

Anabaptist Network News

Peace School: exploring shalom activism

Have you ever wondered what true peace and justice might look like? Is peace more than simply the absence of violence? What does it mean to be a genuine peacemaker? These are some questions that participants will grapple with on the new Peace School programme, launching this year.

Peace School is a national, year-long programme, exploring what it means to be a peacemaker in every area of life – personal, local and global. It consists of an introductory summer school (11-20 August 2006) followed by 3 weekends of learning together, interspersed with individual learning and interaction.

Peace School is linked with both Workshop and the Speak network (partners with the Anabaptist Network through the Root and Branch network). For further information visit www.peaceschool.org.uk or contact Peace School at 4 Park Avenue, Pudsey, Leeds LS28 7TE (0113 257 4572); info@peaceschool.org.uk.

Atonement Debate

You may be aware that some members of the Network have been involved in the ongoing debate about whether 'penal substitution' is an appropriate way of understanding the atoning work of God in Christ. A recent statement issued by the Evangelical Alliance attempts to draw a line under this debate, reaffirming that penal substitution is implied in its basis of faith. Though we do not plan to pursue this issue further at present, we think it unlikely that the discussion will end here – both because of the numbers of evangelicals (and others) who do not subscribe to this belief and because this model of atonement raises many ethical and missional concerns.

For those who are interested, we have now gathered together on our website various contributions made to this debate over the past couple of years. We also offer there a brief summary of the issues and our perspectives on these. See www.anabaptistnetwork.com

New Webmaster Needed

Tim Nafziger will be returning to the US on 26 July after spending two years here, working with the Anabaptist Network, London Mennonite Centre, Speak and helping to launch the UK branch of Christian Peacemaker Teams. Among other things he will be marrying Charletta Erb, who has been on the Bridge Builders staff in London. We are grateful for what they have both contributed, wish them both well and hope to keep in touch with them.

Tim's departure leaves us needing to find a new webmaster for the Anabaptist Network website. This is working well and does not need much maintenance, but we do need someone with the appropriate skills and time to devote to this.

Could this be you? If you are interested, please get in touch and we can explain further what this entails.

Events

24 June 2006
LMC Cross-Currents seminar: *Violent God, Nonviolent Jesus, Violent Christians*.

26-30 June 2006
Mediation and Facilitation Skills Training – residential Bridge Builders course in London.

1 July 2006
Faith and Politics after Christendom – Anabaptist Network/ Ekklesia conference in Birmingham.

30 August 2006
LMC Cross-Currents seminar: *Jesus and the Human: the Mystery of the Son of Man*

4 November 2006
Radical Discipleship – Anabaptist Network/ Methodist day event at Cliff College, Calver.

9 December 2006
Introducing the Anabaptists – a day event at Ringsfield Hall, Suffolk.

14-15 December 2006
Anabaptist theology forum. Main subject: *Environmental Ethics*.

28-29 October 2006
First weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham. Subject: *Church Planting*.

Network Events in 2006

On Saturday **1 July** the Anabaptist Network and Ekklesia will host a conference in Birmingham – *Faith and Politics after Christendom*. Speakers will include Jonathan Bartley, Andrew Bradstock and Alan Storkey.

On Saturday **4 November** Cliff College (Calver, in Derbyshire) will host and co-sponsor a day event exploring the Anabaptist and Methodist traditions, especially their approach to *Radical Discipleship*.

On Saturday **9 December** there will be a day conference at Ringsfield Hall in Suffolk. Stuart Murray Williams and Karen Stallard will present *Introducing the Anabaptists* through a mixture of drama, story-telling and interactive sessions.

On **14-15 December** the theology forum will be meeting. Our guest speaker will be Dr Michael Northcott, author of several books including the acclaimed *An Angel Directs the Storm*. He will be speaking on environmental ethics.

Advance notice: the next Anabaptist Network residential conference will be on **26-28 May** at Barnes Close, near Birmingham (same venue as the last two). Guest speakers: Alan & Ellie Kreider. More details to follow.

Correspondence

We are always delighted to receive responses to articles and items in the newsletter. Here are two such responses to the Spring newsletter:

Veronica Zundel (London) writes: 'The article on the revision of the core convictions has reminded me that I have been meaning to comment on conviction 3 for some time. I think rather than "Western culture is *slowly* emerging from the Christendom era", it should read "Western culture is *fast* emerging from the Christendom culture" (though indeed, some may think it not fast enough).

'Obviously what you perceive depends on where you stand, but while the UK and many other Western nations still have an established church, it seems to me that involvement with it or other churches is now such a minority activity that Christendom exists more on paper than it does in reality. In the UK, for instance, while the law still stands that RE is a compulsory subject in schools, that schools should hold religious

assemblies, and that both of these should be "broadly Christian", in practice I have yet to encounter a school that actually practises this, unless it is a Church of England or other denominationally-based school.

'From my position, having been born into a completely secular family, not "christened" and having no church involvement of any kind till my teens, Britain looks like an entirely secular society.'

Andrew Pattison (Shrewsbury) writes: 'I was interested in your piece *Monologue Preaching or Interactive Learning?*

'In our church (280+ congregation) we feel it's very important to continue with authoritative teaching using a variety of speakers, both from within and outside the church, but we then use the material from a Sunday morning as the basis of our Cell Group word sections in the week. The idea being that these sessions are for the understanding and application of the subject preached on.

'We suggest possible questions, but leaders, using notes provided by the speaker, are free to take the application and discussion in any direction they wish. There are lots of challenges in this way of doing things (adequate notes, training of leaders, etc), but we find it generally works well. Our hope is that we get the best of both worlds.'

www.anabaptistnetwork.com

New on the website:

- A further contribution in our 'Drawn to Anabaptism' series. Phil Meadows has written 'Anabaptist Leanings of a Kinda Methodist'.
- Other articles added recently include 'Throwing a Hand Grenade in the Fruit Bowl' by Jonny Baker (on alternatives to sermons), 'An Anabaptist Perspective on the Environment' by Jo Rathbone and 'Anabaptists and Freedom of Speech' by Andrew Francis.
- Book reviews include Graham Old on Tom Finger's *Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* and Tim Nafziger on *Love without Giving in*.

If you are interested, you can now sign up for a monthly email, alerting you to anything new on the website.

Study Groups

Virtual study group We mentioned in the last newsletter that someone living in Cornwall had proposed setting up a 'virtual study group' (via email) for those out of reach of study groups. David Pountain has received plenty of interest in this and the virtual study group is now up and running. For information, please contact David at david@pountain.demon.co.uk.

Leeds/Bradford group: this study group has a new convener – David Warrington: 10 Sunny Bank Villas, Glusburn, near Keighley BD20 8PT (01535 637012) david.warrington@tiscali.co.uk

After Christendom Series

The first two books in the series Paternoster are publishing in partnership with the Anabaptist Network – *Post-Christendom* and *Church after Christendom* – continue to sell well. Jonathan Bartley's *Faith and Politics after Christendom* is due out on 1 July.

We have had conversations with a number of other potential authors about contributing other books to this series. There are some promising ideas under discussion for books beyond the next two books already planned – *Worship and Mission after Christendom* and *Using the Bible after Christendom*.

Another book, mentioned in the last newsletter, Stuart Murray's *Changing Mission*, has still not been published (for reasons known only to the publisher). Some of you have placed orders for this Anabaptist perspective on the 'emerging church', which we will despatch as soon as we receive copies.

Anabaptist University Course

The University of Bristol is running a course in the autumn for second year undergraduates at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies on the 'Foundations of Anabaptist Thought and Practice'.

The course will be run by Lloyd Pietersen and we believe it is the first course of this kind to be offered at a secular British university!

The details of the course, to be published in the 2006/7 Student Handbook are as follows:

'Suspicious of both the Catholic magisterium and the Protestant insistence on Sola Scriptura, the Anabaptists of the 16th Century claimed to offer a third way. They insisted on the centrality of Jesus and were committed to a radical discipleship involving the sustained practice of non-violence. As a result, they were persecuted by both sides.

This unit will focus on the early history of the Anabaptists, examining their distinctive ideas concerning baptism, community, church discipline, discipleship and biblical interpretation as presented in a number of primary sources. To complete the unit, the thought of two contemporary Anabaptist theologians, John Howard Yoder and Thomas N. Finger, will be considered and critically compared with the early Anabaptists.'

Workshop

Noel Moules writes: 'Workshop has had another great year. We began in September having been re-accredited, which was wonderful. We have had learners from all around the country, and from diverse backgrounds, studying at one of our five regional centres. It has been exciting to see the level of engagement with the topics we have been exploring; searching questions, animated discussion, deep reflection and much more. However, the most rewarding experience is seeing deep significant growth in their own spiritual journey.'

'The regional teams continue to show single-minded commitment to making the programme happen month on month, and their skills in teaching and mentoring are a credit to them. Thank you to those of you in the Anabaptist Network who pray for us and support us – your involvement is making an impact.'

'The new course starting in September will be our 24th year, with over 4000 people having been through it to date. If you know anyone who might be interested in doing Workshop, please encourage them to go to www.workshop.org.uk or phone 01142888816 for a prospectus.'

You or they are also welcome to visit any of the venues, on any day or weekend, during the rest of the year. There is no charge and they will receive a very warm welcome. The dates, and the addresses of the venues, are on the website and in the prospectus. Do get in touch, do get involved.'

Peacenik Website

Peacenik.co.uk is an ISP and email service set up and run by the thinktank Ekklesia (Root and Branch partners of the Anabaptist Network), in partnership with Premier Radio, to support peace and justice work around the world.

It works on a not-for-profit basis, with the money raised going into a fund to promote alternatives to violence, violence reduction programmes and other peace-making initiatives. All users of peacenik.co.uk can vote for the peace projects that they would like to see supported.

On this site new users can make Peacenik their provider of internet access either through broadband or dial up services. You can also get a peacenik.co.uk or peacemonger.co.uk email address. Proposals for peace projects that need support can also be made.

Urban Expression

This Anabaptist-flavoured mission agency is in the process of launching new church planting teams and needs volunteers to move into inner city communities and join them. New teams are starting work in South London, Glasgow and Manchester in the next few months.

Could you get involved in planting a new church with Anabaptist values in an area of enormous social and spiritual need? Urban Expression is looking for volunteers to live in such areas, work to support themselves and participate in a risky but exciting mission initiative.

If you are up for this challenge – or know others who might be – email Juliet Kilpin for details on enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk or visit the website: www.urbanexpression.org.uk.

Crucible

Crucible, sponsored by our Root and Branch partners Urban Expression and Workshop (and Above), explores church planting, urban mission and emerging church. 45 people participated in the pilot year of the course, which concludes in June. Feedback has been very encouraging.

The course will run again in Birmingham during 2006-07. There are three teaching weekends – in October, February and June, plus an optional placement and open learning. For details and dates, please see www.cruciblecourse.net.

Bridge Builders

Mediation and Facilitation Skills Training
26-30 June, London

A residential course to help develop Christians' understanding of church conflict and to learn methods to facilitate resolution and transform conflicts, particularly via mediation. Cost: £585.

For further information on any of these courses, call 0845 450 0214 or email: bb@menno.org.uk

London Mennonite Centre

Cross-Currents seminars this year include:

24 June: *Violent God, Nonviolent Jesus, Violent Christians: the tragic legacy of biblical violence* with Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer.

30 August: *Jesus and the Human: The Mystery of the Son of Man* with Walter Wink

20 October: *Understanding Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* with Chris Hewer

Seminars all cost £20 (including lunch) or £10 unwaged. Further details from Vic Thiessen on 020 8340 8775 or crosscurrents@menno.org.uk

Contact Us

For further information about anything you have read in this newsletter, please contact us. And if you have information for inclusion in the next newsletter, let us have this by 30 September.

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

Our thanks to many of you who responded to our plea in the last newsletter: our mailing costs are significantly reduced this time as we send out more newsletters by email.

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