

MERYL BEEK:

Unexpectedly waking in the small hours of June 2nd, I suddenly remembered that at that moment people were praying in both Gosbrook Road and Caversham Heights churches. What a challenge! I was warmly tucked up in my comfortable bed!

It was all part of the 24 hour prayer vigil in preparation for the 'Sharing God's Love' weekend. Needless to say I did take part in the vigil, but at the more sociable hour of 2 o'clock in the afternoon!

The whole weekend relied so much on the enthusiasm and commitment of the 14 members of the Lay Witness Team. They came from all parts of the country, completely at their own expense. We cannot thank them enough for their devotion, encouragement and friendship.

I shall never forget the worship in church on both Friday and Saturday evenings. The hymns and songs were so well chosen, and some of our real favourites. Someone remarked that 'the music raised the roof with joy and praise'! The theme throughout the worship was commitment, asking us to give ourselves more deeply to the Lord. During worship the witness team gave testimonies on their Christian experiences, whilst another team member offered prayer before they spoke.

Saturday morning was the time for house discussion groups. Each one was very ably led by a member of the team. Various aspects of our personal faith and how we can reach out to others were discussed. There was plenty of time beforehand for general conversation, with refreshments, to enable us to get to know each other better.

Discussion groups after worship on Friday and Saturday helped with this as well. The questions got harder as the weekend progressed, but nobody needed to speak unless they wanted to. Questions included 'What would we like to see happen in our churches?' 'What would you like to see happen in your life?' and 'What can I do to help bring these things about?'

All of us enjoyed the meals supplied by Wesley and Tilehurst churches on the Friday and Saturday evenings. These churches took over the kitchen entirely, enabling everybody from our two churches to sit down together and wait to be served. The chatting and laughing was almost deafening!

Also, Gosbrook Road's Ploughman's Lunch on the Saturday was delicious - containing several cheeses that I certainly had not sampled before. This was prepared by one of their newest members, Rouxlé Mooney - a young lady who is a professional caterer - recently returned from her holiday in South Africa.

We know that a few hiccups occurred and some people were keener on some parts of the weekend than others, but this is inevitable in such a large group. Everyone has different expectations, and is at different stages and backgrounds in their Christian experiences. Let's be honest!

Thanks are due to everybody who worked so hard beforehand to make the weekend a success.

As churches, where do we go from here?

Perhaps in four different ways:

- We need to look at our prayer lives, both personal and corporate
- We must seek to worship our Lord with enthusiasm from the heart
- We must go forward to enjoy fellowship with each other, being open to sharing difficulties and, finally
- Organise more events of every kind to help draw in others. Off we go!!