



# Anabaptist Network News

## A Growing Partnership

Those who have followed the development of the Anabaptist Network over the past several years will know of our close relationship with what until recently was the London Mennonite Centre. The Network began in the Centre's former home in Highgate and there have been many joint events and initiatives since then. Conversations have taken place on many occasions about ways in which we can further develop this relationship. As the LMC becomes the Mennonite Centre Trust (MCT) and relocates its main centre to Birmingham, we continue to explore ways of strengthening this important partnership.

In this issue of the newsletter, the MCT trustees update us on progress made in 2012 after a period of turbulence and uncertainty. Strategic decisions have now been made, new properties have been bought and there is increasing clarity on staffing issues. You can read a detailed report from the trustees below. As you will see, their intention is that the new centre, *Menno House*, will function as a centre of hospitality and resource for the wider Anabaptist movement in the UK. We welcome this development and look forward to exploring its implications.

It will also be evident from this issue that we are increasingly organising events together, as the MCT partners with the Network itself and other groups in the networks of organisations and communities to share resources and to connect with a wider range of participants.

And we are now hopeful that a further development in our partnership will bear fruit and release a new level of resourcing within the Network. We mentioned in the last newsletter that we were in conversation with Mennonites in Canada. We have been exploring the possibility of a fully-funded mission worker coming to the UK, hopefully early in 2013. In June we invited **Mike Nimz** to take up this appointment. To pursue this, Mike will need to be sponsored by the MCT and work under their auspices in order to obtain the necessary visa. If all goes well, Mike, accompanied by his wife, **Cheryl**, will be a resource not only to the MCT but also to the wider Anabaptist movement.

By the time you read this newsletter, Mike and Gordon Janzen (a staff member of Mennonite Church Canada Witness) will be in the UK for an exploratory visit, meeting various people in the Network and MCT trustees. We invite your prayer for all involved in this initiative. We believe Mike (along with Cheryl) has much to offer us and we hope he will be able to join us without delay.

One other aspect of this growing partnership that we are considering is finding a suitably gifted and experienced person to develop our websites and enable us to communicate more effectively via various forms of social media. This might be a paid or voluntary role for a number of hours a week; and other groups in the network of organisations might also draw on and help support this person. If this is of interest to you, or if you know anyone suitable, please let us know.

One more query: is there anyone reading this who has experience of operating a PAYE system and would be willing to offer some advice as the MCT trustees work through the implications of employing Mike Nimz?

## Events

### 25 October

ANO gathering,  
London

### 27-28 October

Workshop:  
*Spirituality*, London

### 3 November

*Reading the Bible  
after Christendom*,  
London

### 6 November

*Celebrating Dissent*,  
Bristol

### 9 November

*Prophetic Voices*,  
Belfast

### 9 November

*Peacemaking evening*,  
Birmingham

### 10-11 November

*Crucible course*: first  
weekend, Birmingham

### 14 November

*Prophetic Voices*,  
Derbyshire

### 17-18 November

*Diverse-City*: Urban  
Expression, London

### 1-2 December

Workshop, *Scrolls &  
Parchments*, London

### 5-6 December

Theology forum,  
Offchurch

### 9 February 2013

ANC gathering,  
Manchester

## News and Events

### Events

**Juliet Kilpin**, who is now organizing events on behalf of the Network and the Mennonite Centre Trust, updates us on recent and future events:

The summer saw the Network involved in great partnerships and a range of brilliant events that promote Anabaptist values and told Anabaptist stories.

At the 2012 *Greenbelt Festival* individuals and organisations connected with the Network were involved in no fewer than twelve workshops or experiences. Walking, protesting, welcoming, eating, singing and even stripping were on the agenda, providing an eclectic introduction to Anabaptist thinking!

At the *Festival of Spirituality* in Edinburgh, Ian Milligan from Exploring Anabaptism in Scotland and Simon Barrow from Ekklesia, with others, presented 'Beyond Religion – Disorganised Religion', in which they asked if Anabaptists, Quakers, Nonconformists and loyal dissenters from within the major streams of Christianity can offer a new vision of faith and an alternative to top-down religion.

Since the summer, Lloyd Pietersen's *Reading the Bible after Christendom* day seminar has run in Portsmouth and Manchester and will be in London on 3 November.

This autumn, three evenings of story-telling and remembering are also on offer at Bristol Baptist College (with dates in September, October and November). *Celebrating Dissent* is providing an opportunity to celebrate radical movements and trouble-makers!

Information about all these events is available at [www.avastminority.com](http://www.avastminority.com). If you are running an event you would like promoted I am happy to help in any way I can. And if you have ideas about an event you would like to see happen or help organize (including repeats of events held elsewhere), contact me at [julietkilpin@aol.com](mailto:julietkilpin@aol.com).

PS: Another event I have pulled together (with others) is ADVENTurous. This festival of ideas, artistry, spoken word and live music will help us imagine how we got to where we are and how we might move towards a new place – through

three prisms: faith, ecology and the economy. Bringing together thinkers, activists and artists from different faith traditions, and none, for a day of exploration, debate and wonder, the event is hosted jointly by Greenbelt and Union Chapel, Islington, on 1 December.



While not overtly Anabaptist, I hope the topics and contributors will help us explore themes which are important to many of us – how to live hope-filled lives in times of turbulence and uncertainty. For information and tickets, go to [www.adventurous.me.uk](http://www.adventurous.me.uk).

### Other News

An Anabaptist group is starting in South Wales. There have been abortive attempts in the past to start a group in that area, but we are pleased to announce that the group is meeting for the first time on 16 November. It will be hosted by **Steve and Judith Kings** at their home (76 High Street, Abertridwr, Caerphilly CF83 4FD). If you are interested, you can contact them on 029 2083 1099 or 07970 501165.

On 9 November, Roy Searle and Stuart Murray Williams will be presenting 'Prophetic Voices' in Belfast. And on 14 November, Roy and Noel Moules will be presenting this at Cliff College, Derbyshire. Details on our website.

The Scandinavian Anabaptist Network now has a website: <http://anabaptist.nu/>. Of course, it is in Swedish, but you might be interested...

## Network of Communities

### ANC Gathering: Manchester

**Sue Haslehurst** writes: We're delighted that the Anabaptist Network study group in Manchester has offered to host the next national gathering of the Anabaptist Network of Communities. This will take place on Saturday 9 February 2013 at

Didsbury Baptist Church, Manchester. (We couldn't easily find a suitable date in the autumn of 2012 so have drifted into the following year.) We hope it will be a great opportunity for many of us to get together for a day of talking, eating, thinking, worshipping and having fun together. There will be a welcome for all ages.

We hope to explore some aspects of following Jesus in all of life, not least by drawing on the experiences and practices of some Manchester group members and others. For any who are not part of the network of communities but are drawn to Anabaptism, we hope the day will be particularly informative by giving a flavour of who contemporary Anabaptists are and what they care about. It will be a 'market place' day with a varied programme for all to share.

## Brethren in Christ Churches

Although Mennonites are more familiar to most UK Anabaptists than other denominations with historic Anabaptist roots, there are now several Brethren in Christ churches in Britain. Emerging in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in Pennsylvania, the BIC churches blend Anabaptist, Wesleyan and Pietist emphases. In the UK members of BIC churches are predominantly African.

Two of these churches, in Southend and Forest Gate (East London), are members of the ANC, so we invited them to introduce themselves. But they decided instead to ask **Dean Chauke**, who leads the West Midlands congregation, to write about his church and give a wider perspective. We hope to build stronger links with Dean and all the BIC churches over the coming years.

West Midlands Brethren in Christ Church is involved in a number of charitable activities. We provide church services to the community. This is done through preaching and teachings of the Christian way of life as well as through general advice giving. This ensures that citizens are encouraged to abide by the expected norms of society and uphold very high moral values, which we believe can only be obtained through a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Our main base is in Birmingham but we attract membership from the Birmingham metropolitan area, Warwick, Coventry, Derby, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall and Leicester.

As a charity we are actively involved in activities that aim at improving the human condition for young people, men and women in society. We

have an active youth department that offers career guidance and promotes ambition among the young. They are also offered entertainment opportunities aligned to the philosophy of the organisation. It is of vital importance that we keep the youth off the street and provide them with alternative lifestyles that will make them better citizens tomorrow.

The women's group also provides critical social support to members of the church in particular and this support is extended to the community in general. Women meet on a regular basis and discuss contemporary social issues which affect them on a day-to-day basis. They also share tips on how to better raise their children as well as improving family life, covering aspects such as cooking, sewing and other domestic skills.

The church also gets involved in helping out during bereavements, especially for its members of African origin. Our organisation always provides emotional, spiritual as well as financial support to the families during these grieving moments. As a church, we visit the bereaved families during the hard times on a regular basis until all arrangements for the burial have been made. Over and above this, the church takes its time to visit its members when they are sick in hospital to offer them support and wish them well.

Every Sunday we provide light refreshments or meals to anyone attending the services. This facility is open to church members in particular and to the community at large. This means that members of society who are disadvantaged and lack food can access free refreshments every Sunday afternoon.

As an organisation, we have linked with other BIC churches in the UK and we hold regular meetings in alternative venues across England. Over the past three years, we have been able to hold conventions at Easter, in July and a Vigil Service on 31 December each year. We also hold joint baptismal services in November for the Southern Region (London Area BIC congregations; Southend on Sea; Basildon; City East) and the Northern Region (West Midlands, Manchester and Leeds). Through quarterly leadership meetings, we have been able to share best practice, ensure uniform standards of prudence and administration, as well as enabling structured leadership development. The national body is embarking on a deliberate church planting programme, which will ensure that more preaching points are established to reach out to local communities with ease.

Historically the denomination's theological ethos and polity has been influenced by Anabaptist beliefs. It is that pioneering revelation that has been passed down through the generations and that has made a lasting impact in the relevance of the Gospel in today's society. The teachings and the standards set have helped us to focus on what makes us different as Christians and how we maintain relevance and presence and how we espouse Christian values in modern day-to-day living. We believe that with the emergence of individual ministries, especially in urban settings, networking, accountability and prudence are key in setting standards of piety, leadership, polity and biblical understanding.

I am hopeful that, as we get more involved with the Anabaptist Network, we will be able to tap into the available support resources and enrol into leadership mentorship schemes that will allow our leadership to progress from lay duties to ordination.

## Anabaptist Theology Forum

The forum is intended for practical theological reflectors and reflective church practitioners. The next gathering will be the usual 27 hours from 5-6 December 2012. Among highlights will be Ruth Gouldbourne on Balthasar Hubmaier's Communion Service, and further discussion of where we are and where we're going with the post-Christendom analysis. The cost is pro rata to £70 for the whole event. For information, contact: [simon.barrow@ekkleisia.co.uk](mailto:simon.barrow@ekkleisia.co.uk).

## Network of Organisations

### ANO Gathering: London

As we reported in the summer newsletter, there was an initial gathering in May in North London of representatives from the Anabaptist Network of Organisations, hosted by Juliet Kilpin and Noel Moules. Some of those invited could not come, so a second gathering is planned for 25 October, when 17 representatives will be there. If you have not received an invitation but are interested, contact Noel at: [office@anvil.org.uk](mailto:office@anvil.org.uk).

Quite a number of those accepting invitations to these two gatherings are not from organisations that are explicitly Anabaptist, but there seems to be an encouraging level of interest in linking

with others who share similar values. A further gathering, which will provide an opportunity for people from both these initial gatherings to meet each other, is planned for 10 April 2013.

## Mennonite Centre Trust

In the last two issues of the newsletter we have hinted at significant developments taking place in what was previously the London Mennonite Centre and is now the Mennonite Centre Trust. But we were unable to provide a proper update while various things were in process. So we are pleased now to be able to offer a more detailed update, provided by the MCT trustees:

### A new location

An important decision was reached early in 2012 when we recognised that our financial resources would not allow us to relocate within London. During 2011 we had explored various other options, including properties in Coventry, Oxford and the M4 corridor. Consultations with our partners led us to Selly Oak in south-west Birmingham, with the potential for making links with the International Mission Centre (Baptist) and with Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

However, we decided not to give up our London connection, seeking to locate our Trust office in a 'community house' there. By May, we had purchased and refurbished *Lyndhurst* in North London, where our coordinator, Will Newcomb, and his wife Yvonne now live, alongside Wayne and Lois Hochstetler, Mennonite international pastors. We also retain a small bedsit there for use by staff or trustees on London business.

### Menno House and associated properties

Our vision is that the Centre should provide a 'motherhouse' of *welcome, hospitality, resource and learning* for the Anabaptist movement. In May we bought an Arts & Crafts style property, set in a large garden, just yards from the International Mission Centre in Selly Oak.



Our partnership with them is vital, enabling us to use their facilities when seminar numbers exceed 20 and for residential conferences. In June our hosts, Darrell and Barbara Jantz, took up residence and began welcoming visitors.

In August, with the active support of all our new neighbours, the designs for extending *Menno House* were submitted for planning permission. These plans provide for an eco-extension to the ground floor that will increase the dimensions of the lounge-seminar room, create more dining space and a new kitchen. The old kitchen and garage will be demolished to make way for a two-story extension housing two en-suite guestrooms above new library and cloakroom facilities. Already existing rooms provide for an office, a resource room, and an en-suite bed-sit for the hosts. We anticipate builders being on-site from December until the Spring, when a new prayer hut will arrive.

In June we were also able to purchase *Kreider House*, a modern four-bedroom town-house just over the road to serve as staff accommodation. This is presently being redecorated and re-carpeted so that, in late November, Darrell and Barbara can move in whilst the builders work opposite. They have been wonderfully uncomplaining about the many moves they have undertaken in the last two years, have carried through major logistical and practical projects with great expertise, and have made a significant contribution to our plans for the future.

During the summer, we have been working to secure ongoing income for the Centre through the purchase and letting of two student houses in Selly Oak, with more in the pipeline. None of these developments would have happened without the professional and entrepreneurial skills of trustees Andrew Francis and Helen Roe, coupled with Andrew's and Darrell's practical skills. Our business plan involves adding to our property portfolio during 2013 in order to fully cover the Centre's operating costs.

### **Staffing and role changes**

In June, we brought a prospective Director and his family from the USA to spend a week with partner groups and a formal day of talks with the trustees. After a further week's UK vacation, he bravely decided to withdraw recognising that this role is not his and his family's calling.

As we went back to the drawing board, the implications of the recent strengthening of the UK Border Agency's rules became apparent.

New regulations mean that we are not allowed to bring in a host couple from North America on rotating three-year visas, if their predominant ministry is to 'service' the *Menno House* centre and its grounds. So we have advertised a new post for someone to lead the work at *Menno House*, which will include teaching, networking and volunteer-supervision, starting in February. In November we will be identifying solutions to our longer-term volunteer domestic needs.

In terms of programme development, we are looking increasingly to partner the Anabaptist Network and associated teaching agencies. To this end, Juliet Kilpin is now working two days a week as Programme Development Worker, and during the autumn will spearhead our website development. Andrew Francis continues to exercise a vital honorary ministry, leading the staff team and chairing monthly staff meetings, spending more than a few days each month in Selly Oak, networking to help create our new profile. Juliet's and Andrew's promotion of our work at various events, including *Greenbelt*, help to build that platform. Some Selly Oak teaching is already underway. A 'Peacemaking' evening at *Menno House* is scheduled for 9 November and there will be a Lent 2013 study group. More details at [www.menno.org.uk](http://www.menno.org.uk).

### **Governance**

During 2012 we have said goodbye to trustees Sean Gardiner and Chris Horton. Sean served the Trust for 25 years, many as chair, steering it through its most turbulent period. Chris helped with the necessary but tortuous legal journey from the 'London Mennonite Trust' towards the more appropriate 'Mennonite Centre Trust' (a Charitable Incorporated Organisation). Jeremy Thomson continues, as chair, to co-ordinate the variety of work involved. We hope several new people will join the Trust in the next eighteen months.

### **The future**

At the heart of our work is nurturing prayerful, Jesus-shaped discipleship in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. We do that by welcoming one another, both friend and stranger, sharing meals and quiet times, learning together what Jesus is calling us to be now and in the coming days. Trustees and staff are working hard so that MCT's ministry can once again offer the resources of place and space, and provide envisioning and educational opportunities. We will publicise our new 'drop-in' pattern, library and resource facilities, as well as an expanded programme once the *Menno House* builders are finished.

Finally, a formal opening of the new Centre will take place on **22 June 2013**. We would like to invite you to come and help us re-launch MCT's ministry on this occasion. There will be worship, food, music, prayer, laughter and conversation. Further details nearer the time, but please make a note to come!

*The Mennonite Centre Trustees*

The Mennonite Centre Trust has a new mailing address: PO Box 68073, London N22 9HS. The Centre is no longer in London, but this is where to send any correspondence.

## Bridge Builders

Raising the Barn? **Chris Burch**, chair of Bridge Builders, reflects on their recent experiences:

Last September, Bridge Builders moved from the London Mennonite Centre in Highgate to its own office a few miles up the road in Muswell Hill, and to its own charitable company identity. This move was accompanied by floods in the office, computer and telephone malfunctions, and (it seemed at the time) about every mishap that could have struck us.

From a small informal group, Bridge Builders' advisory body evolved into first a Management Group and now a Board of Trustees. We have had to invent a way of working together, at the same time as supporting and monitoring the efforts of Alastair McKay and his colleagues in their work of training church leaders, and offering mediation and consultancy to churches and groups in difficulties.

We have grown into a close-knit team, bound by a common purpose (we are quite task-orientated) and also by our habit of sharing personal issues and praying for each other at the start of every meeting. At our last quarterly trustees' meeting, I knew we'd turned a corner – we were sufficiently on top of the issues facing us to be able to finish the meeting early!

While all the surrounding circumstances were so difficult (and the staff team pretty stressed at times), the training work was nevertheless consistently excellent. Most of our courses have been nearly fully booked, which is good for morale and for our finances. Our new office manager, Michelle Power, is gradually getting on top of the accounts, the office procedures and the other challenges facing the team, and

she brings a practical down-to-earth approach that complements Alastair's high-octane style.

But it occurs to me that, had we been an older-fashioned Anabaptist family with a new building to erect, we would have asked our neighbouring families to help 'raise the barn'. Our nearest 'neighbours', of course, were the Mennonite Centre. We worked closely with them and could not have done it without them. But at the same time, as their report in this issue makes clear, they had their own barn to raise...

Could we have asked for more help? And would other brother and sister Anabaptist groups have been able and willing to provide that help? How can we work together better in the future, as we seek to demonstrate ways of living and working together that model Christian discipleship to a watching world?

## Urban Expression

In November, Urban Expression is celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary and recruiting its 100<sup>th</sup> urban missionary. *Diverse:City* is a weekend of events in East London (17-18 November), to which all readers of this newsletter are invited. Details at [www.urbanexpression.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.eventbrite.co.uk).

New teams have begun work recently in Eccles (Manchester) and Ellesmere Port, and we have been encouraged by several applications to join teams. We also now have regional coordinators in Glasgow and the West Midlands.

For more information on our values and teams, please go to [www.urbanexpression.org.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk).

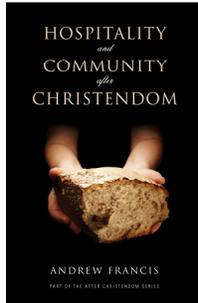
## Crucible

The eighth year of the *Crucible* course begins in November. It runs at the International Mission Centre in Selly Oak, Birmingham, with which the Mennonite Centre is forging a partnership, so Anabaptist influence there and in the course is increasing. And the course is rooted in the same post-Christendom perspective as the 'After Christendom' series, exploring what it means to follow Jesus on the margins.

Why not come along and see what goes on? It is possible to come for just one weekend before deciding whether to do the whole course. More information at [www.cruciblecourse.org.uk](http://www.cruciblecourse.org.uk).

## Books and Resources

### After Christendom series



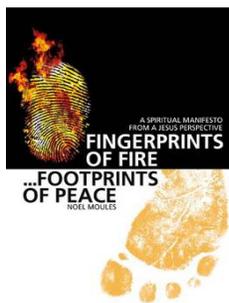
**Hospitality and Community after Christendom**, written by Andrew Francis, is now out. This is available from the usual sources at £12.99 or it can be purchased from the Network at an introductory price of £10. Or choose any other book in the series and buy both for £18 (UK only).

To whet your appetite, four more books in the series are being written:

- Fran Porter is writing *Women and Men after Christendom*
- Jeremy Thomson is writing *Emotions and Relationships after Christendom*
- Glen Marshall is writing *Preaching after Christendom*
- Simon Perry is writing *Atheism after Christendom*.

And if you've not read *Post-Christendom*, which launched the series, we can offer copies at just £8.00 (UK only).

### Fingerprints of Fire, Footprints of Peace



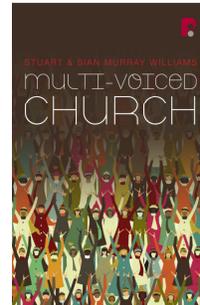
Noel Moules' first book, **Fingerprints of Fire, Footprints of Peace**, has now been published. It was launched in North London on 6 October at a special event at Union Chapel to celebrate 30 years of 'Workshop'. It is on sale for £12.99.

### The Naked Anabaptist

Indonesian and Swedish translations have now been published, with the French and Japanese translations next in line, we think. And it's been very encouraging to receive appreciative emails from those who have been reading the book.

The '2 for 1' offer is still available: buy one copy for yourself at £9.00 (UK only) and get one free to give to someone else who might welcome the opportunity to learn about the Anabaptist vision.

### Multi-Voiced Church



Picking up a theme from one of the Anabaptist Network's core convictions, Stuart and Sian Murray Williams explore the biblical foundation for and historical examples of multi-voiced church. With stories, examples and many practical guidelines. It costs £12.99, or £10 from the Network.

### Just War, Just Life: Eucharist

A Eucharistic liturgy written by **Clare McBeath** and **Tim Presswood**, Urban Expression team leaders in Openshaw, Manchester, in 2011:

In just a few moments,  
I shall have convinced you that my cause is just.  
Just pay attention.  
Let me just speak  
The words just pour from my lips.  
I will speak for just long enough  
to just suggest  
that there is just no alternative.

It's a just war  
It's just a war

Just as you thought humankind  
had had just about enough of violence  
another tyrant just has to be stopped.  
He is just evil.  
Our cause is just.  
A regime will change just like that.  
Those who get in the way will just have to accept  
that there is just no alternative.

It's a just war  
It's just a war

Those who die are just little people.  
Soldiers are just doing a job.  
Oil is just irrelevant.  
The mission is just to prevent attacks on civilians.  
Invasion just won't happen.

We just won't allow our troops to get carried away.  
Their training is just sufficient.

It's a just war  
It's just a war

So just 233 planes take off  
and just bomb the baddies,  
just targeting precisely those they want to take out.  
Forgetting that our bombs are just the same as the ones which fell just now;  
just ignoring the lives  
which young soldiers have just left behind,  
our planes just take off and just drop anonymous bombs.

It's a just war  
It's just a war

Just as, just two thousand years ago,  
a man – just one man  
was just so threatening to powers and principalities  
that they just couldn't cope with his challenge  
and just nailed him to a tree  
just to silence him.  
Just one man.  
Just not important.

This is just bread  
broken bread remembering the un-just

[Break and share bread]

But they just didn't understand  
that he wasn't just a man.  
He was just love  
And love just cannot die  
So just as dead trees  
just spring back to life,  
just three days later  
he just sprang back to life

This is just a cup of wine  
poured to celebrate just-ice

[Pour and drink wine]

He is just life.  
His life is just.  
And so we just want to live  
the life of justice.  
Just like that.

## Book Notes

You might be interested in the following books that have recently been published:

Brian Bewer: *A Pledge of Love* (Paternoster, 2012): a study of Balthasar Hubmaier's view of the sacraments.

Conrad Kanagy, Tilahun Beyene and Richard Showalter: *Winds of the Spirit* (Herald, 2012): a ground-breaking study of Anabaptist churches in the global South.

Gordon Matties: *Joshua* (Herald Press): the most recent volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series.

Eli Sasaran McCarthy: *Becoming Nonviolent Peacemakers* (Wipf & Stock, 2012): a Catholic perspective on US foreign policy.

Branson Parler: *Things Hold Together: John Howard Yoder's Trinitarian Theology of Culture* (Herald Press, 2002): a self-explanatory title.

Stuart and Sian Murray Williams: *The Power of All* (Herald, 2012): the North American version of *Multi-Voiced Church*.

## Articles Wanted

Although there was not room in this issue, we hope to feature further articles in forthcoming issues on the theme: 'What practical difference does Anabaptism make to your life?' We invite you to submit articles of up to 750 words.

And we welcome articles on other subjects that are likely to be of interest to readers. Contact us in advance if you are unsure, or simply send in an article (up to 750 words) for consideration.

## 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 **21 January 2013**.