



Anabaptist Network News

Thank you to those who, in response to the last newsletter, are receiving this in digital format rather than paper or have contributed financially to the Network. Your support is so important to the sustainability of the Network.

Over the next few months we will be thinking about how we communicate what the Network is up to. Since Mike and Cheryl's arrival they have taken the initiative. You can find us on Facebook and Twitter and engage with fellow Anabaptists, or those interested, there. But, we also have a newsletter and website. We are very grateful to Valerie Showalter, Trisha Dale and Ros Parkes who help with the editing and proof-reading of the newsletter, and administration of the website respectively. But Valerie will be leaving the UK soon, and the website is in need of a more wholesale overhaul.

If you have skills that might aid with either of these tasks we would be very keen to hear from you to discuss how you might be able to support the Network with these tasks. Please contact us using admin@anabaptistnetwork.com

This newsletter brings updates from Mike and Cheryl, and reports from the Anabaptist Network of Communities and Organisation days. We are pleased to announce that the next three titles in the After Christendom series have been published.

A core focus of the Network is to provide Anabaptist resources. This edition contains a helpful list and relevant web-links to resources which we hope will be useful to Anabaptist Study Groups, or anybody interested in learning more about the tradition.

Update from Cheryl and Mike

'You came along just when we needed you.' That's a note that we received from some friends recently. They have been on a faith journey for a while and were very attracted to Anabaptist beliefs. We have been blessed to journey with them as we see how we can live out our faith together and in our communities.

Upcoming Events

Radical Routes Book Group
30 June, London

SPEAK Peace Festival
14 September, London

Anabaptist Theology Forum
14-15 October, Birmingham

Crucible Weekend
7-8 November

See inside for more details about these upcoming events.

Anabaptist Network Trust

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Because people are looking at faith in an Anabaptist perspective, Mike and I have been busy meeting up with them. It's wonderful hearing their stories and being able to support them and connect them with other people on the same journey.

Besides meeting people face to face, we have also been using social media such as the Anabaptist Network UK Facebook page to promote events, books and groups. We currently have 311 people following the page. People have connected from all over the world on this page, and friendships have been made. We are hoping to make it more conversational.

Now that it is nicer out, we have been having people over for barbecues. What's better than good food, friends, and conversations? I would say that relationships are at the core of our work here in the UK. To be honest, I can't even say it is work when it comes so naturally, getting to meet people and journey with them.

My faith has never been so challenged but so alive, and I must say to all of you that have been a part of our lives that 'you came along just when I needed you.' Blessings to you all.

Network of Communities

Around 60 people, including six children, gathered on 7 March at St Mark's Baptist Church in Bristol for the annual get-together of the Anabaptist Network of Communities (ANC). The day took as its theme the medieval Feast of Fools, a subversive festival that turns the established order upside-down for one day to prick the pretensions of the wealthy and powerful. Upon arrival at the church, we were welcomed by a vast array of cakes, iced in bright colours which bore no relation to the flavour of the cake, to prepare us for a day of surprises and upside-down-ness.

The focus of the day was 'the foolish economics of Luke 19'. Spending the day

reflecting on the entire chapter was helpful, as we noted, for instance, that Luke has placed the parable of the pounds straight after the story of Zacchaeus, and not long before Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a colt and turns over the tables of the money changers in the temple.

Activities included extended preparation for two dramas based on the story of Zacchaeus, one a pantomime and the other in the style of Monty Python's four Yorkshiremen. From there, the groups went on to make a collage of newspaper headlines, article, and adverts on the theme of challenging the icons of our society, drawing on the beatitudes for ideas. At lunch, we enjoyed a three-course meal creatively cooked from Fareshare ingredients (diverted from being thrown out by shops and supermarkets). In the afternoon, we heard about the economically foolish journey of David and Fiona Hibbs, who joined the Bruderhof community, adding their money and possessions to the community's common purse. We also formed small groups to choose part of Luke 19 for discussion around some thought-provoking questions.

This was the fifth annual ANC day, with previous days held in Birmingham, Manchester, and twice in London. Each gathering has been hosted by a different local group. This day was hosted by the Bristol Anabaptist study group and drew people from across the southwest as far afield as Newquay as well as from Birmingham, Buckinghamshire, Cambridge, Sussex, London and the wider London/Surrey area. We hope that moving the gathering around enables a different group of people each year to travel to the day relatively easily. It brought together people from groups which belong to the Anabaptist Network of Communities, members of the Anabaptist Network, and those exploring Anabaptism.

We're grateful to the team of Stuart Murray Williams, James Manning, Sian Manning and Helen Pears for their vision, hard work and ingenuity. Thanks also to the café team, co-ordinated super-efficiently by manager Lesley Wynne. The café team's hard work made creative use of Fareshare

food, which kept the cost of food very low. Additionally, St Mark's generously allowed us to use the building in return for a donation. The day was free to participants, but donations were welcomed, allowing us to cover costs and make an appropriate donation to St Mark's. Thank you, too, to those who took time to send us feedback about the day. This will be helpful both as we start to plan for next year's gathering and think about whether and how to re-use the Feast of Fools theme in future events.

Reflections from 'Faith Activism' Conference

As part of the Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT) European Convergence, which took place in London from 12 to 17 May, the Anabaptist Network of Organisations (ANO) and CPT decided to join together to organise a day-long conference called 'Faith Activism: Does it Work?' We started the day with a panel of 'expert' activists: Father Martin Newell from London Catholic Worker; human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell; CPT's Muriel Schmid; former Greenbelt CEO Beccie D'Cunha; and 'Soul of Europe' founder Donald Reeves. Unfortunately, Salma Yaqoob, a prominent Muslim activist and leader of Birmingham's Stop the War Coalition, couldn't make it at the last minute, and her input was missed.

Each member of the panel spoke for about eight minutes about their personal experience of faith activism and whether it worked and then they answered questions. Beccie D'Cunha, chairing the panel, set the tone when she shared that she has found Anabaptism inspiring for her activism. In response to the main question, 'Does activism work?' Donald Reeves said that the answer was both 'no' and 'yes'. He spoke from experience of many times when activism seemed to change nothing because too many big vested interests held too much power. However, he also told us about his 'Soul of Europe' project in Bosnia, which approaches peace-making through encounter, mediation, and reconciliation between Bosnian Muslims and Serbs. Peter Tatchell spoke of his experience in the civil rights movement in the USA and of supporting indigenous communities in

Australia with the Student Christian Movement. Fr. Martin Newell shared that he believes that even when activism seems to do nothing in the short-term, others may be inspired to action and hope. He also spoke of the importance of prayer to faith activism and quoted Walter Wink as saying 'history belongs to the intercessors'. Muriel Schmid spoke of the inspiration of faith activists and how they can be 'prophetic', but lamented the lack of these kinds of Christians in the public sphere generally.

In the afternoon, Jon Dorsett from CPT-UK and Noel Moules led the seventy-odd participants in 'open space' conversations. 'Open space' is a tool where participants write questions or topics they would like to discuss onto pieces of paper to display before the group. The rest of the participants choose which topic they would want to be a part of, and multiple discussions occur simultaneously. Topics put forward included: 'Experiences of faith activism', 'Surviving and failing' and 'How can we grow nonviolence in our churches?'

All the evidence is that those who came left feeling inspired, encouraged, and motivated to make a difference. Author and activist Symon Hill (symonhill.wordpress.com) tweeted afterwards that he had had a 'great day' in which he experienced 'people from many backgrounds and campaigns sharing wisdom and making plans'. This was a really worthwhile day, which gives a further example of the role of the Anabaptist Network of Organisations and hopefully has created significant momentum for CPT-UK to develop across Britain. We all hope that there will be opportunities in the future for this kind of event to take place again.

Network of Organisations

Anabaptist Theology Forum *from Andrew Francis and Trisha Dale*

The next ATF is taking place at the International Mission Centre, Birmingham, from coffee-time on Wednesday, 14 October

until early afternoon Thursday, 15 October 2015. We hope you will plan to join us.

Fran Porter will be presenting issues from her newly published *Women and Men after Christendom*. Linda Wilson will bring a further session on the 'role of women in the church'. and there will be two planned plenary discussions, as well as other sessions. Fuller programme and booking information will be circulated in July, after the cost has been finalised – estimated at £70. We will give ideas about our 2016 programme in October.

If you did not receive booking/programme information for our Spring 2015 gathering, please ensure you register your e-address with us at atf@menno.org.uk.

Bridge Builders

from Chris Burch, Chair of Trustees

Bridge Builders has been in a time of change, it seems, for the last 4 years or more, since before it became its own charity. One of the changes is we are beginning to see the benefits of all this change, and rejoice in it! (We might even start calling it 'development'...)

Colin Moulds started work 1 February, overlapping for two months with Alastair McKay, before Alastair stepped down at the end of March. The farewell event for Alastair was held in central London on 24 March, with 35 friends and associates there, including members of the Council of Reference, staff, trustees and Network members. The Mennonite roots of Bridge Builders were celebrated, and a witness borne to the Anabaptist tradition of peacemaking, which inspired Bridge Builders to start and still inspires us today. The tea and cake were good too! One of the Council of Reference who made a speech was Rachel Treweek, Archdeacon of Hackney. I thought she was on a bit of a 'high' – then the next day it was announced that she would be the next Bishop of Gloucester!

Colin has been getting his feet under the table, and is beginning to ask questions like, 'Why do we do it this way...?' We are

confident that the flow of bright ideas has only just begun, and that Bridge Builders will continue to develop. So far we have been thinking about the infrastructure – the website, bill payments, etc. – and this year is a good opportunity to attend to our systems while the course programme is a bit quieter. But the vision looks set to expand too – watch this space!

One change we were expecting, but not quite so soon, was recruiting a replacement Course Co-ordinator for Sarah Wilkin, whose one-year contract was due to finish in August. As it turned out, she got a new job sooner, and left us a few weeks ago. It's great for her, but we had to accelerate our recruitment process. Catherine Ellerby was appointed, and we look forward to her starting work with us in mid-June.

Those in leadership/ministry in small Anabaptist-inspired churches are warmly invited to apply to one of our training courses, *Transforming Church Conflict* or *Leading with Emotional Maturity*. We now have a bursary fund, so if your church is unable to sponsor you, do get in touch anyway. Visit our website www.bbministries.org.uk for the course programme and application details.

Mennonite Trust: Houses for Mission

Over the past few years, The Mennonite Trust has bought several properties to rent out in order to generate income the Trust can use to support the work of the wider Anabaptist movement. However, two houses purchased in the past few months will serve a further and more missional purpose. These houses, in Harold Hill and Hackney, will be used by Urban Expression teams for accommodation and hospitality (as well as providing rental income). The Trust hopes in due course to make additional houses available for Urban Expression teams.

Crucible

The eleventh year of the *Crucible* course, organised by our partners Urban Expression, starts on 7-8 November with modules on the subjects of 'After Christendom' and 'Restoring Hope'. Over 500 people have studied on this course, which is especially for pioneers or would-be pioneers, but is open to anyone interested in exploring what it means to follow Jesus on the margins. Some bursaries are available if limited finance might preclude participation. A brochure accompanies this newsletter. For more information, contact rachel@urbanexpression.org.uk.

Urban Expression

The expansion phase mentioned in the previous newsletter continues, with new teams emerging in Nottingham, Brighton, Wolverhampton, Northern Ireland and London, and conversations about deploying teams elsewhere.

Over recent months we have become increasingly aware that issues of urban poverty and low levels of church involvement are not limited to classic inner-city areas (some of which are now being gentrified), so we are deploying teams on outlying housing estates and in the pockets of poverty we discover in otherwise more affluent areas. There are many opportunities!

We welcome interest from anyone who might consider joining one of these teams as they engage in incarnational ministry and church planting in poor urban communities. For more information, please contact rachel@urbanexpression.org.uk.

SPEAK Network

'SPEAK people should kneel in prayer and physically block all injustice and oppression.'

*-Tony Campolo,
SPEAK honorary president, the day after
the first ever SPEAK meeting.*

SPEAK is organising a 'LOUD' Peace Festival for 14 September, where we plan to creatively challenge the DSEi arms fair. DSEi is one of the biggest arms fairs in the world where, for one week every two years, 1400 arms companies gather in East London to display their weapons to buyers from around the world, including authoritarian regimes and countries with serious human rights problems. This year, DSEi is taking place 15-18 September. In response, there is an entire week of action planned by Stop the Arms Fair, a UK-based coalition of groups and individuals, of which SPEAK is a part. We want to peacefully protest to raise awareness of DSEi's existence and to work to stop it. Join us as we target the arms fair, its organisers, and the exhibitors that make a profit from killing and repression.

The day will include a range of speakers: Greg Valerio, Steve Chalke, Symon Hill, Andrew Dey and Andy Flanagan. We'll also have DJs and live acts like Jinadu DJ, and a variety of workshops with topics ranging from community gardening, seeding change, lobbying MPs, lifestyle inspiration, arts and music.

News and Events

Introduction to Anabaptism

We have offered an 'Introduction to Anabaptism' day a number of times over the past few years – using drama, visuals, lectures and discussion groups to explore the history of the movement and its contemporary significance. Mike and Cheryl Nimz are hosting two shorter events during June in Birmingham and we are open to arranging others in the autumn (full days or shorter events). If this is something you might also be interested in, please let us know.

Webinars

The six webinars co-sponsored with the Centre for Anabaptist Studies have been well received and have attracted enough

participants (and others watching recordings later) to encourage us to organise another series from the autumn. More information about these will be available soon. If you are interested in watching recordings of any of the webinars, you can access these at www.brethren.org/webcasts/archive.html.

Centre for Anabaptist Studies: MA modules – block weeks and online

The 2015-16 timetable at Bristol Baptist College has allocated slots in two block weeks for Anabaptist MA modules. 'Anabaptist Origins and Distinctives' will be taught on 15-19 February. 'Anabaptist Ethics and Hermeneutics' will be taught on 11-15 April. These can be audited by anyone interested, whether or not you want to study towards a degree.

The other good news is that Durham, our validating university, has given permission for the MA modules to be delivered online. This will mean that they can be studied anywhere in the world without needing to come to Bristol. The online modules will be available from October.

If you are interested in studying these modules, in block weeks in Bristol or online, please contact anabaptist@bristol-baptist.ac.uk.

Centre for Anabaptist Studies: Annual Lecture

The second annual lecture organised by the Centre in Bristol will take place on Wednesday, 18 November. The speaker will be Dr Toivo Pilli, course leader in Baptist and Anabaptist Studies at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Amsterdam. Dr Pilli comes from Estonia, where he is currently pastor of Tartu Salem Baptist Church and an associate professor at Theological Seminary in Tartu. His title is 'Anabaptists, the Bible and Discipleship'. He writes: 'The presentation will focus on the central identity marker of Anabaptists – *Nachfolge* or discipleship; it will explore how the Anabaptist commitment to discipleship

can illuminate our present understanding and practice of Christian spirituality.'

A recording of the first annual lecture by Tom Yoder Neufeld on 'Anabaptists, the Bible and Violence' can be accessed at <http://anabaptistnetwork.com/node/728>.

New groups: Cambridge, South Wales, Belfast

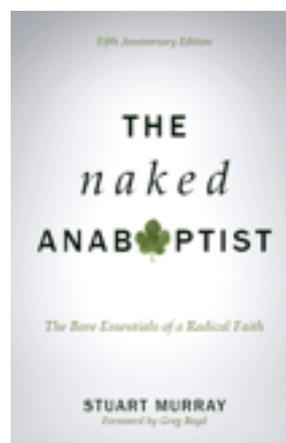
A new Anabaptist study group in South Wales met for the first time in April. Coordinated by Peter Baines, a Baptist minister from Abergavenny, who has made the journey to the Bristol group for several years, the group is meeting in Ebbw Vale. If you are interested in joining this group, you can contact Peter at rev.dr.peterbaines@gmail.com.

There is interest also in starting Anabaptist study groups in Cambridge and Belfast. If you live near either city and might be interested, please let us know.

The Naked Anabaptist – revised edition

Herald Press, who published the best-selling North American edition of the book, are convinced a revised edition of *The Naked Anabaptist* can reach an even wider readership there. Stuart has been invited to revise the book, replacing some of the British material with North American

material. He has done this and Herald plan to publish this in October 2015 as a fifth anniversary edition, with a new cover. Some of us find this cover design rather weak, but the publishers like it and hopefully this will not discourage people from buying it.



Books and Resources

Resources for Study Groups

The study groups linked with the Anabaptist Network are self-organising and depend on the initiative, coordination, hosting and continuing energy of local members. These study groups have come and gone over the past 20 years. Some have flourished for only a short time; others have met for many years. New groups continue to emerge.

The Anabaptist Network can offer the following resources to the study groups:

1. People

There is expertise within the network on many topics, historical, theological, practical and contemporary. Groups can invite people to join them for an evening or a short series. Normally we hope that travelling expenses will be met, and sometimes accommodation may be needed if a significant distance is involved.

Mike and Cheryl Nimz, Canadian Mennonites working with the Network, are happy to visit study groups from their base in Birmingham.

Alex Elish, employed by the Mennonite Trust to develop links with under-40s, would be open to invitations too, especially if the group has younger members.

Stuart Murray Williams, for many years Chair of the Network and author of *The Naked Anabaptist*, is also open to invitations.

2. Courses

The Network's website has a number of short courses designed for group study, which can be found at www.anabaptistnetwork.com/studycourses:

- After Christendom: Following Jesus on the Margins
- Becoming a Peace Church
- Reading the Bible After Christendom: A Study Guide
- Taking Jesus Seriously
- The Practice of Church Discipline

The material and some additional reading can be downloaded at any time.

3. Books

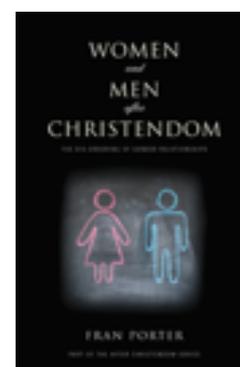
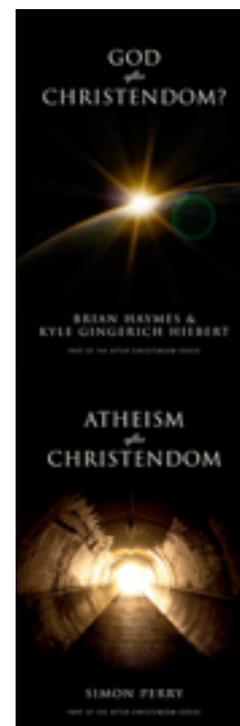
The network has been involved in the development and writing of a series of books on the theme of 'After Christendom'. Three new books in the series have just been published: *Atheism after Christendom* by Simon Perry, *God after Christendom?* by Brian Haymes and Kyle Gingerich Hiebert, and *Women and Men after Christendom* by Fran Porter. Copies can be supplied at a reduced price to study groups (or on request post-free for £14.99), and summaries of their contents and extracts

from these books can be found at www.anabaptistnetwork.com/AfterChristendom. Some study groups have studied some of these books together,

reading chapters beforehand and discussing them (like a book club). Another book the groups have studied is *The Naked Anabaptist*, which has a study guide at the back and can also be supplied at a reduced price. Other books that might be suitable for group discussion are listed at www.anabaptistnetwork.com/otherresources. Group coordinators might find it helpful also to share with each other books they have enjoyed exploring together.

4. Liturgical resources

Some of the study groups include prayer and worship when they meet together, regularly or on occasions. There are some resources that might be helpful:



- *Take Our Moments and Our Days*: an Anabaptist prayer book with readings and prayers for each day of the year, using the framework of the church year.

- *An Anabaptist Table Liturgy*: readings and prayers, including an opportunity to share bread and wine, for gatherings around the table.

- Other liturgical resources drawing on the Anabaptist tradition.

The Anabaptist prayer book can be purchased. Details can be found on the publisher's website at www.heraldpress.com/titles/takeourmoments. The other liturgical resources are available to download at www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/740.

5. Dramatised readings

The Network has made use of various dramatised readings that bring alive the stories of the early Anabaptists. Most of these were created from the original sources by Alan and Eleanor Kreider, founder members of the Network. They can be viewed and downloaded at www.mennoniteeducation.org/MEAPortal/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=787.

These are by no means the only resources available for study groups. There are many other resources on the web that can easily be accessed, including:

www.gameo.org: the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopaedia Online, an enormous website with extensive resources on Anabaptism.

www.mennoners.com: a network of blogs, a 'go to' place for people to read what Anabaptist-minded writers have to say about contemporary issues.

www.thirdway.com: Third Way Café, providing information, both historical and present-day thinking, from an Anabaptist viewpoint.

Books

You might be interested in the following books which have recently been published:

Michael Gorman: *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant* (Wipf & Stock, 2014): a fresh look at the atonement and its impact on discipleship, peace and the new covenant community by an Anabaptist Wesleyan.

Marlene Miller: *Called to Be Amish: My Journey from Head Majorette to the Old Order* (Herald Press, 2015): the story of one of very few outsiders joining the Old Order Amish and staying.

Wilma Ann Bailey and Christina Bucher: *Lamentations, Song of Songs* (Herald Press, 2015): another volume in the Believers Church series of commentaries.

George Brunk III: *Galatians* (Herald Press, 2015): another volume in the Believers Church series of commentaries.

Geoff Broughton: *Restorative Christ: Jesus, Justice and Discipleship* (Wipf & Stock, 2015): in conversation with Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Jesus-for-others), John Howard Yoder (a nonviolent Jesus), Miroslav Volf (an embracing Jesus) and Chris Marshall (a compassionate Jesus), Broughton demonstrates what the restorative Christ means for us today.

Steve Carpenter: *Mennonites and Media: Mentioned in it, Maligned by it, and Makers of it* (Wipf & Stock, 2015): Anabaptists and Mennonites have often been the subject of media scrutiny, sometimes admired, at other times maligned. Beginning with the *Martyrs Mirror*, this book demonstrates that Mennonites 'punch above their weight' in the media, and especially in print.

Kat Hill: *Baptism, Brotherhood, and Belief in Reformation Germany: Anabaptism and Lutheranism, 1525-1585* (Oxford University Press, 2015): an in-depth study of the ways in which Anabaptism emerged and spread in the Lutheran heartland.

Nancy Small: *Seizing the Nonviolent Moments* (Cascade, 2015): peacemaking stories and reflections on the spirituality of nonviolence through the lens of Scripture.