



Anabaptist Network News

Anabaptist Churches in Britain?

Two questions that the Anabaptist Network is asked from time to time are:

- Can you point me to an Anabaptist church near where I live?
- Why doesn't the Anabaptist Network plant churches?

We have reported before in this newsletter our answers to the second question: that we are a resource network, not a church planting agency; that our mandate is to encourage faithful and creative discipleship wherever Christians are, not to lure them away from their own churches; but that we recognise the discomfort this question provokes in Anabaptists who are committed to community and to embodying our convictions in practice.

This discomfort grows each time we are unable to give a satisfactory answer to the first question. We can sometimes point enquirers to an Anabaptist study group or a resource house. We may be able to identify a church in which we know there are members of the Network. But there are very few churches that are explicitly Anabaptist.

There are some: the Wood Green Mennonite Church in Highgate, a Brazilian Mennonite church in Eastbourne, E1 Community Church in Stepney, Peace Church in Birmingham. There are others that might not identify themselves as Anabaptist but draw deeply on the Anabaptist tradition. And there are others in which individual members, or ministers, are trying to introduce Anabaptist ways of thinking and living.

A few years ago we hosted a consultation to explore the possibility of setting up an **Anabaptist network of churches**, in addition to the network of individuals who receive this newsletter. There was some enthusiasm but not enough, we judged, to pursue this idea at that time, especially as some of those involved in the conversation were soon moving to new situations.

We think the time is right to revisit this idea and to ask whether such a network of churches might be feasible – and helpful. We are **not** proposing the creation of a new denomination, but establishing an informal network of churches that can learn from and encourage each other. This network would be held together by relationships, shared values and recognition that post-Christendom requires of us new ways of being church. How it will operate is open for discussion.

What do you think? Would you be interested in exploring this further? Please let us know by contacting Stuart Murray Williams at stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk or on 0117 330 7826. If there is enough interest we will arrange a conversation about this later in the year.

Another response we sometimes make to the second question is that our Root & Branch partners, **Urban Expression**, are planting churches. Although not all of these churches are explicitly Anabaptist, the Urban Expression core values are strongly Anabaptist. So, if you are interested in supporting an Anabaptist church planting initiative, we commend Urban Expression to you, and we are glad to include some information from them with this newsletter.

Events

21-22 February
Second weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham

14 March
Cross Currents LMC: Church Planting and Urban Mission

16 May
Cross Currents LMC: Simply in Season

23 May
'After Christendom' seminar at Harehills Baptist Church, Leeds

27-28 May
Anabaptist theology forum at Offa House

2-5 June
LMC: Bridge Builders *Church Leadership and Family Systems*

20 June
Cross Currents LMC: Response:ability

22-26 June
LMC: Bridge Builders *Mediating Interpersonal Conflicts*

4-5 July
Third weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham

10 October
Anabaptist/Quaker day conference: *Shalom Activists* in Manchester

The *After Christendom* Series

The fourth book in the series, *Youth Work after Christendom* by Jo & Nigel Pimlott, is now out and available. It was launched in July at a well-attended event in Birmingham. This, and earlier books in the series, can be bought for £10 from Christian bookshops or Metanoia Book Service: www.menno.org.uk/metanoia

Two more books are progressing well. Alan and Eleanor Kreider have just completed *Worship and Mission after Christendom*, which is now with the publisher. And Lloyd Pietersen plans to complete *Reading the Bible after Christendom* by the summer. We anticipate that both books will be published by early 2010, maybe sooner.

And another title has recently been accepted for publication. *Preaching after Christendom* will be written by **Glen Marshall** during 2009. Glen is a tutor at Northern College in Manchester and a long-time member of the Anabaptist Network.

Other titles are under discussion, one of which has reached proposal stage. If you have ideas for further titles, please let us know. And if you have suggestions for post-Christendom themed articles on the website, do contact us. The first three of these can now be accessed on the site at www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/504 and also at www.postchristendom.com/node/16.

The two websites also provide a link to a recent Channel 4 programme, *Christianity: A History*, which included snippets from Jonathan Bartley, author of *Faith and Politics after Christendom*.

Anabaptist Theology Forum

Paul Wilson writes: 'The Anabaptist Theology Forum took place on 29-30 October 2008 at Offa House (near Leamington Spa). This event happens twice a year, but it was my first, so I was unsure what to expect. In particular, as I am not a professional theologian, I thought that I might be out of my depth, but in fact I found it very accessible.

'Lloyd Pietersen gave us an advance reading of his forthcoming book, *Reading the Bible after Christendom*. He read chapter 4: Jesus as the Centre of Biblical Interpretation and chapter 5: Performing the Text: An Overview of the Bible; and we discussed issues that arose from them.

'There were about 20 people at the forum, and

we all had a chance to say what was happening in our lives and/or to review a book we'd read. There were plenty of opportunities to chat with people at other times too; some went on a walk before dinner, others went to the local pub after evening prayer.

'On the second day we had two more papers. Jeremy Thompson spoke on 'Reading the Deuteronomistic History after Christendom' (the highlight for me!), followed by Bob Allaway on 'Listen and Let Go' – essentially an analysis of Anabaptist spirituality.

'All in all, I found the forum stimulating and good company. It was my first but will not be my last.'

The next forum is scheduled for **27-28 May** at the usual venue. Presenters already confirmed are Simon Woodman on 'Revelation and the Environment' and Simon Barrow on 'Putting the Difficult Peace of Christ into Practice'. Cost will be about £62.00. To book, email Jo Rathbone on: jorathbone@phonecoop.coop.

Future Events

At 2.30 on **23 May**, Harehills Baptist Church, Leeds, hosts an 'After Christendom' seminar, open to anyone interested. Further information from Ali Phelps: ali.phelps@ntlworld.com.

Various other events are at the planning stage:

- Book launches for *Worship and Mission after Christendom* (autumn 2009), *The Naked Anabaptist* (early/mid 2010) and *Reading the Bible after Christendom* (mid-2010).
- Another conference co-sponsored with the Northumbria Community, following the popularity of the 'New Habits for a New Era' event last May, to which 150 people came.
- Another residential conference in 2010 or 2011.

There will be further details of these and other events in future newsletters.

Anabaptists and Quakers

We are delighted to announce now that we are co-sponsoring an Anabaptist/Quaker event in October 2009. We have actually been trying for over a decade to bring together Anabaptists

and Quakers, representatives of the historic peace church traditions. Several false starts had made us wonder if this would ever happen, but now we have a firm date:

The subject will be **Shalom Activists** (or active peacemaking) and the keynote speaker will be **Noel Moules**, director of Workshop and trustee of the Anabaptist Network. The day will include worship in the Anabaptist and Quaker traditions and seminars on the practical outworkings of a commitment to peace.

When? **Saturday 10 October**

Where? **Manchester**

There will be further information in the summer newsletter, but we are accepting bookings now. To book your place, send a cheque for £15.00 (£12.00 unwaged) to Jo Rathbone: 67 Spencer Ave, Earlsdon, Coventry CV5 6NQ.

Welcome to Krista Ehst

We mentioned in a previous newsletter that we were hoping to have an intern joining us in the autumn from the USA. She has arrived! Krista Ehst comes to us from the Franconia Mennonite Conference (in Pennsylvania) to work with the Anabaptist Network and Urban Expression until early summer 2009. As well as helping us move forward in various ways, Krista is hoping to take back insights that might help the Mennonites in North America prepare for post-Christendom. If this internship goes well, others may follow, maybe as early as this summer.

Hopefully quite a number of you will encounter Krista over the next few months. One task we have asked her to take on is a review of these newsletters, asking how we can improve them.

Other News

Andrew Dodd, for many years a member of the Anabaptist Network, has written with details of the Baptist chapel in the Lake District for which he and Kath are responsible. He recommends this newly renovated chapel as an ideal centre for retreats or away days. For information, see www.hawksheadhillbaptistchurch.org.uk.

Nigel Wright, one of the founders and a former chair of the Anabaptist Network, has written an interesting chapter 'Spirituality as discipleship:

the Anabaptist heritage' in Paul S. Fiddes (Ed.): *Under the Rule of Christ* (published by Regent's Park College, 2008). In this he quotes in full the seven 'core convictions' of the Network! We are hoping soon to post this chapter on our website.

Root & Branch Partners

Christian Peacemaker Teams

Christian Peacemakers has announced that they are planning a month-long training in the UK. This will be held at the London Mennonite Centre in October. If you have been considering going on a delegation and then possibly joining the CPT Corp, then this would be the time. The training is an intensive, integrated, four-week course involving action, reflection, and practice of a variety of peacemaking skills: Biblical Basis for Nonviolence; Public Witness and Nonviolent Direct Action; Ministry of Presence; Negotiation and Conflict Transformation Skills; Spirituality and Faith for Peacemaking; Cross-cultural Work and Undoing Racism; Working in Teams; and Organising and Communication Skills. This training gives CPT the possibility of dramatically increasing the representation of Europeans in the work of CPT. It is an unusual opportunity that may not be repeated again soon. For more information about this, contact Kathy Thiessen (kathy.thiessen@menno.org.uk) or Tim Nafziger (nafziger@gmail.com)

Speak

There are three roles available at the moment: **Regional Support Workers:** RSWs travel the country, meeting with Speak groups and links, to support them in campaigns and integrating our values in their group. Based in London or Manchester this is an inspiring and exciting role which can develop after a year. Due to begin in September 2009, please contact us by March. There are four places available.

Faith and Spirituality Internship: Building on the work we have been doing through arts and the Big Dress, this would suit someone who is passionate about communicating their faith through creative ways that relate it back to our campaigns. This role is based in London and can start as soon as possible.

Network Support Team Co-ordinator: This is a demanding and exciting role, covering team management, event organisation, fundraising, project development and much more. To begin in London in September 2009, we want to hear from you now.

See <http://www.speak.org.uk/get-involved/jobs-and-gap-years> for more info.

Urban Expression

We are continuing to recruit members for new church planting teams in Manchester, Glasgow and London. We are also exploring possibilities for teams in Bristol and Birmingham. If you are interested in joining a team, please contact Jim Kilpin at: jimkilpin@aol.com.

Crucible

The *Crucible* course is running for a fourth year in Birmingham. The next weekend – *The Urban Challenge* – takes place on 21-22 February and the final weekend – *Emerging Church* – on 4-5 July. Places still available. For further details, see www.cruciblecourse.org.uk.

Ekklesia

Ekklesia, a thinktank working from broad-based Anabaptist values, is looking for a partner to join their team. Jonathan Bartley and Simon Barrow have been running Ekklesia for about 5 years, and feel that the time is right for someone else to join them. They are increasingly being asked to comment by media, and contribute to public debate in a range of ways, on issues such as restorative justice, peacemaking, freedom of religion, church and state, religion and society, education and radical economics. They have more opportunities than they can handle, so they need someone else to come on board.

The person appointed could play administrative, developmental or fundraising roles, or take on similar tasks to Jonathan and Simon. Interest in theology and public life would be helpful, and a knowledge of politics. Ability to write, research, communicate with the media, market and/or fundraise would also be of benefit. The crucial thing is that the person shares Ekklesia's core values. Ekklesia works on a not-for-profit, co-operative basis and so the new position will be flexible, depending on the applicant's skills.

If you are interested, contact Jonathan Bartley on office@ekkleisia.co.uk or 020 8769 8163

Bridge Builders

Along with developing a new foundation course *Transforming Church Conflict*, which is offered several times a year, we have developed a new course for those wanting to be equipped to mediate between individuals, entitled **Mediating Interpersonal Conflicts**. The course runs for the first time on 22-26 June 2009 at the London

Mennonite Centre. The cost will be £500, but for those who have attended one of our mediation and facilitation skills courses in the past, we're offering a special £100 discount in this first year of the course.

For those wanting to be equipped with skills and processes for working with conflicted groups, we are offering a revised **Congregational Conflict Consulting** course. The course will explore the group intervention approach used by Bridge Builders through the use of a large-group role-play, and by developing the broad range of skills needed to lead such a process. The course runs on 21-25 September 2009 at London Mennonite Centre. The cost is £500.

For brochures and application forms for all our courses see www.menno.org.uk, or email us at bb@menno.org.uk.

London Mennonite Centre

Cross-Currents seminars:

Saturday 14 March £30 (£15 unwaged)

Church Planting and Urban Mission: Through story telling and reflection, Phil Warburton and Karen Stallard will explore the complexities of engaging with Urban Mission.

Saturday 16 May £30 (£15 unwaged)

Simply in Season: A day to renew awareness of what foods are in season at what time of the year, and to do some cooking together.

Saturday 20 June £30 (£15 unwaged)

Response:Ability: SPEAK explores practical tools and the theological basis for campaigning for economic, social and environmental justice.

Contact Janelle Thiessen on 0208 340 8775 or at jthiessen@menno.org.uk for information.

Contact Us

For further information about anything you have read in this newsletter, please contact us. And if you have information or news items you would like included in the next newsletter, let us have these items no later than **30 April 2009**.

Please let us know if you change your address, if you would be willing to receive newsletters by email to help us save postage costs, or if you no longer wish to receive them.

Anabaptist Network Trust (registered charity 1021760)

Website: www.anabaptistnetwork.com; email: admin@anabaptistnetwork.com

14 Shepherds Hill, London N6 5AQ, England