

Conferences and retreats

One of the things you probably missed out on while you were abroad is teaching, fellowship and prayer times in your own language with people of your own culture. Now's your chance to catch up on what you missed!

It's important while you're on HA to make time to recharge your spiritual batteries, get some meaningful fellowship and get away to listen to God. Perhaps your church has its own weekend away, or goes as a group to one of the major Christian conventions, and you should prioritise being a part of these as they are a good way of enhancing relationships with your fellow church members while meeting your own needs.

The major Christian events in England are Spring Harvest (3 weeks over Easter, in Minehead and Skegness), Keswick (3 weeks from mid-July), and New Wine (2 weeks from end-July, in Shepton Mallet and Newark). Many Christians also go to Greenbelt (August Bank Holiday weekend, Cheltenham) or many of the other conferences which are organised by various denominations. There are also many smaller events which are advertised in the Christian media, and a number of different organisations offering conference and retreat facilities specifically for mission workers. Some of these are listed by Oscar: <http://www.oscar.org.uk/service/pastoral/courses.htm>.

There are also the famous Re-Konnect conferences for mission kids, both for teens and younger children, which help them reintegrate into British culture and make friends with other young people living overseas. For more information email reconnect@gmail.com. At the Keswick convention there is also a mission kids stream as part of the re:ignite programme.

Extended time alone with God is at a premium, and it's well worth making some retreat time a central feature of your HA. Individual or group retreats are offered by many of the established Christian conference centres, and are well worth investigating. Some places, such as Penhurst, also organise specific retreats for mission workers on HA, and the Mission Encouragement Trust have special retreats as well, often in the Field.

Alternatively you may like to try something different like a monastic-style retreat. Many monastic communities across the country are available to visitors for a day or for extended periods of quiet reflection. Among those **Syzygy** can recommend are Loyola Hall and St Beuno's, Ignatian spirituality centres, and the Northumbria Community (in, unsurprisingly, Northumbria) who follow a more Celtic approach.

Special events aimed at helping you rediscover your passion for mission and to refocus your ministry in preparation for a return to the field include All Nations Christian College's Refresh for Mission (<http://www.allnations.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=61>) and Christian Vocations' Re-Ignite (the link is too long to quote here, but go to <http://www.christianvocations.org> and click on the 'help/advice' tag) which includes a special TCK programme. These are both highly acclaimed by past participants.

Links

Greenbelt	http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/
Keswick	http://www.keswickministries.org/
Loyola Hall	http://loyolahall.co.uk/
Mission Encouragement Trust	http://www.metuk.org.uk/
New Wine	http://www.new-wine.org/summer
Northumbria Community	http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/
Penhurst Retreat Centre	http://www.penhurst.org.uk/
Re:ignite	http://www.keswickministries.org/missionary_retreat
Spring Harvest	http://www.springharvest.org/
St Beuno's	http://www.beunos.com