



Anabaptist Network News

Study Groups

The Anabaptist Network grew out of a study group that met in London during the 1980s to explore the resources of the Anabaptist tradition, which we found inspiring and challenging. One of the early aims of the Network was to stimulate the formation of similar groups elsewhere.

Over the years since 1991 study groups have emerged in various places. Some met for a number of years before closing as members moved away or became involved in other things. Others ceased to operate for a while and have started again as demand grew. One or two have continued to meet throughout the past 15 years. Some groups meet as often as monthly, others three or four times a year; some eat together as well as studying; one has a weekend away together.

To give a flavour of the groups, we invited several study group convenors to report what their group is currently studying. Here are their responses:

West Midlands: we meet 8-10 times a year and have a residential weekend in August. In 2006 we have been looking at the Anabaptist Network core values and this will most likely continue into the early part of 2007, after which we will need to choose some different themes.

Leyland: this year we have looked at 3 essays by John Howard Yoder that he identifies (in *For the Nations*) as 'basic' to his thinking. Currently we are reading *The Anabaptist Seed* by C. Arnold Snyder, which is providing a fruitful source of debate and interest.

South London: although this group has not been well-attended recently, we hosted an evening with David Hilborn (Evangelical Alliance) to explore the issue of penal substitution and the Anabaptist tradition. New members welcome!

Cheshire: at our next meeting we will focus our attention on chapters 1-3 of *A Culture of Peace: God's Vision for the Church* by Alan Kreider, Eleanor Kreider and Paulus Widjaja.

West Yorkshire: at our last meeting we discussed the roots of Anabaptism – did it grow out of a desire to embrace a more radical approach to reformation, was it a flowering of social/religious renewal movements, such as the Hussites, or was it an attempt to broaden the ideals of monasticism to involve the laity?

There are currently 14 study groups operating (including a virtual study group), plus a new one forming in Northampton (see below) and we know of interest in 4 other locations: South Wales, Brighton, Liverpool and East Anglia. If you are within reach of these areas and are interested in helping to start a new group, please let us know. Or if you would like to explore the feasibility of forming a group in your area, please contact us and we will put you in touch with others locally. The locations and contact details of all the study groups can be found on the website at: www.anabaptistnetwork.com/studygroups.

Radical Discipleship Conference – Book Now

There is still time to book in for the conference at Cliff College on 4 November, exploring discipleship in the Anabaptist and Methodist traditions. Ring Stuart Murray Williams on 0117 330 7826 or email stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk.

Events

28-29 October 2006

First weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham. Subject: *Church Planting*.

4 November 2006

Radical Discipleship – Anabaptist Network/ Methodist day event at Cliff College, Calver.

9 December 2006

Introducing the Anabaptists – a day event at Ringsfield Hall, Suffolk.

14-15 December 2006

Anabaptist theology forum. Main subject: *Environmental Ethics*.

24-25 February 2007

Second weekend of the *Crucible* course in Birmingham. Subject: *Urban Mission*.

19-23 March 2007

Bridge Builders course: 'Mediation and Facilitation Skills Training for Senior Church Leaders' at Swanwick

26-28 May 2007

Residential conference at Barnes Close with Alan and Eleanor Kreider on the subject *Worship and Mission after Christendom*.

www.anabaptistnetwork.com

Our website is becoming a substantial resource, accessed by people across the world, many of whom contact us with follow-up enquiries. Over the past four months we have added quite a lot of material to the website:

*The video **Rediscovering Anabaptism**, in which people involved in the Network talk about issues of discipleship, justice, mission, church, peace, community etc., was shot in the early 1990s. Segments are now available in DVD format and can be viewed free of charge. A chance to see what we looked like 15 years ago! www.anabaptistnetwork.com/rediscovering

*Two booklets designed as simple introductions to the Anabaptist tradition and the significance of Christendom and post-Christendom. You can print off *Who were the Anabaptists?* and *What is Post-Christendom?* for your own use or for friends: www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/2 or www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/279

*A further article in our 'Drawn to Anabaptism' series. James Stacey reflects on Anabaptist influences in the development of the **Jesus Army**. www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/392

*A new section on **restorative justice**, listing resources and agencies working in this area. www.anabaptistnetwork.com/restorativejustice

*Another new section exploring the principles and practical aspects of **multi-voiced worship**. www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/386

*A series of short articles by Joe Baker, one of the leaders of **Peacechurch** In Birmingham (see www.peacechurch.org.uk), on Anabaptist approaches to church that have influenced him. www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/377

*A link to an online version of the radical tract, **The Net of Faith**, by Moravian Peter Chelcicky. www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/62

There are also Anabaptist resources available on many other websites, including:

Plough ebooks: www.plough.com/ebooks.html

Lloyd Pietersen's blog on all things Anabaptist: <http://anabaptiststudies.blogspot.com>

The **Metanoia Book Service** is now offering an online service: www.metanoiabooks.org.uk

Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (www.gameo.org) provides information on Anabaptist-related topics, including history, theology, biography and institutions. Secular topics from an Anabaptist perspective and full-text source documents are also included.

By the way, you can now sign up for a monthly email, alerting you to anything new on the site.

We are grateful to **Tim Nafziger**, who has now returned to the US, for continuing to act as our webmaster – but we are looking for someone in the UK to take over. Any offers?

Network Events

On Saturday **4 November** Cliff College (Calver, in Derbyshire) will host and co-sponsor a day event exploring the Anabaptist and Methodist traditions, especially their approach to *Radical Discipleship*. Book now!

On Saturday **9 December** there will be a day conference at Ringsfield Hall in Suffolk. Stuart Murray Williams and Karen Stallard will present *Introducing the Anabaptists* through a mixture of drama, story-telling and interactive sessions.

On **14-15 December** the theology forum will be meeting. Our guest speaker will be Dr Michael Northcott, author of several books including the acclaimed *An Angel Directs the Storm*. He and others (Jo Rathbone and Alun Morinan) will be exploring environmental and bio-medical ethics.

In **March 2007** (date not finalised) the Network is co-sponsoring with Cell Church UK a day event to explore *alternatives to monologue preaching*. In the Spring 2006 newsletter we carried an article on this subject, and there are some resources on the website. Further details will be available on the Network's website shortly and in the next newsletter.

On **26-28 May 2007** our residential conference will be held at Barnes Close, near Birmingham. Our guest speakers Alan & Ellie Kreider will be presenting material from their forthcoming book, *Worship and Mission after Christendom*. As we expect this to be popular, please book soon to ensure a place.

For further information or to book a place at any of these events, write or email to the address below or ring Stuart Murray Williams on 0117 330 7826.

Network News and Resources

After a dormant period, the **Bristol** study group has started meeting again regularly. For further details, contact linda.wilson@blueyonder.co.uk or stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk.

Plans are developing to start a new study group in **Northampton**. If you are interested, contact Graham Old: geold@anabaptist.co.uk.

We have a new resource house at the home of **Colin Cartwright**: The Forelands, Red Lion St, Chesham HP5 1EZ colcris@dircon.co.uk

We are pleased that **Jo Rathbone** has agreed to join the Network's steering group. Jo lives in Coventry, has participated in the theology forum for several years, and is deeply involved in the eco-congregation initiative.

Free book: Thomas Finger: *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* (2004), 550 pages – email your address to peter@churchfromscratch.org and it's in the post to you (if you are the first to contact Peter).

Volunteer Opening

The Round Chapel Hackney has a 6-12 month volunteer opening for someone willing to work in family care, a role which could be combined with urban mission. The Round Chapel is well known in urban mission circles as an innovative Christian church (www.theroundchapel.org.uk). Leaders Chris & Ali Lawrence have an urgent need for family care due to Ali's cancer (<http://alisailments.blogspot.com>).

Family details: Asha (3 ½ years) and Kirin (18 months) need someone to come and stay with them to be a stable friend/helper for at least six months while their mum undergoes a second round of chemotherapy. Chris has a flexible job and there is already lots of help offered by their local Christian community. No medical care is required – just someone willing to share family life, the family home in Hackney (E5) and faith in a gracious God.

Asha is soon to start nursery at local school 9-3.30pm every day. Kirin is doing 2 full days at a cooperative pre-school. Tasks will include light housework (not cleaning), shopping, cooking, laundry, picking up and dropping off children, playing, helping with tea and bath time, and occasionally babysitting. Sometimes a parent

will be around, sometimes not, and a flexible approach will be needed.

You can expect: a comfortable double bedroom, internet access, decent hours and allowance (to be negotiated) with good bus and train links into central London.

The need is for a mature Christian with good English who is available for interview and is eligible to work in this country. Some previous experience and a willingness to be flexible are important as well as checkable references.

Email Chris at chrisandali@ukonline.co.uk to tell him about yourself and for further details. Ideally this position would start as soon as possible until at least Easter 2007 but longer if possible. Chris looks forward to hearing from anyone interested.

After Christendom Series

Jonathan Bartley's book, *Faith and Politics after Christendom*, was launched at a conference in Birmingham on 1 July, sponsored by Ekklesia and the Anabaptist Network. Andrew Bradstock, Simon Barrow and Jonathan were the speakers and feedback has been very positive. We await with interest wider reaction to this third book in the series.

There is now a dedicated website to encourage discussion of the issues raised in the series and to offer further resources. If you have not yet found this, go to www.postchristendom.com and add your own comments to the debate.

We did also explore the possibility of setting up another website – Christendom.com, net or org – to post a one-sentence message explaining that 'the era to which this website refers is now closed'! Sadly all possible domain names were already in use.

Stuart Murray's long-delayed *Changing Mission* has also finally been published – an Anabaptist perspective on the emerging church scene. This can be ordered via www.metanoiabooks.org.uk

Root and Branch

Friendship and synergy between Anabaptist-oriented groups continues to grow through the 'Root & Branch' network. This network now has its own website – www.rootandbranch.org.uk –

on which are listed the 14 organisations that are now partners.

Involved in diverse activities – from mediation to urban church planting, from peace activism to selling books, from media work to training – we are continuing to explore ways to enhance and strengthen each other's ministries.

Peace School

The new Peace School initiative (mentioned in our Summer newsletter) started with a 10-day summer school during August. This gathered time was the start of a year-long programme for the 12 participants of this trial year.

Jonathan Dorsett reports: 'With explorations covering subjects as diverse as "Playfulness and peacemaking" and "The myth of redemptive violence", we covered a lot of ground. Exciting teaching and sharing by our visitors catalysed thought and discussion among us, and set the foundations for the rest of our year journeying together.

'By the end of the week there was a deep sense of community among the group as we sent each other out until we meet again for our gathered time in November.'

For further information contact Jonathan Dorsett (0113 2574572) or www.peaceschool.org.uk

Workshop

Noel Moules writes with an update and news of proposed changes to the *Workshop: Applied Christian Studies* programme, which has just begun its 24th year.

'As with all Christian training courses at the moment, numbers are tight, although the quality and variety of the participants remains high. We have around 100 learners this year studying in Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds and London. Lower than expected take-up in the north-west has meant that those who booked in to study at Manchester are now joining those in Leeds. The teams are full of enthusiasm for the new year, but also for the plans we have for creatively restructuring the course for September 2007.

'Realising that many people's busy lives make them feel they cannot give eleven weekends in a year to study, we are exploring the possibility of re-arranging the Workshop material into themed weekends (e.g.: Spirituality, Mission, Church, Ethics).

'Participants will be encouraged to do the whole course, but there will also be the opportunity for people to do one-off weekends on a theme of their choice, and/or to build up a portfolio of study at a pace more suitable to their personal circumstances. Participants will be able to study just for interest, but we hope to gain university accreditation at HE Level 1 for those who want study credits.

'Everything is in the early stages of discussion and we ask for your prayers for wisdom as the planning proceeds over the next few months. We will keep you informed of developments.'

Crucible

Crucible, sponsored by our Root and Branch partners Urban Expression and Workshop (and Alove), explores church planting, urban mission and emerging church. 45 people participated in the pilot year of the course, which concluded in June 2006. Feedback from these participants has been very encouraging.

The course will run again in Birmingham during 2006-07. There are three teaching weekends – in October, February and June, plus an optional placement and open learning. For details and dates, please see www.cruciblecourse.net. As this newsletter went to press, there were still spaces available on this course.

Contact Us

For further information about anything you have read in this newsletter, please contact us. And if you have information you would like included in the next newsletter, please let us have this by 31st January 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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