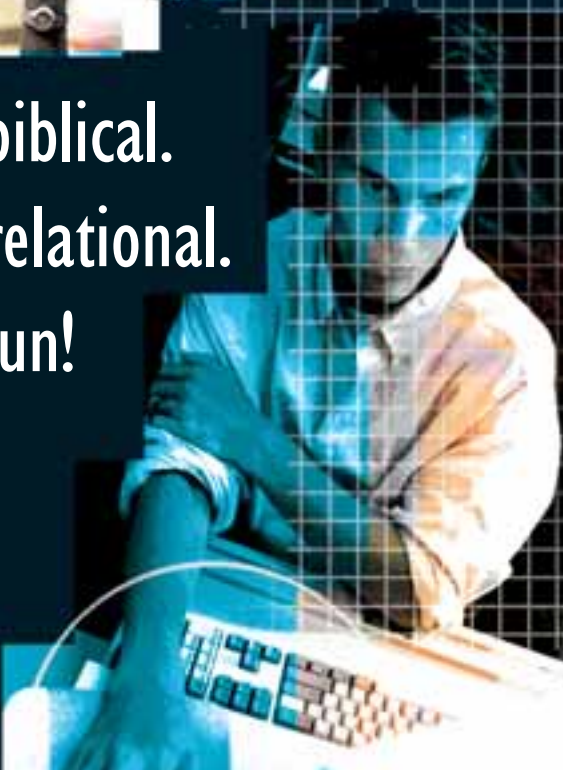


ACT NOW



It's biblical.
It's relational.
It's fun!



Making it happen

On 21 June 2005 the inaugural *Faith in Work* conference was held in the Refectory building at the University of Manchester. 100 people attended the event: 53 Christian students in Years 11 and 12; three parents of home-schooled students; two teachers; two youth workers; two staff from the West Yorkshire School of Christian Studies; 37 representatives from almost as many Christian workplace associations (CWAs); and Anthony McClaren, Chief Executive of UCAS, who opened the event.

This conference is a really good idea and should definitely be repeated Y12 PUPIL

Students had travelled from Cheshire, Cumbria, West Yorkshire, Merseyside and most parts of Greater Manchester to participate. CWA reps had travelled from even further afield – with delegates flying from Edinburgh, driving from Birmingham and taking the train from London.

Pearls of wisdom

The conference began at 9.30am. In the first session, Anthony McClaren talked about the process of applying for a degree-bearing course at a UK college or university. As well as giving useful



Thank you for a great day – I look forward to coming back next year! Y11 PUPIL

tips to students about how they could make the most of their UCAS application, Anthony stressed that they should make time to research courses and campuses.

Students were asked to consider whether they would prefer to study in an urban or a rural setting. Would they require access to particular sporting facilities? What kinds of extra-curricular clubs or societies might they want to join?

Anthony then asked students to consider factors relevant to their life as a worshipping Christian. Are local churches welcoming of students? Is there a strong Christian Union? Are there any vibrant denominational groups eg AngSoc, BapSoc, CathSoc, MethSoc, etc?

Students were encouraged to make their applications interesting and true to themselves by being open and enthusiastic about their interests and activities – including those which are explicitly Christian. Anthony put it like this: ‘Universities don’t just choose students because they achieve good academic grades. They look for people who have something else to offer. So, if you have an interest in drama or sport, or are involved in church activities, then please say so on your UCAS application form. Don’t be embarrassed or shy. It is not wrong to let the universities you are applying to know that you are an interesting person who will contribute to life on campus.’

Questions and answers

Delegates then attended two one-hour career seminars. All in all, six areas of work were explored: Communication, Journalism and PR; Healthcare; Law and Law Enforcement; Media, Music and Entertainment; Politics and Public Service; and Working with Children (eg teaching). These sessions allowed students to ask questions such as: What qualifications do I need to be a probation officer? What ethical issues do Christian doctors face from day to day? As a Christian lawyer, do you pray with clients? As a Christian

I benefited from this conference. Please carry on with it every year so that more people will benefit from this event like I have Y12 PUPIL



Anthony McClaren (UCAS)



Ros Turner (CWF)



Geoff Lawson (ACT)

working in the media, do you feel you are persecuted at work for your faith? When did you know you wanted to be a teacher? How do you know what God wants you to do? How many Christians are there in your office? Do you have a prayer group at work?

At lunchtime students had a chance to meet with representatives from other Christian workplace associations not represented in the seminars. There was a chance to ask questions of, amongst others, an engineer, an architect, a truck driver, a librarian, a scientist, a writer and a vet.

The CWA reps helped Christian students to begin thinking more ‘Christianly’ about their academic study and their choice of career.

Brilliant! Y11 PUPIL

I found it really good. I honestly wouldn't change a thing Y12 PUPIL

Worldview

In the afternoon, Alan Hewardine (UCCF Support Team Leader), Rupert Kaye (ACT’s Chief Executive) and Geoff Lawson (a former ACT Director) spoke about the need for Christians to listen to God and to be obedient to Him if they are to make a difference in the workplace.

Geoff used the beatitudes of Jesus as a starting point for considering how Christians should be different from their non-Christian colleagues. He contrasted Christ’s expectations for us as His disciples with secular workplace norms. Geoff concluded that being a Christian is not just about ‘being different’, it is about taking responsibility for



What's Faith in Work? It's biblical. It's relational. It's fun! We got to unpack what it means to be 'salt' and 'light' in the workplace and we met some very interesting people CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS WORKER

'transforming the way work is done' by putting Christian values at the centre of all things.

Rupert used Isaiah 55 (Come, all you who are thirsty...) to encourage student delegates and CWA reps to reflect on the lessons learnt during the conference. Rupert asked, 'Why spend money on what is not bread, and labour on what does not satisfy?' (Isaiah 55:2). People worked in small groups to consider the things that really mattered and considered that God is able to use people wherever they are, as a blessing to those around them.

Alan drew the conference to a close by sharing the testimony of his life-journey. He stressed that 'living by faith' and 'being open to God' is always more important than making plans for years ahead. He said, 'Yes, we need to know what we should be doing now. Yes, it helps if we know what we are going to be doing next. But what matters most is being open to the fact that God might have other plans for us!'

Essentially, the afternoon was about the need for us all to put Christ at the centre of all things and to live for Him. This means each and every one of us needs to apply our faith to every area of life – including work. In short, we need to develop a Christian worldview.

Looking ahead...

The *Faith in Work* conference set out to make a small but significant contribution to help transform the way 16–19 year olds perceive faith, education and the world of adult work by helping them to explore their academic and career options from a



Rupert Kaye (ACT)



Alan Hewerdine (UCCF)

Christian perspective. By all accounts it succeeded in doing this.

Faith in Work has the potential to grow and develop over coming years. One possibility is for it to be rolled out across the UK as a series of six or more regional Christian careers events for 16–19 year olds. Another option is a series of parallel conferences specifically aimed at university undergraduates. But the future of *Faith in Work* will depend on three key factors:

- God's will for *Faith in Work* to prosper
- financial support (from Christian workplace associations, trust funds and other sources)
- personnel (ie Christian workplace associations sending representatives to events).

The conference evaluation forms were extremely positive. Clearly, the need to give young Christians access to good quality Christian careers guidance will not go away. It would be wonderful to think that every year a new cohort of students could benefit from being challenged and encouraged in this way.

■ Enid Johnston

There was a real buzz going on and loads of people said they could feel God's presence with us. I certainly could. TEACHER
Very well done Y12 PUPIL

