

# PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE 2008 BRF CONFERENCE

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*Alina Pinheiro*

## Arrival

We arrived at Rev. Stewart's house in Ballymena, N. Ireland, one day before the conference began. We were kindly received by the Rev. and his wife Mary. A cup of tea in the living room and the opportunity to finally meet and speak to these brethren in Christ whom we only knew from the internet, after a long trip from Portugal to Belfast, was such a blessing!

We had an early start the next morning as Rev. and his wife were finalising the last details for the conference and we still had to travel to the Share Centre. One of the things that we remember about that morning was meeting Julie and Philip Rainey. We were thrilled to meet her because she had been our contact by e-mail and she was just fantastic in arranging things for the conference and helping us with information for the trip!

## The Share Centre

After gathering some brethren and preparing the luggage, we went to the Share Centre where the conference would take place.

The Share facilities were great and we were very well received. The children were delighted with such a green area, and the lake and the swimming pool!

We were installed in a bungalow for two families—it was very nice and comfortable and we had the opportunity to get to know the Clegg family: Stuart and Kathryn and their two children, Hannah and Martyn.

## Family Vision of the Conference

The first day at Share was breathtaking. It was so much more than we expected that we were nearly without air and simultaneously we never felt so good!!!!

This was our first trip outside Portugal as a family and we were very anxious each one of us in their own way;

## *Reflections on the 2008 BRF Conference*

Regarding myself (Alina), I was fearful of what kind of communion we would be able to have with people we had never seen before, but this wrong idea was one of the first things this conference changed; as the word of God says there is nothing as good as the union of the brethren (Ps. 133) and although there were people from different parts of the world, speaking different languages, we had a bond that surpasses all that and made us experience true communion. I had the most wonderful time of my entire life and I was very encouraged by the families we meet there, especially the ones with small kids but also by all the others from the smallest to the oldest, through our conversations. Furthermore it was in the BRF Conference that we as a couple were confirmed in our decision to embrace homeschooling as we found the encouragement we needed in other couples that we meet there such as Bram and Esther Van de Riet. A very special couple, brother Fred Hanko and his wife Ruth, gave us precious guidelines regarding the teaching of our children under the covenant.

From Nuno's perspective, the BRF Conference was the fulfilment of a dream. After 10 years as a believer, to find people that live their lives according to the Bible in everything they do, to see entire families committed to the Lord, the opportunity of praising exclusively with the Scottish Psalter and to listen to the teaching of the pure word of God on "The Work of the Holy Spirit" from Profs. Hanko and Engelsma ... it was like an oasis in his life! I find difficult to express in words what one feels like when he comes from a place where he is alone looking for the truth. It is like finding a treasure and you do not want to let it go—one wants to hold to it forever!

Meeting Rev. Stewart in person and the opportunity to better know him was something that really impacted Nuno. Rev. Stewart's passion for the work of the Lord, his simplicity and availability were a balsam of hope!

Finally, the children! It was amazing and worthwhile to see how two girls of only 4 and 6 years that didn't speak a word of English made wonderful friendships and were able to communicate and feel the same things we were feeling concerning the communion of the brethren. Not only have they made friends of their own age as Martha and Anna Van de Riet, but they also had a bond with grown-up people that I'm sure they will never forget such as Alex and Cyndi Kalsbeek and Philip and Susan Hall. I have tears in my eyes as I am writing this because only the love of our God does something like this.

## *British Reformed Journal*

Our daughters often remember the days we spent at the conference and they ask very enthusiastically how long will it take for us to be all together again. Moreover, they are learning English and their main motivation to learn fast and well is that they will be able to speak and understand at the next conference!!

Although our trip to the conference was not planned as a tourism trip, this was undoubtedly one of the best experiences we had as a family holiday. Adding to all, the weather was great and we had the sun shining throughout the conference and even though we had some difficulties adapting to the meals schedule and to speaking and learning in English the whole day, the conference was something to repeat!

### **Plan now to attend the 2010 BRF Biennial Family Conference**

**Venue:**

Hebron Hall, Cardiff, Wales

**Dates:**

7-14 August, 2010

**Theme:**

“The Word of God for Our Generation”

**Main Speakers:**

Profs. David J. Engelsma and Herman Hanko (USA)

Plus a special lecture by a Trinitarian Bible Society speaker on the preservation of the text of Scripture