

ON THE ROAD

**Newsletter of the Anabaptist
Association of Australia & New
Zealand**

No. 10

December 2000

**Homepage on the Internet
<http://www.anabaptist.asn.au>**

Contents

From the Editor's Desk

Treasurer's report

Audit Report

News

- **Stuart Murray in Perth**
- **Hursts on the move**

Articles

- **Ian Barns on the Postmodern Church**
- **Stuart Murray - A Sermon on Mark 10: 46-52**

Press release on the January 2001 conference

Conference Brochure January 2001 conference

**About the Anabaptist Association of Australia and
New Zealand**

From the editor's desk

This was originally intended to be a brief edition of the Newsletter to provide members and supporters with the formalities of the audit report and the associated annual general meeting. Those items are included but there is much more for your Christmas reading.

From Ian Barns there is an article on the post modern church – what should the politics of the church be and how should it place itself as we move into a time in which modernity is under question. From Stuart Murray there are notes from a sermon that he preached while in Australia on Jesus' engagement with those who are on the margins.

There is unfortunately more to report on. A member of the committee John Cox, our membership secretary, who was holidaying on the south coast of NSW has been missing for several weeks after failing to return from a half day bushwalk. He is officially listed as missing. Given the circumstances it seems premature to undertake the grieving and celebrate the gifts he brought to the Association over the past few years. Yet something must be said.

John was a person for whom the road had been hard over the past few years yet he travelled it with a consistency and commitment following the call of discipleship even though the cost was high. He was at the meeting in Tasmania at which the Anabaptist Network was established as the forerunner to the Association and served as membership Secretary over the past eighteen months. Various members of the committee reflected on his contributions - John did not have a lot to say but when he did intervene in the discussion in our committee teleconferences there was a maturity and wisdom in what he had to say.

In concluding this reflection there was Bessie Perierra's reminder that while John may be lost to us he is not lost to God. In life and death we are in God's hands and we trust that those hands are indeed loving and present.

This newsletter also contains news from the Hursts of their imminent departure for Australia and a report on the fundraising for their support.

Doug Hynd

Treasurer's report

Treasurer's Annual Report 1999-2000

Our account remained in a positive balance and all legal fees were paid. Thank you to all whom made donations. A special appeal was successful and the total donations for the financial year were \$5,272. This allowed the remaining legal fees for the visa application of \$7003 to be paid. The Auditors report for 1999-2000 is enclosed.

The association registered for an ABN - 80 824 037 619, and GST (quarterly, cash method). The association was endorsed as an income tax exempt charitable entity.

Our financial commitment for 2000-2001 will increase. The committee has budgeted for a minimum donation \$5,000. Mark Hurst will commence working for the AAANZ in mid December. Under a memorandum of understanding the EMM will allocate approximately \$(AUS) 50,000 per year for 3 years.

Regular donations are helpful. For periodic donations please ensure that your surname will appear on the receiving banks receipt. This is important for the record of our transactions. For periodic transfers, the AAANZ's National Australia Bank account number is 46 486 7622 and the branch number is 082-407. Donations made out to the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand Inc (or AAANZ) can also be sent to me, at PO Box 1514 Armidale NSW 2350 Australia.

Shalom

Gary Baker

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF

The Anabaptist Association of Australia & New Zealand Inc.

We have audited the financial statements of the association being the Profit and Loss Account, Balance sheet. We have conducted an independent audit of these financial statements in order to express an opinion on them to the members of the association.

Our audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. Our procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and in the financial statements, and evaluation of accounting policies. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion whether, in all material respects, the financial statements are presented fairly in accordance with applicable Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements so as to present a view of the association which is consistent with our understanding of the associations financial position and the results of its operations.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Audit Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements of the association present fairly in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements the financial position of the association as at 30th June 2000.

Firm: Henry Bauer ATS Pty Ltd
Address: PO Box 620 Dee Why NSW 2099

Signature of Auditor
Dated: **15 October 2000**

Name of Auditor **Henry Bauer Director**

The Anabaptist Association of Australia & New Zealand Inc.

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2000

INCOME		
Donations received		5,272
Interest		2
EXPENDITURE		
Bank Charges	70	
Legal costs	7,003	

		7073
		-

NET OPERATING LOSS		1,799

This statement is to be read in conjunction with the audit report.

The Anabaptist Association of Australia & New Zealand Inc.

BALANCESHEET
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2000

PROPRIETOR'S FUNDS

Balance brought forward	2,655	
Add		
Share of Profit (loss)		(1,799)

		856

Represented by:

CURRENT ASSETS

NAB 46 486 7622	856	

		856
NET ASSETS		\$856

This statement is to be read in conjunction with the audit report.

News

Stuart Murray's visit

The visit of Dr. Stuart Murray and his wife Sian to Perth was one of the highlights of the year for West Australian Anabaptists. Stuart's first engagement was at the Baptist Theological College where Principal Dr. John Olley (a member of AAANZ) hosted a Friday afternoon seminar on Church Planting. About a dozen or more pastors and church workers from Baptist, Uniting and Church of Christ backgrounds attended a lively and informative meeting with plenty of discussion.

I was impressed with Stuart's down-to-earth approach forged by his more than a decade's experience of church planting in East London. The group appreciated Stuart's modest, low key style informed by solid academic and spiritual credentials, practical wisdom and realism. He also demonstrated a willingness to admit he didn't have all the answers. However, I suspect the group went away having a much better idea of what the questions were!

After a relaxing Saturday of sightseeing and shopping in Perth and Fremantle, Stuart and Sian met with a small group of local Anabaptists and interested others in our home. The topic for the evening was 'The Anabaptist Movement in Great Britain'. Stuart shared his own pilgrimage towards Anabaptism through urban mission and how the discovery of a tradition of historically marginalised Christians provided useful conceptual tools for serving Christ in the post Christendom era. Animated discussion followed halted only by the urgency of Stuart and Sian's need to catch the "red-eye special", (the midnight flight to Sydney). There is little doubt that Stuart is an outstanding apologist for Anabaptism. One attendee went so far to as to say that Stuart's presentation suffered little in comparison with those given by John Howard Yoder (who visited Perth in 1980 and 1990).

Ian Duckham

News from the Hursts - Extract from a recent e.mail:

"It is hard to believe that we have just over two weeks till we leave for Australia. The reality of it all has not sunk in yet. We have one more church to speak in and Sunday night is a commissioning service for us at one of our sending congregations. We sent our "stuff" (books, dishes, etc.) earlier this week and it is supposed to be in Sydney by the beginning of January.

We had a meeting with our support team the other night. We have raised close to 2/3 of our fundraising goal and more money will hopefully come in during year-end giving. The next morning a pastor called and said his church wants to support us - their pledge could possibly be thousands of dollars! We are all amazed at how God has worked in providing the needed resources."

=====

Article

The following article comes from Ian Barns in Perth. Ian is a senior lecturer at Murdoch University in the Institute for Science and Technology Policy. He has a strong interest in the links between theology, public policy and the shape of the Christian community.

Re-discovering the church as a 'political community'

When the word 'politics' is mentioned, I'm sure most Australian Christians think of two things, both pretty negative! The first is that 'politics' is about the business of government, political parties, elections and the like, a world of power, ambition and conflict remote from most peoples' everyday lives. The second is that 'politics' is about the grubby business of competition, conflict, compromise, making deals and distorting the truth for short term benefit that happens all too often in the workplace or in any social group. In this perspective the less 'church' has to do with politics the better! Not that church communities can always escape this kind of politics. We are all aware of church splits, personality conflicts, rivalry and factionalism, sometimes in our own painful experience. No wonder we try to avoid politics as much as possible. We like to think that church is primarily a place for worship, for fellowship and personal spiritual encouragement.

Of course that doesn't mean most of us think that 'the church' shouldn't speak out on political issues. Even though Australian Christians might disagree on the particular stances that bishops and other church spokespersons may take on issues such as welfare reform, gambling, reproductive technology, Aboriginal land rights etc, they generally think it is a good thing that the churches have a voice in public affairs. Its even OK to pray in general terms about political issues. But the proper place of politics is outside the church.

In this article I want to argue that 'politics' – though a very different kind of politics - is, or should be, a central part of what it means to be 'church'. As the 'people of God' we are not called to be an a-political group of like minded people who gather together in the private sphere, away from the world of politics, and from which a few might get involved in public life. Instead we are called by our Lord to be a 'sign' to the wider world of a very different kind of political community, or 'polity'. As Stanley Hauerwas puts it:

Put starkly, the way the church must always respond to the challenge of our polity is to be herself. This does not involve a rejection of the world, or a withdrawal from the world; rather it is a reminder that the church must serve the world on her own terms. We must be faithful in our own way, even if the world understands such faithfulness as disloyalty. But the first task of the church is not to supply theories of governmental legitimacy or even to suggest strategies for social betterment. The first task of the church is to exhibit in our common life

*the kind of community possible when trust, and not fear, rules our lives*¹.

Now obviously this means that I have a different view of 'politics' from the two concepts mentioned above: politics as the business of government and as divisive and devious conflict. First I believe that politics is an intrinsic part of any human community: it is how a community lives together, how it makes decisions about its priorities, its allocation of resources, how it resolves conflicts. Politics in this sense is something basically positive. Its about people learning to get along together, cooperating with each other, adapting to each other's needs and interests. Good politics involves cooperation, mutual respect and good leadership. Bad politics involves conflict, jealousy, oppression and backstabbing.

Secondly, I believe that the gospel of Christ involves a distinctive kind of politics that stands in sharp contrast with the usual pattern of power politics. Scripture tells us that the ministry of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit through which the church was brought into being had the purpose of making us a 'people together' who could show to the world God's kind of politics. Of course as we know so well churches have so often failed to live up to their political calling. But that doesn't mean that we should try to get away from politics altogether and focus only on our individual spiritual journeys. Instead we need to recover the distinctive vision and spiritual resources of being a 'kingdom polity'.

I want to briefly mention three fundamental aspects of this task:

First, we need to re-discover the politics of the gospel story. In focussing on the message of personal salvation we have largely forgotten that this is only part of the larger story of the gospel. In this story, the message was that Jesus was the long-awaited messiah of Israel and that through him the promises of God to his people Israel were to be fulfilled. Not only that, in his death, resurrection and ascension Jesus was proclaimed as 'Lord of all the earth' who had triumphed over the principalities and powers. His sovereignty over all those powers that have held sway in the earth is celebrated throughout the New Testament. For example in Ephesians, Paul speaks of God's power

..which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1: 20- 23).

Yet Jesus 'lordship' is not like that of those who would rule the earth. His is an 'upside down' kingdom, characterised not by the usual forms of hierarchy, status and power, but by a new order of service, humility and love. We see the kind of 'lord' and 'king' Jesus is in his response to Satan when he was tempted in the wilderness at the very beginning of his ministry (Matthew 4:1-11). We see it in his response to

¹ Stanley Hauerwas, 'The Church and Liberal Democracy: The Moral Limits of a Secular Polity', in *A Community of Character, Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, 85

Peter at Caesarea Philippi, when Peter rebukes him for speaking of his humiliation and death (Mark 8: 27 – 33). We see it in his response to the request of James and John for places of honour in the coming kingdom (Mark 10: 35 –45). Neither does Jesus cease to be a ‘servant king’ when he ascends to the right hand of the Father. Paul exhorts the Christian church at Philippi to have the mind of Christ ‘ who though being in very nature God, did not consider equality of God something to be grasped..’ (Philippians 2: 5-6).

Inspired (by the Holy Spirit) to live of Jesus’ kingdom politics, the first communities of disciples clearly understood themselves to be a ‘new people’ brought into a new political relationship with God and with each other (1 Peter 2: 9 –10; Ephesians 2: 11-22). They were called to be a people, a ‘polity’ which challenged the political divisions and hierarchical politics of the world in which they lived. Lesslie Newbigin has pointed out that in choosing the more secular and political language of ‘ecclesia’ (town assembly) rather than ‘synagogue’ (religious gathering) the early churches were asserting an alternative public and political identity. Likewise Paul’s language in Ephesians: “ you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” (Ephesians 2: 19) was a political language which challenged the order of the Roman polis. Commenting on this passage, Bernd Wannewetsch has recently commented that the first Christians used the language of Jewish ‘people-hood’ and the Greek ideas of ‘polis’ (public, political community’) and ‘oikos’ (household’) in radically new ways². In particular they challenged the sharp distinction between the polis and the oikos and thus the hierarchy between free men on the one hand and women and slaves on the other. In the ecclesia, the ‘civic assembly of God’s people’ all were brought into a new unity of equality and interdependence of mutual service: a new order of politics!

Second, in order to recover the distinctive politics of the gospel we need to deal with the unhappy legacy of our ‘Constantinian heritage’ that has its symbolic beginnings with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in 312. The ‘Constantinian era’ involved an historical compact between the church and the state which brought secular power and influence for the church in exchange for spiritual authorisation for the state. As Mennonite theologian John Yoder has argued Constantinianism has meant a profound and systematic distortion of Christian identity, belief and practice³. In the era of high Christendom it meant great power and wealth for the church and a social order in which everyone was born and baptised as a Christian. It also meant the active complicity of the church in forms of oppression, violence, colonialism and exploitation – for example in the Crusades. Even though the Christendom era with its formal alliance between church and state has passed, nevertheless western Christian belief and practice is still profoundly influenced by Constantinian habits. Many Christians still tend to think that we are basically a ‘Christian society’ held together by Christian morality or ‘Judeo-Christian’ values. We accept the complementarity of church and state. Now, in exchange for religious freedom we accept the autonomy and legitimacy of a secular social order. We accept its forms of education, cultural practices as basically good. We enjoy the fading benefits of Constantinianism in which being Christian meant that you could be part of the

² Wannewetsch, Bernd, 'The Political Worship of the Church, 269 -299

³ John Yoder, 'The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics', in *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel*, Notre Dame, Univ of Notre Dame Press, 1984, 135-150

cultural and political and economic status quo. We were on the winning side of human history.

Overcoming our 'Constantinian habits' means a profound rethinking of Christian thought and practice, both past and present. This task is obviously important for Christian witness and evangelism, since one of the major reasons for people's refusal to listen to the voice of the church is that the Christian message is discredited by its complicity in various forms of colonial violence and oppression. Even though much of this criticism is unfair, nonetheless our Christian forebears were involved, for example, in the colonisation of this land and the destruction of Aboriginal culture. Christians did persecute conscientious objectors during war time. They did marginalise the aliens. They did oppose the rights of workers during industrial conflicts. Of course there were wonderful exceptions, as Henry Reynolds has pointed out in his recent book, *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (1998) where he talks about the way Christians defended the rights of Aborigines in the context of colonial brutality and displacement: but they were exception, not the rule.

To overcome our Constantinian habits we need to retell the story of our own European history, not in terms of a triumphalist story of advancing civilisation, but in terms of the more uncertain, subversive outworking of the gospel of the broken, suffering Christ. We also need to recover a 'critical distance' from the culture in which we now live, especially in relation to its ethos of competition, success, achievement, consumption and its preoccupation with power, propaganda and violence. To do this, as Hauerwas and Yoder have argued, we need to rediscover the significance of 'church' as political community which seeks to be a sign of God's kingdom to the world and not as a merely 'voluntary club' which meets on Sundays to provide a haven from the world. To quote Hauerwas again:

.. by taking seriously its task to be an alternative polity, the church might well help us to experience what a politics of trust can be like. Such communities should be the source for imaginative alternatives for social policies that not only require us to trust one another, but chart forms of life for the development of virtue and character as public concerns. The problem in liberal societies is that there seems to be no way to encourage the development of public virtue without accepting a totalitarian strategy from the left or an elitist strategy from the right⁴

This brings me to my third point. How do we in practice recover the distinctive politics of the gospel? I suggest that it isn't a matter of bringing political issues into the church, that is, by 'politicising' the life of the church by focusing on important political issues such as Aboriginal land rights, welfare reform, industrial relations or globalisation to mention just a few. Rather it involves discovering the distinctive 'politics' that is inherent in the central practice of communal Christian worship. This may seem a startling thing to say: the politics of worship!

I don't mean the politics of who gets to decide on what sort of music we play in church or the politics of who can and can't preside over the communion service. Rather I mean the kind of 'body politics' that is involved when we learn to worship God rightly together.

⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, S, 'The Church and Liberal Democracy', p 86

Body Politics is the name of a little book by John Yoder in which he explores five core practices that are central to Christian worship⁵. These practices are:

- binding and loosing, or the exercise of moral judgement or discipline in the church;
- the sharing of the communion meal;
- baptism into the new humanity of the church;
- the distribution and exercise of gifts;
- the practice of preaching or prophecy and the processes of communal reflection on such prophecy.

Most of us tend to think of worship as something between us as individuals and God, even though we also assemble together for worship. (Indeed, many if not most of our contemporary songs of worship are about 'Jesus and me'). By contrast, in his discussion of these core practices, Yoder highlights their social and political character: how they bring us into new relationships with one another. Thus, for example, baptism is not simply – or even primarily – expressive of my own individual relationship with God. It is rather a public incorporation into the body of Christ, such that my primary social and political identity is now – for better or for worse – tied up with God and his people.

Yoder also emphasises that these aspects of worship are not strange and 'religious' activities that have little to do with ordinary life. Rather, they are central political practices, common to all human communities, which have been given a new meaning and focus in relation to God's gift in Christ. Thus, for example, the communion meal is not something purely religious, but is a shared meal. As we share the communion we give a new meaning to the way we produce and distribute the diverse goods and services of our economy. By implication, the communion meal has a deep political significance challenging us to a deep sense of creaturely gratitude and a new equality and reciprocity in our economic life.

As Yoder and others (such as English theologian David Ford⁶) suggest, worship is not something purely internal and spiritual – and hence a-political. Rather it is a sign – and a symbolic representation – of a different kind of politics, the up-side down politics of Jesus and his kingdom. If only our hearts and minds were open to it, we could begin to see that in our worship Christ is in our midst, not as the overbearing lord – or President or CEO – but as the servant king, whose desire is to draw us into God's own kind of politics, the deep politics of God's own trinitarian love. As we are able to discover and experience this kind of politics it can then enable us to see ways in which that kind of politics can be applied in the various situations in which we live our daily lives.

⁵ John Yoder, *Body Politics: five practices of the Christian community before the watching world*, Nashville, Discipleship Resources, 1992

⁶ David Ford, David 'What happens in the eucharist?' (*Scottish Journal of Theology*, 48,3(1995))

Stuart Murray – A Sermon on Mark 10:46-52

Stuart Murray has been active in anabaptist circles in the United Kingdom and is editor of *Anabaptism Today*. During his brief visit to Canberra Stuart preached at the 9.30am service at All Soul's Anglican church on the gospel reading for the day *Mark 10: 46-52* It was a powerful sermon and Stuart was kind enough to provide the notes for his sermon for the Newsletter. The notes could be used as a study with exploration of the Gospel passages that he refers to

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus, a blind beggar was sitting by the roadside. When he heard it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say "Jesus son of David, have mercy on me." Many sternly ordered him to be quiet but he cried out even more loudly "Son of David, have mercy on me". Jesus stood still and said "Call him here."

And they called the blind man saying to him "Take heart : get up he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him " what do you want me to do for you?" the blind man said to him "My teacher let me see again." Jesus said to him "Go your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. (Mark 10:46-52)

1. This is a well-known story, familiar to many since childhood, told so simply by Mark. There is a real danger of taking this miracle (and similar gospel stories) for granted.
2. A blind man can see again! His life is transformed - he is no longer consigned to life on the margins of society; he can follow Jesus down the road out of Jericho; he can earn his living instead of begging; all kinds of new options are available to him. This was the greatest day of his life: physical, social, economic and spiritual healing. Whatever else we learn from this story, we must not fail to celebrate the liberation of Bartimaeus.
3. Blind people recovering their sight was one of the defining marks of the ministry of Jesus, one of the signs that he was the Messiah: read Matthew 11:4-5. Jesus had chosen his home synagogue to spell out his mission priorities: (read Luke 4:18-19. The Nazareth manifesto.) The poor, the prisoners, the blind and the oppressed: the focus of Jesus' ministry was on the marginalised.
4. This should not have surprised anyone who was familiar with the Old Testament story and the writings of the prophets (such as Isaiah). God so often seemed to operate from the margins, to choose unexpected people, to turn social norms upside down.
5. But many found this confusing and offensive (see Luke 4; Matthew 11:6). They wanted Jesus to concentrate on the respectable people, the religious people, those at the centre, those who mattered. In various ways they tried to deflect him from this mission priority.

6. As Mark tells the story, again and again Jesus reaches out to people on the margins but faces criticism, opposition and misunderstanding:
(a) Mark 2: the teachers of the law cannot welcome the transformation of Levi the tax collector's life but ask "why does Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners?"
(b) Mark 3: the Pharisees are unable to celebrate the healing of a man with a withered hand but complain about breaches of Sabbath regulations.
(c) Mark 5: those who witness the amazing liberation of the Gerasene demoniac plead with Jesus to leave their region.

7. Sometimes those on the margins whom Jesus wants to meet are simply crowded out by those who want to keep Jesus to themselves. Only if they are really persistent or have friends to help them can they get through:

- (a) Mark 2: the paralytic in Capernaum cannot get through the door and has to be lowered through the roof by friends.
- (b) Mark 5: a woman with a haemorrhage manages to force her way through the crowd and touch Jesus' cloak.
- (c) Mark 7: a deaf and mute man is brought to Jesus in the Decapolis region.
- (d) Mark 8: a blind man is brought by friends to Jesus in Bethsaida.

8. Sometimes marginal people are actually turned away by the crowds who followed Jesus, or even by his disciples:

- (a) Mark 10:13: children are turned away by the disciples, but Jesus rebukes them.
- (b) Here, in our passage, many in the crowd try to silence the blind beggar. Again Jesus steps in - his priorities are different.

9. Only slowly did the disciples grasp this. After all, this was not the kind of Messiah they were expecting. The title Bartimaeus used - "Son of David" – expressed the Jewish hope that a warrior-king would come and liberate the nation.

10. Bartimaeus also called him "Rabbi", but his teaching was so different from other rabbis, so upside-down, inside-out, back-to-front.

11. Outsiders were insiders, the first would be last, prostitutes would precede Pharisees into God's kingdom, those on the margins of society were at the centre of God's concern.

12. There are some encouraging signs in the book of Acts and in other parts of the New Testament. The early churches did explore ways of working out the Nazareth manifesto, of becoming good news to the marginalised, of living according to the ways of this upside-down kingdom.

13. But Mark's gospel shows that by the time he was writing the churches were still struggling with this. The way Mark tells the story of Jesus reminds his readers how Jesus reached out to the marginalised and challenges them to do the same.

14. And this remains a challenge for churches in western societies like Britain and Australia which have been identified so often with the wealthy, the powerful, those at the centre. Middle-class Christianity still struggles to follow Jesus in his mission to those on the margins. Urban mission course in Sydney.

15. But the familiar story of Bartimaeus calls us again to embrace this challenge. With whom will we identify? The crowd who tried to silence the cries of this marginalised man and to keep him from becoming the centre of attention? Or with Jesus who heard his cries and called him to find healing and new purpose in life?

16. Australia has just hosted the Paralympic Games - a remarkable event where those so often marginalised have taken centre stage. Moving, challenging, disturbing. A challenge to the church? Could this even be a secular sign of God's kingdom?

17. But how can we respond? When Jesus told someone that loving his neighbour was at the heart of God's law, he asked, "Who is my neighbour?" and drew from Jesus the story of the Good Samaritan. We may ask, "Who are the marginalised?"

18. In a modern city like Canberra, the answers may not be immediately apparent. We may feel that blind beggars on the roadside are much more obvious. But note that the crowd found it hard to see Bartimaeus. All cities have people on the margins social, economic, health, cultural, educational, moral and spiritual margins. It depends whether we are really looking.

19. Or we may ask, "How do we reach out to the marginalised?" or "What is good news for people on the margins?" There are very important questions. Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" We can so often assume we know what is good news for those on the margins - and we can often be wrong. Ask a paralympic athlete.

20. Removing Bartimaeus' blindness was wonderful but had major implications for his future life. Imposing our solutions may not be good news to the marginalised. We may need to listen carefully before doing or saying anything. In fact, listening to those like Bartimaeus whose voices are often silenced may be as important as anything else we do.

21. And it may be that our encounters with those on the margins change us powerfully too. If God is truly at work on the margins, perhaps it is there rather than at the centre that we will encounter him and rediscover the gospel itself.

22. So, let's celebrate the healing of this blind beggar and rejoice in the love and power of God which transformed his life. But let's not miss the challenge here and throughout Mark's gospel: to turn our attention to those on the margins, to see them, to listen to them, to reach out to them, and to be transformed ourselves as we do this.

Anabaptism for the 21st Century Church

PRESS RELEASE

In this so-called 'Post Modern' age, Christians dig into the past seeking the roots of reality, practice and belief. A study of 16th Century persecuted Anabaptists takes us to the beliefs they were willing to die for.

Theirs was a conviction that being a Christian meant seriously following the teachings of Jesus, to be radically discipled to Him and to one another. The cutting-edge of Jesus' teachings, and particularly of the Sermon on the Mount, were earthed in their lives, relationships and witness. This stark Christian practice lies in contrast to the spiritualising and 'other worldliness' of the Gospel message that marks areas of church practice in their day and ours.

Perhaps the movement is best known for their commitment to peacemaking and reconciliation. At this stage in the life of humanity on our planet, we see the need to come to grips with the message of the Prince of Peace. The wars of our recent past, and the current conflicts raging in our present have seen the resurgence of interest in non-violent means to bring about change.

"The call of the church to live out these values brings it into sharp contrast to politics of injustice and to alignment with the marginalized and the poor." The church must always be free of entanglements that blur or compromise our Gospel stance. This was the stand that brought the early Anabaptists into collision with a church that had become enmeshed with the state.

The Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand is an organisation seeking to network and resource those across the church interested in seeing Anabaptist ideals enrich the church of our day.

A conference is to be held at Whitley College, Parkville, Melbourne 25th to 28th January 2001. Speakers will include Marita Munro, Gordon Preece, Ross Langmead and Mark and Mary Hurst who will cover topics to do with the theme -

"Peacemaking, Reconciliation and Mission"
Open session Saturday 7.30 pm Brunsick Town Hall
Tim Costello
Tickets \$5 including supper

For further details and brochure contact -
Neil and Saralyn Horsburgh 03 9481 0757 Email ccsm@bigpond.com
Bessie Pereira 03 9893 2649 Email bessiep@jeack.com.au

Check out the WEB site <http://www.anabaptist.asn.au>

Anabaptist Conference in Melbourne

Peacemaking, Reconciliation and Mission An Anabaptist Perspective for the 21st Century Church Whitley College Melbourne 25th - 28th January 2001

Key leaders in the Church together will provide historical, biblical and spiritual perspectives of Anabaptism.

This conference provides a unique opportunity for Christians across the church to come together to consider how these influences can shape the future of the life and mission of the Australian church.

MAIN PRESENTATIONS

Thursday

6.30 pm Registration

7 pm - Historical Basis for Anabaptism - Marita Munro - Lecturer at Whitley College

Friday

9.30 am Biblical Basis for Anabaptism -Gordon Preece - Lecturer in Ethics & Practical Theology; Director, Centre of Applied Christian Ethics, Ridley College, University of Melbourne.

11 am Anabaptist Perspectives for Peacemaking Mark and Mary Hurst - Pastoral workers with AAANZ

Free afternoon for Australia Day activities or sightseeing

7.30 pm Anabaptist Perspectives for Mission Ross Langmead - Director of the School of World Mission and teaches mission studies at Whitley College.

SATURDAY WORKSHOPS - From 9.30 am

Anabaptist Spirituality

Peace and Justice at work in Australia

Conflict in the Church setting

What is a Peacemaker?

SUNDAY MORNING CHURCH SERVICES

10 am Collins Street Baptist Church, 174 Collins Street, CBD

10 am Truth and Liberation Concern,
265 Bayswater Road, North Bayswater

Both of these services will highlight Anabaptism

Saturday 27th January 2001

Tim Costello

Brunswick Town Hall

7.30 pm \$5 incl supper

Registration Form

Registration is essential for daytime seminars - Please fill out the following Form -
Full conference (Thursday night, Friday & Saturday incl evening) \$

Thursday night Presentation \$

Friday 26th January only \$

Saturday 27th January only \$

Total \$.....

Plus accommodation if applicable.

See later for details \$

Grand total \$.....

Do you require a children's program? Yes/No

If so, ages of children.....

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....P/Code.....

Phone.....

Detach and send with a cheque to:

Bessie Pereira

10 Viviana Crescent

Heathmont Vic 3135

Cost

Full Conference Fee (Thursday night, Friday and Saturday incl evening) \$100

Thursday night Presentation \$5

Daily Conference Fee \$60

Saturday night Presentation \$5 (to be paid at the door)

Lunch and Dinner, morning and afternoon tea provided on your registered days.

The Saturday night Presentation with Tim Costello is open to everyone. Bring friends and folk from your church congregation. Admission \$5 to be paid at the door.

Accommodation

* Single live-in - \$25 for night + \$5 breakfast= \$90 total per person (3 nights) [single bed with study desk & wardrobe, shared bathroom facilities]

* Couple/family live-in - \$60 per night + \$5 breakfast = \$210 total per family (3 nights) [double bed with separate lounge room with

TV, ensuite and kitchenette. Mattresses can be put on the floor for children]

Please write your preference and add the cost on this form.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....Total \$.....

Venues

Venue for conference -Whitley College, 50 The Avenue Parkville 03 9342 3600

Trams from the City (along Elizabeth Street) are numbers 19 and 20 called 'North

Coburg'. Whitley is stop #15 - about 10 minutes from the CBD. Please note that

ticket purchase is by coin only from a vending machine on the tram.

Venue for Saturday night Presentation by Tim Costello
Brunswick Town Hall, 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick
#19 Tram stop outside hall (conferees will catch the tram outside Whitley) 4 Minute
walk from Jewel train station. Parking available opposite Brunswick baths.

For further information about conference details -Neil and Saralyn Horsburgh 03
9481 0757

Bessie Pereira 03 9893 2649

Mobile 0412 316 252

The Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand

The AAANZ includes Christians of many parts of the church and exists to encourage
Anabaptist ideals of peacemaking, discipleship and justice in our day.

For further details check out our WEB -[http:// www.anabaptist.asn.au](http://www.anabaptist.asn.au)

The Anabaptist Association of Australian and New Zealand

Background to the Association

The initiative for the establishment of the Association came out of a meeting in Tasmania in May 1995 of Christians from a variety of denominational backgrounds who had been influenced in a variety of ways by the Anabaptist tradition. To provide a means of building on the contacts established at the meeting the Anabaptist Network of Australia and New Zealand was formed which became the Anabaptist Association of Australia and New Zealand following its incorporation in 1998.

Purposes of the Association

The purposes of the Association are:

1. to nurture and support the Christian faith of individuals and groups in Australia and New Zealand who identify with the Anabaptist tradition.
2. to network and link individuals, churches and groups of Christians who share a common Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith.
3. to provide religious services including teaching, training, pastoral care, mediation, and counsel to its members and others interested in the Anabaptist tradition.
4. to provide resources and materials relating to the tradition, perspectives, and teaching of Anabaptists to both the Christian and general public.
5. to convene conferences and gatherings which provide opportunity for worship, teaching, training, consultation, celebration, and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.
6. to extend the awareness of Anabaptism in Australia and New Zealand assisting individuals, churches and groups discover and express their links with the Anabaptist tradition.
7. to provide an opportunity for affiliation for churches and groups who wish to be known in Australia and New Zealand as Anabaptists.

What is Anabaptism?

Anabaptism is a radical Christian renewal movement that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Whilst Anabaptism was a grass roots movement with diverse expressions in its early development, its enduring legacy usually has included the following:

- baptism upon profession of faith
 - a view of the church in which membership is voluntary and members are accountable to the Bible and to each other
 - a commitment to the way of peace and other teachings of Jesus as a rule for life
 - separation of church and state
 - worshipping congregations which create authentic community and reach out through vision and service
-