

March 2017 Newsletter

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Dear Friends,

'Rooted in the Anabaptist tradition, cultivating Christian discipleship as a way of life' – this is the strapline on the Mennonite Trust website and expresses who we are and what we are aiming to do, in partnership with others. This newsletter is an opportunity to update you on developments over the past six months.

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### Development Worker: Alexandra Elish



Alexandra writes: 'It seems like the world in which I am writing today is entirely different to the world of the most recent newsletter. Political and social upheaval dominate the news and it seems like society is in a collective state of heightened anxiety. In the past few weeks I have been mulling over two pieces of writing: C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* (specifically the letters between Screwtape and Wormwood dealing with politics and democracy) and an article entitled "Alien Citizens" by William H. Willimon, reflecting on the challenge of living faithfully as

Christians and the church in these times. Willimon, quoting Karl Barth and Eberhard Arnold, rehearses his call from *Resident Aliens* (co-authored with Stanley Hauerwas and now celebrating its 25th anniversary) for Christians to fully inhabit the political

nature of being the church by continuing to assert that “Jesus is Lord”. (Or maybe – for our non-feudal times we should declare that “Jesus is President” or “Jesus is Prime Minister”.)

‘While quietism and political disengagement are potential pitfalls of focussing primarily on the life and activity of the church, I was once again inspired by this vision of the church as an alternative community with particular (and peculiar) practices that point to the Kingdom of God realised here and now. “What kind of particular/peculiar practices might Jesus-following communities form their common life around?” is a question that I have been thinking through and discussing with Anabaptist friends over the past few months. We are hoping to have a discussion as part of the upcoming Anabaptist Theology Forum in April on this question and reflect on some of our conversations as younger Anabaptists.

‘Over the past few months I have continued to develop partnerships with other organisations with peace-centric values, such as CHIPs and CPT. These partnerships help to facilitate shared learning and create opportunities for greater collaboration on projects engaging with schools and communities around issues of peace and community flourishing. As we consider the unsettled affairs of our times and the political and ethical challenges that are to come, I am convinced that our Anabaptist values cannot be faithfully realised without being embodied in committed Christian communities, living deeply and sacrificially together and working out what it means to follow Jesus. I believe that how we address this challenge is a key issue for those of us drawn to Mennonite and Anabaptist values to reflect on and wrestle with in these times.’

### **Administrator: Vickie Schellert**



Vickie writes: ‘The Mennonite Trust is making progress in our application towards becoming a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation). It looks hopeful that before 2017 has ended we will be able to update you with some new organisational details. I've also been having some fun going through the archives to get rid of unnecessary paperwork and finding little treasures like correspondence with Jim Wallis at Sojourners from the 1970s and children's artwork who lived at Shepherd's Hill. I'm working my way towards getting as much digitised as possible and storing some

historical items for posterity. I've enjoyed supporting various organisations in awarding grants to Peaceful Borders and the Ukrainian Theological Seminary library, and providing a little admin support for CPT's Convergence bookings. Finally, I've found myself getting reacquainted with the SPEAK Network, trialling a desk space along with Alexandra in their Bethnal Green office a day a week.’

## Anabaptist Network Development Workers: Mike and Cheryl Nimz



Mike and Cheryl write: 'We have been participating in many of the same events that we have in the past, including church planting conferences and the European gathering of "Church and Peace", which was held in Birmingham again this year. There was a series of discussions, both formal and informal, about the need for the church to stand against the

growing hatred and war stance spreading through the West. We are being invited to speak at more churches – most of these are in the Birmingham area, but there are some in farther away places. We have spoken in Leeds a couple of times and hope to speak there more.

'A new Anabaptist study group has started in Birmingham. We have called it an Anabaptist Peacemeal. Nine people showed up and we had great discussions of the history of the Anabaptists, what Anabaptism is today, and why this is still important. We all decided that this group will get together every 4-6 weeks. We are hoping to engage with more people and churches in the near future, and also to start a new Anabaptist group in London. In addition, guests from all over the world are staying and some are here for the purpose of seeing what we are doing in order to try and do something similar in their own places.'

## Partners

### Anabaptist Network

'Is Religion Costing the Earth?' The main Network conference this year is an opportunity to reflect on pressing environmental issues that periodically rise up the global political agenda only to be knocked down by other apparently more urgent concerns. What, if anything, can Christians and members of other faith communities contribute to the search for sustainable ways of living on the earth? Or is religion part of the problem? Is there a distinctively Anabaptist approach to these issues? What can we learn from others? We have invited guests from a number of other organisations to inform us, challenge us and help us respond to these issues. [Details of this event in Coventry on Saturday 3 June can be found here](#). Please join us if you can – and tell others about this.

The Anabaptist Network sends out newsletters three times a year. If you do not already receive these but would like to do so, follow this [link to sign up](#).

### Peaceful Borders

Juliet Kilpin writes: 'During October and November 2016 we accompanied residents and volunteers through the demolitions, chaotic registrations and dispersal of the

Calais 'jungle'. It took far longer than the media showed, and we were there at various points right up until the last buildings were demolished (the church and the first mosque) and the last residents were bussed out (the women and babies). We were able to support some of those who were protecting people left behind in Calais (now at risk of arrest) and also welcome some who received last minute passage to the UK. One of our extended team helped manage an emergency Safe House in London that received some of the children who were given passage here.

'Current reports say many people have returned to Calais, including 150 unaccompanied minors, all of whom are sleeping in hidden places across the city. People who go to showers that the French courts deemed acceptable are now arrested each day and the Mayor of Calais announced this week that giving food to refugees in Calais is now a criminal offence. We continue to ask what the shalom of Calais looks like.

'Strategically, we would urgently like to release further pastoral care provision to British volunteers as the levels of trauma and mental health problems are a deep concern, and are looking for funding to appoint pastoral support workers to visit volunteers in hotspots across Europe to help them link into the Solidarity and Support Network we helped to set up. £30,000 could fund 2 part-time workers to do this. The Mennonite Trust is able to take any donations on our behalf.'

For further information, contact [julietkilpin@aol.com](mailto:julietkilpin@aol.com)

### **Christian Peacemaker Teams - UK**

Ruth Wilde writes: 'Christian Peacemaker Teams UK have been working hard organising the annual European Convergence which took place in Yorkshire this year. CPTers from all over Europe, and even one person from the Czech Republic who now lives in Columbia, came together on 1-6 March – first at All Hallows Church in Leeds, then moving to Scargill House in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The Convergence was a success and people enjoyed going for walks and enjoying the Yorkshire countryside between the business meetings. We mostly discussed the future of the project with refugees on Lesvos, which we are trying to raise money for and which we hope will become an official project of CPT International (if you are interested in donating to the project, get in touch with [uk@cpt.org](mailto:uk@cpt.org)). We also heard from Executive Director, Sarah Thompson, about CPT's work around the world, and people from Leeds and the surrounding area came to hear her speak at All Hallows. There has been a lot of interest in supporting CPT in different ways following the talk from Sarah, who came all the way from Chicago to be with us.'

For further information, contact [uk@cpt.org](mailto:uk@cpt.org)



## Centre for Anabaptist Studies

One of the major initiatives the Mennonite Trust is supporting is the Centre for Anabaptist Studies at Bristol Baptist College.

The 2016 annual lecture was given by Dr Mary Raber, a Mennonite mission worker based in Ukraine. Her subject was 'Recovering Compassion: Post-Soviet Insights for Anabaptists.' An audio recording is available on request.

The 2017 annual lecture will be given by Dr Ian Randall. It will take place at Bristol Baptist College at 7.30pm on Tuesday 21 November. His topic is 'A Peace Witness under Pressure: the Bruderhof Community in England, 1936-1942'

Two further modules are being taught in block weeks in April and May. The first (24-27 April) explores the life and writings of Pilgram Marpeck, an influential first-generation German Anabaptist. The second (22-25 May) investigates an important text by the Dutch Anabaptist leader, Menno Simons – his 'Foundation of Christian Doctrine'. As always, you do not need to be signed up for a course at the Centre to audit these modules. You can participate just for interest.

For further 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 at [www.facebook.com/groups/anabaptiststudies](http://www.facebook.com/groups/anabaptiststudies) and <http://anabaptiststudies.wordpress.com>

## Chris Burch

We were saddened to hear of the unexpected death in December of Chris Burch, long-time friend of the Mennonite Trust and chair of Bridge Builders. Andrew Francis, a former Mennonite Trust trustee, wrote this tribute for the recent Anabaptist Network newsletter:

'Many of us in the Network were shocked to hear of the sudden death of Chris Burch, who has been a friend to many and involved in the Network for over 30 years. He was only 66.

'Some of us first got to know Chris as a dedicated inner-city parish priest in Sheffield. As the city's URC's Urban Priority Area Minister while co-chairing "Faith in Leeds", I first worked ecumenically alongside Chris in Leeds, where he and his wife Roz's hospitality at their Osmondthorpe vicarage for many meetings helped create several prophetic initiatives.

'Chris became a Canon and Precentor at Coventry Cathedral, where his Anabaptist involvements told of his radical theology. He found, and gave, much support and

challenge in his involvement in the Anabaptist Theology Forum. Before returning to UPA parish ministry in Leicester, he wrote for Anabaptism Today about being an Anabaptist in the Establishment.

'Chris shared our many values about conflict mediation, becoming heavily involved in Bridge Builders. While executive vice-Chair of the Mennonite Trust, I worked with Chris, as Bridge Builders' transition Chair, helping them evolve into a separate trust and organisation.

'In our meetings at conferences, Chris' CAMRA membership always aided our escape for a good pint and conversation. Chris was a great model railway builder, creating layouts which still tour the exhibitions. He was an expert on English choral music, and a great bass, easily finding his place in the CD-recording "8ctave" clergy singers.

'He was a man of many parts, faithful in prayer, a family man, a good pastor and wise friend. Our thoughts and prayers are with Roz and the rest of Chris' family. Upon hearing of Chris' death, Alan Kreider quoted Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours and their good works go after them."

## International Links

**Lithuania:** Alexandra writes: 'In November Stuart and I were warmly welcomed to a very snowy Lithuania by Arturas and Vita Rulinskas, their energetic boys and their church in Vilnius. We spent time with their church and other churches that are part of a growing network of Mennonite Brethren communities. We spent time teaching and in conversation, as well as eating delicious food and listening to the concerns and challenges faced by this small nation. The possibility of a threat from the "big bear" next door, and the numbers of young adults leaving Lithuania for work or study are significant concerns. But Arturas and Vita, with a group of leaders they are mentoring and supporting, are engaging theologically and pastorally with the questions arising from their post-soviet, post-modern context. Please pray for these Mennonite brothers and sisters as they witness to the Prince of Peace in their country.'

**Germany:** Alexandra and Stuart are on the road again at the end of March, speaking at the annual leaders' conference in Suttgart of a small Anabaptist denomination (Evangelische Täufergemeinden) in Switzerland and South Germany.

**Ukraine:** the Trust has provided a grant to enable a theological seminary in Kiev to increase the number of Anabaptist texts in its library. Our partners in Canada have also collected further books to be taken to Kiev by a visitor shortly.

## The After Christendom Series

After publishing eleven books over the past thirteen years with Paternoster, we have decided to move the series to Wipf & Stock, who are keen to expand the series and to encourage more international authors. They will also republish earlier books in the series once the Paternoster editions have sold out. With this in mind, we have purchased many of these books and can offer them at a very cheap price. The list is appended. Please email [administrator@menno.org.uk](mailto:administrator@menno.org.uk) if you want to purchase any. An updated and revised version of Post-Christendom, which launched the series, will also be published within the next year.

### After Christendom Series (reduced prices, plus postage)

- Post-Christendom (Stuart Murray) £2.00
- Church after Christendom (Stuart Murray) £5.00
- Faith and Politics after Christendom (Jonathan Bartley) £3.00
- Youth Work after Christendom (Jo & Nigel Pimlott) £2.00
- Worship and Mission after Christendom (Alan & Eleanor Kreider) £3.00
- Reading the Bible after Christendom (Lloyd Pietersen) £3.00
- Hospitality and Community after Christendom (Andrew Francis) £3.00
- God after Christendom? (Brian Haymes/Kyle Gingerich Hiebert) £10.00
- Women and Men after Christendom (Fran Porter) £10.00
- Atheism after Christendom (Simon Perry) £10.00
- Relationships and Emotions after Christendom (Jeremy Thomson) £10.00
- Plus:** The Naked Anabaptist @ £5.00

## Trustees

We want to continue to renew and refresh the board of trustees. We have invited someone to join us at our June meeting with a view to becoming a trustee, and we are still searching for a treasurer-trustee with financial expertise. Do you know anyone who might be suitable?

Due to pressure of work, Ian Milligan is taking a year's break from being a trustee (though he continues to keep up with correspondence). We are grateful to Jeremy Thomson, who was due to step down as a trustee in November, but who has agreed to continue his involvement during this period.

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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

Email: [administrator@menno.org.uk](mailto:administrator@menno.org.uk) Web: [www.menno.org.uk](http://www.menno.org.uk) Twitter: <http://twitter.com/MennoniteTrust>

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