



Anabaptist Network News

Can Enemies Become Friends?



'Can Enemies become Friends? Adventures in Reconciliation' is the title of a conference on 12 March at Bloomsbury Baptist Church in central London, organised by the Anabaptist Network.

The main speaker will be **David Porter**, the archbishop of Canterbury's director for reconciliation.

Workshops on various dimensions of reconciliation and peacemaking will be led by members of the Anabaptist Network and friends from Christian Peacemaker Teams and Christian International Peace Service. There will also be books and other resources available.

To book your place (£20.00 per person or £15.00 concessions), please go to: <http://adventuresinreconciliation.eventbrite.co.uk> For more information, please contact admin@anabaptistnetwork.com

From Postage to Email

Printing and posting out copies of this newsletter is the single greatest expense incurred by the Network each year. We are grateful to those who have supplied us with their email addresses and agreed to receive the newsletters in this way, but we are still incurring considerable costs. We have decided that we need to move towards an email-only newsletter from the beginning of 2017.

However, we are aware that a small number of readers do not use email and that others are averse to reading on-screen or printing the newsletter out for themselves. So we are prepared to continue to print and post out newsletters to those who require them in this way, but we will need to ask for a donation to cover costs. We suggest £10 per year.

This is advance notice of the planned change. Please either supply us with your email address (via email or PO Box 99, Malton YO17 1BW) or confirm that you want to continue receiving the newsletters by post and ask us for details of making a donation. We will remind you about this in the next two newsletters, but we'd welcome action sooner rather than later.

Events

24-28 February
Christian Peacemaker
Teams 2016 European
Convergence,
Hamburg

12 March
'Can Enemies Become
Friends?' Conference,
London

31 March
'Heart of Anabaptism'
webinar (6)

6-7 April
Anabaptist theology
forum, Birmingham

11-15 April
Centre for Anabaptist
Studies block week,
Bristol

28 April
'Heart of Anabaptism'
webinar (7)

4 May
'Anabaptism and
Anarchism', Union
Chapel, London

7 May
Anabaptist Network
conference,
Birmingham

14-15 May
Third *Crucible*
weekend, Birmingham

Networkers

The Anabaptist Network, in partnership with the Mennonite Trust, supports Alex Elish and Mike and Cheryl Nimz as networkers/development workers. Here are their current reports:

Mike and Cheryl Nimz

Cheryl writes: 'January is always a time of reflection for me. 2015 has been a year of learning. One word that has been consistent throughout the year is relationships. Mike and I have been in the UK for 2½ years and we've built many relationships all over the UK and Ireland. We've met many people who have been on the same faith journey that I have been on. We aren't here in the UK to plant churches, but we have been a part of lots of groups learning about how to live out their faith from an Anabaptist perspective. One group meets every Tuesday evening in our friends' home. This is a group of 8 (sometimes more) who have spent this last year getting to know each other, being vulnerable with each other and keeping each other accountable. We also discuss things that are pressing on our hearts. It's a group that I honestly couldn't be without, and I feel this is what church is supposed to be like.

'We also have hosted many people from other parts of the world, including Canada, Germany, USA and Columbia. We were honoured to have Cesar (and Sandra) Garcia, executive director of Mennonite World Conference, stay with us for a few nights. They joined us at our Tuesday evening "church" and it was another evening of eating together, laughing, sharing and being genuine with each other. When we were on our way home I asked Cesar how he enjoyed the evening. He said, "I'm jealous." His response took me by surprise. He then explained how he has never experienced a group of friends who see each other as equals and value what each other has to say. He loved how we focused on how to live out our faith with each other and our communities. I felt honoured to have them feel a part of our "church".

'We have a new roommate. Luiz recently came back from Bangladesh and needed a place to temporarily stay. He came with us to Tuesday night "church" and his response at the end of the evening was "I never knew groups like this existed". He felt accepted and valued. This

group is not unique though. Mike and I have been blessed to build relationships with many people, some in traditional churches and some in house groups – from Glasgow to Cornwall, from Dublin to London – they all have the same focus. Relationships full of love, challenge and acceptance.

'Please note new phone numbers for both Mike (07464 727977) and Mike and Cheryl (0121 471 1762).'

Alex Elish

Alex writes: 'Some exciting partnerships are beginning to emerge between several peace-making organisations and the Network. As well as meeting up with "The Forgiveness Project" and developing further plans for community mediation training, since the beginning of the year I have been privileged to join the Christian Peacemaker Team's (CPT) UK steering group. CPT UK is particularly concerned with raising awareness for the work of CPT internationally and encouraging and equipping people to consider joining teams supporting communities in a Jesus-inspired nonviolent struggle against oppression. My hope is that through developing this relationship with CPT, the Anabaptist Network will be in a strong position to continue to learn from the experience of grassroots peacemakers, and be an active partner in training and sending peacemakers into extremely challenging and volatile contexts, both in the UK and globally.

'In light of the growing refugee crisis, over the summer CPT partnered with local organisations on the Greek island of Lesbos to support and protect the refugees. It has been disturbing and humbling reading the accounts of refugees as they arrive in Lesbos and try to find safe routes off the island. With Juliet Kilpin (see below), I visited "The Jungle" in Calais, and so have first-hand experience of the living conditions that thousands of refugees find themselves in. I hope that through connections with Juliet's work in Calais and the AN's link with CPT, as an Anabaptist community we will be even further equipped to protest and act for compassionate government policies, an end to war in Syria and for routes to safety for hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

'I think that as Europeans we are faced with a "Kairos" moment in the face of the desperation of these people fleeing violence and war. We

need to recover, remember and re-enact stories of welcome for the persecuted and the stranger in our time.



‘Closer to home I had the brilliant (and slightly terrifying!) experience of presenting one of the “Heart of Anabaptism” webinars, on the fifth core conviction – on churches being called to be committed communities of discipleship and mission. If you haven’t yet been able to join in with one of the webinars, do try to, or watch them on catch-up; the presenters come from a variety of interesting backgrounds and contexts.

‘Concern for a deepening engagement from an Anabaptist perspective with environmental issues has led me to getting to know the folks at Green Christian (formerly Christian Ecology Link) a little better. I have been to two of their most recent events. As a network we want to engage with the issue of creation care and the environment further, so if you would like to get involved in this, please do drop me a line at acaellish@icloud.com’

News and Events

Study Groups

A new study group has had its first meeting in **Cambridge**. Please contact us if you are within reach and this might be of interest to you.

There are plans to start a new study group in **Glasgow** too. Again, please let us know if you are within reach and might be interested.

And we are hoping to set up one or more study groups in **London**. We had three groups at one stage in north, south and east London, but all of them ceased for various reasons. If you are interested in convening or participating in a group in London, please let us know.

The Heart of Anabaptism

The series of webinars exploring the seven core convictions of the Anabaptist Network continues in March and April. We have asked presenters from the UK, South Africa, Australia and North America to reflect on these convictions, critique them and ask what they mean in practice. Each webinar starts at 7.30pm (UK time) and will last an hour, with presentations and opportunities for discussion.



On Thursday 31 March **Dennis Edwards** from Minneapolis will explore the core conviction that commits Anabaptists to an approach to biblical interpretation that is Jesus-centred, rooted in community and oriented towards discipleship.



On Thursday 28 April **Mark and Mary Hurst** from Sydney will explore the core conviction that says that peace is at the heart of the gospel and invites us to seek nonviolent ways of living and learn how to make peace in different areas of life.

To register, go to www.brethren.org/webcasts And to watch recordings of earlier webinars, go to www.brethren.org/webcasts/archive.html

Hope and Rage

Rob Schellert (an Anabaptist team leader in Hackney) writes: ‘*Hope and Rage* (a term of greeting found in activist/anarchist circles) is a community of people who want follow the way of Jesus and work out together what this might look like in our lives and in the neighbourhoods we find ourselves in. In participating in the way of Jesus, we find ourselves with the expectation that another world is possible where we find not only ourselves but the neighbourhoods where we dwell transformed.

‘*Hope and Rage* is a discipleship thing that is praxis/activist-oriented. Discipleship too often seems to focus on other-worldly or spiritual matters. This is a discipleship that is looking at helping each other connect with God, ourselves

and our neighbours. It is a discipleship that we learn by doing and not just by listening, as most discipleship courses tend to be.

'*Hope and Rage* is a series of experiments into how we can practically follow Jesus in a given area – a mixture of field assignments, creative reflections, group actions, group discussions, looking at stories of Jesus and contemporary stories, as well as engaging with experts when we can get them. It is something not for those faint of heart!

'Our first experiment (1 March-5 April) is called "Reclaiming Our Neighbourhoods" – looking at what it means to follow Jesus when we find our neighbourhoods experiencing gentrification. Future experiments will explore other issues we face in our communities, such as inter-faith dialogue, living out Anabaptist values (what it means to commit to nonviolence and to be peacemakers in our neighbourhood), as well as what so-called spiritual disciplines, like prayer, have to do with where we live.'

For more information about these activities, see <https://hopeandragenetwork.wordpress.com/>

Conscience

Conscience (www.conscienceonline.org.uk) has for 37 years been campaigning for tax payers to be able to redirect the proportion of our taxes spent on war to support peace initiatives. This 'peace tax' campaign has been persistent but so far unsuccessful. But, emboldened by the election as leader of the Labour Party of Jeremy Corbyn, a long-standing supporter, there is an attempt to have a Taxes for Peace Bill read in Parliament on 2 March 2016 – the centenary of the date when UK citizens were granted the right to apply for exemption from military service as conscientious objectors.

Conscience is encouraging supporters to sign a register of conscientious objectors to military taxation. They quote John Stoner (of 'Every Church a Peace Church'): 'As participants, or perpetrators of war, every citizen of the modern technological state is conscripted for warfare, to accept the ideology of deterrence and to fund the technology of violence.'

To find out more or to sign the register, go to www.conscienceonline.org.uk/register-yourself-as-a-conscientious-objector

International Anabaptists

On 20-21 July 2015, Anabaptist Networks from around the world gathered in Pennsylvania, just before the Mennonite World Conference. This gathering was the first attempt to meet with Anabaptist Networks working in other countries and continents. Participants from the following networks were present: Peace Assemblies Network (Philippines); Anabaptist Network in South Africa (ANISA); Scandinavian Anabaptist Network; Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand; Anabaptist Network in Britain and Ireland; Korean Anabaptist Centre; Centro Latino Americano de Recursos Anabautistas (CLARA); Chinese Anabaptist Network; Latin American Women Theologians; Mennonite Mission Network; and Canada Witness.



Alex Elish and Tim Foley (can you spot them?) represented the Anabaptist Network in Britain and Ireland.

Network of Communities

'Stuff Happens'

'Stuff Happens: Dealing with Suffering' is the theme of the annual conference on **Saturday 7 May** in Birmingham – which is open not only to representatives of the network of communities but to anyone.

Activities lined up so far include a seminar on living with and supporting people with mental health issues and time to hear some stories of the suffering of refugees and how to respond. There will be plenty of time to connect with each other too and share news of the communities. Some activities will be suitable for children and for other parts of the day they'll have separate activities.

The venue is Chelmsley Wood Baptist Church, Hedingham Grove, Chelmsley Wood, Solihull B37 7TP. This is 2.5 miles from Birmingham International, 1.75 miles from Marston Green rail station (3 trains per hour to Marston Green from Birmingham International and Birmingham New Street – contact crnimz@gmail.com if you need a lift from the station). Driving and parking: near the M6 and M42 (exit for the NEC/A446), plenty of free parking at the church.

The time: 10.00am-4.00pm. The day will be free with the opportunity to contribute towards costs on the day. For guidance, the cost will be £15 per head. If you can afford to give more, please do as this will help cover the costs of those who can donate less.

We will be using Facebook and the website to publicise more details as planning progresses. But you can book in now (and until 30 April) at www.eventbrite.com/e/anabaptist-network-of-communities-day-stuff-happens-dealing-with-suffering-tickets-21138714464 When you book in, please specify how many people you are booking for, the ages of any children, and any dietary requirements, using the email address at the foot of this newsletter or the Eventbrite 'contact the organiser' link.

Peacemeal

South Birmingham Peacemeal is a new project in the Selly Oak/Bournville area of Birmingham. Peacemeal is an initiative of the Anvil Trust (www.workshop.org.uk/anvil). It is an exciting concept, and there are many others around the country. There will soon be a website dedicated to Peacemeal.



The idea is that a group gathers in someone's house to share a meal and fellowship, and then worship together. Every Peacemeal is different, but what they share in common is the meal and the worship, bringing together people from all denominations, and making sure responsibilities for leading the worship and also for the food are shared.

At South Birmingham Peacemeal, we have a rota and a different person leads the worship each time, using whatever liturgy, music etc. they feel will be helpful to the group. We have had Quaker silence, Lectio Divina, meditations, Taize songs and hymn singing. As part of our meeting, we also make sure we have a time for sharing what we have been doing that week (or since we last met) and for asking each other for prayers for anything we might need prayer for.

All of the members of this new Peacemeal group find the meetings incredibly helpful to their spiritual journey and are very grateful for Peacemeal's existence! To find out more about South Birmingham Peacemeal and where and when we meet, email ruthajwilde@gmail.com; or leanormary90@gmail.com

Network of Organisations

Mennonite Trust

The Mennonite Trust needs to find a couple of new trustees, especially people with expertise in financial or property management. Do you know anyone who might be interested in this? Might you be? Please contact the Trust if you have any ideas at administrator@menno.org.uk

The Trust continues to explore ways of using its resources to support the work of the Anabaptist community in the UK and to encourage ongoing connections with Anabaptists and Mennonites in other contexts. We will shortly be applying for the renewal of visas for Mike and Cheryl Nimz. In April Alex Elish and Stuart Murray Williams will be in Canada to strengthen links with the Nimz' sending churches and mission agency.

Anabaptist Theology Forum

The next forum will take place residentially at the International Mission Centre in Selly Oak, Birmingham, from coffee time on Wednesday 6 April until after lunch on Thursday 7 April 2016. The full board costs will be £77 and there is a day rate for local visitors. The programme is not yet finalised but includes Fran Porter speaking on *Women and Men After Christendom*, Paul Lusk on a new Ekklesia book about housing, *Foxes Have Holes*, to which he is a contributor, and Veronica Zundel leading an inter-active Bible study. There will also be worship, group

discussions and other seminars. To join the mailing list and receive further details, please contact atf@menno.org.uk

Centre for Anabaptist Studies

MA Modules

The Centre, based at Bristol Baptist College, is offering five MA modules:

- * Anabaptist Origins and Distinctives
- * Anabaptist Ecclesiology and Missiology
- * Anabaptist Ethics and Hermeneutics
- * Study of a Christian Figure: Pilgram Marpeck
- * Study of a Text: Menno Simons' *Foundation of Christian Doctrine*

The MA can be taken over 1, 2 or 3 years. And a Postgraduate Diploma will also be available, consisting of the taught elements of the MA without the dissertation. In addition, any of the modules can simply be studied for interest.

The modules will be taught in two modes: in block weeks to enable students living some distance from the college to attend, and online for students beyond reach of the college. The first two modules will be taught on the following dates: February 15-19: *Anabaptist Origins and Distinctives*; April 11-15: *Anabaptist Ethics and Hermeneutics*.

Annual lecture

The second annual lecture on 'Anabaptists, the Bible and Discipleship' on 18 November was given by Dr Toivo Pilli. An audio recording of this lecture (and the 2014 lecture by Tom Yoder Neufeld on 'Anabaptists, the Bible and Violence') can be accessed at www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/study-centres/anabaptist-study-centre

Research Supervision

Bristol Baptist College offers postgraduate research supervision (MPhil, MLitt and PhD). The director and associates of the Centre will offer supervision of research topics related to the Anabaptist tradition.

For further information about any aspect of the Centre please contact: Stuart Murray Williams, Centre for Anabaptist Studies, Bristol Baptist College, The Promenade, Bristol BS8 3NJ or at anabaptist@bristol-baptist.ac.uk The Centre also has a Facebook group and a blog at www.facebook.com/groups/anabaptiststudies, and <http://anabaptiststudies.wordpress.com>

Bridge Builders

Chris Burch writes: 'Last October the trustees provisionally adopted a draft Business Plan, including our new Vision Statement. While the various bright ideas in it are being worked up into achievable, costed plans, we have started to put one idea into practice already. A firm of IT consultants is integrating our three different systems of inputting information, which will cut down on a lot of wasted work and make things much smoother in the office. One outcome will be a new-look website, with a much more user-friendly feel for people who wish to contact us. In case you don't have the website address, it's www.bbministries.org.uk

'At the same time we are rebranding – one of the results of that will be a new logo, replacing the beautiful "cross and dove" image that we inherited (temporarily) from the old London Mennonite Centre. We will be sad to leave that logo behind, but strictly speaking it was never really ours to start with! The new logo (which I hope to show you in the next AN News) retains a dove, but has more of a building motif.

'Meanwhile our courses are full, and we are looking to expand our menu of short courses, which we hope will be more accessible to those on limited incomes. We are also developing a training resource ("Growing Bridgebuilders") for local church leaders to use with members of their congregations. It is being produced for us by CPAS, and will be available to buy later this year.'

Urban Expression

Juliet Kilpin has been released for part of her time to engage with the growing refugee crisis. She has visited 'The Jungle' in Calais on many occasions in the past few months and reflects on her experience here: 'The European refugee crisis is the largest movement of people across Europe since World War 2 and it is stretching our existing political, border, charitable and humanitarian aid policies. Kilian Kleinschmidt, a leading authority on humanitarian aid, says "I think we have reached the dead end almost where the humanitarian agencies cannot cope with the crisis. We're doing humanitarian aid as we did 70 years ago after the Second World War. Nothing has changed...We [are] building camps: storage facilities for people. But the refugees [are] building [cities]."

'I think this is why I have felt so drawn to Calais since my first visit in August. Not only have I been faced with slum conditions and poverty like those I experienced visiting friends and fellow urban missionaries in Lima, Kampala, Phnom Penh, Sao Paulo and Tijuana, but I have also witnessed the birth of a new suburb, perhaps even a new city in France. It has been mind-blowing coping with this paradigm shift, which brings developing-world-scale poverty to one of the richest countries in the world.'



Juliet is helping to set up a 'listening project'. Volunteer listeners have been moving around the camp, listening to the concerns of residents and volunteers and getting to know community leaders. Three 'Listening Caravans' have been situated, offering peaceful spaces for reflection and dialogue for refugees and volunteers facing immense stress and trauma in a transitional context of very limited resources. Juliet writes: 'Each visit to Calais is an intense and privileged learning opportunity. I hope that together the peacemakers there can help to birth a peaceful city.'

Crucible

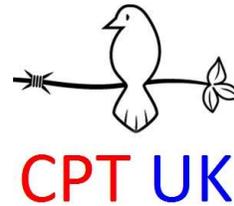
The eleventh year of the *Crucible* course – a course for pioneers and anyone interested in mission on the margins in post-Christendom – be in November with a higher than usual number of participants. By the time you read this the February weekend will have taken place too. The third weekend is on 14-15 May. There are also 'taster events' in Bradford on 5 March and in Nottingham on 2 July.

Details at www.cruciblecourse.org.uk Bursaries are available in case of financial difficulties.

CPT

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is a peace church (Mennonite, Quaker, Brethren) initiative which began in the USA. It now does grassroots

peacemaking and conflict resolution alongside partners in many different countries, including Columbia, Iraqi Kurdistan and Palestine. It also currently has a presence on Lesvos in Greece, working with refugees.

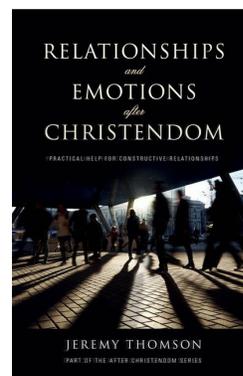


Recently, a group of CPT supporters, reservists and ex-full-timers based in the UK have set up 'CPT UK'. This is an outreach project to spread the word about CPT in the UK and encourage more people from this country onto delegations as peacemakers. They are still in the very initial stage of the project, trying to set up a viable structure, and they may go into partnership with another charity rather than setting up as a new charity. The eventual goal is to employ a full-time outreach worker for three years (initially).

Whilst everything is being set up, **Ruth Wilde** is doing freelance work on the project. You can contact her by emailing uk@cpt.org or connect with CPT UK on twitter (@CPT_utdkingdom) or Facebook (/ChristianPeacemakerTeamsUK). If you would like to find out more about CPT or support our work, go to www.cpt.org

Books and Resources

'After Christendom' series



The eleventh book in the series, *Relationships and Emotions after Christendom* by Jeremy Thomson, one of the trustees of the Mennonite Trust, will be published in June 2016 and priced at £14.99. You can pre-order a copy of this book via the email address below. There is an extract on the Network's website.

Jeremy Thomson summarises the main theme of his book here: 'Relationships and emotions are essential to all our lives: without them we would not be human. Most people long to be

involved in meaningful relationships, to have family members they can talk to, friends they can rely on, lovers with whom to share their lives. Western societies are awash with mind-boggling means of electronic communication, and yet loneliness is a rising phenomenon. And, of course, there are Christians who cry out for God to help them with their relationships and emotions. Yet churches rarely seem to address these needs, and often are marred by emotional tensions and unresolved conflicts. After Christendom, the followers of Jesus must find ways to embody his gospel of reconciliation in the ways we treat each other. Using theological and psychological insights, this book explores Jesus' relationships and emotions to illuminate human experiences of bereavement, anger and fear, and looks for constructive responses to oppression and conflict.'

Resident but Alien

Alan Kreider's teaching series on the early church, previously only available as expensive DVDs, can now be accessed free of charge: www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLbOAx84ri7g2OzXCKZwSU5x8GQwv8mAet

Anabaptist Witness

Anabaptist Witness is a North American online journal with articles offering Anabaptist views on a range of issues. The latest issue, 'Taste and See: Anabaptism, Food, and Mission', includes an article by Andrew Francis. The editors put out a call for articles from time to time, so watch out for any subject on which you might want to make a contribution. For a free downloadable journal, go to www.anabaptistwitness.org

Book Notes

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

Robert Emmet Meagher: *Killing from the Inside Out* (Cascade, 2014); a powerful argument against 'Just War' through exploring the moral injury suffered by combatants in war.

Alan Storkey: *War or Peace? 1. The long failure of western arms* (Christian Studies Press, 2015); argues convincingly that the main cause of both WW1 and WW2 was the arms manufacturers.

Lisa Weaver and J Denny Weaver: *Living the Anabaptist Story: A Guide to Early Beginnings with Questions for Today* (Cascadia, 2015): the subtitle is self-explanatory.

Lee Beach: *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope after Christendom* (IVP, 2015): a detailed study of the exilic literature and its relevance to post-Christendom.

Jonathan Sacks: *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015): explores the roots of violence and its relationship to religion, focusing on the historic tensions between the three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

John Driver: *Life Together in the Spirit: A Radical Spirituality for the Twenty-First Century* (Plough Publishing, 2016): a revised and expanded edition with reflections from church leaders and scholars around the world.

Charles Moore and Timothy Keiderling: *Bearing Witness: Stories of Martyrdom and Costly Discipleship* (Plough Publishing, 2016): martyr stories through the centuries.

Articles Wanted

We welcome articles on subjects that are likely to be of interest to readers. Please contact us in advance if you are unsure, or simply send in an article (up to 750 words) for consideration.

Contact Us

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

And if you have information or news items you would like included in the next newsletter, let us have these no later than **31 May 2016**.

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