



Anabaptist Network News

From one network to three...

The Anabaptist Network began in 1991, as Christians from various traditions agreed that there were enough people inspired by the Anabaptist tradition and interested in learning from one another to form such a network. For the last 19 years we have concentrated on relating and resourcing Christians (and others) interested in the relevance of Anabaptist values and practices for discipleship, mission and church life today.

But in the past few years organisations, as well as individuals, have embraced Anabaptist values and have connected with each other through the Root and Branch network. Furthermore, several congregations and emerging churches now identify with the Anabaptist vision and want to network together. In the last newsletter we reported on an initial gathering of such groups in Birmingham in September.

So we believe the time has come for some restructuring. From the beginning of 2010 we have been operating as a tripartite network of individuals, communities and organisations:

- **The network of individuals** will enable individuals to connect with one another, draw on Anabaptist resources and access events of interest.
- **The network of organisations** will enable organisations that related to each other via Root and Branch, and want to continue to do so (plus any others with similar values) to share resources and explore partnership.
- **The network of communities** will enable congregations, study groups and other communities with Anabaptist values and interests to connect, share resources and explore partnership.

Among other things, this restructuring will mean:

- * Organising conferences and other events that respond to the interests of the participating communities.
- * Exploring ways that the organisations can work more closely together and add value to what each is already doing.
- * Redeveloping the website to reflect a tripartite network and to make available more resources.
- * Expanding and redesigning this newsletter (as from the summer issue) so that the communities and organisations are better represented and resourced.
- * Hosting an annual gathering for the organisations and communities.

Restructuring never sounds particularly exciting – in fact, this is often the last resort of an organisation that has lost its way! But we believe that moving from one network to three will enable us to respond to a growing conviction among communities and organisations that Anabaptist values and practices can help us develop creative missional responses to our emerging post-Christendom context.

If you are involved in a community or organisation that you think would benefit from becoming involved in one of these new networks, please let us know.

Events

13-14 February

Second weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham

27-28 February

Salvation Landscape: Jesus to 1500
Workshop weekend in Birmingham

27 February-1 March

SPEAK Soundcheck event in London and Day of Action

14-19 April

Transforming Church Conflict: for Senior Leaders, Sheffield (Bridge Builders)

18-23 April

Transforming Church Conflict, Durham (Bridge Builders)

21-23 May

Shalom Activists at Woodbrooke College, Birmingham

10-11 July

Third weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham

12-17 September

Transforming Church Conflict, London (Bridge Builders)

2 October

Annual gathering of Anabaptist network of organisations and Anabaptist network of communities, London

Events

This is an unusually light year in terms of events because we are concentrating on developing the networks of organisations and communities. But some of our partner organisations mention (in their sections below) events that might be of interest to you. Do check these out.

We mentioned in the winter newsletter that we have been invited to participate in a weekend course (21-23 May) at Woodbrooke, the Quaker college in Birmingham. The subject will be ***The Meaning of Shalom*** and the course will explore Quaker and Anabaptist traditions, especially in relation to peace. For details, contact 0121 472 5171 or look at the information on our website.

Further ahead, Stuart Murray Williams and Roy Searle will be presenting a day event, ***Voices from the Margins***, in three locations: London on Friday 17 September; Cardiff on Tuesday 28 September; and Manchester on Saturday 23 October. A further expression of the developing partnership between the Anabaptist Network and the Northumbria Community, these events will explore the significance of the marginalised Anabaptist and Celtic traditions for the witness of the church in post-Christendom. There will be more details in the summer newsletter.

Books

Some of you may have heard that Paternoster, which publishes the 'After Christendom' series, was bought during the autumn by Koorong, an Australian publishing house. This caused chaos for several months, delaying the publication of *Worship and Mission after Christendom* as well as making it difficult to obtain the earlier books in the series.

We hope that things will settle down soon and that Lloyd Pietersen's *Reading the Bible after Christendom* (which has received a stunning foreword from famous Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann) and Stuart Murray's *The Naked Anabaptist* will be published without any delays.

www.postchristendom.com

Since the first book in the 'After Christendom' series was published, we have maintained a website offering extracts from the books, other

articles on related topics and opportunities for debate. This has been a useful resource, and we have recently renewed the domain name, but it has depended on the occasional attention of someone with too many other things to do.

It would be great if someone were willing to take responsibility for this site and explore ways of developing its potential. If anyone is interested, please let us know.

Network of Communities

Following the consultation in September, there have been ongoing conversations about how an Anabaptist network of communities might take shape.

Ali Phelps from Harehills Baptist Church (one of the participating communities) has agreed to coordinate this network. We have set up a 'ning' (private social networking) website to enable participating groups to connect with each other and share resources and experiences. And we are looking forward to the first of what we hope will be annual gatherings for members of these communities to meet face to face, rather than virtually.

This will be a joint gathering (at least this year) with the network of organisations to encourage interaction and an awareness of the expertise and resources these groups can offer. It will be on **Saturday 2 October**, hosted by the London Mennonite Centre. More details in due course.

Our guests for the day will be **Dennis & Connie Byler**, long-term Mennonite mission workers in Spain, who are involved with a growing network of Anabaptist/Mennonite congregations in that country. We are looking forward to learning all we can from their experience.

If you want more information or want to join this emerging network, please contact Ali Phelps at ali.phelps@ntlworld.com.

Network of Organisations

The Root and Branch network is no more. It has been succeeded by the new Anabaptist network of organisations.

The aims of this new network are the same – to link together organisations with shared values, and to explore ways of supporting each other in

the various activities they are committed to – campaigning, training, church planting, media work, conflict transformation, etc. But we hope this new network will be more sustainable and more creative.

Noel Moules has agreed to coordinate this network. The founding members are Ekklesia, the London Mennonite Centre, Bridge Builders, Workshop, Urban Expression, Peace School and Speak. We have carried news from these organisations in previous newsletters, and we will continue to do this.

Speak

Soundcheck10: Transformation with Ruth Valerio. **27 February – 1 March.** Islington Arts and Media School, Turle Rd, London, N4 3LS

SPEAK's annual gathering, **Soundcheck**, is a weekend of input and inspiration to help you challenge injustice in the world and seek transformation in yourself and your community. It is a weekend of exploration on how our Jesus-centred spirituality leads us into radical prayer, creativity and action for justice. Get connected with others passionate about justice and find out how you can be an agent of transformation.

On 1 March, take part in a **Day of Action** to pray for an end to government support of the arms trade, which is fuelling conflict, aiding repression and harming development. Pray for swords to be beaten in ploughshares as part of a transformative creative action and meet your MP to let them know your concerns. Meet 10:00 at Cathedral Hall, Westminster Cathedral.

To find out more and book visit the website <http://www.speak.org.uk/soundcheck10>

Crucible

The *Crucible* course is offering a wider range of subjects for study this year, with two streams at each weekend. Subjects for the next weekend (13-14 February) are *The Urban Challenge* and *Becoming Human*, and for the third weekend of the year (10-11 July) are *Jesus Unplugged* and *Creating New Churches*.

For further details of subjects and dates, or to book a place, see www.cruciblecourse.org.uk or contact us at crucible@urbanexpression.org.uk. There are still spaces available on the February and July weekends, and the one-year course can be started on any of the weekends.

Urban Expression

We are continuing to recruit team members for new and emerging teams in Birmingham, Stoke, Bristol, London, Manchester and Glasgow. If you are interested in joining one of these teams, contact Jim Kilpin at: jimkilpin@aol.com.

If you'd like to offer financial support to enable us to engage more effectively with these new opportunities, or if you would like to receive our regular newsletters, please get in touch with us at enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk.

Workshop

The up-and-coming weekends are:
Peace & Power – Birmingham: 13-14 March
Living Community – Leeds: 20-21 March
Body & Soul – London: 27-28 March

For more details about these weekends and those taking place in May and July, visit the web-site www.workshop.org.uk or contact 0114 288 8816 or admin@anvil.org.uk

London Mennonite Centre

The Centre continues to work on the issues that were identified in the 'listening report' in 2008. A vision document has now been agreed, setting out priorities for the coming years. New trustees have been appointed and, as Ed & Phyllis Shirk complete their term of service at the Centre, a new host couple, Darrell & Barbara Jantz, have joined the team for the next three years.

Bridge Builders

The LMC trustees have now clarified, as part of a wider re-visioning process for the LMC, that they see Bridge Builders moving to become a separate organisation, either as a subsidiary trust of the Centre, or a completely independent trust. We are in the process of establishing a management group for Bridge Builders, which will become the trustee body in due course. We are currently seeking the right people to be part of this. In addition to people who can represent the interests of some of the main denominations in England, covered by the current BB advisory group members, we also need new people with management experience.

We are fortunate to have located a recently retired solicitor who understands charity law. We also need someone who will function as the treasurer, and who will either be a qualified accountant or someone with strong experience

of small charity finance. And we also hope to find someone with marketing and/or fundraising expertise. If you know someone who fits one of these descriptions, and who you think might be able to share our vision for transforming the culture of how conflict is handled in British churches, BB director Alastair McKay (email alastair.mckay@menno.org.uk) would be glad to hear from you. Alastair welcomes your prayers for all those involved in Bridge Builders, as well as for the trustees and staff of the LMC, as further decisions are made about the future.

Transforming Church Conflict: A Foundation Course for Leaders

Bridge Builders' highly acclaimed foundation course exploring conflict transformation for Christian leaders and their churches

18-23 April, Durham

12-17 September, London

31 October – 5 November, Cheshire

Transforming Church Conflict: A Foundation Course for Senior Leaders

Bridge Builders' acclaimed foundation course specifically for senior church leaders with oversight responsibilities

14-19 April 2010, Sheffield

Church Leadership and Family Systems

Running for its sixth year, this course introduces ways for participants to reflect on their ministry in the church in light of their family background, applying a family systems model.

8-11 June 2010, London

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

Publicising the Network

As we move into this new phase, with the three networks taking shape, we'd like to encourage others to draw on our resources and participate in one or more of the networks. If you can help us do this, we would be very grateful. Do you know individuals, communities or organisations that might be interested?

Those of you (now the majority) who receive the newsletter by email will find a brochure attached – which we hope you will forward to someone who might be interested. If you receive a posted copy of the newsletter and would like copies of

the brochure posted to you to pass on, please let us know how many you can use.

And if you live anywhere near Bristol, have a look at the new website of the regional study group that meets there every six weeks or so: <http://bristolanabaptists.wordpress.com/>

Steering Group

In order to facilitate the new tripartite network, we are making some changes to the personnel and meeting structure of the steering group. We will go on meeting three times a year, twice in London and once elsewhere, but the first half of our meetings will in the future be spent in three subgroups focusing on individuals, communities and organisations. Representatives of these organisations and communities will be invited to participate in these subgroups. We will need the rest of the time to ensure we coordinate plans for the three networks.

We bid farewell to two longstanding members of the steering group. **Trisha Dale** has decided to focus her energies on developments in her local church in Littlemore (which is a member of the network of communities). And **Andrew Francis** has recently become a trustee of the London Mennonite Centre (a member of the network of organisations) and has decided to concentrate on this responsibility.

But we welcome **Jonathan Bartley** of Ekklesia (one of the groups in the Anabaptist network of organisations) back on to the steering group after a period of absence, and we are also in conversation with other people about joining us.

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 no later than **21 May 2010**.

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.

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