



# Spirituality in Schools

## ACT SCOTLAND DAY CONFERENCE REPORT

**In November 2003 the ACT Scotland annual get-together and AGM was held at the Tayside Christian Fellowship Centre in Perth. Forty busy teachers attended the day and their horizons were widened and their faith strengthened.**

After **Kirsti Paterson** (Chair of ACT Scotland) had led a time of devotions and dealt with the main business **Moira Smith** talked about her work with OMF (Overseas Missionary Fellowship) as a mentor and adviser to those who have to teach their children at home. Though based in Singapore, Moira travels widely in the Far East. Much of her communication these days is via the computer but she still finds that getting folk together is always a worthwhile exercise.

**John Lawson** spoke of life in Botswana without computers. He talked about the devastating impact which the AIDS epidemic is having on the country. 38% of the population are HIV positive and pastors spend more time conducting funerals than preaching. In a very Christian atmosphere, the message of abstinence is accepted as the sole answer to this problem.

After a coffee break, **Jonathan de Groot** spoke of his experiences over four years as a Church Youth Worker which led to his involvement in Flora Stevenson's Primary School in Edinburgh. He explained how he now works with 19 classes and takes a weekly assembly. He uses a range of storytelling techniques to engage the children and deal with topical issues like bullying (by telling them about David and Goliath) and the plight of refugees (by talking about the experiences of Mary and Joseph).

Consequently, with the help of church people, a lunchtime Student's Union was started at the school. A Crusader class began too. He said that hard-pressed teachers appreciated help in RME (Religious and Moral Education) classes. Likewise, there was now Christian input into Circle Times and Sex Education lessons.

Jonathan described how he had been able to go to an outdoor week with the pupils and had even been asked to hand out prizes at the end of term – which he described as 'the icing on the cake'.

After an enjoyable lunch **Chic Lidstone** spoke about his ongoing work as one of the chaplains serving Perth High School. He said chaplains take it in turns to lead an assembly once a month – but do not to try to initiate worship. There is also a place for chaplains on the annual P7 to S1 (Primary-Secondary) Transition Day.

During a Prayer Day children were given an opportunity to submit their own prayer request – 150 pupils from Perth High chose to do so. Their concerns included bullying, feeling heartbroken and suffering abuse.

*He said that Christian pupils at the school were now confident enough to stand up for Jesus and challenge the scoffers*

He stressed that chaplains and others helping in schools have to earn the right to speak and work through their commitment, enterprise and cooperation – eg volunteering to drive a mini-bus! He concluded by saying that it is also important for chaplains to find the right place and time to give due praise and encouragement to teachers and parents.

He said that Christian pupils at the school were now confident enough to stand up for Jesus and challenge the scoffers.

Finally, **Michael Philip** brought the day to a close with a talk about the Schools Prayer Network.

■ Ken Fotheringham

Ken is a member of the ACT Scotland Executive Committee and is editor of *InterACT* magazine.