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HOME EDUCATION ON THE INCREASE

Home Ed 2004, the biennial conference for Christian Home Educators, was held in a new venue in order to accommodate the growing demand: and still it was full to capacity! Over 400 gathered at Cefn Lea Christian Centre, set in beautiful surroundings in mid-Wales, in September.

In the first plenary session Dr Roger Slack set out with great clarity the manifest failure of secular 'education' to change mankind, despite the fact that over the last 200 years successive generations had promoted education as the salvation of society – and even today we are asked to believe that the world can be transformed by more education. By contrast, the gospel is God's appointed means of transforming the world, and this truth must be the core content of education for the Christian.

In the next session Steve Richards showed how Christian home educators could be (and often are) involved with the community. Home education does not mean isolation, but gives families many opportunities for interaction with the local community that are not available to 'school' families, and many openings for Christian witness and testimony. Nor does it commit the parents to all the teaching – it would be better named 'home based learning'. In some areas home educating parents co-operate to help each other out and also share expertise. Steve also outlined the theological case for Christian home education in the final plenary session, from the foundation truths of creation and redemption.

A number of practical seminars were held during the weekend, including an overview of suitable Christian curricula, Home Education and the Law, Shaping Your Child's Character, and Learning Through Doing at Home. Later a panel of those who had experience of home education (some stretching back 25 years!) fielded questions.

Some delegates also took the opportunity of visiting a local historic town on Saturday afternoon – the castle and its long-gone conflicts between races and language groups had echoes in the modern world, showing that the problems and the needs of mankind do not change.

Once again the conference had attendees from Canada, USA, Australia, Jersey and several families from Southern Africa. A special feature of Home Ed conferences is that children are welcome, and this year that meant over half the total number present. The children's workers and crèche facilities were therefore greatly appreciated – after the last plenary session the children demonstrated what they had learned in their sessions, a lively presentation centred on Jesus Christ, our rock. As always, however, the greatest benefit from the weekend was contact

with other home educators and their children – sharing experiences and advice, and mutual encouragement.

The conference is organized by Home Service, which is an independent support organization for Christian home educators.

CDs of all the conference sessions, together with those from previous conferences, can be obtained from Home Service.

**Home Service is a support organization for Christian home educators, and can be contacted on 0161 432 3782 or write to 48, Heaton Moor Road, Stockport, SK4 4NX.
<http://www.home-service.org>**