

# Anabaptist Network Newsletter

June 2003

## New courses

Three new courses, designed primarily for group study but useful also for individuals, are now available from the Anabaptist Network:

- *Taking Jesus Seriously*

How has Jesus' teaching (especially the Sermon on the Mount) often been explained away? Why was this done? What might it mean to take Jesus seriously? How would this affect our responses to issues of violence and economics? How can we rediscover the radical, surprising and attractive Jesus and introduce him to our friends?

- *After Christendom*

What was Christendom? How did the partnership between church and state that dominated Europe for centuries affect the way Christians understood the Bible, practised church and engaged in mission? In Christendom the church was central. Now that Christendom is coming to an end, what does it mean to follow Jesus on the margins?

- *Becoming a Peace Church*

A study guide to the booklet by Alan and Eleanor Kreider with the same title. Why have churches been more interested in grace than peace? What is a 'peace church'? How does peace impact the way we worship, build community, work and witness? How do we respond to questions of warfare?

Each course consists of:

- Biblical material and reflections
- Historical resources
- Anabaptist perspectives
- Teaching segments
- Questions to consider
- Issues to discuss
- Ideas for further reading

These courses are available as free downloads from the network's web site, or you can request copies by post for £3.00 per course. The booklet *Becoming a Peace Church* by Alan and Eleanor Kreider is available for £1.50.

The courses are already being piloted in several places and we look forward to any feedback to help us improve and develop them.

## Resource houses

Thank you to those who responded to the request in the last newsletter for hosts for Anabaptist 'resource houses' in different parts of the country.

When this issue went to press, we had already had offers to host houses in:

- Wolverhampton
- Suffolk
- Northamptonshire
- Lancashire
- Devon
- Wiltshire
- East London
- Kent
- Smethwick
- Mexborough
- Cardiff
- Fife

We have been very encouraged by news that some of the resources will be provided free of charge by North American Mennonites.

We hope to set up the first resource houses in the autumn and to give details of these in the next newsletter. If you are interested in becoming a host too, please let us know.

## New centres

Those searching for resources on Anabaptism or on issues such as peace, conflict transformation, social justice and community, where Anabaptists have distinctive perspectives to offer, struggle to find these in the UK. By far the best resource centre is the London Mennonite Centre, with its library and Metanoia book service.

However, this centre is not easily accessible for everyone, so we are exploring possibilities for other Anabaptist/Mennonite centres. Discussions are underway in Portadown (Northern Ireland) and also in York. These may develop differently from the London centre, but they will be places where others can connect with the Anabaptist tradition.

We hope we may have further news of these developments in the next issue of the newsletter.

## Coming events

### *EXODUS*

A day conference looking at why people are leaving the church. Stuart Murray Williams is the keynote speaker for this event, which is co-sponsored by the Anabaptist Network Yorkshire study group and Yorkshire Baptist Association. There will also be a presentation by LEAD Consultants UK (who have a specialist ministry towards those who have left church), plus a selection of seminars.

*Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2003*: 10-3 at Ward Green Baptist Church, Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

Full details and an application form can be downloaded from the Anabaptist Network website, or send sae to: Jonathan Blakeborough, 20 Arundel Grove, Woodthorpe, York YO24 2RZ

### *Jesus Fellowship Praise Day!*

1pm: food and friendship. 2pm: 'Church to care and dare' with guest speaker Stuart Murray Williams (Anabaptist Network). 4.30pm: food and friendship. 6pm: 'Celebrate Jesus' (featuring technomedia gospel presentation). All welcome. Free admission.

*Saturday 18 October 2003* at City Hall, Sheffield.

For information, ring 01327 34999.

## People

**Ben Faulkner**: we grieve the death of Ben, one of our study group convenors, and we continue to pray for Barbara and their two young children. There is a tribute to Ben in the current issue of *Anabaptism Today*.

**Jonathan Bartley** (the director of Ekklesia) and **Jonathan Blakeborough** (the convenor of the Yorkshire study group) have both agreed to join the Anabaptist Network steering group.

**Andrew Francis** (our former development worker) was inducted on 7 June as minister of Emmanuel United Reformed Church in Haydon Wick, near Swindon.

**Jared Diener** is completing his year as research assistant for the Network and returning to the USA. We are grateful for his help and are hoping to find a successor for the coming year.

## Study groups

Study groups meet in various parts of the UK. If you want to join a group or try one out, ask for dates and venues.

**Bristol**: Ruth Gouldbourne, Bristol Baptist College, Duncan House, The Promenade, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NF (0117 946 7050)

**Oxford**: Trisha Dale, 4 Mistletoe Green, Oxford OX4 7FY (01865 773403)

**North London**: Vic Thiessen, 14 Shepherds Hill, London N6 5AQ (020 8340 8775)

**South London**: Alun Morinan, 37 Piquet Road, London SE20 7XY (020 8778 7018)

**West Midlands**: Derrick Faux: 58 Lightwoods Hill, Smethwick, West Midlands B67 5EB (0121 434 3597)

**Yorkshire**: Jonathan Blakeborough, 20 Arundel Grove, Woodthorpe, York YO24 2RZ (01904 703710)

**Edinburgh**: Jim Purves, Bristol Baptist Church, Buckingham Terrace, Edinburgh EH4 3DJ (0131 332 3682)

**Portadown**: Tim Foley: 60 Gilford Road, Portadown, Co. Armagh BT63 5EF (028 3833 7260)

### **New study groups?**

New study groups may begin soon in Leyland, Liverpool, Belfast and Dublin. Please let us know if you are interested in joining one of these or starting a group elsewhere.

## *Anabaptism Today*

The June 2003 issue includes the following:

- The Two Swords: Jeremy Thomson reconsiders a passage in the Gospels used by some to claim Jesus endorsed violence.
- The End of Christendom: an exploration of the third of the Anabaptist Network's core convictions.
- Re-inventing Christendom: Nigel Wright asks how church and state might relate in post-Christendom.
- Oh Brother!: Ali Phelps reflects on the highly publicised imprisonment in India and release of her brother, Ian Stillman.

Complimentary copies of *Anabaptism Today* are available on request. Back issues are available at half price (£2). An index of authors and subjects can also be supplied.

To subscribe to *Anabaptism Today* or to renew your subscription, send a cheque for £10 (one year's subscription) payable to 'Anabaptism Today' to the address below.

## Theological forum

For 24 hours twice a year the Anabaptist Network theological forum meets, usually at Offa House, near Leamington Spa. In March 2003, 24 of us met and discussed the 'War on Terror', Anabaptist hermeneutics and 'Re-inventing Christendom'.

The next event is on 23-24 October at the usual venue, when we will be exploring Anabaptist spirituality.

The forum convenor is Ruth Gouldbourne, Bristol Baptist College, Duncan House, The Promenade, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NF (0117 946 7050). Please contact her if you want further information about the forum.

## Introducing the Anabaptists

Who were the Anabaptists and why are Christians in Britain today interested in this tradition? Every so often we offer a day seminar introducing this movement and its contemporary significance.

If you are new to the Anabaptist Network or would like to discover more about the Anabaptist movement and its distinctive approach to radical discipleship and following Jesus, a special *Cross Currents* seminar (co-sponsored by the London Mennonite Centre and the Anabaptist Network) may be of interest.

**Saturday 29 November (10.00-4.30): led by Stuart Murray Williams and Karen Stallard**

Through stories, pictures and drama, this seminar will introduce participants to the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. What did it mean to be an Anabaptist? Why were these people persecuted? What did they believe? What kinds of churches did they plant? What was distinctive about the way they lived?

We will follow the story through the first two generations, meeting some of the leaders and

many ordinary believers. We will also think about the significance of this movement for Christians today. Why are many people finding Anabaptist ideas and practices helpful as they think about faith and discipleship in our society? What can Anabaptism contribute to the way we think about mission, peace, community and lifestyle?

Fee: £18 (£9 if unwaged).

## London Mennonite Centre

The centre offers encouragement and resources to those seeking to learn more about radical Christian discipleship in the Anabaptist tradition.

Current ministries include seminars, Metanoia book service, Bridge Builders mediation and conflict transformation service, a library and retreat facilities.

Contact the London Mennonite Centre for more information at 14 Shepherds Hill, London N6 5AQ (0845 450 0214) email: [lmc@menno.org.uk](mailto:lmc@menno.org.uk), website: [www.menno.org.uk](http://www.menno.org.uk)

### *Bridge Builders*

Bridge Builders offers mediation services and training/consultancy in conflict transformation for churches. Future dates include:

**6-10 October 2003: Bristol.** *Skills Training for Mediation in the Church*, led by Richard Blackburn/Alastair McKay.

### *Cross-Currents seminar programme*

The autumn programme includes:

**Saturday 27 September: Film 2003: theological reflections**

Join Vic Thiessen, LMC director and lifelong film buff, amateur film critic and theologian, and professional film critic Jeremy Clarke for a day of exploring the links between film and theology.

**Saturday 1 November: Restorative Justice: An introductory workshop with Libby Schrag, Vic Thiessen and Alastair McKay**

Restorative justice advances the concept that crime is a violation of people and relationships. Justice involves the victim, offender and the community in a search for solutions which promote repair, reconciliation and reassurance.

Fee: £18 (£9 if unwaged).

## Urban Expression

Urban Expression is an inner-city church planting agency with Anabaptist values that works through self-funding teams. There are currently six centres in East London.

Three of the team leaders – Phil Warburton, Jim Kilpin and Karen Stallard recently visited the *Center for Anabaptist Leadership* in Los Angeles. Karen also visited College Mennonite Church in Goshen (Indiana), with whom we have good links. Reports of this visit are available on request.

For recent news and further information, please write to Urban Expression, PO Box 35238, London E1 0YA or visit our new and improved website at: [www.urbanexpression.org.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk)

## Ekklesia

The theological think-tank Ekklesia is an initiative of the Anvil Trust, which runs the Workshop discipleship training course, and comes from an Anabaptist perspective. It has recently promoted ideas of non-violence in the context of the war in Iraq, which have been debated by the BBC on several occasions.

Ekklesia has also launched a syndicated news service for church web-sites that encourages readers to look at the news from a theological perspective. The service is already being used by dozens of churches in the UK.

Ekklesia is looking for people with creative ideas about how theology might be applied in public life. Ideas would be welcomed particularly in the areas of international relations and peacemaking, constitutional reform including the relationship to prison and victim-offender reconciliation. But all areas of public policy will be considered.

People are being asked to ‘think the unthinkable’ in a series of short papers. If you are interested in writing a paper of about 1,000 words that explores an issue of public policy from an Anabaptist perspective, Ekklesia would like to hear from you.

More details can be found on Ekklesia’s web site: [www.ekklesia.co.uk](http://www.ekklesia.co.uk) You can get in touch with

Jonathan Bartley at Ekklesia, 21 Tooting Bec Gardens, London SW16 1QY, by phone (on 020 8769 8163) or by email: [office@ekklesia.co.uk](mailto:office@ekklesia.co.uk).

## Workshop

Noel Moules writes: ‘We are now in the last few months of this current year in which so many good things have happened for both students and the teams. We are also looking towards this September when we will be beginning our 21<sup>st</sup> year. Please would you pray for us and help us make the course known.

‘For information and resources to do this, please ring 01142888816, e-mail [admin@anvil.org.uk](mailto:admin@anvil.org.uk) or visit our website [www.workshop.org.uk](http://www.workshop.org.uk). Thank you.’

## Our web site

Over recent months we have upgraded the Network’s website. Many thanks to Jared Diener and Will Newcomb for doing this. If you have access to the Internet, you might want to check out the new resources and links to other sites of interest: ([www.anabaptistnetwork.com](http://www.anabaptistnetwork.com)).

## About this newsletter

Thrice-yearly newsletters from the Anabaptist Network are sent free of charge to subscribers to our journal, *Anabaptism Today*, and to others who are on our mailing list because you have asked to be or have attended events we have organised. The newsletters report on recent activities and contain news of future events arranged by the Network or our partner organisations.

However, if you are surprised to receive this and would prefer not to receive future issues, please inform us and we will remove your name from the distribution list.

Do also contact us if you would like to receive email versions of this newsletter, a complimentary copy of *Anabaptism Today*, or if you want further information about anything.

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