

New Habits for a New Era: Comments from Participants

Many thanks for the conference last Saturday. It was very enjoyable.

Just to say thanks ever so much, we had a great time at the conference, and look forward to more in the future

Thank you for your part in organising and running Saturdays conference - it was hugely significant for us and an immense blessing, so thank you, I hope the themes and prophetic voices of the day will spread out to a wider audience

I left the conference with mixed feelings.

On the one hand the notes I made from the sessions lead by Paul, Stuart and Roy will be really helpful to us as a church and I found this input excellent.

However I left with the question "Well how do we do it then?". I must confess I was disappointed with the afternoon seminar I took part in, maybe I chose the wrong one. The emphasis in that seminar could be summed up as "how should I form new habits to help me cope in this new age"all very individualistic rather than community focused with lots of talk about "ministry", "finding God's calling" and how to find time away from others in a busy life schedule.

I am part of an emerging church that has grown and we are aware that we need to build community in a number of ways to reach out to the world. I am drawn by the idea of developing a daily or weekly pattern of life and liturgy that we can share together. I was disappointed that this was not touched upon at all. Maybe this is something we have to rely on the Holy Spirit for and develop ourselves, although I'm sure we can draw from the rich heritage of the Celts and Anabaptists.

Thank you again for including Darren and I in the conference. We thoroughly enjoyed the learning and stimulus we gained as well as the wonderful people we met. What a tremendous group of individuals and communities. I look forward to connecting again with some of these folks.

Also, thank you for the historical insights I learned from you regarding the Anabaptist tradition ---- fascinating. It clarified some questions I have had in putting the whole New Monasticism movement in perspective.

I Appreciated...

- the venue being near the station
- the introductory session, which I felt set the scene of New Monasticism well (12 Points...)
- Stuart's session on an Anabaptist perspective.
- the balance of the timetabling, with no one thing dominating the agenda: the day seemed to flow well
- starting and ending with worship

I Didn't Appreciate

- the 'conversation' approach to sessions which I felt left the day as a whole feeling very 'content-light'. Maybe this is to do with my learning style!

- the workshop (DiY Habits) which I had expected to help me frame some DiY Habits but which merely left me appreciative of the struggles expressed by the workshop leaders. I appreciated their honesty and understood what they were trying to do, but for me personally it wasn't what it said on the tin!

- In reflecting on the day overall I guess I felt that there was a bit of tension between the day's title 'New Monasticism' and the sub-title - 'new habits'. I (and others that I discussed with on the way home) had gone wanting to explore things from a more personal perspective, both for ourselves and on behalf of others in our churches (i.e. be stretched, stimulated and resourced in the quest for 'New Habits of the Heart'), whereas quite a bit of the day was about the experiences of those engaging with 'New Monasticism' as an intentional community experience which is not where most of us find ourselves. Perhaps I should have spotted that before I went!

Anyway, overall I was glad I went and thank you again to all involved

Many thanks for your email, as I said earlier I thought the conference was excellent, with lots of food for thought.

My one suggestion in terms of how it could be improved, would be to say that it would be of benefit to have more expression of an overseas/cross cultural mission point of view. To my mind (and I am biased, as this is my 'bag') one of the key aspects which distinguished the Celtic church, and then the Anabaptists, was their global viewpoint. Like their Celtic forebears, the Anabaptists would go overseas with no thought of returning home, as part of their monastic commitment to seeing the kingdom come across the world.

My opinion of the current wave of 'new monasticism' is that it can occasionally become a little parochial, and this is unnecessary given the heritage we have, and also the work ongoing by movements like ours, and 24/7 prayer etc.

If the day could be improved, then perhaps it would be by adding this kind of element into the mix.

With warmest regards, and many thanks,

I was going to email anyway to thank you for all your hard work organising - it was a great day for us and something of a watershed, it brought together various plans and questions and it was an immense blessing, so thank you.

The organisation of the day was faultless, the info, organisation, lunch etc all perfect. The main speakers were excellent and the main problem was deciding who to go and see. I guess the one thing I'd have changed would be I'd rather have had the choice of going to 2 afternoon seminars and scrapped the plenary session, folk can always nuzzle a speaker over coffee if they have particular questions or issues.

We'd have a couple of suggestions of how to improve things for again. I'm sure it's not deliberate but it seems to be an Anabaptist you can't have children - organising childcare was a rather expensive hassle for us and we would like to go to the preaching conference at Selly Oak but the lack of a children's programme makes this very unlikely. I know there are huge logistical issues with this, but it goes against the values of community being expressed on the day if we exclude children and those without the finance or family to look after children for them. The other comment would be just how the sessions were all led by men - the uniformity of the plenary panel

was quite striking, all white, middle class, well educated men. It would have been good to have some female speakers and perspectives and a bit more diversity of practitioners.

But please don't let this take away from the success of the weekend, it was used by God and I'm sure much will come of the seeds sown.

So thank you again and we look forward to future events,

Thanks for last Saturday. I am sorry that I couldn't stay all day but I would like any follow-up information.

I also wondered if anyone was free to put on a stall and maybe do a talk about new monasticism at Leamington peace Festival Sunday June 15th. I am co-running a Celebration of Christian Mysticism at All saints church and it seems that new monasticism would be a very important contemporary subject.

Thanks very much,

Thanks, again for a really great, inspiring day! It was very well organised, and the timetable was just right for me to get the most out of the seminars without getting overwhelmed.

There's only one suggestion that I'd like to make - could the seminars be recorded next time as I was torn as to which to go to! I'm sure the discussions in the other seminars were as thought-provoking and I would have liked to have heard *all* the speaker's stories and experiences!

Just to say how excellent I found the conference - a very, very stimulating and inspiring day. Thanks! (When's the next one?)

The day was wonderful - refreshing - challenging - inspiring. More glad than I can possibly express that Christendom is on the way out.

So ... how do I become an Anabaptist?

Please keep up the good work!

That was a really good day. Thank you very much for everything you did to organise it. I came away with lots to think about and - obviously - lots of new questions. It was particularly good to learn something about the Anabaptists. I didn't know anything about them before (except a few of the sixteenth century bits).

Thank you for your input at Saturday's conference in Coventry. The attendance was very encouraging and indeed indicative of the increasing interest in the movement and continuing emerging forms of doing "church" and practicing our faith. It was particularly interesting for me to note the differences between the US new monastic formations (of which I am fairly familiar) and the UK forms (of which I'm not too familiar).

Thank you for organising such an excellent day last Saturday. I have been to many such events, religious and secular, and that had to be one of the best. The attention to detail in the organisation and the quality of the catering (simple but appetising) was of a high standard.

Thanks for everything!

I really enjoyed participating in the day and thought there was a good cross section of ages there. I had a great time working with Karen but we did a dialogue based session with no notes, we explored together beforehand what we would do and it was unscripted. I did produce a handout which I will forward but doesn't reflect much of what we said which was basically an attempt to be honest and vulnerable about how we live out our vocations. The handout is more some concepts which we may have touched upon a little.

One of my observations of the day (and this is my area of particular sensitivity) is the lack of women in the plenary sessions except as worship leaders and organizers ie they didn't contribute to the "teaching" (I thought the worship was good). I would have thought it possible to have a woman in the practitioner session - Karen would have contributed much.

It may have been helpful to have some core material for us to read beforehand - the 12 marks of new monasticism may have given Karen and I a different sort of framework to talk around and would have helped us root what we said in a way that connected more with other parts of the day. It may also have been useful to get those of us doing the workshop sessions to give a brief introduction to it - I think from talking to people who went to various ones there was some mismatch of expectations.

The above is offered in the spirit of constructive feedback. I think it is a helpful dialogue and I have enjoyed learning more about anabaptist values.

Just a line to say thank you for all the effort put into last Saturday's conference. It was a truly stimulating and inspiring day. I was so glad - and humbled - to be able to take part in it.

Once again, many thanks - and please pass them on to others who put so much work into making the day happen.

(Let's do something similar again soon!)