

Conference Report September 2006

There is not likely to be a more memorable Home Service conference than the one in September 2006.

As you can imagine, planning a conference takes many months, especially one as large as the Home Service residential weekend conference. Consequently, the planning for the 2006 conference commenced shortly after the 2004 conference. We decided to invite Rick and Marilyn Boyer from USA to pass on their advice and encouragement.

The planning went like clockwork, and, although a lot of effort went into the planning, there was no indication of a hitch. As we were putting the last welcome pack together for the delegates, the evening before the conference began, the telephone rang. It was a call from the Boyer's daughter. To cut a long story short, they were not able to make the conference due to technical problems with two planes at Chicago airport.

What followed over the next 24 hours is a real testimony to God's grace and goodness. The committee got together for an emergency planning meeting 3 hours before the first delegates were due to arrive. We all had ideas to bring to this meeting and we all had a sense that the Lord was fully in control. We prayed for the first half of the meeting and by the time we finished the meeting half an hour later we had a completely new programme which was definitely worked out by God.

The first delegates arrived shortly after and were handed new welcome packs with programmes and seminar lists by only slightly ruffled committee members – all due to God's grace and peace which we felt so strongly that day. We were truly blessed by the experience.

The Friday evening commenced with Steve Richards "Home Educating with Confidence" which was truly inspirational. It was a really "high" start to what turned out to be an excellent weekend.

The Saturday morning plenary session was led by Mike and Jan Matthews and their title was "Why we Home Educated". This was a very encouraging session, and it helped to have a couple who

had “been there before” give us some insight into their reasons for home educating.

Saturday morning seminars were led by Becky Hacker who did a helpful curriculum overview, Roger Slack who was very challenging with his “Worldviews and Education”, Hannah Richards who so ably stepped in and presented “Home Education and Beyond – a daughter’s perspective” which was very well received, Jenny Bennigsen who led a discussion group on coordinating local groups and Steve Richards who tackled the often brought up subject of Socialisation.

The afternoon seminar sessions were also very successful, being led by Rachel Retallick who gave an encouraging seminar to those home educating in difficult circumstances, Lyn Richards with practical advice from her own experience on shaping a child’s character, Rick Williams who encouraged fathers to be ‘hands on Dads’ and Steve Richards and Roger Slack who put forward the options beyond 14.

As usual there was a panel on the Saturday evening to answer questions from delegates. The panel is always very popular and was successful again this year.

The Sunday morning service and message were very encouraging. It was lovely to be singing praises to God in a room full of Christian Home Educators. What a privilege! Steve Sherwood presented an encouraging word which rounded off the conference well.

Of course, the other huge part of the conference is the children’s work and while most of the sessions were going on volunteers were working hard to keep the children happy and safe. Lyn Richards put a phenomenal amount of work into this and it all ran very smoothly. We are grateful to the people who ran sessions and especially to Ruth Humphreys who ran a very efficient crèche. It was wonderful to see how this all worked out so well and to see how much the Lord cares for our children. Many of the children have such a wonderful time at the conference with their new and old friends – it knocks the “what about socialisation” myth on the head well and truly.

We have had many stories of people being encouraged by the weekend and we look back and see how much it was God's conference in a very real way. The prayer groups, resources, fellowship, refreshment breaks all worked really well.

The conference came to a close after lunch on the Sunday. Many people were sorry to leave because of the wonderful time we had all had. Of course, those who were staying on for the holiday week could relax and carry on the networking, fellowship and support.

The holiday week was again very successful and a lot of the units are booked up for 2007.

If you would like more information on either the conference or holiday weeks please contact us.

Rick and Andrea Williams