



GRACE COMMUNION

INTERNATIONAL

New Zealand - Living and Sharing the Gospel

28 June 2017

FESTIVAL 2017 – WAIKANAЕ
“Drawing Closer ~ Looking Forward”
(11 – 15 October)

Kia ora friends,

One of the very great blessings we in GCI have long enjoyed is our annual September/October festival gatherings. During those days together we recapture the bigger meaning of ‘family’ and rejoice as we reconnect with friends from across the country and around the world. These are wonderfully heart-warming, encouraging occasions in which we celebrate our individual and collective involvement in the Body and Work of Christ. These days spent together have always been times of fun and fellowship, celebrating events, milestones and accomplishments of the year past while refocusing and reinvigorating us for the year ahead. Above all, however, these are moments when we purposefully come into God’s presence collectively, are blessed in our reconnecting, and express our gratitude to God in worship of him as Father, Saviour and Spirit.

Both Rex Morgan and I had our first experience of festival gatherings 50 years ago this year when we travelled with our respective families to Blackheath, in the Australian Blue Mountains of NSW in 1967. As young teens, that amazing experience left an indelible mark. The weather may have been cold and blustery but we remember fondly a wonderful time – hundreds of people from so many places rejoicing together, devoted to God’s plan for us and the world. Nor does that excitement diminish for God’s blessing is evident each time and we are uplifted and encouraged.

I am pleased to announce this year’s festival will be held in the Elm Hall in Waikanae’s El Rancho Christian Camp, 58 Weggery Drive (this is their new entrance now the SH1 bypass is complete) from Wednesday 11 October till noon on Sunday 15 October. As in years past, we will begin on the first day with a morning song service concluding with communion and following that come together for our first full service in the afternoon. Thereafter we will enjoy services each morning and follow that with an activity in the afternoon or evening with the remaining time free for fellowship over a cuppa or exploring whatever the Kapiti Coast has to offer.

It has been four years now since our last festival in Waikanae and I for one am looking forward to experiencing again its iconic surroundings and opportunities. Of importance in choosing the site this year was Waikanae’s closer proximity to our new congregation in Masterton and the hope that most from there can attend, if even only for the weekend. I also hope that as many of the rest of us will gather too to strengthen our now widened connections within GCI, and explore with them the things God is placing on their hearts and thus support and bless each other. Already our Masterton congregation have reached out into their wider community, recently inviting friends and workmates to the Deeper Walk Retreat that Larry Hinkle and Gracie Johnson of Odyssey in Christ (a GCI ministry working across and beyond church boundaries) were called on to lead, and which a few from Wellington, Auckland, Hamilton and Palmerston North attended.

Our theme this year, “Drawing Closer ~ Looking Forward”, works out of the thematic direction begun in February’s Refresher Weekend and last month’s Deeper Walk Retreat. Fundamental to our witness and work is that we “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), and it is love (John 13:35) that empowers the unity and camaraderie vital to both. Drawing closer is an essential action of love arising from a decision for love based on our hope in the faithfulness of the great Lover who called us to be one in Him (John 17:21). And such hope always looks forward, to sharing that love outward, for God has plans for us (Jeremiah 29:11)!

The special feature of the El Rancho experience is the communal living, its camaraderie and the deeper friendships that can result. Services will be run in the Elm Hall with social activities shared between the Hall and the Fireside Lounge. And for special meetings, or for quiet time away on one’s own, the Chapel just up on the hill will be available.

Most will be housed in the Elm Complex, as we did in the 2011 and 2013 festivals, with meals taken together at the Dining Hall (note, these units no longer have cooking facilities, retaining only fridges and kettles). Also, we are reserving the nearby self-catering Baker Lodge complex for our Filipino brethren to accommodate their special food preferences.

As we also did before, we will be subsidizing accommodation and meal costs so those of us with families will find it more affordable (El Rancho charges accommodation by the person, not the room). Note that if you have dietary needs (non-dairy, gluten-free, etc.) the Camp requires a daily extra charge per person. Also, for those arriving Tuesday (e.g. the set up crew), meals will be available. You will find the costings for all of these options on the enclosed registration form. Please send these in to Rex if at all possible not later than Wednesday, 20 September, so we can advise El Rancho of expected numbers.

Again, I do encourage you to come and be a part of this year’s festival! And bring your families if you can – we will have more than enough room to billet everyone. We are planning a series of activities and a seminar or two in the hope that this year’s festival will be a special, pivotal occasion in which we draw even closer together and look forward in expectant hope to all that God plans to bless us with. And please be praying for the other festivals in our region – our brothers and sisters in Vanuatu meet 5-12 October with Rex leading them, and in Fiji from 15-21 October where Louis and Alasi Smith will again be supporting the celebrations.

Blessings and best wishes!



Dennis Richards
Festival Coordinator

Incl.

- Festival registration form