

Conference Report 2019

This was our 5th consecutive time at Conference and blessed with fine warm weather. We travelled down taking Sophie with us.

The theme of this year's Annual Conference at High Leigh was 'Welcoming, Supporting & Networking Missional Churches' and our guest speaker was Michael Quicke who introduced some of the challenges that come of being a missional church in his three talks.

After lunch and catching up with folks over coffee, our enigmatic brother, Ken Hart opened the conference with the President's Address, welcoming him in as the new Connexion's President who took over the role from Dave Sweetman. Ken spoke on Acts 2 v42 - The fellowship of believers and the importance of who we are in Christ, fellowship with one another, being God's visual aid - Paul said; '***The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer***'. This verse became the passage of the theme.

At 4.30pm we welcomed our guest speaker Michael Quicke who spoke on the importance of being a Missional Church and focused on being **Welcoming** church. As part of God's community of people, we need to reflect Christ's love for those visiting, maybe for the first time.

After Dinner we had 'Connexional Speed-Dating' this was a chance to catch up with news from each of the churches from around the connexion - Each church was asked to get into pair up with another, which myself and Gordon was one group representing NC and we asked a set of questions to each of the other churches and they did likewise. It was great way to meet everyone representing their churches.

Tuesday

8am Before breakfast, we had prayer groups. Peter Riddle led the one I went along - A lovely start to the day.

After breakfast, we had worship for all the family, followed by our 2nd talk by our speaker focusing on being a **Supporting** Church. He spoke on God is a work everywhere as he gathers + scatters His church. One of the points he spoke on was the danger of the cult of Individualism - Sadly there is too much of the 'I' and not enough of the 'we' and backed this up by using the illustration of the vine that our Lord used. The speaker coined the phrase Church-as-usual which he expanded on in his talk.

11.30 - We had our Trustees AGM Meeting. Led by Noel who gave us a quick update on the Connexion and the progress of other churches becoming CIO.

David Lockett - Gave us an overview on the stats from each of the churches. These can be downloaded from the Connexions website.

Graham Sqibbs gave us the Treasurer's Report and highlighted the financial health of the central Connexion.

After Lunch we had Mission Marketplace led by Ben Quant.

Prior to conference, all the churches were asked to gather info and present a display of literature and information on how they reached out into their respective communities in the last year. Gordon Lowman put together a great NCHB display of our past leaflets and information on how we went about it. It was great way to see what other churches did over coffee & cake.

SLM

The AGM was opened by Jeff Chapman- the pastor of Turner's Hill chapel, he reminded us of how if we have Hope, God can do the impossible. He linked this to the work of the SLM, there is a limited budget but we must seek God's vision that anything is possible.

Greetings were sent from Magnus Bendu in S.L. He thanked the SLM for their support; through medical supplies, education, church planting in Muslim areas, training of ministers, helping the homeless, emergency support. Thanks were sent to the connexional churches of St Ives and Mortimer, who this year had been particularly generous. We prayed for Magnus who has just been made a bishop.

The committee are looking into creating a new mission statement or vision. They are looking to put together some new literature to inform us of how we can continue to support and help.

We heard from Bethany and Esther Green of Rosedale church, who went out to Sierra Leone with Janet O'Shea. They told us of their visit to the children's home in Bethesda, where they met Magnus, they described the orphanage as a happy home. They had planned to go out to Sierra Leone to distribute the containers, they had not yet arrived, so instead they visited many schools and churches as well as the school for the blind. They also went out at night to feed the street children in Waterloo but sadly had to come away before they could finish as the food being given out was causing desperate adults to fight the children for the free meals.

Points to supports / pray for:

- There is a need for lockable cupboards in the schools so that the donated books do not go missing.
- A pastor asked for a portable PA system so that the many people outside his church building would be able to hear the message, as well as being able to take this ministry into other villages that are yet to hear the word of God.
- The well at Bethesda and many others have dried up which means a threat of cholera, there is a need to drill deeper.
- Magnus wants to develop a clinic near Bethesda, this needs building.

- Janet O'Shea and 2 young people will be going out to SL at the end of June. They are planning to establish book corners in some classrooms, do some teacher training and paint classrooms.

The date of the next Day of Prayer for SL is 12th May.

After Dinner we came to the point in the evening that we all feared. Ken's Quiz. It was like University Challenge but with the easy questions taken out. However, Tilly managed to answer correctly one of the questions about Moby Dick.

Wednesday

After a scrummy breakfast we had worship and feedback from the children. The Children learnt about putting on the full armour of God from Ep 6v11 and showed us their wonderful armoury. We also heard back from the youth and great to see Jordan, Michael and Sophie enjoying themselves so much with others.

sat down for the last of the three talks by Micheal Quicke on the subject of Networking. Following on from the metaphor of the vine + branches Jesus used, the speaker spoke on FOMO & JOMO - Fear Of Missing Out and the Joy Of Missing Out.

He mentioned how churches can fall into one of the 2 categories - This has been a real challenge for me and felt it spoke to many of us there.

This followed by a time of Communion just before lunch

After lunch we said our goodbyes and made our way home.