



## Fiji Festival 2015

A big "Bula!" from our Fiji members to their "neighbours" in New Zealand! I was blessed to be at their annual Festival, which was held at the Coral Coast Christian Centre last week (October 23-31). The camp is located at Pacific Harbour, about one hour by car from Suva. It has a meeting hall and accommodation similar to that at El Rancho, Waikanae. However, meals are fully catered by the members, reminiscent of the way we prepared them at the SEP camps of old. The members are divided into three teams, one of which takes over the kitchen for each meal and works together to prepare and serve the food for the whole camp. This results in generous, delicious meals at a reasonable cost, put together with teamwork and fun.



The food included freshly caught fish, chicken curry, an abundance of root crops such as kumara, taro and cassava, lots of coconut cream (freshly prepared using a coconut grinder invented by Isei Colati), and pawpaws with every meal.

The weather was fine throughout, with temperatures ranging from 20 to 30 degrees. Attendance averaged 73, reaching a maximum of 88 on the last day.



"Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Our Faith" was the Festival theme. Sermon speakers included Frank Boyd ("Hope"), Jope Uqueqe ("Patience"), Teisa Mataika ("Relationships"), Robert Franklin ("The Lord's Prayer"), Isei Colati ("Faith") and I spoke on "Looking at Jesus" and "What happens to those who haven't heard about Jesus?", as well as taking a Youth Bible Study and speaking to the Men's Ministry. There was also a Women's Ministry meeting, a Family Day, and an "Island Night". One day services were entirely in the Fijian language, and the international visitors spent the day in Suva. Visitors included Cleo and Cathy Sturdivant from the US, attending their 21<sup>st</sup> Festival in Fiji (visitors just keep wanting to come back!), and Mark Maharaj and Don Braid from Queensland. As the only Kiwi there I had to hold up the flag for NZ (but which one?) and endeared myself to the

Australians there by claiming repeatedly that the All Blacks were going to win the Rugby World Cup in the final to be played the morning after the Festival.



There were so many items of special music put forward that each service included two or three pieces, culminating with no less than 10 items during the final service, including the singing of the Hallelujah Chorus.

In a touching and much appreciated gesture, Mrs Sofi Kainaimawi invited the members to afternoon tea at her hotel five minutes' drive from the camp, to

mark the third anniversary of the death of Ratu Epeli.

The "Island Night" after the final service, last Saturday, was held at James and Alisi Panuve's seaside property at Navua, close to the camp. Food for 90 people was cooked in a "lovo" (earth oven similar to a hangi) and eaten with plenty of fun, fellowship and laughter, followed by a number of entertainment items as the sun set on a wonderful week. To the moving strains of the Fijian farewell song "Isa Lei", the local members bid a tearful goodbye to the guests, amid comments that once again this had been "the best Feast ever!"

