



Anabaptist Network News

We always welcome contributions to the newsletter from members of the network. This edition we have a reflection from **Ian Wilson** of the Bristol study group; sharing his thoughts in the run-up to Remembrance Sunday. If, like Ian, there is a subject you are passionate about and would like to write an Anabaptist-flavoured article we would happily include it. Even if you are unused to writing articles, and only have the seed of an idea, please do get in touch and we can discuss how to develop that idea. Reflecting the Network's fifth core conviction, it would be excellent for this newsletter to be as multi-voiced as possible.

On the theme of multi-voiced Church, we have a review of a workshop **Stuart** and **Sian Murray Williams** led building upon the themes they write about in their multi-voiced church book.

Karen Stallard takes an interesting approach reflecting on what is a common Anabaptist distinctive, peacemaking. Continuing our series on the core convictions Karen explores how the world of therapy can aid us in our own peacefulness and how we express that with others.

Mike and **Cheryl Nimz** have arrived safely in the UK. Mike is employed to support and develop the network of communities, whilst Cheryl will be volunteering her time to support the network of organisations. They share some of their early experiences with us and are keen to hear from individuals, communities or organisations that it would be good for them to connect with. They outline how to get in touch with them below.

Please continue to support Mike and Cheryl by:

Prayer: for Mike and Cheryl as they adjust to life in the UK and develop their ministry with the Network.

Invitation: invite them to meet you, to visit your church/ community, or to connect with your organisation.

Giving: towards their in-country expenses.

We only have an estimate of their likely travelling and other expenses at this stage – roughly £5,000 a year. Some of this will be covered by the communities and organisations they visit and serve, but the Network will need to cover the rest. If you would like to offer financial support please contact us via admin@anabaptistnetwork.com to make arrangements.

Upcoming Events:

The Essentials of a Radical Faith, with **Stuart Murray Williams**

Saturday 30 November,
10am-4pm, Exeter

Multi-voiced Church, with **Stuart** and **Sian Murray Williams**

Saturday 18 January,
10am-4.30pm,
Westborne, Portsmouth

See:

<http://menno.org.uk/events/>

for more information and how to book.

Reflecting on the Core Convictions: Peacemaking and Therapy

Karen Stallard shares a personal reflection on an Anabaptist commitment to peacemaking, and the helpful insights therapy can provide.

As an Anabaptist who takes peacemaking seriously I have found that the psychological world of therapy provides me with some rich resources to manage my own emotional responses to violence. Let me give you an example:

The other night I had a dream. In my dream I was watching a young child sing and dance, she was very good. I spoke to her and asked if she would sing and dance for all the people watching. She smiled at me saying she would love to. But then a woman approached me, she was very thin and pale and had black angry rings under her eyes. She said that it was time for the little girl to go and that she was not to sing and dance for the people. The little girl looked heart broken. I woke up feeling angry and sad.

Quite recently I have experienced a relationship breakdown. This was not someone I was particularly close to, however it affected me deeply. I was left very troubled that someone could hate me so much, but also that I too could be so hard in my response to them. My dream has helped me to understand some of the dynamics that were happening in that relationship. I had become the angry woman; the other person was the little girl and we played out the script of my dream so very well. The ending of upset, anger and hatred was inevitable. I had become the angry woman because she is always there in my internal story, constraining, restricting and disregarding hope. I regret not being able to understand this at the time of the breakdown as I may well have been able to change the script for both of us, but I can learn from this and with the help of my

dream I can become more aware when it happens next time. There is always a next time!

Conflict is always around us; we cannot control the responses of others, we can however learn to control our own responses. We all have our own dark angry character attached to us, the one who wounds, constricts and controls. We also have our wounded character, the one who longs to expand, hope and dream. The two are often in conflict. Resolving our own inner conflicts through the work of therapy can have a huge impact on our relationships with others. What if the angry woman in my dream can choose to let the little girl sing and dance, maybe then she might begin to feel young and healthy herself! Peace comes when we are able to change stories from ones of inevitable hurt to surprising hope. Often loving your enemy means learning to love the enemy within. For me in my dream it is learning to love the angry woman who is as much me as the little girl, and who was of course the little girl herself a long time ago!

With this in mind I would very much like to recommend the conference below to anyone wanting to explore continuity and tension between the world and church, nature and grace, psychology and theology.

Interested in the common ground between counselling, pastoral care, therapeutic or psychological work, and also spirituality, theology and faith? Then join us at the next **Continuing the Journey conference:**

Flow and Ebb: playing in the shallows, diving in the depths, 28th April – 2nd May 2014, The Hayes Conference Centre, Derbyshire.

This conference offers a safe opportunity for conversations with others, with our self and with God in a liminal place. It provides a chance to retreat from the busyness of life with space for reflection, challenge, nourishment and fun.

Speakers this year are: Canon Trevor Dennis, Ruth Layzell, Sr Elizabeth Obbard, Roy Searle

For more details:

www.continuingthejourney.com

and for the latest newsletter:

www.continuingthejourney.com/newsletters

News and Events

Mike and Cheryl Nimz have arrived!

As you will hopefully have heard via our *Newsletter Extra* mailing, Mike and Cheryl Nimz have arrived safely in the UK. They are currently based at Kreider House in Selly Oak.

Mike shares some of their initial experiences in the UK.

As many of you already know, Cheryl and I have finally arrived in the U.K. It has been a slow process and well worth the wait. In the short time we have been here, we have found that there is much to learn, much to do, many people to meet and new experiences to savour.

We have been here for seven weeks as this is being written and it has been a full seven weeks. It didn't take very long before we started meeting people, travelling and making new friends. Within the first 72 hours we had already made some very good friends in Birmingham, inside and outside the Network. In less than a week, we were already learning to drive, had a mobile phone and starting the process of learning our way around.

We have had the opportunity to be hosted by many people from the Anabaptist Network already. We were invited to stay with Tony Russell in his pop-up camper at Greenbelt and met a number of people from the Network and many familiar with it.

Recently, we were a part of the Fellowship of Churches of Christ annual meeting. We had a display for the Anabaptist Network. It was a good opportunity to meet people who

were not a part of the Network and tell them about what we are doing. As we have found elsewhere, many people were familiar with the Anabaptist Network and some of what it offers.

I have not listed the churches we have visited or other related groups that we have connected with, or everyone we have had the chance to meet as this would be several pages long! We have more planned for the next couple of months in the way of workshops and visits. Please feel free to contact us about getting together.

If you use Facebook please like Anabaptist Network UK and add us on twitter @anabaptistsuk.

Multi-Voiced Church Workshop

Ian Pentney, of Wood Green Mennonite Church, reports on a recent workshop following the publication of **Stuart and Sian Murray William's** book, *Multi-Voiced Church*.



Stuart and Sian Murray Williams believe that healthy churches are multi-voiced communities where members participate actively. The opposite, an all too common reality, is of mono-voiced church with a passive congregation of consumers. Multi-voiced churches, they suggest, are more likely to be effective in mission and in sustaining faith and discipleship.

The workshop day was structured around four sessions exploring the meaning of multi-voiced church; multi-voiced learning; multi-voiced worship and asking why we should bother with multi-voiced church.

Appropriately for a workshop concerned with encouraging active participation, plenty of opportunity was built into the day for small-group discussion and dialogue with the speakers.

Stuart explored the meaning of multi-voiced church, reminding us of the multi-voiced nature of the early church and relating how this changed when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

The onset of Christendom produced a profound change in the relationship between church and state which led in turn to churches gradually becoming mono-voiced. Christianity became an imperial religion with a top-down power structure rather than the radical community-based movement which gave the poor and marginalised a voice.

Stuart pointed to the rediscovery of multi-voiced church by early Anabaptists. He used the dramatic reading of an account of an illegal gathering of Anabaptists in 16th-century Germany to illustrate how worship, teaching and preaching became multi-voiced in these communities.

Sian shared what multi-voiced church meant to her from her childhood in Wales through to her experiences of leading a Baptist church in Oxford. I particularly enjoyed hearing her recount her shock on first joining that church when people would speak out during the service, sharing their thoughts or giving their opinions on her sermon.

Sian began to realise that rather than seeing this as a problem she would embrace it. She recounted how she would facilitate opportunities for people to share 'where God had been for them' that week during the time of worship. This enabled the congregation to hear each other's experiences of God, both positive and negative, as a central element of worshipping together. This sort of empowering of people involves risk. (Sian alluded to moments during multi-voiced learning when the ideas that were being shared were firmly in the hallucinatory category!) However it became central to how they did church together.

She finished her account by playing us a song that had been written by the church (in

the manner of Miriam and Mose's song from Exodus) recounting their experience of God's faithfulness in helping them through a particularly difficult time (involving the local council and a protected tree!) This seemed to be a fitting expression of what multi-voiced church could look like.

I found the workshop stimulating and it gave me a lot to think about and take away (I used Sian's idea for getting people to share honestly together, as part of the service at our church and had very positive feedback.) There was plenty of opportunity for discussion and questions and we had some helpful input from the team at Bloomsbury Baptist church on their own experiences of multi-voiced church. I look forward to reading the book.

If this has whetted your appetite, Stuart and Sian will be presenting their 'Multi-Voiced Church' material again in Portsmouth on 18 January. They will also be sharing this with the Scandinavian Anabaptist Network in Sweden during February 2014.

Anabaptist Theology Forum: next meeting 3-4 December 2013

The Anabaptist Theology Forum usually meets twice a year to spend time together, listen to and discuss a mix of presentations on themes related to contemporary theological and discipleship issues, together with historical explorations, all influenced by an Anabaptist perspective. There is usually the possibility of a walk together, and devotional times. Some people are regulars, others come along occasionally. It is a very friendly and welcoming group. Our venue for many years, Offa House near Leamington Spa, sadly closed down rather suddenly earlier this year. We are now trying out a new venue, the BMS International Mission Centre in Selly Oak, Birmingham.

The forum will meet Tuesday 3 December from 11am through to Wednesday 4 December at 2pm. The programme is being finalised and the cost will probably be around £60. If you are interested in joining

us, please get in touch with Linda Wilson:
linda.wilson@blueyonder.co.uk
or Simon Barrow,
simonbarrowuk@gmail.com

Other Events

The Essentials of a Radical Faith is a one-off day event with **Stuart Murray** in Exeter. The day is being organised by the South Devon study group, and will hopefully draw together those who have expressed an interest in Anabaptism in the South West. Tickets for the day can be booked through:

<http://avastminority.wordpress.com/>

or by contacting Martin Parkes, 07886 118528.

It is hoped this might be the first of a series of events in the South West, so if you live in that part of the country, and would be interested to hear about more upcoming events please contact Martin on the above number.

Karen Stallard and Stuart Murray Williams have presented *Naked Anabaptist* days – a mixture of story-telling, drama, teaching and discussion in various locations. They are available to bring this to your area. Interested? Contact them at: admin@anabaptistnetwork.com.

Some of the authors – present and future – of the 'After Christendom' series are also available for day events. There are opportunities to explore books already published and preview future titles. If you are interested in hosting an event, please contact **Juliet Kilpin** (julietkilpin@aol.com), the Mennonite Trust's development worker, as any events will probably be co-sponsored.

Information about current and future events can be found on the Anabaptist Network website or at:

<http://avastminority.wordpress.com/>.

Network of Communities

Following the successful Network of Communities days organised by Birmingham Peace Church and Manchester Study Group, we are very excited that **E1 Community Church** will be hosting the next annual gathering of the Anabaptist Network of Communities on **Saturday 8th March 2014**.

The day will be in Shadwell, east London, where there are good public transport connections. They have room for lots of us to attend so it's a great opportunity to gather people from all the ANC member communities and others who are already part of the Anabaptist Network or just want to know more about Anabaptism.

Network of Organisations

Ekklesia

The Christian think-tank Ekklesia is looking to recruit a full-time Operating Officer to begin work in the New Year. The job will be based in central London at Bloomsbury Baptist Church. The successful applicant will need to share Ekklesia's Anabaptist vision and values, and be extremely motivated. They will work with Ekklesia's directors to implement a Five Year strategy. Fundraising and project management experience are required. Familiarity with public policy is also desirable. This is a full-time, salaried post. Those interested should send a CV and covering letter to: Jonathan.Bartley@ekkleisia.co.uk

Bridge Builders

From this autumn, Bridge Builders (BB) is starting to offer a regular programme of Open Workshop Days, instead of Network

Days. For many years BB has run half a dozen training days each year which have usually been specifically for people who have done previous training with BB. In future, all these events will be open, and aimed at a wider audience of anyone in a church leadership role of some kind. BB's first workshop in London on 17 September was a sell-out with 50 participants. The remainder of the programme is:

Sat, 2 Nov 2013 – **York**, Priory Street Centre – **Handling Tension in Church Life** (bookings now open)

Wed, 12 Feb 2014 – **York**, Priory Street Centre – **Email, Social Media and Conflict in the Church**

Wed, 2 Apr 2014 – **Coventry**, St Michael's House – **Leading Well Under Pressure**

Tues, 29 Apr 2014 – **London**, St Peter's Bourne – **Informal Mediation**

Tues, 17 Jun 2014 – **Manchester**, King's House – **Facilitating Difficult Church Meetings**

The workshops run from 9:30 am – 4:30 pm, and cost £60 (£10 discount for BB Network members) including lunch.

Urban Expression

A new development in recent weeks has been an invitation to help establish Urban Expression in Toronto and Montreal, in partnership with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada. We have a longstanding friendship with Brian Bauman, the 'missions minister' for that region of Mennonite Church Canada, and during a visit to the UK in August he asked us to work with him to develop an Urban Expression initiative in these Canadian cities. Plans are coming together for exchange visits in 2014 to take this forward.

Back in the UK we continue to welcome new team members into urban ministry and to investigate further opportunities for deploying new teams. We are also pleased to announce the release of two books. The first is by one of our team leaders, Rob Schellert, whose ministry is with squatters and anarchists in East London. *Without Borders – Journeying with Jesus into the*

Margins is available (for £9.99) by contacting enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk. The second is by a former team leader, Paul Ede: *Urban Eco-mission: Healing the Land in the Post-industrial City*. This is available for £3.95 from Grove Books.

And the ninth year of the *Crucible* course began on 9-10 November with modules on 'After Christendom' and 'Restoring Hope'. More information can be found at www.cruciblecourse.org.uk.

If you'd like regular news of Urban Expression and/or the *Crucible* course, email enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk.

Reflection

Why I Won't Be Wearing a Poppy

Ian Wilson of the Bristol Study Group offers us a personal reflection in the build-up to Remembrance Sunday.



I won't be wearing a poppy for Remembrance Sunday. I cannot bring myself to. Every year, I find the whole business of Remembrance, poppies, the two-minutes' silence and all the rest of it extremely upsetting. I find it hard to explain my emotional reaction to it, but I'll try.

I get very angry when I see our political leaders wearing their poppies and laying their wreaths at the Cenotaph. The Royal British Legion website tells us that the annual poppy appeal remembers those who have 'made the ultimate sacrifice'. But the dead service men and women didn't make a

sacrifice, they were sacrificed, by generations of political leaders willing to treat the lives of men and women as expendable. Harry Patch, the last British survivor of the First World War, said, 'Politicians who took us to war should have been given the guns and told to settle their differences themselves, instead of organising nothing better than legalised mass murder.' Amen to that.

'Wear your poppy with pride' we were always told. I want to tell the politicians to wear their poppies with shame. Shame that in the 21st century they still can't find a better way of settling differences than war. Shame at the lies they have told us about it. Shame at the blood on their hands. Shame that they refuse to learn the lessons of history. (The First World War was described as the war to end all wars. If only.)

What does it say when churches hold Remembrance Sunday services? And why do some church buildings have old regimental flags hanging up? War is evil. The idea that you can make the world a better place by killing people is evil. The church has no business endorsing it, legitimising it or blessing it. It is not glorious, or noble. Wilfred Owen was right. We should not:

tell with such high zest
to children ardent for some
desperate glory,
The old lie, *Dulce et Decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

If churches mark Remembrance Sunday, let it be with calls to renounce the evil of war, and prayer for peace.

The UK's annual poppy day appeal is organised by the Royal British Legion, a registered charity. The work they do is impressive, and, unfortunately, very much needed. I have given them money to help support it, but I won't buy and wear a poppy. I can't. And I have a question. If young men and women are killed or disabled because they have been sent to war, why do they and their families have to rely on charity for support? The politicians who send them to war ought to shoulder the responsibility for their welfare and the welfare of their families. In full.

If anyone thinks that I would feel differently if I knew what it was like to have lost

someone as a casualty of war, I do know. My own father lies in 'some corner of a foreign field'. His name is on the wall of names at the Armed Forces Memorial' at the National Memorial Arboretum. (I went to see it recently, and I was horrified to see how much space has been left for more names.)

I know that many deny it, but I always feel that Remembrance Sunday and the poppies glorify war. The Cenotaph in Whitehall is even inscribed to 'the glorious dead'. If I wore a poppy I would feel that I was showing solidarity with something that sickens and horrifies me. I just can't. Sorry.

Books and Resources

The 'After Christendom' Series

Three further books in the 'After Christendom' series are nearing completion. At the end of October Fran Porter, who is writing *Women and Men after Christendom*, presented a preview of some of her material at a day conference in Birmingham, entitled 'Disordering Gender Relationships'. Brian Haymes and Kyle Gingerich Hiebert are making good progress on *God after Christendom*. And Simon Perry has completed *Atheism after Christendom*. We hope soon to have news of publication dates.

We are also pleased that Paternoster has accepted a proposal for a further book in the series. *Missional Discipleship after Christendom* will be written by Dan Yarnell and Andy Hardy, leaders in the Fellowship of the Churches of Christ, a small denomination with some Anabaptist influences in its origins. We are planning during next year to hold some informal conversations with representatives of the denomination, perhaps followed by a conference, to explore these influences and their contemporary significance.

The Naked Anabaptist

During October Stuart Murray Williams was in Switzerland, speaking at a conference to mark the publication of the French translation. The German translation is nearing completion and should be published in January 2014.

The book continues to sell well in North America, with news of some churches encouraging all of their members to read it. But it was written primarily for the UK so we'd love to see more copies sold here too. If you can make use of any, we can supply these at a reduced rate – just ask for details.

Book Notes

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

Kerry Walters and Robin Jarrell: *Blessed Peacemakers* (Wipf & Stock, 2013): one for each day of the year, 365 extraordinary people who changed the world.

David Fitch and Geoff Holsclaw: *Prodigal Christianity* (Jossey-Bass, 2013): an attempt to find a middle way between emergent and neo-Reformed positions, written from an Anabaptist perspective.

Donald Kraybill, Karen Johnson-Weiner and Steven Nolt: *The Amish* (John Hopkins University Press, 2013): an authoritative introduction, based on twenty-five years of research.

Stephen Plant and Toni Burrowes-Cromwell: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters to London* (SPCK, 2013): his previously unpublished correspondence from 1935-6.

David Neville: *A Peaceable Hope: Contesting Violent Eschatology in New Testament Narratives* (Baker, 2013): an exploration of seemingly violent eschatological language in search of a non-violent reading.

Malcolm Yarnell: *The Anabaptists and Contemporary Baptists: Restoring New Testament Christianity* (B&H Academic, 2013): essays exploring the significance of the Anabaptist vision for Southern Baptists.

Changkyu Kim: *Balthasar Hubmaier's Doctrine of Salvation in Dynamic and Relational Perspective* (Pickwick Publications, 2013): a fresh interpretation of a major theologian of the Anabaptist movement, written by a Korean neo-Anabaptist.

Jamie Pitts: *Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder's Sociological Theology* (Pickwick Publications, 2013): a critical appraisal of Yoder's major themes and in particular his use of the language of principalities and powers.

John Roth: *Constantine Revisited* (Wipf & Stock, 2013): a contribution by a leading Mennonite scholar to the ongoing debate about how Constantine should be evaluated and the contemporary value of Christendom.

Contact Us

For further information about anything you have read in this newsletter, please contact us, using the details below.

To offer financial support to the Network, please get in touch with our treasurer, Lloyd Pietersen (lloyd.pietersen@btinternet.com), who will send you the forms or information you need.

And if you have information or news items you would like included in the next newsletter, please let us have these no later than 1 January 2014.

Anabaptist Network Trust

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