

Autumn 2016 Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

This newsletter is an opportunity to update you on key developments over the past six months.

### **Development Worker: Alex Elish**

Alex writes: 'Travelling with Stuart in April to Canada was a fantastic opportunity to meet Canadian Mennonites and begin to understand more about the opportunities and challenges Mennonite churches are wrestling with. I had the privilege of talking with pastors, church leaders and peace activists involved at local church level who are passionate about how Anabaptist convictions can inform and re-vitalise church life and mission. Two personal highlights were facilitating a church-planting workshop for around 40 church planters from a variety of different contexts in Eastern Canada; and enjoying some local craft beer with the Pastors Beer Group in Saskatchewan.'



'Back in London, I am delighted that in my role with the MT/AN I have been able to develop friendship and key working relationships with CHIPS (Christian International Peace Service) and St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation. We are just at the beginning of working together to create a peace activist training course/conversation that we will hopefully be piloting in the New Year. Our aim is to bring together local leaders and people in our neighbourhoods to think through how we make peace together in our communities. Taking seriously the notion that 'Nothing without us about us can be for us', we want to learn from people who are peacemakers (whether they realise this or not!) in the neighbourhoods we live in, and bring them together with other local leaders to think through how we can wage peace in our communities. I'm really excited about this project; I will keep you

updated as this collaborative work develops.'

### **Administrator: Vickie Schellert**



The Trust has a new administrator. Vickie Schellert began work on 1 July and after a two-month handover period from Mike Beckett is now fully in charge! We are grateful for the contribution Mike has made to the Trust and wish him well as he continues to seek a full-time job.

Vickie writes: 'I have a completely useless degree in Marine Biology, a diploma in ministry, I've been a writer and editor for published works, I've tour managed a US punk band across Great Britain, and I've been a community worker, church planter and activist in as many capacities. I enjoy variety in life. I have ten years' experience in Charity Management and Administration and live in Hackney with my husband Rob, daughter Gwen and cat Cosette. I am originally from Oxnard, California, but I have been in the UK since 2004.'

### **Anabaptist Network Development Workers: Mike and Cheryl Nimz**

Cheryl writes: 'These past 4 months have been a whirlwind. Mike and I completed a 2 1/2 month itineration in Canada and the USA. In that time we saw our son Odin get married to a wonderful young lady, Cayla. It was wonderful being back among family and friends. We travelled over 7,200 miles by motorcycles and spoke at multiple churches, house groups and conferences. North



American Anabaptists are excited at what's happening in the UK. It gave us a renewed energy to come back to the UK to continue building relationships with people who want to follow Jesus and live out their faith in an Anabaptist perspective.

'So what's next? We are going to be getting in contact with different Anabaptist study groups across the UK. We are hoping to build stronger relationships with these groups and help support a few more. We've received a few emails as well, asking us to come and meet with people to chat about Anabaptism. We will be busy at different conferences and speaking at house groups across the nation. If you would like us to come to your area, please email us at [nimzcycles@gmail.com](mailto:nimzcycles@gmail.com)'

### **Partnerships**

The Trust has longstanding partnerships with both the Anabaptist Network and

Urban Expression (which runs the [Crucible course](#)), and we have recently formalised partnerships with two other organisations that share our values and priorities:

- **Peaceful Borders** is an initiative being developed by Juliet Kilpin, a former development worker for the Trust, which is offering support to refugees and volunteers in the camp in Calais known as ‘the jungle’ and elsewhere. This includes networking, pastoral support, conflict resolution, listening and being a peaceful presence in a stressful context. For further details, contact [julietkilpin@aol.com](mailto:julietkilpin@aol.com)
- **CPT-UK** is an attempt to develop a UK branch of the well-established and highly regarded Christian Peacemaker Teams movement, which trains and deploys volunteers to accompany vulnerable communities in conflict situations in many parts of the world. For further information, contact [ruthajwilde@gmail.com](mailto:ruthajwilde@gmail.com)

### Centre for Anabaptist Studies



One of the major initiatives the Mennonite Trust is supporting is the Centre for Anabaptist Studies at Bristol Baptist College. For information about any aspect of the Centre please contact:

Centre for Anabaptist Studies,  
Bristol Baptist College,  
The Promenade,  
Bristol BS8 3NJ  
or at [anabaptist@bristol-baptist.ac.uk](mailto:anabaptist@bristol-baptist.ac.uk)

The Centre also has a [Facebook group](#) and a [blog](#).

There are two significant events at the Centre during one week in the autumn: From 21 to 24 November, an MA block week on **Anabaptist Ecclesiology and Missiology** will be run at the college. What did the early Anabaptists believe about church? What were their distinctive practices? How did they understand and practise mission? What contemporary relevance might this marginal and deeply missional movement have now that Christians in the West are on the margins? If these questions interest you, you are welcome to participate in this block week – either as part of an MA course if you are qualified for this or simply auditing the module.

During that week, at 7.30 on Tuesday 22 November, the 2016 annual lecture will be given by **Dr Mary Raber**, a Mennonite mission worker based in Ukraine. Her subject is ‘**Recovering Compassion: Post-Soviet Insights for Anabaptists.**’ An audio recording of the 2014 and 2015 lectures can be accessed [here](#).

### Another House

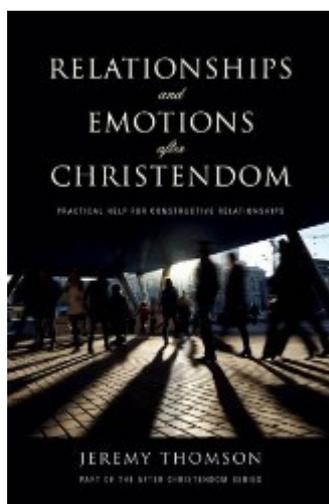
Regular readers of this newsletter will know that the Trust has purchased two houses for the use of [Urban Expression](#) teams – in Harold Hill and Hackney. Reviewing our

finances, the trustees concluded that we could afford to buy one further house and so we have been able to respond to a request from the team in Brighton for a house for some of their team members. We are in the process of identifying and purchasing a suitable property. We are pleased to be able to buy these properties to provide affordable housing for team members in marginal communities in which housing costs are very high despite the level of deprivation.

### International Links

As mentioned in the March newsletter, Alex and I were in Canada in April to strengthen links with the Mennonites there who are supporting Mike & Cheryl's ministry and to be the 'warm-up act' for their time in Canada between June and August. We travelled back and forth across the country, interacting with various groups and offering perspectives on the post-Christendom context that is very familiar in the UK and becoming more of a reality in Canada.

In October I have a further opportunity to connect with Mennonites in Europe. I have been invited to be the resource person at a retreat in the Netherlands for Mennonite Central Committee staff working in Europe and the Middle East. Then in November, Alex and I will be in Lithuania, meeting with an emerging network of churches that has developed links with the Mennonite Brethren denomination. Their main leader, Arturas Ruslinskas, spent some time with us in the UK earlier this year and is eager to foster links.



### Relationships and Emotions after Christendom

The eleventh book in the 'After Christendom' series, *Relationships and Emotions after Christendom*, by Jeremy Thomson, one of the trustees (and former chair) of the Mennonite Trust, is now available and priced at £14.99. We can supply copies, post-free, on request. Copies of the ten earlier books in the series can also be supplied, post-free, as can copies of *The Naked Anabaptist*. Please ask for details and prices if you are interested.

### Trustees

We are pleased to announce that the board of trustees has been strengthened by the addition of two new trustees. Linda Wilson is a church historian who lives in Bristol, is a member of the local Anabaptist group and the Anabaptist theology forum, and is a research fellow with the Centre for Anabaptist Studies. Gerry Barlow is a Baptist minister who lives in North London and brings very welcome expertise in

housing matters to the Trust.

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We welcome feedback on any of the above and continue to value your support and prayers as we move forward.

Shalom,  
Stuart Murray Williams  
Chair of Trustees

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