



Anabaptist Network News

New Habits for a New Era



The conference on new monasticism on 3 May, which we co-sponsored with the Northumbria Community, proved to be very popular. About 150 people participated in the event and conversations between sessions indicated that they came from many places and many different traditions. I met Quakers, Anglicans, Baptists, emerging church leaders, youth specialists, charismatics, urban missionaries and an anarchist – and I'm sure there were many others too.

Pete Askew provided an overview of new monasticism, reflecting on both the UK and US scene and highlighting twelve marks of the movement which were recognised by a gathering of communities in 2004. Roy Searle introduced the Northumbria Community, which has drawn on both the desert monks and on the Celtic tradition. I explored links and resonances between monasticism and the Anabaptist movement, noting that the early Anabaptists were described by the Reformers as 'new monastics'.

Workshops explored various subjects: the relevance of monastic rhythms for urban and rural ministry, developing sustainable patterns of spiritual life, areas of similarity and divergence between this new monasticism and older monastic patterns. We were delighted to have Brother Samuel, a Franciscan monk, with us to engage in this discussion. There was also a brief public conversation with several practitioners reflecting on their own experience of new monasticism.

And as previously in these jointly sponsored events, we started the day with worship in the Northumbrian tradition and concluded it with worship and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.

The popularity of this conference and the interest it generated mean that we are wondering about running it again at some point. Or we might plan some kind of follow-up event as an opportunity to dig deeper and to address many questions that were raised but not fully answered in the time available. In the meantime, in response to several requests, we are posting some papers from the conference on the website. See: www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/19

Stuart Murray Williams

Events

5-6 July 2008

Third weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham

8 July 2008

Youth Work after Christendom: launch event in Birmingham

18-20 July 2008

London Mennonite Theology Forum near Bath: *Responsibility to Protect*

1-8 August 2008

Residential week for *Peace School* in North Yorkshire

9 October 2008

Incarnational Mission Conference with Mike Frost in Oxford

18 October 2008

Second *Preaching in a Changing Culture* conference in Selly Oak, Birmingham

25-26 October 2008

First weekend of the new *Crucible* course in Birmingham

Perspectives on Preaching

Anabaptist Preaching: a conversation between pulpit, pew and Bible (edited by David Greiser and Michael King) was published in 2003. Its contributors propose a distinctively Anabaptist approach to preaching. Preaching has been a significant practice in the Anabaptist tradition, but multi-voiced alternatives have also at times been influential. We recognise the importance of preaching in many churches, but are aware also of much dissatisfaction with this. We hope that a day conference later this year and a new website may help us reflect on this practice and develop new ways forward.

Preaching in a Changing Culture is a second conference on the subject of preaching, jointly sponsored by the Network and Cell UK. This will take place on Saturday 18 October at the International Mission Centre in Selly Oak. This event is an opportunity to take further ideas we explored in April 2007, especially alternatives to monologue sermons. Details on the website or on request.

<http://interactivepreaching.net> is a new website developed by **Graham Old**, who convenes the Anabaptist study group in Northampton. The website 'is all about promoting the practice and values of dialogical, experimental, communal and practical preaching. Reflecting this, our site aims to be as interactive and open-source as possible. We intend to address, in numerous ways, the issue of moving beyond monologue sermons and include articles, tutorials, reviews and sermons. In keeping with the spirit of the site, you actually have the opportunity to edit or add to one another's preaching.'

New Anabaptist Centre

We have received news of the launch of the Montreal Centre for Anabaptist Studies. The Centre is a creation of the Mennonite Central Committee of Quebec and of the École de Théologie Évangélique de Montréal. It will publish Anabaptist resources in theology and biblical studies, organise symposiums and conferences (both academic and for a wider audience) on Anabaptist and peace issues, gather a collection of books on Anabaptist and peace studies and create a website.

Neal Blough, director of the Mennonite Centre in Paris and an accomplished scholar, was the guest speaker at the launch. He offered a

presentation on the importance of developing a francophone and urban Anabaptist theology in dialogue with other Christian traditions. The launch event took place on the campus of the University of Montreal, and drew forty people from different corners of the evangelical and Mennonite communities of Montreal.

An Invitation

Readers of this newsletter are warmly invited to an event in Oxford on 9 October, organised by our Root & Branch partners, Urban Expression. Michael Frost, vice-principal of Morling College in Sydney, Australia, will explore the subject of **Incarnational Mission**. Michael is co-author (with Alan Hirsch) of *The Shaping of Things to Come*, one of the most helpful and widely read introductions to emerging churches, and author of *Exiles: living missionally in a post-Christian culture* (which resonates strongly with our own 'After Christendom' series). Further information is available on our website or on request.

A Reminder

The launch of *Youth Work after Christendom* is on Thursday 8 July in Birmingham. Details on the website, or you can contact Jo Fitzsimmons at frontier@fyt.org.uk to book a place. The cost is £17.50 but this includes a copy of the book and lunch. If you cannot attend but want a copy of this next volume in the 'After Christendom' series, it can be purchased from the Metanoia Book Service: www.menno.org.uk/metanoia.

A Request

At the Greenbelt Festival (22-25 August 2008), the Network will be sharing a stall in G-Source (the resources tent) with the London Mennonite Centre. If you can help with this, please contact Vic Thiessen: victhiessen@menno.org.uk

An Intern

We are hoping in September to welcome an intern from Franconia Mennonite Conference (Pennsylvania) to work with the Network until May 2009. We valued previous US interns (Tim Nafziger and Jared Dienar), so we hope all the arrangements will fall into place for this. More news in the next newsletter.

www.anabaptistnetwork.com

As you may have noticed, our website has been through a major overhaul and redesign. We are grateful to our webmaster, **Chris Moore**, for the many hours he has spent on this – and we hope you like the new site. It should be much easier to navigate than before. Inevitably, there are a few bugs still to sort out, so if you spot anything amiss, do let us know.

There is also some new material on the site – not least a study guide to our core convictions: www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/471. There are also new reviews and information about upcoming events.

Network Accounts

If anyone is interested in inspecting the 2007 annual accounts of the Network, these can be obtained on request from our treasurer, Lloyd Pietersen: lloyd.pietersen@btinternet.com.

Membership of the Network is free of charge, but we welcome donations towards the cost of producing and distributing these newsletters. If you want to support the Network financially, do ask Lloyd for details of how to do this.

More New Books

You might be interested in other books written recently by members of the Network:

Linda Wilson introduces her second book, *Marianne Farningham: A Plain Woman Worker* (Paternoster: 2007): 'As Anabaptists we need to be wary of leaping straight from the 16th century to the present day without taking note of all that happened during the intervening centuries, including the development of Baptist churches.

'Marianne Farningham (1834-1909) grew up in a little rural Baptist chapel at Eynsford in Kent in which the sense of community was very strong, and she reproduced this community experience, not in a church, but in a young women's Sunday school class which she taught for many years.

'There was much more to Marianne than this, however. She has been called one of the most influential female members of the 19th-century Baptist community, yet her name, familiar in evangelical households in the later 19th century,

is virtually unknown today. Marianne was a single woman who wrote for the Christian press for fifty years. I first came across her through her wonderful autobiography, when researching 19th-century female spirituality, and determined to discover more about her.

'This book explores Marianne's life and thought, her views of women's roles, her educational work, her public life, for example as a lecturer, and her spirituality. It challenges stereotypes of Victorian evangelicalism, including assumptions about evangelical women and the relationship between evangelicalism and feminism. Readers not familiar with this period should find this an interesting investigation of an unjustly neglected figure.'

Stuart Murray has written *Planting Churches: a Framework for Practitioners* (Paternoster), due out in August. This 'does exactly what it says on the tin': offers a straightforward guide to church planting practice for church planters and those who deploy them.

If you know of other books written by members of the Network (or have written one yourself!), do let us know for future newsletters.

Root & Branch Partners

If you thought you were a subscriber to the bi-monthly Root & Branch emails but wonder why you have not received these recently, we have just discovered that an upgrade to the system accidentally knocked out the address list!

If you want to continue to receive these emails (which are free of charge), please do go to the website (www.rootandbranch.org.uk) and sign up again. We're sorry about this glitch.

Peace School

Peace School is a one-year program exploring what it means to be a peacemaker in every area of life: personal, local and global. The programme investigates peacemaking from the biblical perspective of shalom, a view of peace as not merely the absence of violence, but about wholeness and integratedness; about life-giving relationships with others, with God and with the rest of creation.

Peace School is a community of learning where everyone's contribution is valued, everyone is a student and everyone is a teacher. It begins with a week-long summer residential followed

by four weekends through the year. In between participants interact and support one another through an online blog and discussion forum. The gathered times explore a raft of subjects from 'The Myth of Redemptive Violence' to 'The Importance of Playfulness'. More information on the website: www.peaceschool.org.uk.

There's no set fee for taking part; instead we lay out on the website the costs of the programme and let participants decide how much they can contribute. The current average cost is around £800 per person for the year.

The dates for the 2008–2009 Peace School are: Summer School: 1 to 8 August 2008, Beamsley Centre, North Yorkshire. Weekends: 17 to 19 October 2008; 23 to 25 January 2009; 17 to 19 April 2009; and 19 to 21 June 2009, all at the Chellington Centre, Bedfordshire.

For more details, please contact the programme coordinator Jonathan Dorsett on 07930 364733 or jonathan@peaceschool.org.uk.

London Mennonite Centre

The library, which contains the best selection of Anabaptist-related books in the country, is now online at www.menno.org.uk: go to the website and click on 'library'.

The Cross-Currents programme includes the following: **Mennonites and the United Nations** with Doug Hostetter, Director of the Mennonite Central Committee's United Nations Liaison Office, which has consultative status at the UN with the Economic and Social Council.

Are you aware that Anabaptists have influence at the United Nations, especially in the field of international conflict?

When MCC staff from conflict areas return to the USA, they are brought to New York so that they can meet with UN staff, representatives from national UN Missions and other NGOs to share first-hand, grass-roots information about the country in which they have worked. Using information from these staff, the office works with other NGOs to send information or policy recommendations on issues before the UN, to the Secretary General, UN Ambassadors from Security Council states, the Human Rights Council or others in the UN system.

The office has also been used to hold 'off the record' meetings between people who could not otherwise meet (it hosted meetings between North American Christian leaders and Iranian President Ahmadinejad while he was in New York to address the General Assembly).

Thursday 17 July, 9:30 am – 4:00 pm. Fee: £20 (£10 if unwaged), includes a meal. For further information contact 0845 450 0214 or see www.menno.org.uk/crosscurrents.

Workshop

The new Workshop brochure is now available, giving details of the programme for 2008-09.

If you have not yet caught up with the changes as Workshop operates through bi-monthly themed weekends in various locations, have a look at the information at www.workshop.org.uk

Coming shortly: '**One World, Many Faiths**' in Bristol 5-6 July or Birmingham 12-13 July. See the website or contact the office (01142888816)

Urban Expression

We are continuing to recruit team members to join church planting teams in Glasgow, London and Manchester. We are also in conversation in other cities with people interested in developing teams there. If you know anyone who might be suitable, do encourage them to contact us at enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk

The **Crucible** course has its final weekend this year on 5-6 July on *Emerging Church*. Details of the 2008-09 course are now available from the website: www.cruciblecourse.net and brochures can be downloaded from there.

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 items no later than **31 September 2008**.

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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