

## **HOME SERVICE CONFERENCE 2008**

### **Making the Right Impression**

The latest Home Service conference was a huge contrast administratively to the previous one. Two years ago we had major complications when the international speakers had to pull out less than 24 hours before the commencement of the conference. The Lord saw us through amazingly. This year, due to other pressing commitments, the administration was mostly completed 2 weeks before. However, we still needed the Lord and He didn't let us down.

Friday evening was the usual busy registration and settling in time. We know this is not easy for new families with small children but it mostly went well. A minor panic was caused by the forgetting of the video due to be screened, but a trip to Llandrindod Wells by Steve Richards filled the gap with an acceptable substitute.

The two plenary sessions were led by Stanley Jebb. On Friday evening he brought us the lifestyle of a Christian home educator and how this makes us different. On Sunday morning he gave an outstanding overview of the Biblical basis for home educating. Many of us were hugely impressed by this presentation and felt it was a talk which Christian sceptics would find it hard to challenge.

There was a packed seminar programme, as we dropped a plenary session to fit in four more seminars. This is a brief outline of these seminars.

Cathy Koetsier presented the reasons her family have chosen the "learn as you live" way and gave a well thought through and scripturally based breakdown of the reasons behind their decision. Steve Richards and Roger Slack talked about the options beyond 14 which are always of interest and explained the problems associated with the new compulsory in-school assessments which are now part of most GCSE programme. At the same time Craig Koetsier encouraged us with responses we might give when asked the question "why aren't your children in school?", and Stanley Jebb encouraged us with the educational reasons for home educating.

After a short break for refreshments which were expertly served by Kate Charlesworth and her team, the second seminar session began.

Lorraine Doye talked about her experiences and why she has chosen to use a structured curriculum, along with useful tips from her experience for those choosing this route. Phil Harman gave a challenging and thought provoking seminar on the essential perspective of grace, especially when applied to home educating families. Meanwhile, Josh Williams and Daniel Bright talked about their experiences of being home educated and their thoughts on the subject now they are in employment and there was also a chat about the dvd which Home Service is producing, with a view to getting new ideas for it.

The afternoon was free for browsing resources (of which there were a record number), enjoying the site and fellowshiping together. The weather was good on Saturday for which we thank the Lord. It made a difference for the children to be able to be outside, both in the formal sessions and during the afternoon.

The evening session of seminars also went very well. We had Steve Richards delivering his very necessary and helpful getting started seminar, which was gratefully received by those at the beginning of their journey. Then, while the Dads could listen to John Penberthy Smith's advice on nurturing a home educating wife, the Mums were able to hear Andrea Williams and Lyn Richards pass on hard learned advice on coping with the stress which often accompanies the role of home educating mother. There was also a small group discussing FAQs on the Home Service website.

For the first time this year we had half board so some self catering had to be done. Most people appreciated thus being able to keep costs down although, of course, it added some pressure in terms of meal preparation.

Of course, while all these interesting and encouraging seminars were going on, the children were having a wonderful time in their sessions. These were very ably run by a team of parent helpers, coordinated by Lyn Richards, who had put a huge amount of time into the organisation of this.

Some comments we heard from the children were "this is fab", "that was huge fun", "when is the next children's session?". There was even a scavenger hunt on Saturday evening which went down very well. It is so encouraging to see the children forging friendships and then building on them year after year.

The teenagers had their own Bible studies and fun sessions and we are grateful to Alan and Elspeth Bright for being in charge of these. It was great to see how well they all got on and we know that they appreciate these friendships throughout the year as well.

Once again, we thank the Lord for His presence during the conference, both in the visible and invisible things. We know He is working in Home Service and in the lives of our members and we stand in faith to see what He will do next.

Some people left the conference on Sunday afternoon, some stayed on for the holiday week and some arrived on the Sunday afternoon for the holiday.

The weather during the week was not good and we were very grateful to Cefn Lea for the use of the main conference centre, which we do not officially pay for. There were more events organised this year than ever and it is great to see more people each year enter into the spirit of the holiday and organise events.

The activities included baking chocolate chip cookies, mum's coffee groups, dad's full cooked breakfast, cricket match, wide games, demonstrations of instrument playing, sports activities, singing, monarchy tournament, chess tournament, fishing lessons, to name but a few.

A new event this year, very well organised by Liz Davies, was a craft exhibition. The number of participants exceeded expectations and certainly the standard did. This is definitely now a regular part of the annual holiday. The exhibitors had their work commented on by a team of "experts" and it was a huge success.

As usual we had an end of week concert and we continue to be amazed at the abilities which God has given our children, and their commitment to excellence in these abilities. It was a brilliant evening, one of the highlights of which was an auction of a special book which raised a good sum of money towards sending Bibles to Zambia, for which Rick Williams had done a 28 mile sponsored walk on the Wednesday of the holiday week.

So we thank the Lord for His presence with us at both these events. It is an honour to be involved with a work which encourages others as we have been encouraged in the past. Both the conference and holiday week were over subscribed again this year. It would be good to meet more of you at these events in the future but please make sure you book early.

There is a holiday week planned for 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009 - e-mail [rickandandrea@onetel.com](mailto:rickandandrea@onetel.com) for more details.

The next conference will be in 2010. More details from Home Service nearer the time.

Rick and Andrea Williams  
Home Service