

ACT news and reports

Stuck in neutral?

Around fifty delegates attended the National Christian Teachers' Conference in Wigan over the weekend of 15–17 September 2006. The event – organised by the Association of Christian Teachers, Scripture Union, The Independent Schools Christian Alliance and The Stapleford Centre – was entitled *Stuck in Neutral?*

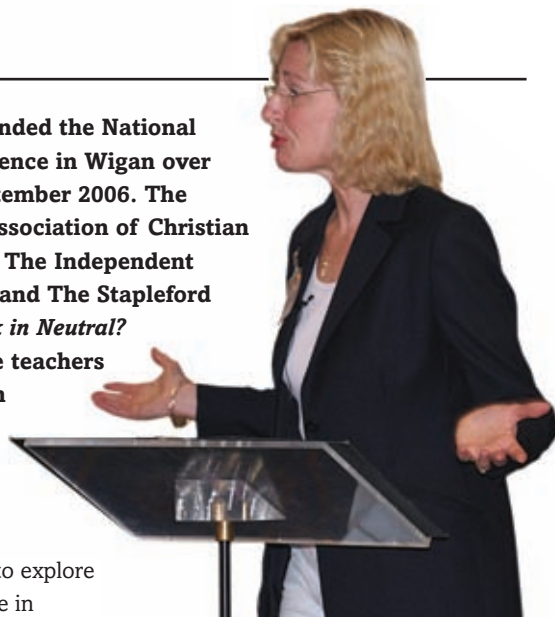
Most of the delegates were teachers or headteachers working in non-denominational schools, or schools with a Christian ethos.

The aim of the weekend was to explore if, as Christian teachers, we are in danger of losing our sense of identity as Christian professionals and of becoming stuck in a neutral position.

On the one hand, this could mean unquestioningly accepting the secular argument that if education is free of overt religious or spiritual input it is 'neutral'. On the other, it could mean accepting the prevailing view of education in its narrow sense as a means of training young people for examination success which can be quantified, instead of seeking to foster those aspects of a child's education which cannot be measured in terms of grades and percentages.

The main speakers were:

- Bart McGettrick (Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Glasgow)
- Yvonne Richmond (Chaplain for Evangelism at Coventry Cathedral)
- Emlyn Williams (Head of Schools Ministry for Scripture Union in England and Wales).



Yvonne Richmond

In the workshops we were invited to consider what we mean by spirituality and which values – such as honesty, compassion, respect for self and others – are important when seeking to respond to the needs of the 'whole' child rather than focussing exclusively on developing intellectual achievement.

This was the second time I had attended this annual gathering. Again I found that everyone was very sociable and the worship time was very simple and moving. I particularly appreciated the discussions I had over the weekend with other Christians who are equally passionate about their role in school.

As I have taught French and Spanish at primary level and ESOL and French to adults, I was also able to bring my own experience and ideas to the debate, as well as my current role as a Teaching Assistant responsible for English as an Additional Language. It meant a great deal to me that my ideas and opinions were received as being as valid as those expressed by teachers and headteachers in the group, since this is not always the case for Teaching Assistants within the hierarchical structure of a school. The weekend was a memorable experience.

■ Alaine Sheppard

ACT Day 2006

Sixty-three delegates attended ACT's annual day-conference in London on 18 November 2006.

The day began with a word of welcome from Rupert Kaye (ACT Chief Executive) and greetings from two overseas visitors: Kornelia Taneva (National Co-ordinator, Bulgarian Christian Teachers' Association) and Revd Isaac Wheigar (Chief Executive, Association of Christian Schools of Liberia). This was followed by a time of worship which included a message preached by Kirsti Paterson (past Chair, ACT Scotland).

Signe Sandsmark (Secretary and former Chair of the European Educators' Christian Association) and Richard Wilkins (past General Secretary of the Association of Christian Teachers) were the two keynote speakers. Signe spoke about the challenges faced by Christian teachers in Norway today. Richard reflected on the threats and opportunities faced by Christians in education and, particularly, ACT members over the years.

As several delegates remarked, the conference was notable for its rich international flavour and for its worshipful character. During the two twenty-minute 'Pray for the Nations' sessions – one before and one after lunch – delegates joined one of five prayer groups, one each for Bulgaria, England, Liberia, Norway and Scotland.

During the 2006 AGM, thanks were given for the work of five ACT Directors stepping down since the 2005 AGM: Priscilla Azubuine, Phil Mellen, Anne Roche, Penny Thompson and Patricia Watson. Five new Board Members were elected: Dalwyn Attwell, Geoff Coggins, Tim Irwin, Gbenga Olajugbagbe and Andrew Palfreyman.

The day also included lively contributions from Richard Armiger (*EXODUS 20* and Active Media Publishing), Sue Heywood (BRF/Barnabas bookstall), Richard Smart (*The Nativity Story* and Premier Radio) and Scott Fellows who read two excerpts from his book: *God's great Mystery Trip: from Atheist to Chaplain in Fourteen Days*.



Alison Farnell and Bart McGettrick

ACT Saturday events

Cost: £10 for all members of ACT, ACT Scotland, ACTW, NIACT or TISCA. £15 for everyone else. The course fee includes lunch, afternoon tea, other refreshments and all course materials.

Booking: Please photocopy and complete the booking form at the bottom of this page and post it to the ACT office, attaching a cheque payable to 'ACT', by the closing date indicated. Please use a separate form for each event you wish to book a place on.

Time: All of the Saturday events listed here start at 10.30am and finish at 3.30pm.

Saturday 13 January 2007

Hosted by Bath ACT Group

Christian approaches to classroom management and challenging behaviour

Led by: Rupert Kaye (ACT)

At: St Bartholomew's Church Centre, King Edward Road, Oldfield Park, Bath BA2 3PB

Closing date for bookings: 3 January 2007

Saturday 20 January 2007

Hosted by Merseyside ACT Group

Christian approaches to classroom management and challenging behaviour

Led by: Rupert Kaye (ACT)

At: Bridge Chapel Centre, Heath Road, Liverpool L19 4XR

Closing date for bookings: 10 January 2007

Saturday 3 March

Hosted by Dunstable ACT Group

Take a break: a quiet day for Christians working in education

Led by: Rupert Kaye (ACT)

At: All Saints' Church, Main Road South, Dagnall, Nr Dunstable HP4 1QX

Closing date for bookings: 21 February 2007

Saturday 17 March 2007

Hosted by Nottingham ACT Group

Called to Teach: 1st National Conference for Christian NQTs and Student Teachers

Led by: Trevor Cooling (Transforming Lives)

At: Trent Vineyard, Easter Park, Lenton Lane, Nottingham NG7 2PX

Closing date for bookings: 7 March 2007

Saturday 24 March 2007

Hosted by Plymouth ACT Group

Christian approaches to classroom management and challenging behaviour

Led by: Rupert Kaye (ACT)

At: Hope Baptist Church, Peverell Corner, Peverell Park Road, Plymouth PL3 4QG

Closing date for bookings: 14 March 2007

Saturday 5 May 2007

Hosted by Bath ACT Group

The Christian teacher: making a difference (being a Christian witness in school/college)

Led by: Rupert Kaye (ACT)

At: St Bartholomew's Church Centre, King Edward Road, Oldfield Park, Bath BA2 3PB

Closing date for bookings: 25 April 2007

Saturday 26 May 2007

Hosted by ACT Scotland

Christian approaches to classroom management and challenging behaviour

Led by: Rupert Kaye (ACT)

At: The Eric Liddell Centre, 15 Morningside Road, Edinburgh EH10 4DP

Closing date for bookings: 16 May 2007

Saturday 30 June 2007

Hosted by Nottingham ACT Group

The Christian teacher: making a difference (being a Christian witness in school/college)

Led by: Rupert Kaye (ACT)

At: Trent Vineyard, Easter Park, Lenton Lane, Nottingham NG7 2PX

Closing date for bookings: 20 June 2007

BOOKING FORM

Please complete in full and return this booking form to ACT, 94a London Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 1NX no later than ten days prior to the date of the event.

Please note: we need to know by this date in order to confirm the catering arrangements. Bookings cancelled seven days or less prior to the event will not be refunded.

I wish to book a place on the following Saturday event:

Date of event: _____

Hosting ACT Group: _____

I am a member of:

ACT ACT Scotland ACTW NIACT TISCA

I enclose a cheque (made payable to 'ACT') for:

£10 £15

Please tick as appropriate

Name: _____ Please print

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel: _____

Email: _____

I work at: _____ School / College name

My dietary (or other) requirements:

vegetarian vegan gluten free

other: _____

Please specify