



Anabaptist Network News

New Habits for a New Era? Exploring New Monasticism

The church in Britain (and much of western culture) is in exile, according to many commentators, aliens in a strange new world. What spiritual resources, patterns of community and ways of living do we need to sustain faith, inspire discipleship and energise mission?

We hear many stories of 'emerging churches' and 'fresh expressions of church', but Christians in many places are also rediscovering older forms of spirituality and discipleship. Some are drawing on the monastic traditions to find resources for a post-Christendom culture.

'New monasticism' is the term many are using to describe these attempts to re-work old rhythms, rules of life and liturgical resources in a new era. Is this a hopeful sign? Or is this 'monastic-lite', a fad that is unlikely to last? What does 'new monasticism' mean and what does it offer the church?

The Northumbria Community and the Anabaptist Network will be exploring 'new monasticism' in a day conference in Coventry on **3 May 2008**. Through plenary sessions, discussion, worship, workshops and conversations with a wide range of resource people, we will assess its potential for the church in exile.

The Northumbria Community draws on the Desert Fathers and Mothers and the Celtic monastic tradition. Anabaptism has been described as a 'lay monastic movement'. Both groups have links with emerging churches and with old and new monastic communities. We have organised three conferences together before and we are looking forward to working together again.

We invite you to join us, to share your experiences and questions and to learn from others. The venue is Warwick Road United Reformed Church, **Coventry**, within walking distance of Coventry rail station. The event will run from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm. The cost is £15 (£12 if unwaged). Hot drinks will be provided and you can bring your own lunch or purchase it nearby.

Booking forms accompany this newsletter and can also be downloaded from www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/417. We anticipate that this conference will be quite popular, so do book early to ensure a place.

Anabaptists at Greenbelt 2007

The Anabaptist Network was one of eight groups represented in the Root and Branch zone at the Greenbelt Festival in August. Having a zone of our own and many more people around (not to mention two settees, tea and coffee and 1400 Mennonite cookies!) was much better than the several individual stalls last year. We were also able to organise mini-seminars, reflections and two 'peacemeals'.

We are already wondering how we can develop this further for Greenbelt 2008. If this is something you might like to get involved with – either the planning or in the zone itself – do let us know.

Events

13-15 November 2007

Bridge Builders event:
Training of Trainers
in London

1 December 2007

Cross Currents event:
Emerging Church: an Anabaptist perspective
in London

5-6 December 2007

Anabaptist Theology
Forum: Offa House

23-23 February 2008

Second weekend of
the *Crucible* course in
Birmingham

2-7 March 2008

Bridge Builders event:
*Skills Training for
Mediation and
Facilitation in the
Church* in London

3 May 2008

*New Habits for a New
Era?* Anabaptist
Network/Northumbria
Community event in
Coventry

5-6 July 2008

Third weekend of the
Crucible course in
Birmingham

18 October 2008

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

Letter from America

Following their return to the US after their tour of England and Northern Ireland earlier this year, **Alan & Eleanor Kreider** write: 'It was a delight for us to be in England again. Three weeks of reunions with old friends, the sharing of life experiences since we had last been together, and encounters with people who were new to us and whose stories we were happy to learn – all these were gifts to us. To all who received us so warmly and who fed and accommodated us (we slept in thirteen beds!), heart-felt thanks!

'Going to England is always a very seductive experience for us. We feel so much at home there and enjoy so many things (such as John Humphreys interviewing someone on the *Today* programme!) that we forget that our home is now on the other side of the Atlantic. Is it significant that last week, while on holiday in the States, Alan for the first time in seven years began to drive on the left side of the road? Fortunately, it was 8 a.m. on a Sunday and nobody was coming! Our lot is to feel at home in two places – and we pray for people in both that we care about and institutions that matter to us.

'One impression from our weeks in England is that there are now many more people and institutions of Anabaptist coloration to pray for. The Anabaptist Network website had alerted us to the growing scale and complexity of the Anabaptist scene, and it was fascinating for us to encounter this first-hand. We are grateful for new life and the good work that many people are doing.

'We were also sobered by the challenges – secularist, materialist, cultural – which Christian churches face in post-Christendom England. As Anabaptists respond to these challenges, what you are doing can seem so small, ephemeral.

'To choose one example, we think of our visit to Wapping, where we spent an evening with an Urban Expression domestic church and with the Anabaptist Study Group – around the corner from a church plant from Holy Trinity Brompton. A vulnerable plant, inculturating sensitively into local culture; will it have mustard seed power next to its strong transplanted neighbour?

'How does God work? No doubt in many ways, which look very different and may even seem contradictory. But we believe that in Wapping and many other places God will use Anabaptist

theology, spirituality and lived discipleship to make an essential contribution. As we think of you who are involved in this, we say, gratefully, "May you be encouraged in the peace of Christ!"

Interactive Preaching

There have been two developments out of our conference in April on 'Preaching in a Changing Culture' (jointly organised with Cell Church UK).

A new website is being launched. **Graham Old** explains its role: '<http://interactivepreaching.net> will address the issue of how we move beyond monologue sermons and will include articles for those interested in the history and biblical basis of the topic, as well as tutorials and examples for those wanting to begin preaching in (what many believe is) a more biblically, culturally and missiologically appropriate manner.

'The website will include a forum to discuss our experiences and offer each other advice. There will also be a section addressing non-verbal preaching through song, dance, drama, film and so on; there will be the opportunity for users to upload and/or view movie clips of interactive preaching. Additionally, we will publish (and sometimes respond to) arguments in favour of the traditional sermon.

'The website will aim to be fully interactive and open-source, including a section where people can post examples of interactive preaching. And in accordance with the spirit of the site, we will provide the opportunity for users to edit or add to one another's preaching (think Wikipedia!).'

And we have decided to put on '**Preaching in a Changing Culture**' again – in Birmingham, at the International Mission Centre in Selly Oak. This will not be a re-run of the first conference but an opportunity to take further some of the ideas we explored last April, especially practical ways of developing alternatives to monologue sermons. The date is 18 October 2008: further information nearer the time.

www.anabaptistnetwork.com

We have a new webmaster! **Chris Moore** has not only taken over responsibility for the website but also plans to redesign this and make it more user-friendly. Hopefully by the time we send out the next newsletter he will be ready to invite you

to visit the site and offer some feedback. In the meantime, there is some new material on the site:

- An article on Polish Anabaptism (a little known branch) by Michael Bochenski.
- An article by Alan Kreider on 'Abolishing the Laity'.
- Several new book reviews and details of two conferences in the US.
- Information about forthcoming events.

After Christendom Series

The 'After Christendom' series continues to stir interest and provoke discussion in many groups in Britain and other nations.

Nigel Pimlott has just completed the manuscript of *Youth Work after Christendom*, which we hope will be available by mid-2008. If all goes to plan, we hope Lloyd Pietersen's *Using the Bible after Christendom* and Alan & Eleanor Kreider's *Worship and Mission after Christendom* will be published by the end of 2008.

We continue to welcome proposals for further books in the series – suggested topics or offers to write a volume! We are in conversation with a member of AAANZ (the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand) who is interested in writing a book on discipleship and citizenship after Christendom.

We were also pleased to discover *Evangelism after Christendom* by Bryan Stone, published by Brazos Press earlier this year. Although not part of our series, this offers perspectives on a tricky and often controversial practice from a similar post-Christendom angle.

News and Events

Many of us and our Root & Branch partners are celebrating Gordon Brown's announcement in July that DESO (the Defence Export Services Organisation, through which the government promotes arms exports) is to close by the end of 2007.

Anglican (and other) readers of this newsletter might be interested in a blog by a Canadian Anglican, who participated in our residential conference this year. Tim Chesterton writes at <http://anabaptistan Anglican.blogspot.com/2007/07/what-does-anabaptism-have-to-do-with.html>

We have received information about an event in the US next year: 'On Being a Peace Church in a Constantinian World', to be held at Messiah College in Pennsylvania on August 12-14, with keynote speakers Brian McLaren, Craig Carter and Sharon Baker. For further information, go to www.preachingpeace.org.

Root & Branch Partners

To receive bi-monthly Root & Branch emails, go to www.anabaptistnetwork.com and subscribe (free of charge) on the side panel.

Urban Expression

We are celebrating the award of a substantial grant from the Baptist Union, which will enable us to employ staff for the first time. Jim & Juliet Kilpin will job share the role of coordinator. This grant is very timely as Urban Expression is now expanding. Conversations are taking place about deploying church planting teams in other cities, and Urban Expression Netherlands is up and running.

Wanted – pioneers with Anabaptist values to join inner-city church planting teams in London, Manchester and Glasgow. To find out more, visit www.urbanexpression.org.uk.

Crucible

The *Crucible* training course (run by Workshop, Urban Expression and Alove) has commenced its third year, still based in Birmingham. The first weekend of the 2007-08 course was on October 20-21. The next is on 23-24 February, when the topic will be *The Urban Challenge*. Places and some bursaries are available. Further details at www.cruciblecourse.net.

Bridge Builders

Bridge Builders was featured in an appreciative article in the *Baptist Times* in August. We have received information about the following event: **Skills Training for Mediation and Facilitation in the Church**: 2-7 March 2008 at Guy Chester Centre in North London. Although conflict is both normal and inevitable, Christians often feel ill-prepared to handle this in the church. This five-day course explores conflict within us, between individuals and in the congregation. It is designed to equip Christians with practical skills to respond constructively to conflict. Book now to reserve a place on this popular course. More information, including application forms available for download, can be found on the website: www.menno.org.uk

Peace Church

A Root & Branch partner we have not featured before in this newsletter is the Peace Church movement, a small but growing network of local churches. They explain: 'Peace church is a way of thinking: discovering authentic church to be rooted in the centrality of Jesus, within the vision of shalom, and experimenting with the values that flow from this source.' There are peace churches now in Birmingham, Bristol, Chepstow and Plymouth. These groups draw explicitly on Anabaptist values. For further information see www.peacechurch.org.uk.

Workshop

This September we have begun our 25th year of Workshop. We are running the programme in its time-honoured format, of one weekend a month for eleven months, in Leeds and London (there is still time to join). In Bristol and Birmingham we are launching Workshop as a series of 12 themed weekends, such as 'Spirituality', 'Scrolls & Parchments', 'One World, Many Faiths' and so on. They will take place every other month and so run on a two-year cycle. The beauty is that you can start at any point, do as many as you wish, leave and then return for more. There are also three other weekends on the 'Salvation Landscape' theme and a joint involvement with the 'Crucible' course. For more information, see: www.workshop.org.uk, phone 01142888816 or email admin@anvil.org.uk.

London Mennonite Centre

The autumn 2007 Cross Currents seminar programme includes: ***The Emerging Church: an Anabaptist Perspective***.

Why are fresh expressions of church emerging in Britain and several other western nations? Are these creative mission initiatives incarnating the church into post-modern, post-Christendom culture? Or are they self-indulgent distractions from the task of mission?

What is church? What are the negotiables and non-negotiables of church? What can we learn from these emerging churches and how can we participate in this conversation? This seminar offers an Anabaptist perspective and uses the lens of post-Christendom to investigate this phenomenon.

To lead us during this day of reflection on the

emerging church, we are pleased to welcome back one of our most popular speakers, *Stuart Murray Williams*, who has engaged widely with, and reflected carefully on, the emerging church.

Saturday 1st December 9:30 am - 4:00 pm. Fee: £20 (£10 unwaged) includes a meal. For further information on this and other events, ring 0845 450 0214 or email lmc@menno.org.uk

And Finally...

About three years ago we wrote to many of you because the Anabaptist Network found itself unexpectedly in financial difficulties. We were so grateful for the generous response that not only resolved the immediate difficulty but gave us some additional resources.

We said then that this was the first time since we began in 1991 that we had solicited financial support and we hoped it would be the last. We are glad to report that our finances are in good health and that we are living within our limited but adequate means.

If you are interested (at any time) in inspecting the Network's accounts, please contact Lloyd Pietersen, our treasurer, via the website contact form and he will send you this information.

You can also contact Lloyd if you want to offer regular or occasional financial support. We do not need any more to sustain our current level of activities, but further support would enable us to do more.

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 December 2007**.

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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