

Anabaptist Network News

A Toy Boat and A Massacre

By Tim Nafziger

Tim Nafziger recently spent three months with Christian Peacemaker Teams working in Colombia as a reserivist. CPT Colombia accompanies unarmed citizens in the Magdalena Medio region. They aim to use non-violent tools to create space for Colombians reclaiming their autonomy within conflict areas.

It's not often that I have profound conversations about toy boats over breakfast. But this was the case while talking with Alfredo (name changed), a 4-year-old who lives on the Opón river where Christian Peacemaker Teams maintains a presence. Alfredo was playing with a balsa-wood boat made by his father when someone asked if the boat was a Piranha, the small navy gunboats that patrol the river. For most little boys in the West this suggestion would have made the imaginary voyages across the patio more glamorous. Alfredo, however, quickly assured us that no, this was a Chalupa, the civilian version of the same craft.

I would not have thought too much about this incident if it had not been for the events of the week before. On Monday, February 21, Luis Eduardo Guerra, a leader of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community, his partner and his 11 year old son were detained by men belonging to the Colombian army. Three days later their bodies were found mutilated in a mass grave. Eight members of the peace community were killed, including three children and one teenage girl. Although the army denies involvement, the community has explicitly denounced them as responsible for the massacre. A human rights lawyer and a Catholic priest working with the community have gathered multiple testimonies from community members to back the denunciation.

The San José de Apartadó Peace Community in Urabá was one of the first of dozens of communities that have declared themselves actively neutral as part of the peace community movement that began in Colombia in 1997. These communities declare themselves autonomous and refuse to be involved with any armed group, illegal or legal. This autonomy has come at a great cost. In San José de Apartadó, with a population of 3000 in 28 hamlets, more than 130 people have been murdered by various armed groups since their declaration.

So the presence of the navy and the army does not make some communities in Colombia feel safe. This is why CPT Colombia is concerned with the presence of the armed groups in the Opón, both illegal *and* legal and why Alfredo was not playing with a toy Piranha gunboat.

Tim is back in the UK. For his speaking schedule: <http://www.cptuk.org/tim.html>

How shall we then live? Residential Conference

The Network's residential conference took place on 28-30 May – an interactive event with participation from a wide range of people. For a report on the event, which was not available in time for this newsletter, have a look at the website: www.anabaptistnetwork.com.

Events

25 June 2005

An Urban Expression *Open Day* (to find out more) in East London

4-8 July 2005

A Bridge Builders course at the London Mennonite Centre on *Congregational Conflict Consulting*

26-29 August 2005

Greenbelt – Urban Expression, SPEAK, Workshop, Anabaptist Network, Ekklesia and London Mennonite Centre will be there.

3-7 October 2005

A Bridge Builders course at Ushaw College, Durham, on *Mediation and Facilitation in the Church*

15 October 2005

Anabaptist Network event: 'Workers for Peace – Anabaptist Perspectives on Being Church and Making Peace'. In York.

15 October 2005

An Urban Expression *Open Day* (to find out more) in East London

29-30 October 2005

First weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham: *Creating new churches*

Conferences

The Network has generally organised each year one or two conferences on various subjects and in different locations. We will continue to do this, but we are now also receiving invitations from others to participate in or co-sponsor events. We are very glad whenever possible to respond positively to such invitations.

On Saturday **15 October 2005** we have been asked to lead an Anabaptist study day in York. Jonathan Blakeborough writes: 'At the request of the University College of York St John, the Anabaptist Network and Christian Peacemaker Teams are presenting a day conference titled: 'Workers for Peace – Anabaptist Perspectives on Being Church and Making Peace'. Cost: £10 (£5 concession for senior citizens, students and unwaged). Bookings to Pauline Kollontai, Principal Lecturer, York St John College, Lord Mayor's Walk, York YO31 7EX. Cheques payable to 'Anabaptist Network (Yorkshire)'. Enquiries to Jonathan Blakeborough: 01904 703710; email: blakeboroughjdr@hotmail.com

On Saturday **14 January 2006** East Midlands Baptist Association has invited the Network, in partnership with Urban Expression, to present a day, probably in Melton Mowbray, exploring the Anabaptist tradition and facing the challenge of mission from the margins. There will be more details in the next newsletter.

Looking further ahead, the *Men, Women and God* network (with whom we have partnered before) has suggested a jointly sponsored conference on the theme 'Women and Men after Christendom'. More details of the date and venue in a subsequent newsletter.

And we have just started a conversation with the Northumbria Community about another co-sponsored conference with them, possibly in the north-east of England, probably in late 2006. We have worked together before on three successful conferences, so we look forward to another joint event.

News

Theology forum: by the time you read this the June meeting of the Anabaptist theology forum will have taken place. The main subjects this time were 'Menno Simons and Suffering' (Sue Sainsbury), 'Anabaptists Anonymous' (Ruth Gouldbourne) and 'Unbiblical Evangelicalism'

(Veronica Zundel). If you are interested in being involved in future events, please contact us.

Symposium: those of you who have followed the debate about penal substitution which has energised or outraged parts of the Evangelical community (and which we have reported on our website) may be interested in the forthcoming 'symposium on the theology of atonement', to be held at the London School of Theology on 6-8 July 2005. Stuart Murray Williams and Lloyd Pietersen from the Network will be participating in this. More information from the Evangelical Alliance: 020 7207 2100.

New book: along similar lines, you may also be interested in a new book, co-edited by Jonathan Bartley and Simon Barrow of Ekklesia, entitled **Consuming Passion: Why Did Jesus Need to be Killed?** This will be published in July by Darton, Longman & Todd.

Root and Branch: another meeting took place in April of representatives of the 8 Anabaptist-oriented organisations that currently make up the Root and Branch network – for the first time in Northern Ireland, where Tim Foley reported on his continuing struggle to engage in cross-community peacemaking and reconciliation.

Anabaptist paper: Lloyd Pietersen has recently heard that his proposal has been accepted to present a paper at the very prestigious Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Philadelphia (19-22 November 2005). Lloyd's paper is titled: '2 Timothy 3:12 and "the Ideal of Good Christian Citizenship": An Anabaptist Perspective'. This will be the first time that an explicitly Anabaptist paper has been presented at this gathering. Lloyd has written an article for this issue of the newsletter, giving us a flavour of what he plans to present.

Fit4Life: there continues to be high demand – and high praise – for the Fit4Life course we are distributing. One Baptist Association recently ordered 30 copies to use around the churches in their region. However, there were problems with some CDs in the recent batch, so if you received a defective copy, please let us know. We have recently taken delivery of a new consignment and can provide replacements.

Network of congregations: we reported in the previous two newsletters on discussions about forming a 'network of congregations' alongside the present network of individuals. While there is some enthusiasm for this, we have concluded that now is not the right time to develop this.

Some of those who met to discuss this idea last October are in transition and others are already linking up through Urban Expression Associates or the 'peace church' network that is also taking shape. We don't want to duplicate what other networks are doing, so we'll keep a watching brief on developments and maybe look at this again in the future.

Greenbelt: are you coming to the Greenbelt Festival this year (26-29 August)? The Network will be sharing a stall with Urban Expression. Volunteers needed to help with this – if you can help, please contact us. For more information on the festival, see www.greenbelt.org.uk

Vic Thiessen: Vic, the director of the London Mennonite Centre, and his family are in North America for three months over the summer. He assures us that this is not holiday but work – the 'North American Assignment' that all Mennonite missionaries fulfil every three years.

www.anabaptistnetwork.com

New on the Network's website:

- Anabaptism in cartoon form! A member of our steering group, Karen Stallard has recently produced a simplified version of 'Introducing the Anabaptists' with maps, cartoons and other visuals. If you were wanting an easy-to-understand way to explain the Anabaptist tradition, this is it. You can download it free of charge.
- Jonathan Bartley has produced a survey on 'attitudes to the atonement', inviting people to identify which of various ways of understanding the death of Jesus is closest to their own perspective. Have a look and make your choice.

Coming soon on the website: yet another study guide (the fifth) for individual or group use. This will be on 'interactive learning – alternatives to the monologue sermon'. It will be written for us by Jeremy Thomson.

If you have proposals for further study guides on the website, please let us know.

After Christendom series

Spring Harvest this year was on the theme 'sing the Lord's song in a strange land' (in effect, an exploration of post-Christendom). Paternoster

took the opportunity of vigorously promoting our 'After Christendom' series. They reported that **Church after Christendom** by Stuart Murray was their best-selling book at the event, and the third book in the series – **Faith and Politics after Christendom** by Jonathan Bartley – also received very good publicity. This book should be out early in 2006.

We mentioned in the previous newsletter that Paternoster had approved the fourth book in the series – Alan and Eleanor Kreider's **Worship and Mission after Christendom**. We have now heard that the fifth book has also been agreed – **Reading the Bible after Christendom**, to be written by Lloyd Pietersen.

If you have ideas for further books, let us know (whether or not you are offering to write these). You may also be interested to know that Stuart Murray's **Beyond Tithing**, not part of the series but related to it, is back in print.

Workshop

The course has been going well, with each of the five centres having a stimulating group of students. Please pray for them as they near the end and look to the future. One important plus since Easter has been that the government's accrediting board, the QCA, has re-accredited our course for another 3 years (the maximum period offered). This substantially strengthens what Workshop is doing.

We are planning for the launch of our 23rd year in September. The new prospectus is out, being widely distributed and very well received. If you would like a copy, or know others who might be interested please ring (0114 288 8816), e-mail (admin@anvil.org.uk) or contact us through our website (www.workshop.org.uk). If you haven't seen it, ask us for our 7-minute video CD about the course and we will send it to you by return.

Please pray for us as we put together the teams of mentors and teachers for September in each centre; that in each case there will be enough of the right people to make up this core group.

Some people are exploring ideas as to how the Workshop material can be made available for unchurched people, or those newly come to faith from a non-church background. This is at its very early stages. Please pray that they will have wisdom and insight as they begin to put materials together.

Advanced Workshop 2006–08

This is advance notice about the next Advanced Workshop course, which will begin in October 2006. This is open to anyone who has done Workshop and provides instruction at degree level in Apologetics, Hermeneutics and Ethics.

The course is currently accredited for a Licence in Theology (LTh) with the University of Wales, Lampeter. This is equivalent to the final year of a first degree in Theology. To enrol on the LTh programme you must have a first degree or professional equivalent.

We hope that, for the next course, accreditation will also be offered for a Diploma in Theology (equivalent to the second year of a first degree in Theology). This will be open to anyone who does not have a degree but can demonstrate sufficient equivalent learning to the first year of a degree course through experience gained in their local churches, teaching on Workshop, etc.

For further details, or to express initial interest, please email the Course Director, Lloyd Pietersen at advancedworkshop@anvil.org.uk.

London Mennonite Centre

Highlights of the Cross-Currents programme in the autumn include:

- **15 October:** Gareth Higgins on film and theology.
- **29 October:** Ann Morisy on mission in contemporary society.
- **19 November:** Michael Northcott on apocalyptic religion and American empire.

Contact lmc@menno.org.uk or 0845 450 0214.

Bridge Builders

Congregational Conflict Consulting **4-8 July 2005, London**

This course at the London Mennonite Centre, led by Dave Brubaker, is designed to equip participants to work with congregations in conflict using the congregational intervention

approach used by Bridge Builders. Cost: £400 (bursaries available). For further information: www.menno.org.uk/pdf/CCC20050704.pdf

Skills Training for Mediation and Facilitation in the Church

3-7 October 2005, Durham

This fully residential course at Ushaw College Durham, led by Alastair McKay, Colin Patterson and Charletta Erb, aims to develop Christians' understanding of church conflict and to learn how to facilitate resolution and transformation of conflicts, particularly through mediation. Cost: £400. For further information:

www.menno.org.uk/pdf/MSTCOct2005PublicityApplication.pdf

Crucible

This new course, jointly sponsored by our partners Urban Expression and Workshop (and ALOVE), is attracting quite a lot of interest. The combination of topics – church planting, urban mission and emerging church – seems to be both unique and intriguing.

The course runs over three weekends (29-30 October 2005, 25-26 February 2006 and 8-9 April 2006) in Birmingham. Accommodation is available. Participants can come to one, two or all three weekends and can gain credits by doing a supervised placement and/or open learning modules. The **Crucible** course can also be combined with the **Workshop** course (at a discounted rate).

Brochures are available (and enclosed or attached if you receive this newsletter by email). Please ask if you would like copies to distribute. For further details, see www.cruciblecourse.net.

Ekklesia

Ekklesia describes itself as 'a not-for-profit think tank which promotes radical theological ideas in public life through a radical approach.'

In April it was ranked by the Independent newspaper as one of the top 20 British think tanks! Its director, Jonathan Bartley, will shortly be joined by a new Associate, Simon Barrow.

Anabaptist Network Trust (registered charity 10217)

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