



GRACE COMMUNION  
INTERNATIONAL

## New Zealand Update

10<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Greetings,

I hope you have all had a good week. As usual, I have been blessed to be surrounded by lots of lovely people, and to see God working in my life and the lives of those around me, and I pray it has been the same for you. In addition to my usual activities, this week I began a new Grace Communion Seminary course about Trinitarian Theology. Students on this course were chosen so that they could refresh their understanding of this important topic and then teach it in their parts of the world. So, you can look forward to us collectively learning more about the greatness of the Father, Son and Spirit in years to come.



Grace Communion International, as well as other denominations around the world, use the Revised Common Lectionary as a way of ensuring we look at the entirety of the Bible every three years. This weekend one of the key scriptures 2 Timothy 2:8-15. Here we are told that we share in Jesus' death and resurrection, and so are able to endure any hardship in this life because we focus on him. His victory supersedes our circumstances, and our enduring through suffering is a wonderful example of faith to those who do not yet know Jesus. Despite difficulties, we fix our eyes on Jesus, the risen King. Every struggle we get through is a testament of the good news of Jesus and his victory, and the problems of this world will not silence our proclaiming of him.

I hope you have good weekend. I will be preaching in Auckland, where we will also have our monthly children's church session and our foodbank collection. Please let me know of the good things going on in your congregations and personal ministries, as it's encouraging to share with fellow GCI members.

Also this weekend, I will have the pleasure of joining current and emerging GCI leaders from around Australasia for a virtual meeting of the Christian Discipleship Pathway students. We will be continuing our study of spiritual formation.

As you can see, God is doing lots of good things in our church. I will let you know about some of these in future editions of this Update.

In Christian love,  
Anthony

## Retreat

The annual New Zealand GCI retreat took place from Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September at the Willowhaven holiday park in Ngongotaha, near Rotorua. More than 30 people travelled from many parts of the country for a time of fellowship, worship, learning and prayer, with this year's theme being "Dynamic Disciples of the King".

A meeting of the church board took place on Wednesday afternoon, although the retreat itself began in the evening. Dennis Richards welcomed those present and set the tone for what was ahead. Then on Thursday morning there was a chance to debrief from previous retreats and training events. There was a review of Michael Frost's "Surprise the World" book, as well as discussion regarding what Martin Bailey presented at last year's retreat on the subject of "Being About our Father's Business". Members then shared what they had started doing differently to intentionally put themselves in situations where they were able to act as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

Some members were delayed in getting to the retreat due to bad weather, one of whom was Phil Baldwin. Phil had prepared several devotionals to be used before retreat sessions, so the first of these took place on Thursday afternoon. After that, everyone looked at information provided by The Rotorua Trust, an organisation that assists many small community groups. They had supplied resources to help GCI congregations in serving in the communities where they meet, so that was discussed to help enable those present to go away with some best-practice ideas regarding how they could be most effective. Everyone split into congregational groups to analyse the material and then feedback to all those present.

That evening there was a chance to support the local community, as well as enjoy social time, as the group took over the Spirit of India restaurant in Ngongotaha for a wonderful selection of dishes cooked by the restaurant's chefs. This was followed by a presentation by Rex Morgan about his recent trip to GCI congregations in Vanuatu and Fiji. He shared many photos, spoke about his experiences, passed on lots of information and told everyone of things to be praying about.

On Friday morning, Anthony Dady shared findings from his recent study on the subject of how churches can better meet community needs. He particularly focussed on input he had received from GCI members, although he also spoke of the overall results of the study and gave possible recommendations based on this. Everyone was then divided into congregational discussion groups and tasked with coming up with one thing their congregation would do differently as a result of what was discovered during Anthony's investigation.

Following that, Dennis Richards spoke on "Intentionality in Discipleship", particularly focussing on E.K. Strawser's book "Centering Discipleship". This was accompanied by congregational discussion about the material, following which it was dinner time. No collective meal was planned, thus enabling members to relax wherever, and with whomever, they wanted, so some members returned to the Spirit of India to enjoy more

food from there. Following dinner, much fun ensued as everyone enjoyed a quiz night prepared and hosted by Phil Baldwin.

Saturday and Sunday was devoted to covering material prepared by GCI president Greg Williams on the subject of “Kingdom Culture”, GCI’s theme for 2025. On Saturday morning and afternoon there were workshops intended to get those present to deeply consider aspects of the Kingdom of God. Everyone was divided into discussion groups, in the morning to study Jesus’ words about the Kingdom in Matthew chapter six, and in the afternoon to look at some of Jesus’ parables that illustrate what the Kingdom is like. After the discussions, everyone got back together to feedback what their group had discovered. The workshop designations were “Foundations for Kingdom Mindedness” in the morning and “Kingdom Imagination” in the afternoon.

That evening a barbecue was served, accompanied with “Kingdom Experience – The Marriage Supper of the Lamb”, a chance for people to use their “sacred imaginations” to think about possibilities regarding what it will be like to join Jesus upon his return. Having considered the wonderful prospects of that great reunion, Phil Baldwin led everyone in a hymn and Rex Morgan officiated the taking of communion.

On Sunday morning, there was a praise and worship service, including an offering. Alison Dady led the worship, and Anthony Dady gave a sermon written by Greg Williams. Following this, Dennis Richards concluded the retreat with communion, prayer and a send-off, leaving people to go away energised and inspired to continue Kingdom living in their own local contexts. However, this wasn’t quite the end of the proceedings, as retreat attendees then joined the Ngongotaha Christian Fellowship for a shared lunch at the nearby Lakeview Bible Camp.

As well as special events each day, there were certain activities that took place on a daily basis. Each day began with a prayer meeting and ended with supper. Thursday, Friday and Saturday sessions also featured a separate children’s church linked to parables about God’s Kingdom. Also on Thursday to Saturday, a communal lunch took place in one of the cabins, with more than twenty people in attendance each day.

There were lots of things that made the retreat special. Many people stayed on the campsite, which was in a beautiful setting on the edge of Lake Rotorua. Cabins were available for hire, so members were able to be together on the same site and spend lots of time together. Retreat sessions were designed to be practical and so enable everyone present to go away equipped to more deeply engage with Jesus and the Kingdom. Intentional engagement happened with the local community, meaning GCI members could be a blessing to others in the area, something which will hopefully be built upon in future years. Greatest of all, the Holy Spirit inspired what happened, Jesus was praised, and everyone there was given a foretaste into his Father’s Kingdom. This focus on kingdom culture was a valuable springboard for being dynamic disciples of the King.

A photo collage will be sent to every person on the NZ Update email list, although here is a low-resolution version of it. If you have not received this as a separate higher-resolution attachment but would like to do so, please email [anthony@gci.org.nz](mailto:anthony@gci.org.nz)

