



Anabaptist Network News

Shalom Activists

Anabaptists and Quakers in the 21st Century



Shalom is the hope of the prophets – enemies reconciled, injustices righted, hurts healed, fears calmed and community prosperity. *Shalom* is the Bible's word for peace.

And peace is at the heart of the gospel. God's mission is to bring the whole of creation into harmony. Peace with God. Peace between the nations. Peace with the created order.

Followers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, are invited to work together with God in this peace-making mission. To be 'shalom activists'.

But often we have lost sight of this vision, colluded with injustice and coercion, and believed the 'myth of redemptive violence'. Or we have restricted *shalom* to internal peace, personal peace, or spiritual peace. Or we have confused peace with passivity.

Anabaptists and Quakers together comprise the historic *peace church* tradition. Dissenting from the consensus of the mainstream churches in the Christendom era, Anabaptists and Quakers are not convinced that peace can be achieved through violent means. But we do not want to be passive or disengaged. We want to find non-violent alternatives in an unjust, divided and violent world.

'Shalom Activists' is the first conference jointly sponsored by Anabaptists and Quakers (as far as we know). We want to learn from each other's experiences, the different roots of our commitment to peace, and our current insights on peace making. And together we want to explore fresh ways of thinking and acting.

Our keynote speaker will be **Noel Moules**, founder and programme coordinator of the *Workshop* learning programme since 1983. Throughout that time he has introduced many to the vision of 'shalom activism', a phrase he coined in the 1970s.

Workshops will help us wrestle with issues such as 'peaceful witness', 'peace and justice', 'becoming a peace church' and 'active peacemaking'. And the day will be framed with worship in the Anabaptist and Quaker traditions.

Come and join us!

The conference will run from 10.00 to 5.00 on Saturday **10 October 2009** at The Priory Rooms, Bull Street Quaker Meeting House, Bull Street, Birmingham, B4 6AF. The cost is £15 (£12 if unwaged), and includes refreshments and a sandwich lunch. A booking form is enclosed or attached.

Events

20 June
LMC Cross Currents:
Response:ability

22-26 June
Bridge Builders
*Mediating Inter-
personal Conflicts*

4-5 July
Third weekend of the
Crucible course in
Birmingham

31 July-7 August
Peace School summer
school week in North
Yorkshire

5 September
Consultation: Network
of Congregations

10 October
Anabaptist/Quaker
day conference:
Shalom Activists in
Birmingham

23-25 October
First weekend of the
Peace School course
in Bedfordshire

24-25 October
First weekend of the
new *Crucible* course
in Birmingham

2-3 December
Anabaptist theology
forum at Offa House

Network of Congregations

In the Spring newsletter we mentioned plans to develop an *Anabaptist Network of Churches*. We have had enough encouraging responses to move forward, so on **Saturday 5 September** we are holding a consultation and resource day for interested congregations.

We hope to draw together representatives from congregations who are exploring ways in which Anabaptist values and practices can help them build community and engage in mission. There will be a training dimension to the day, and also an opportunity to think through how this network will operate.

If you are interested and would like an invitation to this meeting, contact Stuart Murray Williams at stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk.

The After Christendom Series



We are looking forward now to the publication of the fifth book in the popular 'After Christendom' series. Edited by Trisha Dale on behalf of Paternoster, *Worship and Mission after Christendom* by Alan and Eleanor Kreider is scheduled for publication at the beginning of October 2009.

We plan to launch the book at the conference on 10 October – hopefully with a link to the USA so Alan and Eleanor can be involved!

But you are welcome to pre-order a copy any time you want from now on. The price will be £12.99 (including postage and packing). Send a cheque (payable to 'Anabaptist Network') to us, with a note of your address.

Resource Houses

Some years ago we were able to set up some resource houses in different parts of the country with gifts of Anabaptist books from Mennonites in North America. These resource houses are mainly private homes in which we have placed a selection of Anabaptist material for anyone to borrow. A list of these resource houses can be found on the website.

We have recently received a fresh consignment of Anabaptist books from friends in Franconia Mennonite Conference (in Pennsylvania). This means we can stock another three or four such resource houses. If you might be interested in hosting some resources, please let us know.

Welcome to Lora Steiner

Franconia Mennonites have provided, not only books, but another intern. Krista Ehst is now back in the USA (her term cut short by problems with immigration), but we look forward to the arrival of **Lora Steiner** in June.



Lora will mainly be working with Noel Moules, helping to develop learning resources, but we expect her also to connect with others in the Anabaptist Network. She is here until August.

Stuart Murray Williams was in Franconia for two weeks in March, meeting members of churches that are supporting these interns. He also met a young man who is interested in coming to the UK as an intern later this year or in 2010. This is a developing and valued relationship. Interns serve the Anabaptist Network and take back to Franconia what they learn about mission in a post-Christendom context.

Anabaptist Theology Forum

Linda Wilson writes: At the recent forum on 27-28 May, we invited Fran Porter to give a paper on 'Faith and Feminism'; Simon Barrow to offer one entitled 'Putting the Difficult Peace of Christ into Practice', and Simon Woodman to address the issue 'Can the Book of Revelation be a Gospel for the Environment?'

There will be another forum on 2-3 December 2009, and so far we have one paper offered for that: Roger Mitchell, 'Sovereignty, Money and the Church in the Modern World'. If you are interested in coming, please get in touch with Jo Rathbone at jorathbone@phonecoop.coop. If you would like to offer a paper, please contact me at linda.wilson@blueyonder.co.uk.

The Naked Anabaptist

Work continues on this basic introduction to the Anabaptist tradition. If all goes well, it should be with the publisher by the end of August and out in the middle of 2010.

There is still time, then, to respond to a request in the Spring newsletter. We're hoping for short, snappy contributions (a maximum of 50 words each) on one or both of the following subjects:

How did you encounter the Anabaptist tradition and/or what attracted you to this tradition?

How do any of the Anabaptist core convictions (these can be found on the Network website at www.anabaptistnetwork.com/coreconvictions) inspire or challenge you, and/or how have they impacted your life?

If you are willing to contribute something along these lines, please post your comment to Stuart Murray Williams at 24 Effingham Road, Bristol BS6 5BJ or email stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk.

New Anabaptist Networks

In recent weeks we have heard news of two emerging Anabaptist networks in nations, like Britain and Ireland, with no historic Anabaptist presence or legacy. We were already aware of the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand, and of Anabaptist centres in Montreal and Seoul. But something more is happening.

At the end of July, Andrew & Karen Studeman, a young Canadian Mennonite couple, will be spending time in the UK on their way to **South Africa**, where they will be helping to nurture an emerging Anabaptist network. They are coming here to learn about the Anabaptist Network and talk with some of us about what their priorities might be in South Africa.

And a **Scandinavian** Anabaptist network is also taking shape. About 30 people are in touch with

each other and are planning to get together for the first time later this year. They have asked for input from the Anabaptist Network here.

These are interesting developments, especially in light of comments from a number of high-profile American church leaders, challenging Anabaptists to value their traditions and realise how potent their insights and practices are for the church today. As Christendom disappears, maybe the Anabaptist vision is coming into its own?

Fit4Life

Over the past few years we have supplied many copies of the *Fit4Life* CD. Developed by friends in Australia, this contains extensive resources on healthy church life and relationships.

Biblical material, role-play and other exercises combine to provide the best set of resources we know of for churches wanting to encourage healthy and mature community life.

We are the sole UK distributors of *Fit4Life*. We can supply copies on request for £10.00 (which includes postage). Further details can be found on our website.

Root & Branch Partners

Crucible

The *Crucible* course, which has been operating for four years, is expanding and offering a wider range of subjects for study from October 2009. We will still be running over three weekends in Birmingham, but there will now be two streams at each weekend. New subjects include *Jesus Unplugged*, *Restoring Hope* and *Becoming Human*. The first weekend is on 24-25 October.

For further details of subjects and dates, please see www.cruciblecourse.org.uk or contact us at crucible@urbanexpression.org.uk.

Urban Expression

There has been an unexpected but welcome explosion of interest in urban church planting in the past six months.

We are receiving enquiries and firm applications from various people and hope shortly to deploy teams in Birmingham, Stoke and Bristol as well as further teams in cities where we are already working. There are also plans to initiate Urban

Expression in North America and in Sweden. We are running to keep up with developments at present!

If you are interested in joining one of these new teams, contact Jim Kilpin at: jimkilpin@aol.com. If you'd like to offer financial support to enable us to engage more effectively with these new opportunities, or if you would like to receive our regular newsletters, please get in touch with us at enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk.

London Mennonite Centre

The London Mennonite Centre is going through a period of transition. Vic Thiessen will conclude his time as the Programme Director at the end of June and the trustees are currently engaged in a consultation process to determine the focus and shape of the Centre in the coming years. They would value your prayers, as would Vic & Kathy as they make plans to return to Canada.

The final **London Mennonite Theology Forum** will be held on 10-11 September at the Guy Chester Centre (near the London Mennonite Centre). The theme is 'Anabaptist Theology in the 21st Century: where are we going?' For more information or a booking form, contact Janelle Thiessen at jthiessen@menno.org.uk

Bridge Builders

For those wanting to be equipped with skills and processes for working with conflicted groups, we are offering a revised **Congregational Conflict Consulting** course. The course will explore the group intervention approach used by Bridge Builders through the use of a large-group role-play, and by developing the broad range of skills needed to lead such a process. The course runs on 21-25 September 2009 at London Mennonite Centre. The cost is £500.

For brochures and application forms for all our courses see www.menno.org.uk, or email us at bb@menno.org.uk.

Christian Peacemaker Teams

Christian Peacemakers has announced that they are planning a month-long training in the UK. This will be held at the London Mennonite Centre in October. If you have been considering going on a delegation and then possibly joining the CPT Corp, then this would be the time. The training is an intensive, integrated, four-week

course involving action, reflection, and the practice of a wide variety of peacemaking skills: Biblical Basis for Nonviolence; Public Witness and Nonviolent Direct Action; Negotiation and Conflict Transformation Skills; Spirituality and Faith for Peacemaking; Ministry of Presence; Cross-cultural Work and Undoing Racism; Organising and Communication Skills; and Working in Teams. This training month gives CPT the possibility of dramatically increasing the representation of Europeans in the work of CPT. It is an unusual opportunity, which may not be repeated soon. Contact Tim Nafziger (nafziger@gmail.com) or Kathy Thiessen (kathy.thiessen@menno.org.uk)

Peace School

A year-long programme exploring what it means to be a peacemaker in every area of life; local and global. Peace School is a community of learning where participants bring their own experiences and take something away from the experiences of others. It is designed to give participants the resources to be peace and justice activists within their own spheres of influence. Peace School seeks to survey the world through a Jesus-centred, Christian understanding of *shalom*.

Peace School runs over a year, and is designed to enable people to participate in alongside their everyday lives. The community of learning meets for an initial summer school followed by three residential weekends throughout the year. The community of learning continues through the year through web-based activities and individual exercises. For details, contact us at info@peaceschool.org.uk.

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 no later than **30 September 2009**.

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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