

## EFCW Summer Conference, 17th June 2017, Gorslas

This year's Summer Conference took place on 17th June at Gorslas. Over 40 people attended, a mixture of members and non-members.

We were delighted to welcome Bishop Mike Hill of Bristol who spoke on the subject "The Offence of the Cross: is the church too nice for its own good?" The teaching was divided into 3 sessions, 1 before lunch and two afterwards.

**Talk 1** was based around Psalm 137:4 "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" and tackled the issue of how we handle the truth in a post truth society. We were encouraged to see the dark times as times which shape us and that the more submissive we become to God the more he can use us. 4 pointers were given to having a useful ministry:

- understand the people in your area
- engage with people to enable challenges to be made to their thought world
- challenge our own people too - do we set the bar too low?
- disciple - being a Christian is about our whole lives.

Bishop Mike encouraged everyone to be courageous noting that those who are more afraid of failing are more likely to collude with the ideology of the times.

**Talk 2** focussed on 2 Timothy 4:1-15 and gave the 'challenge of the isms'. 4 'isms' were considered:

- Individualism - though the Kingdom of God grows one life at a time, we are called to a community.
- Consumerism - worship isn't a product; it's expressing what we believe about God and so good theology is needed.
- Fragmentalism - Consumerist ideals impact on relationships which leads to fragmentation of society. High numbers of men over 65 have no relationship with their children. Maintaining a commitment to marriage creates a more stable society.
- Deconstructionism - in the universities the prevalent idea that there is no such thing as reality or a reliable text is causing many issues for Christians, and hatred towards Christians is growing.

Paul encouraged Timothy to stick with the gospel, and so should we. It can be easy to lose confidence in the gospel and become muddle headed. We need to have courage and remember that we believe in revealed truth and doctrine. Like Timothy we must preach Christ crucified. Modern ideology is based on the concept that we are born good and the reason we don't stay good is because of our genetics or life experiences or lack of education. The Bible has a clear diagnosis (that we are all by nature sinners, because of the Fall), prognosis (this leads to hell), and cure (God loves us anyway, so Jesus died in our place, taking our punishment on himself, so we can be God's children who know him and love him forever, spending eternity with him). If any part of the diagnosis-prognosis-cure is wrong then the whole gospel is distorted.

Bishop Mike encouraged the church as a whole to be faithful in prayer.

He finished by answering the question "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

- confidently
- clearly
- together
- carefully (as in having care for those who don't yet know the Lord)

**Talk 3** was a brief look at the way forward. Bishop Mike made the following points:

- We need a change in temperature of spiritual leaders (each to prayerfully check where we are on our journey),
- evangelisation will happen with less paid clergy. Every Christian is called to be a witness.
- Church isn't an end in itself. Effective churches make a difference in society.

- we need to have some soft edges and not be slaves to legalism.
- We need to lift the faith threshold.

The Annual General Meeting took place during the lunch break where the following officers were elected:

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Chairman                            | Rev'd Alan Chadwick  |
| Vice-Chairman                       | Ven Will Strange (we hope a lay member will take on this role) |
| St Asaph lay representative         | No nominations   |
| St Asaph clergy representative      | Rev'd Will Marshall  |
| Bangor lay representative           | Clive Addison  |
| Bangor clergy representative        | Rev'd Kevin Ellis  |
| Llandaff clergy representative      | Rev'd James Griffiths  |
| Llandaff lay representative         | Henry Shepherd   |
| Swansea & Brecon lay representative | No nominations   |
| Monmouth lay representative         | No nominations   |

A brief address from Rev'd Aneurin Glynn (our England rep) was also heard.