

NZ Update – 26 February 2015

Hello there! The Refresher Weekend at Waikanae was once again a resounding success, greatly enjoyed by over 30 members from around the country.

The National Pastoral Team convened on Thursday evening and the Board met on Friday. The NPT spent some time considering a process which we are thinking of using later this year to clarify the church's vision in NZ. The Board also looked at the matter of strategic directions and vision. Peter Lindop presented his chairman's report for 2014, which will be mailed to members shortly. The Board also approved the audited accounts for 2014, which are now to be sent to the charities commission. Other items included the approval of updated employment contracts for the two church employees, updates to the church's policy register, investments, insurances, assets and goals for the year ahead.

On Friday evening the Refresher began with a *mihi* (Maori welcome) in which a couple of local Maori, Philip and Margaret, called the visitors into the *whare* (meeting house) and gave brief words, songs and prayers of welcome. Philip quoted from a poem using the Maori word *tui* (to stitch or thread), symbolic of the weaving of intertwining lives that would take place over the weekend, and *toki* (adze), indicating that we would be carving out a place of new understanding.



Rod Matthews and Kerry Gubb responded on behalf of the visitors, thanking the hosts for their gracious and heartfelt greetings. Dennis Richards introduced a communion service and Kerry set the scene for the material to follow over the next two days, before everyone enjoyed a sumptuous supper.

Saturday morning began with Rod making a presentation to Dennis and Sue Richards on their 25th anniversary of full time employment in the church. The Richards were given gold watches on behalf of Joseph Tkach, and something they were able to share with the audience—a large chocolate cake!



Kerry made the theme "Delight in Him—Seek His Face" come alive with the use of colourful illustrations, analogies and plenty of humour. One example was the way Kerry as a young lad used to snuggle on his grandfather's chest to smell the Pears soap on his face. Another graphic illustration came from the word picture behind Gen 17:1, where God revealed Himself to Abraham as "El Shaddai". The Hebrew word "shad" means "breast", so the picture here is of a nursing baby in its mother's arms, gazing into the mother's face and totally dependent on her for sustenance and life. The learning was made more personal and memorable by the opportunity to split into breakout sessions where members shared ideas and impressions in small group format.

The El Rancho food was as abundant as always, and the morning and afternoon teas provided by Brenda Gordon and the Wellington ladies were superb! A number of members took the 30 minute walk alongside the river to the beautiful wide expanse of Waikanae Beach looking out to Kapiti Island. Although an equipment failure aborted the film to be shown on Saturday night, the audience moved seamlessly into an evening of singing, with Ian Darke on the piano, and plenty of hearty fellowship.



All too soon it was time to say our good-byes once again and head off to homes around the country and across the Tasman. But the vivid memories of food both physical and spiritual, fun, family and fellowship will linger long in the lives of the participants as they continue to delight in God and seek His face.



Hope Project: You will remember the TV ads and booklet sent out last year to invite as many Kiwis as possible to a conversation about hope. Millions of people saw the TV ads, over 1.5 million "Hope For All" booklets were delivered, and thousands went to websites preaching the gospel.

I'm happy to report that this year will see phase 2 of this project launched in April. A new series of TV ads will begin on April 19, a second nationwide booklet drop will take place from April 28, and there will be more web media available at the Hope Project & 10 Day Challenge websites. Through lessons learnt, this year's efforts will be improved.

Promotional videos for playing in church or home groups are available at: <http://alltogether.co.nz/promotional-videos/> and there are a number of free sermons, small group studies and concise equipping videos at <http://alltogether.co.nz/resources/>.

Social Media: Lianne Trevarthen has been doing a great job of actively adding interesting new devotional posts on our Auckland and Wellington Facebook pages. Recently she spent \$15 on creating an advertisement and boosting one of the posts (shown on the right), as a test. This effort led to over 15,000 people seeing the GCI Facebook page, with about 700 "liking" the post and around 50 more people "liking" and following our page. So this method definitely appears to have a great potential in spreading the message we have to share with the world. Lianne will continue, with the encouragement of the church board, to explore this new platform as time allows.

Warm regards to all, Rex

