

The Grand Experiment

(Community page report by Steve Maltz)

Foundations goes virtual

I remember the day well, as it was my birthday. A good friend, an NHS doctor had video-called me and told me, in no uncertain terms, that Foundations 13, at The Hayes, Derbyshire – just six weeks away – **must** be cancelled unless I wanted deaths on my hand. I was torn, as to cancel a God-inspired conference after months of planning was not a happy prospect, yet the only alternative was to make it an on-line, virtual conference. A virtual conference? Unthinkable! Many proposed Christian celebrations and conferences were duly cancelled at the cost, in some cases, of over a million pounds! Some were re-imagined online, usually as video of speakers and worship groups streamed over Facebook or YouTube. If Foundations was going online, in my eyes, it had to be a *Foundations* experience, otherwise I didn't see the point. The Grand Experiment was birthed ...

Now, two months later, we are still reeling. A three day conference, taking up forty hours of Zoom time, brought over 120 people together – without ever meeting in the flesh – and, on Monday afternoon, when we were trying to pull the plug on an exhausting conference, many still wanted to hang around! It was an unqualified success and over a third of the delegates have sent us their thanks and their testimonies since then. God moved among His people in ways that we couldn't have imagined or hoped for. Hallelujah! Every person who stated that they were 'reluctant' attendees were won over and told us so! How could this be? How on earth did fellowship flourish in cyber-space, how did 120 people, by the end of the three days, conquer the impersonal nature of a virtual world and allow God to turn it around to a positive experience? It is too early to unpack this but, be assured, an article will appear in the next edition of *Sword* to tackle this!

God was very much in the details. We were able to experience a three day Sabbath, with opening and closing rituals, fun games as ice-breakers – charades, a quiz, a jokeathon and marshmallow construction – we had two excellent worship teams, one in Scunthorpe, the other in Rotherham (with help from the Wirral). Our three excellent Bible teachers covered the first four commandments, with lengthy Q&A sessions afterwards, all managed by an unseen team of 15 “co-hosts”. Workshops took us into a flat in Northern Ireland to learn Hebrew, a dining room in London to understand Hebraic Church, a lounge in Rotherham (and in the Home Counties) for Hebraic dance, a kitchen in the Wirral to discover fermenting and a mock kitchen on our dining room table where Monica instructed us all how to make pots out of salt dough! And don't get me started on the teddy bear bathroom choir! All pumped into our safe spaces through the internet. If this was lockdown, then many bodies, hearts and minds were thoroughly unlocked!

For a full list of the feedback from delegates, visit

<https://saltshakers.com/main/content/foundations-13-reviews-responses-and-testimonies>

*The next Foundations conference is **Foundations 14**, on October 5-9th. This will either be at Sidholme Hotel, Devon, or it will also be a virtual experience if lockdown is still in force for our delegates. Contact Steve nearer to the time to find out more at 07885 941848*