

Anabaptist Network Newsletter

June 2002

Hello and welcome ...

... to the first of what will be thrice-yearly newsletters from the Anabaptist Network. They are distributed free of charge to subscribers to our journal, *Anabaptism Today*, and to others who are on our mailing list because you have asked to be or have attended events we have organised. The newsletters will report on recent activities and will contain news of future events arranged by the Network or our partner organisations. We hope you will find these interesting.

However, if you are surprised to receive this and would prefer not to receive future issues, please simply let us know and we will remove you from the distribution list. We do not want to bother you with unwanted mail. See back page for contact details.

Please also contact us if you would like to receive email versions of this newsletter, a complimentary copy of *Anabaptism Today*, or if you want further information about anything. For more information about the Anabaptist Network and activities mentioned in this newsletter, you can also visit our web site: www.anabaptistnetwork.com

If you have news or events to advertise, please send this to us. We cannot promise to include it – this will depend on available space and relevance – but we are happy to receive contributions.

Tim Foley – Development Worker

From 1 January 2002 Tim Foley has been the Anabaptist Network development worker, taking over this role from Andrew Francis. Tim juggles three part-time jobs: pastoral leadership in Wood Green Mennonite Church, work with Mennonite Mission Network and development worker for the Anabaptist Network. Tim is married to Rachel and has two young sons, lives in North London and is based at the London Mennonite Centre.

His role includes networking with churches, study groups and individuals; developing the Network's resources; and responding to requests from those interested in Anabaptism. Do contact him (see back page) if you want to get more involved in the Network or if you think he might be able to offer resources to you.

News from the study groups

Study groups meet in various parts of the UK – contact details are given below. If you want to join a group or try one out, ask for dates and venues. Here are samples of what the groups do:

Yorkshire Jonathan Blakeborough writes: 'The Yorkshire study group meets every couple of months at different venues. Since September we've met in Glusburn, a Christian-owned pub in Bradford, Leeds, Hull and York. Further meetings are planned for Glusburn (June) and Lincolnshire (a joint "away-day" with the Oxford study group) in July. The Leeds and Hull meetings attracted well over 30 people. The latter, entitled "Blessed are the Peacemakers", was an introduction by Stephen Willis to Anabaptist perspectives on peacemaking, attended by members of the Anglican, Methodist, URC, Baptist, Vineyard and Quaker denominations, plus Hull Christians for Peace and the Fellowship for Reconciliation.'

North London Tim Foley writes: 'We meet on the third Wednesday evening of each month and there are normally around 10 of us. We have spent three evenings recently discussing forgiveness, using David Ausburger's book and a video examining reconciliation work in a South African prison. Our last meeting reflected on the tragedy in Rwanda, especially the failure of Christians. We asked: "How can God shape us so that we can be Jesus to the world?" and decided to study *Life on the Vine* by Anabaptist Phil Kenneson. This practical and community-oriented book combines reflection on Christian life and practice with cultural analysis. Each of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is explored in its biblical context with discussion of how our culture inhibits them.'

Gosport (Hants) Lin Gibbons writes: 'Our first meeting was in August 2001 and we meet each month. We feel a relatively new group, calling ourselves "Crossing Paths", because we have seen a flow of people coming, staying sometimes and going. We always share a simple meal, a Bible study, discussion and prayer, and sometimes a short liturgy. Sometimes we meet again for an extra event/social activity – a conference, gig or demonstration opposing treatment of refugees or nuclear submarines. Three from our group are part of a Trident Ploughshares affinity group called the "Purple Peaceheads" (better a peacehead than a

warhead) – and two have court cases pending for blockading Devonport's Vanguard Trident Submarine in February. We have also gone to detention centres to protest about the treatment of detained asylum seekers. We are studying Mark's Gospel with the aid of *Binding the Strongman* by Ched Myers. It has proved challenging, thought provoking and exciting. That's about it! A group of ordinary followers of Jesus meeting together to support each other, learn together, eat and live out what we believe. You would be most welcome to cross our paths anytime.'

New groups? We have heard rumours that new groups might be starting in Edinburgh, Margate, Manchester and Taunton. If you are within reach and interested, please ask for further details.

Study Group Convenors

Contacts if you wish to visit a study group:

Northern Ireland: Janet and Joe Campbell, 17 Church Avenue, Holywood, Co. Down BT 18 9JB (0123 175 974)

Bristol: Ruth Gouldbourne, Bristol Baptist College, Duncan House, The Promenade, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NF (0117 946 7050)

Oxford: Steven Willis, 2 Wales St, Kings Sutton, Banbury, Oxon OX17 3RR (01295 811 264)

East/North London: Tim Foley, 3 Teynton Terrace, London N17 7PZ (020 8808 9042)

South London: Alun Morinan, 37 Piquet Road, London SE20 7XY (020 8778 7018)

South Hants: Les and Lin Gibbons, 7 Jacomb Place, Bridgemary, Gosport, Hants PO13 0LS (01329 312553)

West Midlands: Barbara Smith, 3 Highland Road, Cradley Heath B64 5NB (01384 412 656)

Yorkshire: Jonathan Blakeborough, 20 Arundel Grove, Woodthorpe, York YO24 2RZ (01904 703 710)

Recent Events

Who were the English Radicals?

Almost 100 participants spent a day in the historic Amersham Baptist chapel learning about Lollards, Diggers, Levellers, Quakers and other radical groups. Among the speakers were Christopher Rowland and Andrew Bradstock, joint editors of the recently published *Radical Christian Writings: A Reader*. Other presenters were John Coffey,

Meic Pearse and Doug Gwyn. Highlights included a guided walk to a local Lollard memorial and the communal singing of the radical 'Jerusalem'.

Papers from this conference will be available soon on our web site: www.anabaptistnetwork.com. A full conference report can be found in the Summer 2002 issue of *Anabaptism Today*.

Anabaptist Network Residential Conference

By the time this newsletter reaches you, the first Network residential conference for several years will have taken place at the Community for Reconciliation near Birmingham. Most of the places were booked for this, with several others commuting in for all or part of the event. The theme was 'Re-imagining Church' – a chance to hear stories, share concerns, dream dreams, and reflect on the shape and mission of the church at the start of the 21st century. A subversive liturgy based on the demand for a monarch in 1 Samuel 8 was written as an unusual way to celebrate the Queen's golden jubilee! (Copies on request.)

Alan and Eleanor Kreider

Known to most within the Anabaptist Network, Alan and Ellie Kreider (Mennonite missionaries who completed 30 years of service in England in 2000) have spent several weeks in Britain again this year, visiting friends, speaking at churches, Workshop, study groups and other events. They were the main speakers at the residential event. This will be their last official visit to Britain, but we expect to see them back from time to time.

Mary and Andy Wilson report on one significant event in the Kreiders' tour: 'About 40 people attended a day conference at a church in Taunton, Somerset, with a theme of separation as Christian community and yet distinctive local presence. Alan and Ellie spoke specifically about six facets of life: forgiveness, truthfulness, peace, welcome, economics and service. With each area of life they showed a progression in which we could recognise our commonality or "sameness" with all people; examine Jesus' teaching and way of life, recognising that while he was like others, he was also distinctively different; learn to forgive, tell the truth, etc. reflexively within the church; go *outside* the church – live out authentically distinctive lives in the culture in which we are set. Christian community response to the neighbourhood gave a practical element to the day – helping create a nursery, a skate park and a nurse practitioner service.'

Center for Anabaptist Leadership (LA, USA)

The Network has hosted other North American visitors in 2002. Jeff Wright and Joe Manickam from the Center for Anabaptist Leadership (CAL), an urban mission training agency in Los Angeles, spent 10 days in January with Urban Expression, churches, study groups, the London Mennonite Centre and visiting individuals. In May, Bert and Gloria Newton visited Wood Green Mennonite Church, Urban Expression, Workshop and two of the study groups. Gloria also works for CAL, and both are involved in Urban Village, an intentional Anabaptist community in Los Angeles. We hope to develop stronger links by sending some British urban Anabaptists to Los Angeles.

Future Events

We feature here events run by the Network or other organisations that may be of interest to you. If you have information about events we can mention in future newsletters, please send this in.

Anabaptist Network Autumn Conference

9 November 2002 Men, Women and God's Word

This day conference, co-sponsored with the *Men, Women and God* network and London Mennonite Centre, will explore ways the Bible has been used to oppress and to liberate, to invite and to exclude, as a source of slogans and as a basis of hope. We will investigate the Anabaptist insistence on the centrality of Jesus when reading the Bible. And we will examine ways in which the Bible has been used to understand the roles and relationships of women and men in church and society.

The conference will be at Cholmeley Evangelical Church, Highgate, North London. The cost will be £18 (concessions £9). For more details, contact Anabaptist Network: 14 Shepherds Hill, London N6 5AQ. Email: admin@anabaptistnetwork.com

ECONI (Evangelical Contribution on Northern Ireland)

Summer School 2002: Wednesday 10 – Saturday 13 July at Greenmount College, Antrim
Strand 1: Back to the Future
Facilitators: Lynda Gould/Emily Stanton
A challenging and interactive exploration of the nature of political, religious and cultural identity.
Strand 2: A Spirituality for Social Engagement
Facilitators: Derek Poole/Glenn Jordan

An opportunity to look at what kind of spiritual vision and practice is needed if Christians are to prophetically engage with a divided community.

Strand 3: Faith and Politics

Facilitators: Alwyn Thomson/Heather Morrow

A seminar-based programme designed to help participants explore the relationship between Christian ethics and political engagement.

For further information, please contact ECONI, Howard House, 1 Brunswick Street, Belfast BT2 7GE (028 9032 5258). Email: claire@econi.org

Bridge Builders

Bridge Builders offers training and consultancy on mediation and conflict transformation issues.

Future dates include:

14-18 October 2002: York. Skills Training for Mediation in the Church, led by Richard Blackburn and Alastair McKay.

31 March–4 April 2003: London. Skills Training for Mediation and Facilitation in the Church, led by Alastair McKay and co-trainer.

16-19 June 2003: London. Advanced Mediation Skills Training course, led by Dave Brubaker and Alastair McKay.

6-10 October 2003: Skills Training for Mediation in the Church, led by Richard Blackburn and Alastair McKay, possibly in **Coventry or Bristol**.

For further information, please contact Alastair McKay, Bridge Builders, 14 Shepherds Hill, London N6 5AQ (alastairmckay@menno.org.uk).

London Mennonite Centre

21 September 'Following Jesus in the face of terror'

How can we stand against a culture of violence and witness against war preparation, enemy demonisation and the use of massive military force to solve complex global problems? Are there realistic alternatives to the war against terrorism? If not war, then what? Speakers include Simon Barrow, Chris Cole, Haddon Willmer and Jonathan Bartley.

30 September 'Setting the Church free: the case for disestablishment' Co-sponsored table talk with the Anabaptist Network and the Jubilee Group

There is a growing body of opinion that the establishment of the Church of England is a serious impediment to the gospel – indeed, that it is contrary to the gospel. This event will argue that establishment is bad for the churches and a barrier to mission. Join us for short presentations, supper and discussion, with Simon Barrow, Stuart Murray Williams and Dave Nussbaum

22 November ‘Globalisation – who runs the world?’

Dave Nussbaum will lead this table talk on economics, globalisation, multi-nationals and stakeholding.

Hope and Disarmament gathering

International ploughshares activists plan to gather in the South of England 19-22 October 2002 for reflection, nonviolence training, and disarmament action. For details contact Lizzie Jones: 01590 622198 lizz_wizz@hotmail.com or Les Gibbons: 01329 312553 dodgy@les-k.freeserve.co.uk

Urban Expression

Urban Expression is an inner-city church planting agency with Anabaptist values that works through self-funding teams. An interview with one of its leaders, Juliet Kilpin, appeared in the Spring 2002 issue of *Anabaptism Today*.

- The four established teams have been joined by a fifth Urban Expression centre in Leyton (East London) and a sixth may be established in Plaistow in September.
- The Forest Gate team has opened an Asian Friendship Centre and is involved in a charity to support Afghan refugees.
- 24 people attended a recent Open Day for those interested in knowing more about Urban Expression. A further Open Day is planned for Saturday 21 September.
- There is interest in Urban Expression working in other cities as well as London.

For further details, write to Urban Expression, PO Box 35238, London E1 0YA or visit the website: www.urbanexpression.org.uk

Workshop: Dynamic Christian Learning

Noel Moules writes: ‘2001–2002 has been exciting and challenging as we have grown to six UK centres, each having a team. The quality and commitment of the team members is fantastic, making the course stronger and more significant. In December 2001 we gained accreditation for our Certificate in Applied Christian Studies through the government’s Qualifications & Curriculum Authority. Thus we have become not only the first Christian, but also the first faith-based vocational training programme they have accredited. It came after three years’ hard work and gives us a firm base upon which to build in the future.

‘Because accreditation came late in the year, it put strain on putting our teams and structures in place as the course was progressing. That we have done this is an incredible testimony to the teachers, tutors and team leaders across the Workshop network, who have gone beyond what we could have expected to make it happen. During this time of development and change we have seen the quality in depth that makes up our network. Gaining accreditation has provided us with a tool to run more effectively a course that is committed to communicating radical Christian values. Our first and main aim is transformation in the lives of all the participants on Workshop and everything on the programme is focused towards this goal.

‘We are currently promoting our 20th anniversary year programme of Workshop, which begins this September. If you know anyone who would like information please phone 0114 2888816 or e-mail office@anvil.org.uk and we will send you our new 24-page colour prospectus. Or visit our new website at www.workshop.org.uk. Remember that you are always welcome to visit any of the centres at any time; just turn up with a mug and sandwiches for a day or a full weekend. We would love to see you.’

Metanoia Book Service

Metanoia recommends two recently published titles: *Changing Women, Changing World: Evangelical Women in the Church*, by Fran Porter (Blackstaff Press, £9.99) and *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land* (revised edn), by David K Shipler (Penguin US, £16.50). To order, please use the address below.

Anabaptist Network Trust (Registered Charity 10217)

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