



Pastor's Page

Shaken in Swanwick

With all my conference clothes neatly packed I jumped into my car and headed off to Swanwick in Derbyshire for a Baptist Minister's gathering. The Hayes Conference centre holds lots of memories for me from my first visit in 1970 just a couple of weeks after I became a Christian to the many Evangelists conferences that I attended there in the 1980s. On one of these occasions I, along with 300 other evangelists, listened to a pre-recorded talk from David Watson who was unable to be there due to ill health (cancer) I remember that night well; there was a great sense of anticipation as the crowd gathered and then a holy hush followed as we waited for the tape to begin. The silence was broken by the distinctive voice of the famous speaker saying "I'm sorry not to be there with you all tonight sharing in this great event, but health issues have prevented my doing so. However, I want to assure you all that, contrary to some rumours, I'm not speaking to you from heaven!" The whole place fell about with sustained laughter. But the words that this man of God spoke that night came straight from above and a couple of months later he really was in heaven! You don't forget times like those.

So my hope was that God would speak to me again this week in this special place. One of the first talks at this 2008 minister's gathering was from a trained counsellor who spoke about the Pool of Bethesda and God "disturbing the waters" (John 5:1-8) She talked about the fact that often in church life everything on the surface looks lovely but under the surface there are allsorts of other things happening. She asked us to contemplate what things might be lying beneath the surface of our lives. "Are we really being honest? Perhaps God wants to stir the waters a little in order that we may go deeper with him and each other". I found this both challenging and slightly unsettling as I considered whether I was willing to allow God to disturb me a little!

Walking back from lunch the next day I heard a voice call my name. It was a good friend of mine from Sheffield who was there attending a different conference at the centre. We went off for a stroll together before he asked me if I was free to come to the next session on their agenda. It was a meeting about moving in the prophetic. I was free and so with some apprehension I went along. Following the bible based talk we were encouraged to break into small groups and pray prophetically for each other. I was sceptical, a little fearful but also expectant. "Perhaps God will speak to me very directly through one of these guys" I thought. They all prayed for me, good, solid, helpful prayers, but nothing too revelatory. We then prayed for another man in the group. I prayed something quite specific for him which I just felt might be relevant. As we then shared he looked straight at me and said "you hit the nail on the head – you were spot on! I'm beginning a ministry amongst those very people!" I said "great" (trying not to look too pious!) before creeping back to the safety of the Baptist Family! As I reflected on the incident I wondered if it was just a lucky guess or whether God was reminding me that he really can use me (and you) to speak to others, if I (we) just step out in faith, not afraid of a little "water disturbing".

I went to sleep that evening still considering this challenge only to be woken at 1.00pm by an earthquake! ("Thank you Lord, but I'm truly more comfortable with the still small voice, honest!") Disturbing stuff indeed!

2nd March 2008