

## NZ Update -- 29 March 2017

**Congress:** Dennis Richards, Dennis Gordon and I represented GCI at the 8<sup>th</sup> NZ Christian Leaders' Congress at the Hope Centre in Lower Hutt, March 21-23. It was a great opportunity to interact with colleagues from many different churches and agencies such as the Bible Society, Radio Rhema, World Vision, Scripture Union etc. The photo shows some of the 80 or so leaders who were there.

The Congress theme was "Difficult Conversations – How do we Maintain Unity?" In the opening night address Chris Clarke, CEO of World Vision, mentioned that from time to time his wife says to him "We need to talk." This is always the precursor to a difficult conversation, but their marriage is all the better for confronting and discussing such issues.

It was interesting to note how many difficult conversations face the church, including things like the interaction between youths and older members, singles and marrieds, migrant groups and locals, homosexuals and the transgender community, women in leadership, Christians who don't go to church, political differences, reluctance of members to engage in evangelism, "have's" versus "have-not's", inclusion of people with disabilities, appreciation of the Maori viewpoint, dealing with Islam, and the list goes on. Many of these issues were discussed during the Congress, including a couple of addresses from visiting speaker, Dr Rosalee Ewell, Theology Director for the World Evangelical Alliance. Dr Laurie Guy filled in the history of "How the NZ Church has engaged on sexuality issues", Dr Stuart Lange spoke on Martin Luther and the Reformation, which has its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October this year. Dr Joseph Bulbulia from Victoria University recounted findings from the NZ Attitudes and Values Survey. There was a panel discussion of political issues and a panel consideration on "Why don't Maori come to Church?"



NZ Christian Network leader Glyn Carpenter, who is about to take a sabbatical after 15 years of sacrificial service to the Network, was honoured for his work. He concluded the event on the positive note that we can have the peace of God even in difficult conversations because we don't have to settle everything ourselves—we can leave that to Christ the Head of the Church and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Dr Ewell reminded us that Jesus didn't promise an easy path, but He did promise always to be with us, never to forsake us.

**Myanmar:** Following our gift to Myanmar (mentioned in last week's update), I have received this message from Van Thawm Lian: "I am writing to express my deepest thanks for your recent donation of funds to reprint 1000 copies of the Falam Chin version of the Discipleship Course. I am most grateful for your generosity and heart for the financial support needed to continue GCI mission activities overseas. With your faithful financial contribution you've demonstrated your deep commitment to the work of translating, printing and distribution of GCI literature materials in Myanmar. Your support plays a key role in our success in spreading the gospel message in Myanmar."

**Vanuatu:** We're delighted to report that the drought in Malekula has ended. The past few weeks have brought good rains, so the water tank is full and the crops are growing again. Thank you for your prayers for our brethren at Rory.

**Cyclone Debbie:** *An update received yesterday from Australian National Director John McLean:* "You will have seen the destruction caused by Cyclone Debbie in North Queensland. Bob Regazzoli reports that most of our members seem to have come through relatively unscathed, although the Kreymborgs in Bowen endured a night of extreme wind and rain that broke windows, and threatened roofs and doors. It looks like they will have to be evacuated tonight. I know you will want to pray for them, as we pray for all those impacted by this event, with its massive winds, heavy rain and flooding."

**"Inside Life":** Please remember to pray for the latest issue of "Inside Life", that people in the community receiving it will be led to pick up a Bible and consider its value as a book well worth reading, even in this day and age!

Warm regards to all, Rex