



Anabaptist Network News

Thank you to all those who contributed financially to the Anabaptist Network in response to the last newsletter. We are very grateful for your support. It means we are in a much more stable position than we were.

However, we do not wish to become complacent about the financial position of the network. Therefore if you are reading this newsletter in its paper format, but would be able and happy to receive it electronically we would be pleased to send it to you that way, saving us the printing and the postage. If you would like to change to the electronic format please email admin@anabaptistnetwork.com

We also need to strengthen our ongoing support for the day-to-day running of the network. If you would like to support the Anabaptist Network financially, we have again enclosed a standing order form.

Inspiration from the Journey: A reflection on our UK visit



by Tom and
Rebecca Yoder
Neufeld

We might call these reflections 'Planes, Trains, and Automobiles', but that would not begin to describe the intense two months in the United Kingdom as guests of the Anabaptist Network and Mennonite Trust. We were privileged to listen, share, teach, lecture, and preach in dozens of places and settings, meeting countless inspiring persons who have found in Anabaptism the impetus for courageous and creative witness. It was heartening to see folks committed to discipleship and mission in a setting in which the church is losing or has lost its place at the table.

We saw the wondrous diversity of the body of Christ in many settings in the UK, whether in university and college lecture halls, study

Upcoming Events

Anabaptist Network of Communities Day

7 March, 2015. Bristol

Crucible weekend

16-17 May, 2015

Anabaptist Network of Organisations Day with Christian Peacemaker Teams

16 May, 2015. London

See inside for more details about these upcoming events.

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groups, house churches, or in denominational churches with long and rich histories. It turns out that Anabaptists in the UK are not 'naked' at all, but wear quite diverse clothes, some quite distinctively unique, others the clothing of many traditions (e.g. Baptist, Church of Christ, Anglican, Scottish Episcopal, Quaker)—even if their undergarments are Anabaptist. Or is it the other way around?

We were inspired by the commitment we saw to be a transforming presence in neighbourhoods struggling with poverty and cultural marginalization. We were inspired by the readiness of teachers in colleges and seminaries to move back and forth from the classroom to the practice of ministry in congregational settings. We were inspired by intellectual energy finding expression in publishing. We were inspired by the desire to take the insights and convictions drawn from the Anabaptist movement and theology into the churches and structures historically suspicious of Anabaptism. It strikes us that all of these efforts and persons are like holy yeast, 'infecting' the whole loaf.

That is a pearl of great price, to use yet another of Jesus' parabolic images, even if it brings with it a set of challenges. How do Anabaptists who may feel like a tiny minority within their traditions find the resources and communities of encouragement to nurture their vision? If it is 'Anabaptist' to interpret the Bible together, how are the familiarity with and skills to interpret the Bible fostered? How does one keep 'Anabaptism' from becoming an ideological niche, making sure it has at its heart a desire for new life in Christ, lived out in practice, all the while knowing it shares that desire with a much broader circle of Jesus followers? In asking these questions, we are keenly aware that they are being asked in the UK with much greater insight than a two-month sojourn in your midst affords us.

We are both profoundly thankful for the privilege of enjoying your hospitality and offering our gifts. Learning, encouraging, and enriching has become very much a two-way street between the Anabaptist Network in the UK and the North American Mennonites. Thanks be to God!

Reflecting on 'Who Would Jesus Shoot?'

by Peter Anderson

Who would Jesus shoot? The question seems absurd, but could there be an occasion where the use of violence is a necessary part of following Jesus' way of love?

In November, Professors Nigel Biggar and Thomas Yoder Neufeld came together to debate this topic. Prof. Biggar, who teaches at Christchurch College, Oxford, is a proponent of just war. Dr Yoder Neufeld is a scholar of Christian pacifism and professor emeritus at Conrad Grebel University College in Canada. Both presented well, thoroughly articulating their positions. The crowd, a diverse mix of all ages, largely seemed to be pacifist-leaning supporters of Neufeld, but this didn't appear to affect Biggar's poise.

Rather than summarising their content here, I wanted to share with you my response to the evening—the reactions of an aspiring Shalom Activist, a pacifist Mennonite living in London, and a man who grew up in middle America well-inundated with a patriotic belief in just war.

The first thing I listen for during conversations like these is: 'How big is our concept of "Peace"?' A common failure is that the debate revolves around the narrow question of whether or not we should fight and kill, rather than exploring what constructive acts we could do instead. While Biggar largely ignored the big picture, Neufeld made it a primary emphasis.

Too often, just war theorists reduce pacifism to: 'If you won't use violent force against evil, you will let evil win'. I believe Christian pacifists are strongly active in resisting evil. We hold our leaders accountable to a high standard of justice. We are actively willing to sacrifice ourselves for long-term nonviolent peacebuilding, strengthening communities around the world to prevent and end violence.

Another common argument against pacifism is that it's unrealistic and idealistic, and fails

to deal with the reality of evil. As Biggar argued, pacifists live parasitically off of society, keeping their hands clean while letting others use violence to keep everyone safe. In some cases this is accurate, and it's worth further consideration about how we live out our values.

The accusation of idealism, however, is a double-edged sword, as the same challenges apply to 'just warriors'. Classic just war theory is very stringent—it describes an ideal war, if you will—yet rare is the situation where violence is justified by the theory. Far too often, just war is used as an excuse by governments with ulterior motives, later to be revealed is that the justification was based on lies and half-truths. In practice, the theory never lives up to its ideal and leads to further instability.

Biggar suggested that pacifists and just warriors believe nearly the same thing, except whether or not violence can be used as a last resort. Philosophically, perhaps he is right. But in reality, 'just' violence most often is just another tool for enforcing our wishes on others at the expense of equality and justice. Jesus followers are called to imaginatively challenge the powers that be to positive change, not find reasons to give them permission to do what they already want to do.

Beyond all the theology being discussed that night, my thoughts focused on the audience, who seemed to be largely supporting Neufeld's pacifism. Who were all these people? Why had they come? More importantly, are they shaping their local community into a vision of shalom? What issues of justice are they involved in? My hope is that most of the attendees are demonstrating a commitment to peace in practical and local ways, living out a peace that starts within ourselves, in our homes, and with our neighbours. All the debates in the world mean nothing if we're not encouraged towards action.

*Peter Anderson is a former aspiring Army officer turned pacifist Mennonite youth pastor from Indiana. He's now living in the East End of London ministering as a member of InnerCHANGE.
www.innerchange.org*

Missed the debate? Two options for listening:

You can access the audio for 'Who Would Jesus Shoot?' online at <http://tinyurl.com/WWJSaud>. Or, if you would rather download the MP3 you can find it at <http://tinyurl.com/WWJSmp3>

Introducing Alexandra Elish

Hello! I'm Alexandra, and I recently joined the Anabaptist Network as development worker, where my focus is on connecting and journeying with adults under forty years of age.



I live with my husband, Phil, and our two children in Shadwell, Tower Hamlets in the East End of London. I work locally as a Baptist minister at E1 Community Church (E1CC), a church with distinctively Anabaptist-flavoured values and practices, and born out of Urban Expression.

My journey into Anabaptism began as an accident. Growing up in South Africa, my family attended a Presbyterian church where I was first baptised as a baby. As a 15-year-old, I moved to the UK from South Africa and found myself worshipping with a local Baptist church. At 18 years old, I wanted to make a commitment to faith for myself as an adult and baptism was the way that I saw fitted most closely with where I was on my faith journey. A few years later, I completed a Masters degree in Applied Theology at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague (now the International Baptist Theological Study Centre, Amsterdam) which specialises in Baptist/Anabaptist theology. In my studies, I experienced Anabaptist convictions, practices and theology as a homecoming, a place that I did not know I was looking for, but felt once I was there. Joining E1CC in 2009 has deepened my experience of

Anabaptist values expressed in a diverse, urban context.

Currently, I am getting more involved with community organising and agitating for change locally in Shadwell and Tower Hamlets, as well as working with others to deepen understanding between Christians and Muslims in the neighbourhood.

My role within the AN is to connect and network with younger adults who may already be part of the AN, or who may be open to discovering more about the Anabaptism. In particular, I am hoping to meet and build relationships with young adults who are interested in thinking through ways that we can network, learn and build trust together, to give birth to incarnational Anabaptist practices and communities.

One of the key issues in this phase of relationship-building is asking what the Anabaptist Network might be able to offer to a new generation of Anabaptists. What might we want to create? In what ways can we support each other? What might a network of younger Anabaptists have to offer the wider Anabaptist movement, the church, and our culture, and what resources might we need? How, from an Anabaptist perspective, might we contribute to the global conversation on issues of violence, including the rise of terrorism, destruction of creation, and growing inequality? If you or any young adults that you know would value being part of this conversation, please email me at acaellish@icloud.com.

News from Mike & Cheryl Nimz

Life continues on its busy trajectory. While many people ask us why we are so busy and suggest that we may need to slow down, it often feels right for us. There is always so much to do, many people to meet, and there are so many things yet to learn.

Early winter was busy with guests at Kreider House. These included Tom and Rebecca Yoder Neufeld, and Paul and Kaylee Walker and their new daughter, Olivia. The Walkers were transitioning from a position at a

church in North Yorkshire to a new role at a church in Canada. It really was a blessing to have all these people as guests.

November included time for us to take in events and connect with churches that we hadn't previously. We had the opportunity to lead worship at a church near us in Selly Oak. Michael also took part with other members of the Anabaptist Network in a meeting with some members of the Fellowship of Churches of Christ as they look at becoming a peace church. This is an exciting time.

With the guests gone, we had time to connect with AN communities. This is something that we have not done much, but have a commitment to do more. We have spent the last year making connections and now we are working at growing our relationships with existing groups and the new connections we have made. But, there are still more people in the network that we need to connect with. We hope to hear from you and get together.

Our work here is making an impression in North America as well. Mennonite Church Eastern Canada recognises much of what the Anabaptist Network has been doing, amongst other UK groups, and particularly sees value in the Network's teaching and experience. We have also gotten some attention from a group on Facebook, called MennoNerds. People from this group have put together a book called *A Living Alternative: Anabaptist Christianity in a Post-Modern World* (with foreword by Stuart Murray-Williams). Our group in Birmingham is using this book for discussion over the next few months and the contributors of the book are looking for feedback from us. Anyone else who is reading this book and wants to contribute thoughts and ideas about what they read, please do so.

The Anabaptist Network Facebook page continues to grow, with 230 people following worldwide. You're invited to visit the page!

In January, Cheryl took on a position with a corporation here in the UK. This will help with our finances but also gives Mike more time to blog, do research and make local connections. Cheryl will continue to work with the AN in the evenings and weekends.

Network of Communities

Anabaptist Network of Communities Day

In the last newsletter we gave details of this year's gathering of the Anabaptist Network of Communities in Bristol on Sat 7 March. There are links to more information about the day on the Anabaptist Network home page (<http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com/>) although not too much information as, intriguingly, the organisers don't want to give away too much about what is planned so as not to spoil the surprise...

What we do know is that they are working with the theme of the Feast of Fools, a subversive medieval festival that challenged social norms. The focus for the day will be 'the foolish economics of Luke 19 - living well in a consumer/material world'. There'll be all sorts of interactive and creative activities to help us take a fresh and challenging look at the story of Zacchaeus and the parable of the pounds. The day will be designed to include and engage children, with some special activities running alongside the adults' activities where necessary for the very youngest, and we're planning to include some kind of conversation about Anabaptist beliefs and/or history for those who want a bit of an introduction. We'll be sharing bread, wine and liturgy over a meal and taking time to ponder together the tough questions about our own participation in an economically driven world. And we even get tea and cake to nourish us for the journey home.

So if you're close enough to Bristol, do consider joining us for the day. Please book by 28 Feb via sue.haslehurst@gmail.com (or phone 0117 330 7826).

Philippines Anabaptist Network

There is a new Anabaptist network, in the global Anabaptist community. Darnell Barkman writes: 'We've launched here in the Philippines what we're calling Peace

Assemblies Network locally but internationally it's the Philippines Anabaptist Network. This is just to get around the confusion about the Baptist denomination and help people see that we're not creating another denomination.'

Network of Organisations

Network of Organisations Day

The 2015 Anabaptist Network of Organisations Day is an exciting partnership between the Anabaptist Network and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT).

The day will be part of the larger CPT European Convergence, taking place at Union Chapel from Tuesday 12 to Sunday 17 May. More details about the different aspects of this event will appear on the Network's website.

Everyone is invited! The day is free, but would you tell us you are coming by booking at www.faithactivism.eventbrite.com. If you are involved in an organisation you are invited to bring information and a stand let us know. More details on the website.

Anabaptist Theology Forum

The Anabaptist Theology Forum next meets from coffee-time on Wednesday 22 April until after lunch on Thursday 23 April, 2015 at the International Mission Centre, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6QX. The cost will be about £70-75 for the whole event, with the potential for day visitors, too. Details are to be circulated shortly and bookings need to be made by 31 March 2015.

Unless you have already done so, please contact Andrew Francis and Trisha Dale, atf@menno.org.uk to confirm or supply your email address, to ensure that you receive the booking information. We are hoping to focus loosely on 'God and the nations' this April, with sessions on nationalism and two of the new After Christendom books, among

other input. We are creating a downloadable leaflet about ATF which (hopefully) will be available to ATF e-supporters and via the Anabaptist Network and Mennonite Trust websites in early March 2015.

Our subsequent scheduled gathering for all serious God-talkers, interested in or committed to the Anabaptist cause, is provisionally 14-15 October. We look forward to receiving your contact information.

Urban Expression

by Juliet Kilpin

In a time of austerity and cutbacks, Urban Expression has seen a surprising period of generosity and expense! Several new teams are emerging, and we have been able to appoint regional coordinators or development workers to help birth and support these new initiatives.

As a consequence, our 'organisational team' of coordinators has grown with an increasing number of people working only one day each. This seems to be working far better than employing just a few full-time staff, and enables Urban Expression to respond swiftly and organically to opportunities in various localities. We are exploring what this means as we grow, and are committed to ensuring that we stay a flat, relational, light-weight organisation.

Urban Expression continues to be effective at recruiting team leaders, but we would love to recruit more team members so that the teams are not left too small and vulnerable. In particular there are opportunities in Nottingham, Wolverhampton, London and Manchester for people who want to join team. Do get in touch if interested!
(rachel@urbanexpression.org.uk)

We have been immensely grateful for some financial support from the Mennonite Trust which is enabling a couple of properties to be bought to rent out to UE team members in London, creatively enabling mission on the margins in a city which is increasingly

marginalising the poorer and more vulnerable.

As UE approaches its 18th birthday, we are aware that there is a generation of teenagers who have grown up as a part of families in Urban Expression teams. We are looking forward to taking a bunch of them away next month for the first time and praying for good relationships to be formed, reflections to be stirred and imaginations stretched of how these unique teenagers might continue to build shalom-filled communities.

I have recently responded to an invitation to become an elder of Servants, another organisation founded with Anabaptist values (www.servantsasia.org). This relationship will no doubt enable Urban Expression to learn from their incarnational presence in some of the most marginalised areas of the world, and together we look forward to exploring how organisations can recruit, equip, deploy and support such teams more effectively.

Crucible

by Juliet Kilpin

Now in its tenth year, Crucible (cruciblecourse.org.uk) continues to help people reflect on following Jesus on the margins. Two streams are offered during each of the three weekends per year, for a total of six topics to explore over two years. 'After Christendom' and 'Restoring Hope' are scene-setting weekends which broaden our understandings of context and perspectives of what we are headed towards. 'The Urban Challenge' highlights how the majority of the world now live in cities and helps to explore the impact for those who are inspired by the Great Commission. 'Becoming Human' asks what discipleship is all about, while 'Jesus Unplugged' explores evangelism and how we can communicate the Jesus-story effectively and truthfully. 'Creating New Churches' examines what church might look like as a consequence of all we have learned through these other topics.

Crucible seems to be more than just a course. The relationships built and support

shared provide much-needed reassurance and motivation for those who often feel on the margins themselves.

Bridge Builders Update

We reported last time on the appointment of Colin Moulds as our new Executive Director, to take over from Alastair McKay who has led Bridge Builders since it started in 1996. Colin started work on 1 Feb, overlapping for two months with Alastair in order to pick up the reins of the job as smoothly as possible. Alastair steps down at the end of March, before his ordination in the Anglican Church on 4 July.

We are also very pleased to welcome Graham Shorter on to our board of trustees, as our new treasurer. Graham has been an accountant for 30 years, acting as financial advisor to many small businesses, and he brings to our board both his long experience with business and finance, and his Christian commitment. Our last board meeting was a sparky, stimulating event—I sense that Bridge Builders is about to move forward in a creative way.

One creative step forward is the agreement between Bridge Builders and the Church Pastoral Aid Society to write, produce and market a training resource for use by local church leaders with local Christians. Its working title is *Growing Bridgebuilders*, and it is to be written by Alastair in partnership with our Associate Director Colin Patterson. (Having two Colins on the staff is a challenge we haven't yet worked through!) *Growing Bridgebuilders* is due to be published in mid-2016, and will be a valuable resource for every type of local church. Watch out for it!

News and Events

Anabaptism in North America

Beyond Mennonite, Amish and other denominations related to historic Anabaptism, the past few years have witnessed growing interest in the Anabaptist vision among emerging church pioneers,

evangelicals and others. Aware of this growing interest, Herald Press have commissioned a revised edition of *The Naked Anabaptist* to celebrate the fifth anniversary later this year of its publication. This book has sold well in North America (despite being aimed at a British readership) and Herald believe a revised edition can reach an even wider readership. Copies of the current edition are available at £8.00 (post free) on request.

Centre for Anabaptist Studies

by Stuart Murray Williams

The Centre for Anabaptist Studies at Bristol Baptist College was launched on 8 October and is developing an MA programme. Although it is our intention in due course to offer this programme entirely online, making it accessible to students anywhere in the UK or even globally, we could also teach the modules in block weeks in Bristol if there is enough interest from current students and others within reach of the college.

We are currently hoping to teach three modules:

- Anabaptist origins and distinctives
- Anabaptist ecclesiology and missiology
- Anabaptist ethics and hermeneutics

We intend to write further modules, enabling students either to complete the MA with a compulsory module on research methodology and five Anabaptist modules or to combine some of these modules with others offered by the colleges. But the above three modules could be taught during the 2015-16 academic year – if there is enough interest.

Please let me know if this might be of interest by contacting me at anabaptist@bristol-baptist.ac.uk. We are not looking for any commitment at this stage, merely expressions of interest.

Mennonite Library

The library, which was transported to Bristol Baptist College in July, unpacked and

sorted by a team of volunteers, is now shelved in the college library and fully accessible. Anyone wishing to consult the collection should contact the college librarian, Mike Brealey, on 0117 946 7050 or email library@bristol-baptist.ac.uk.

We are in the process of adding to the collection books published during the past ten years. We are very grateful to the Bruderhof Community in Robertsbridge for a generous donation of £5,000 towards this. Once the library has been updated in this way, the Mennonite Trust will provide an annual grant to enable the college to continue to purchase relevant books.

Webinars

We are midway through the programme of six webinars on the theme 'The Challenges and Opportunities of Post-Christendom', featuring authors of already published and forthcoming books in the 'After Christendom' series. Recordings of the webinars that have already taken place can be found at www.brethren.org/webcasts/archive.html. If you are interested in watching future webinars, registration information can be obtained from stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk.

Books and Resources

Ian Randall: *'Church Community is a gift of the Holy Spirit': the spirituality of the Bruderhof community* (Regent's Park College, 2014): the first time an outsider, a Baptist historian with Anabaptist sympathies, has been invited to write an account of the Bruderhof communities.

Joanna Harader & A O Green (Eds.): *A Living Alternative: Anabaptist Christianity in a Post-Christendom World* (Ettelloc Publishing, 2014): a collection of essays by various neo-Anabaptists in the North American missional/emerging church movement.

C J Sansom: *Lamentation* (Mantle, 2014): the sixth in a series of historical novels about the lawyer Matthew Shardlake, set in the reign of Henry VIII, this one portrays the fear of Anabaptists in England at that time.

David Shenk: *Christian, Muslim, Friend* (Herald Press, 2014): twelve ways in which Christians can form authentic relationships with Muslims, rooted in fifty years of friendships in Somalia, Kenya and the USA.

James Reimer: *Toward an Anabaptist Political Theology: Law, Order, and Civil Society* (Cascade Books, 2014): pushing at the boundaries of Anabaptism and encouraging a more creative and positive engagement with civil society.

Brian Froese: *California Mennonites* (John Hopkins University Press, 2014): the story of Mennonite engagement with the economics, culture and religious context of west coast America.

J Denny Weaver (Ed.): *John Howard Yoder: Radical Theologian* (Cascade Books, 2014): yet another exploration of Yoder's hugely influential writings on theology and ethics, but this book also reflects on his human flaws.

After Christendom series

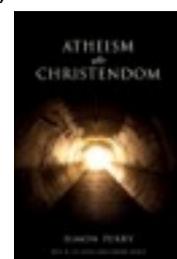
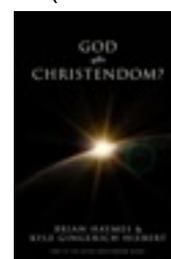
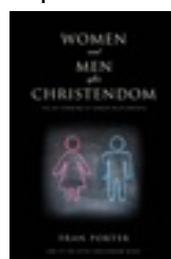
Three further titles in the popular 'After Christendom' series will be published in 2015. They are:

God after Christendom? by Brian Haymes & Kyle Gingerich Heibert

Women and Men after Christendom by Fran Porter

Atheism after Christendom by Simon Perry

Please contact us if you would like to purchase copies (£14.99 each).



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