA. After noting that a number of marine creatures have been named after Dennis¹, Rod explained (while trying to suppress a cheesy grin) that we were honouring him in the same way the scientific community does, with the naming after him of a new variety of cheese, a Gordonzola².



And so, all too soon, it was once again time to say our goodbyes after another enlightening, inspirational and refreshing weekend.

¹ Around a score of bryozoans have been named after Dennis, including the genera *Dengordonia*, *Gordoniella* and *Dennisia*.

² Thanks go to Phil Baldwin for the wording on the cheese, which says "A cheese to discover: *Dennisia Gordonzola Prestoniensis*. If you love biodiversity, you'll love this cheese. Warning: not recommended for consumption with bryozoa."