

NZ Women's Retreat -- February 15-17, 2019

By Marilyn Wong

The triennial Women's retreat was held at El Rancho in Waikanae from Friday evening dinner 15th February to Sunday lunchtime 17th February. What a weekend! The feedback from many of the ladies was it was a resounding success with messages of hope, encouragement and love. This was possible with the many ladies who pitched in with help in billeting, transporting, making chair gifts, baking, helping in the kitchen, decorating and in many numerous ways, big and small. One instance in particular, Janis Murton from Wellington took on the challenge of learning how to set up and operate the sound equipment and enabled the retreat to run smoothly throughout the weekend. Janis also designed the programme which was something new for her as well. God was very evident in filling in gaps and covering lapses.

We were privileged to have Sandra Sellmer Kersten, a well-known and experienced speaker. Sandra has ministered for many years helping many work through past issues and encouraging each to embrace their true identity and destiny as God's loved ones.



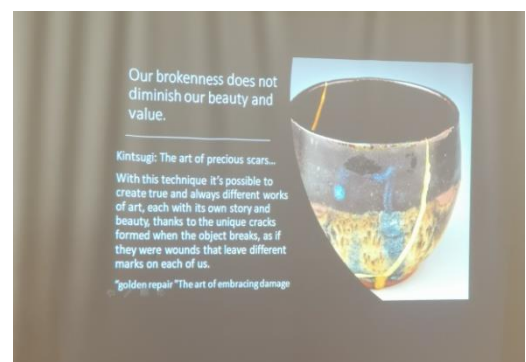
With our beautiful floral arrangement full of sunflowers, organised by Sue Richards, Sandra's first message was about the survival of a sunflower in her garden where despite her efforts to get rid of it as it was in the wrong place, it survived and reached for the sun. Isaiah 43:4 reminded us about how precious and honoured we are in God's sight.

The theme "Precious Pearls" was repeated numerous times through the parables, e.g. the pearl of great price; the lost treasure; the lost sheep; the lost coin and the lost son. Each pictured the steadfast and merciful love of God for the lost. We also heard about the resilience of Ruth who was a broken woman and became a woman of excellence

with a mention of the art of kintsugi, a Japanese way of repairing broken vessels with gold, treating the breakage as part of its legacy rather than something to disguise.

There were also many lessons itself from the making of the pearl which covered how wounds can be healed as we bring and release our hurts and broken hearts to the Cross.

Other ladies who shared their personal stories were Gael McInnes and Maureen MacDonald. Gael shared her experience with the men who dived for pearls in Northern Australia and related that to her own journey in her Christian life. Maureen spoke on looking for love and finding it with a loving Jesus.



Saturday evening was an opportunity to dress in colourful flowery attires and leis. There was lots of fun and laughter as we tackled the games run by Jocelyn Best, Anita Barnes and Erin Moyle. Some surprises were the agility of some of the ladies in swinging the hula hoop!



Alongside the messages we were treated to amazing suppers, world famous now in our retreats, by Brenda Gordon. We were truly spiritually and physically fed. There were daily gifts on the chairs for each lady and one that was greatly appreciated was a copy of the devotional “Jesus Calling ... Enjoying Peace in His Presence” by Sarah Young.

As usual we closed the weekend with a communion ably led by Ruth Matthews and Daphne Sidney from the Gold Coast, which reminded us that our Saviour valued us so much that He willingly gave His life for one and all.

An unexpected and delightful surprise was a gift that was specially made by Isei Colati, our pastor from Fiji. Isei made a plaque aptly decorated with shells and pearls inscribed with the scripture from Matt 13:46. The plaque was brought over by Va Colati and Irava Raki.



The highlight of the retreat was the amazing ladies who committed to come together, half of whom were from other denominations. We were together in harmony as followers of Christ and during the weekend we fellowshiped, worshipped, shared, reflected, prayed together and were powerfully reminded how God sees us as precious, empowered, accepted, redeemed and loved.

