



The Mennonite Trust

Dear Friends,

We reported in February that the trustees had made some far-reaching decisions about the focus and priorities of the Mennonite Trust. The past few months have been spent working through the implications of these decisions:

- To provide support and resources for the wider Anabaptist movement, rather than developing our own programmes.
- To ensure that the Anabaptist movement continues to draw on the legacy and experience of the global Mennonite community.

We are pleased to be able to report now on several encouraging developments.

Mennonite Library

The library, which had been in storage since the sale of the London Mennonite Centre, was transported to Bristol Baptist College in July, unpacked and sorted by a team of volunteers (some shown in this photo), and will be accessible from 1 October.



The collection has not been updated regularly during the past decade, so we plan to purchase

quite a number of books in the next few months and then to allocate an amount each year to ensure it is kept updated. We are pleased that the library will once again be readily available. Anyone wishing to consult the collection should contact the college librarian, Mike Brealey, on 0117 946 7050 or email library@bristol-baptist.ac.uk.

Centre for Anabaptist Studies

The imminent arrival of the Mennonite library has encouraged Bristol Baptist College to develop a Centre for Anabaptist Studies. [There is more information about this Centre, in which the Mennonite Trust is a partner, in this leaflet link.](#) We look forward to the official launch of this Centre in October.

Webinars

One of the first initiatives of the new Centre will be a series of webinars (web-based seminars that can be accessed from a home computer). Six webinars on the theme 'The Challenges and Opportunities of Post-Christendom' have been scheduled, featuring authors of already published and forthcoming books in the 'After Christendom' series. There's a [flyer](#) about these, [with details of how to register if you are interested.](#)

North American Mennonites

As many readers will be aware, it has become increasingly difficult for North Americans to obtain longer-term visas to enter the UK. The Trust has sponsored **Mike Nimz** to work with the Anabaptist Network, together with his wife **Cheryl**, and they just starting their second year. They are living in Kreider House, our property in Selly Oak, hosting an Anabaptist study group and welcoming many visitors, as well as travelling extensively to connect with individuals and groups interested in learning from the Anabaptist tradition. This represents a further contribution by the Trust to the wider Anabaptist movement.



Whether it will be possible to bring others over on this basis in the future is by no means clear. But it is still feasible to arrange short-term visits, so we intend to set these up regularly over the next few years. We are in conversation with a number of North American Mennonites about visits in 2015 and beyond. And this year, from mid-September to mid-November, we are delighted to welcome Canadian Mennonites, **Tom & Rebecca Yoder Neufeld**, who will be based in Kreider House in Selly Oak but travelling widely and speaking in churches, conferences and theological colleges.



You can find through these links [more information](#) about their visit, which will include Tom giving the [inaugural lecture of the Centre for Anabaptist Studies](#). If you are able to get along to this or [other public events in their schedule](#), you will be very welcome.

European Mennonites

We are also eager to strengthen existing links and develop further links with Mennonites in other parts of Europe. A conversation took place in April that helped to identify people and institutions with whom we hope to interact much more over the coming months. This will be followed up by exchange visits and further conversations.

Selling and Buying

The trustees decided some time ago to invest a significant part of the proceeds from the sale of the London Mennonite Centre in property, rented out to provide an income for the Trust. More recently, we also decided to invest in properties to assist Urban Expression teams in their ministry in poor urban communities. In the London area, especially, property is very expensive and the teams struggle to afford suitable housing. Urban Expression (www.urbanexpression.org.uk), an urban mission agency, is part of the wider Anabaptist movement that the Trust is now committed to supporting. We are in the process of selling two properties in order to finance the purchase of houses in Hackney and Harold Hill for two of the teams. These will provide some rental income for the Trust and will also provide the facilities these teams need.

Personnel

In June we finally bade farewell to Will Newcomb, long-term Trust administrator, as he retired to China with his wife Yvonne. **Mike Beckett** has picked up this role and has provided excellent administrative support for the Trustees, bringing a wide range of experience and skills to bear, not least in the areas of housing and management. **Juliet Kilpin** has continued to operate as our development worker but, in light of the Trust's new priorities, has reduced her hours and will cease to work for us at the end of December. We have appreciated her energy, creativity and enthusiasm as she has set up various events and activities during this transitional period. Perhaps the most memorable was the 'Everyone thinks they're open-minded...' debate at Union Chapel, London, in June between Simon Perry, author of *Atheism after Christendom*, and Richard Norman from the British Humanist Association.



Bridge Builders

One of the ministries to emerge from the London Mennonite Centre was Bridge Builders (www.bbministries.org.uk), a congregational conflict transformation initiative. Now a separate ministry, Bridge Builders has for several years been directed by Alastair McKay. He is moving on and Bridge Builders is looking for his successor. [Further information is available here.](#)

Looking Ahead

During 2014 we have clarified our priorities, achieved financial stability and laid the foundations for future activities as we continue to support and resource the wider Anabaptist movement. Looking ahead, we anticipate:

- Exploring ways to communicate the Anabaptist vision effectively to a younger generation.
- Strengthening links with European Mennonites and arranging further visits from North American Mennonites.
- Renewing the trustees as some long serving trustees step down and we invite new people to join us.
- Continuing to partner with the Anabaptist Network and others to put on more events that engage with challenging conversation-partners (don't miss ['Who would Jesus shoot?' on 12 November at Union Chapel – flyer link](#)).

We welcome feedback on any of the above – suggestions, comments, concerns or encouragements – and we continue to value your support and prayers as we move forward. We hope to see many of you at events over the next few weeks.

Shalom,

Stuart Murray Williams
Chairs of Trustees



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