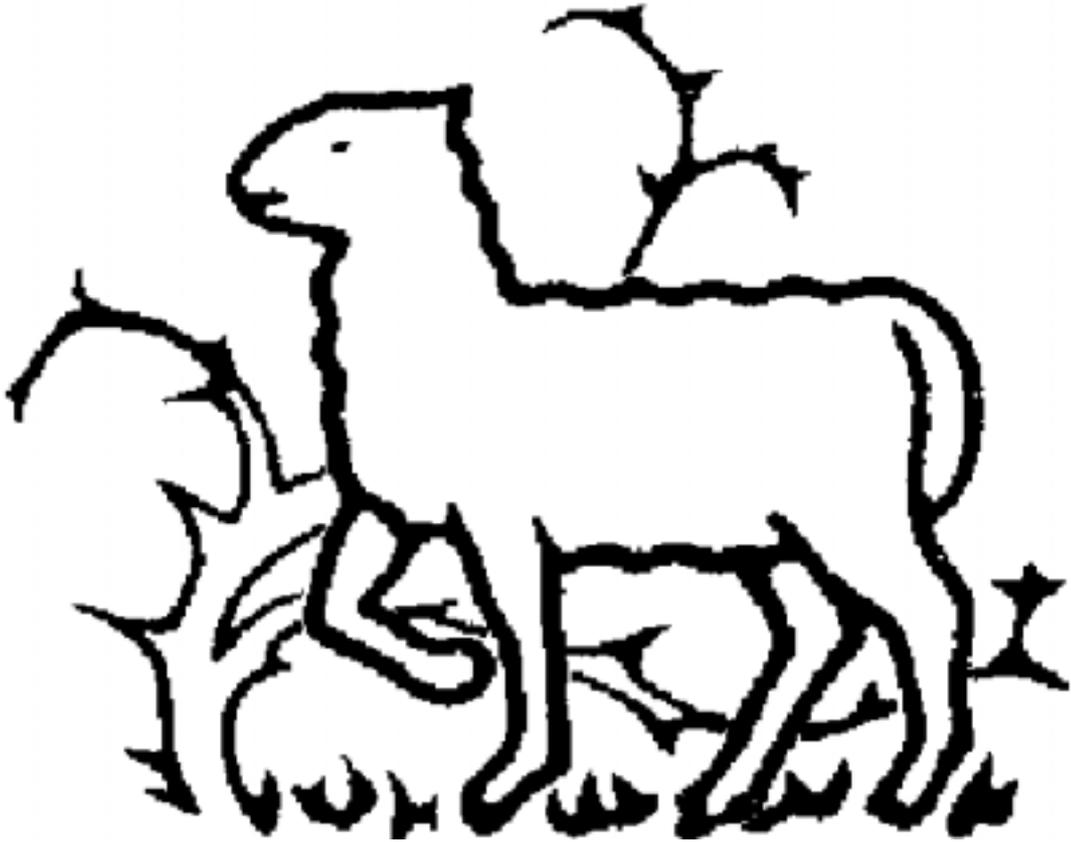


# ON THE ROAD



**Newsletter  
of the  
*Anabaptist Association of  
Australia and New Zealand Inc.***

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THE  
ANABAPTIST  
ASSOCIATION OF  
AUSTRALIA AND  
NEW  
ZEALAND



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## THE VIEW FROM EPHESIANS FOUR

...to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service

**MARK AND MARY HURST**

We sometimes worry about the amount of American content in this newsletter. Our hope is that what we present is an alternative to what normally comes out of the US media but we still wish for more Aussie and Kiwi material.

But it is not just that we are Americans and don't want to impose North American issues on an Aussie/Kiwi newsletter. We all live in a world now dominated by the American empire. Look at what some Australians have been saying. The following comes from a letter written by Matthew Quaipe-Ryan, Chaplain at Central Queensland University in Rockhampton to Sojo-Mail, *Sojourners* magazine's online newsletter:

*Jim Wallis, in his "State of the Union" reflection, noted that Canadians were perhaps wondering why everything in Bush's speech was about "American leadership, America's role and America's responsibility..." I'm not sure whether it's strictly correct to say that Canada and by implication all the other countries of the world are puzzled by such hubris. The rest of the world knows at some level that we are living at a time in human history in which we all, whether we like it or not, are a part of the American Empire. And like the Roman Empire of 2000 years ago, there are two set of laws - one for U.S. citizens and one for the rest of us... Every country in the world's foreign as well as domestic policy is dominated by how it relates to the U.S... At this point in human history it is very important for Christians and all people of good will to work out what it means to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.*

And this from Phillip Adams' column entitled "In thrall and proud of it" from *The Weekend Australian*, Feb. 2-3, 2002.

*"...we live in a culture that is so Americanised, so hybridised, that we don't even notice it... There isn't a nook or cranny of Australian life that hasn't been colonised by the US. As Sesame Street creator Joan Ganz Cooney once told me: "You Australians absorb American culture as if you were made of blotting paper."*

*...As I've been writing for 40 years, we've been dragging the Trojan horse of American pop culture into every lounge room, principally in the form of American television. And while much of that popular culture, from jazz to Citizen Kane and beyond, is magnificent, American energies have cuckooed our eggs out of the nest. And we're fast losing our individuality and authenticity.*

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### On The Road

The AAANZ quarterly newsletter publishes news, articles, book reviews, and resource information. It is published online with a paper edition available for those without computer facilities. (Paper edition A\$20 per year) To be added to the mailing list write :

**ontheroad@today.com.au** or

**On The Road Editors 3/653 Princes Highway,  
Sutherland NSW 2232 Australia**

**COVER SYMBOL:** The lamb in the midst of briars is a traditional Anabaptist symbol. It illustrates the suffering Lamb of God, who calls the faithful to obedient service and discipleship on the road. This particular rendition is from *Hymnal A Worship Book*. Copyright 1992. Reprinted with permission of Mennonite Publishing House, Scottsdale, PA, USA.

*The author of The Lexus and the Olive Tree told me, "You have no choice but to become American" – convinced that was not only our destiny, but that of the world.*

*Don't you think it's sad that he's almost certainly right?"*

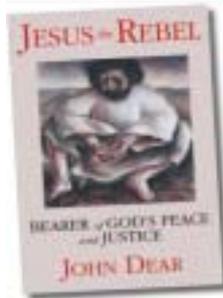
Our aim in this newsletter and the work we do with AAANZ is to encourage us to constantly ask the question "What does it mean to be faithful to Jesus and the Kingdom of God at this time?" The context for us is the Pax Americana while for early Christians it was the Pax Romana. We do not stand alone in our quest to be faithful but travel in company with others in the church. The church is to be the place where we struggle with questions of faithfulness and discipleship as J. Denny Weaver points out in the following passage from an article entitled "Violence In Christian Theology".

*"The church distinct from the social order constitutes the context in which Jesus' actions pose contrasts to prevailing practices and in which it makes sense to speak of confrontation between church and empire or church and social order. In fact, since the empire and the social order are considered pagan, it makes no sense not to speak of Jesus and the disciples and the early church as posing a contrast or a witness to the social order. And it seems almost self-evident that for those who call themselves Christians, Jesus is the orientation point for that witness."*

Several articles in this issue deal with the church. If the church is the place where we learn how to live as Christians in the midst of worldly empires, then we need to take the church seriously. For sixteenth century Anabaptists "church" issues

were central. They were convinced we could not be solo Christians. With this in mind the AAANZ is sponsoring a June conference on church planting and joining the NSW Baptist Union in an urban church planting project in Sydney.

Scattered throughout this issue of *ON THE ROAD* are quotes from a book by John Dear entitled *Jesus the Rebel/ Bearer of God's Peace and Justice*



(Sheed & Ward, 2000). The back cover of this book says: "*Jesus The Rebel* explores how Jesus of Nazareth's radical life and teaching speak to our own world of violence, poverty, and nuclear weaponry."

John Dear is a Jesuit priest, peace activist, and former executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Dear does not soft peddle the message of Jesus. He bluntly says what he thinks discipleship means for us today. Too bluntly for some maybe. During this season of Lent the question of what discipleship means is an appropriate one for us to ponder.

Dear assumes an American audience for this book. As you read his quotes, ask yourself how what he says applies to the Aussie and Kiwi setting. If our destiny is to all become American, Dear might be asking the questions we all need to hear.

**"Jesus was anything but passive, complacent, or corrupt. Rather, he was the beloved of God on fire with love for every human being who ever lived. As such, he was trouble from day one: trouble for the establishment, trouble for the religious elite, trouble for the rulers, trouble for the war-making empire."**

**- Jesus the Rebel (xv)**

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT .....DOUG HYND**

The AAANZ Committee is hard at work organising a couple of significant events. The urban church planting consultation in June this year and the AAANZ Conference in January 2003 are important for a scattered network such as ours. They are flagship events that give a face, focus to the Association, and provide an opportunity for people to get together, build connections, and provide encouragement for the journey. These occasions are also important opportunities to introduce people to the Association and its work.

The urban church planting conference has come about through the support provided by a grant from Eastern Mennonite Missions. This funding has enabled us to engage Stuart Murray-Williams for the seminar on his way down to Melbourne to teach at Whitley College. Stuart has had extensive experience in church planting in the UK as well as a deep passion for the Anabaptist tradition and what it has to offer the church. The consultation will have a very practical focus. Ross and Diane Coleman, respectively present and past secretary of the association are following a call to plant a church in inner city Sydney. The consultation will take up that commitment as a case study to earth the discussion.

Planning for the 2003 AAANZ Conference has moved us to reflection around the theme of Peace Church – how to

sustain a peacemaking community in a time of violence. How can the community that we call church sustain its witness to God's shalom and non-violence in a time in which violence seems the endemic response to conflict? We are hoping that this will be a time of renewal and focusing of our vision.

The other significant issues that the Committee is grappling with relate to the longer term vision for the Association. How can we best serve the New Zealand and Australian church? What should our operating model be for the longer term and what are the resource implications? For a small organisation with limited resources and currently dependent upon support from the Mennonite community in North America there are some real challenges. Consider the aims of the Association:

- To nurture and support the Christian faith of individuals and groups in Australia and New Zealand who identify with the Anabaptist tradition.
- To network and link individuals, churches and groups of Christians who share a common Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith.
- To provide religious services including teaching, training, pastoral care, mediation, and counsel to its members and others interested in the Anabaptist tradition.

**"Here we have one of the clearest and most neglected commands of the Scriptures. 'Jesus is my beloved. Listen to him.'"**

**- Jesus the Rebel (107)**

- To provide resources and materials relating to the tradition, perspectives, and teaching of Anabaptists to both the Christian and general public.
- To convene conferences and gatherings which provide opportunity for worship, teaching, training, consultation, celebration, and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.
- 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.
- To provide an opportunity for affiliation for churches and groups who wish to be known in Australia and New Zealand as Anabaptists.

I would ask for your assistance in the following ways:

- Pray for the AAANZ Executive Committee, Mary, and Mark as we look at priorities, ways of operating and resources. The need for the Anabaptist witness to be earthed in Australian and New Zealand has never been greater.
- Participate by offering your suggestions in response to the material that will be circulated over the next few months in shaping the future vision of the Association.
- Make the work and resources of the Association known to your friends. Encourage your

- friends to receive the newsletter. Back issues of the Newsletter are available on our website and contain a good deal of useful material that can be freely reproduced.
- Consider becoming a member of the Association and committing yourself to support its work including financially.
- Consider organising with friends in your region for a visit by Mark and Mary.
- Put the 2003 AAANZ Conference (24 -26 January) in your diary now and plan to be there.

On financial issues: the constitution of the Association was changed at the AGM in December 2001 to allow the Association to charge a membership fee and an annual fee that can be waived if people cannot afford it. The committee will be deciding on the amount of the fees shortly. The membership joining fee and the annual fee are not intended to be a major source of funds but to help meet the costs associated with basic administration of association affairs, including audit and accounting costs and communication with members.

All of this is detail, mundane and down to earth but then so is our discipleship. It is in the details of our lives that we can expect to experience God and find ourselves giving witness to the life of the Spirit. May we find joy in our attention to the details of creation and community and hope in those moments of healing and celebration.

*The following article by Kevin Ward is longer than what we usually print but we think it is worth the read. We would love to get feedback from you. Do you agree with his views or not? If what he is saying is correct, what are the next steps for Christians in Australia and New Zealand who are interested in being "missional"?*

## **Christendom, Clericalism, Church, and Context: finding categories of connexion in a culture without a Christian memory**

**BY KEVIN WARD**

In New Zealand and Australia, like all western countries, involvement in institutional religion, measured by such figures as church attendance, has been showing a steady and fairly relentless decline since the beginning of the 1960s. In Australia 40% of the population in 1961 claimed to attend church at least monthly, a figure that had declined to 24% by 1980 and 20% by 1999. Weekly church attendance was calculated at 10%. New Zealand figures would appear to be very similar, although data is more difficult to find. Forty percent of the primary school roll were enrolled in Protestant Sunday Schools in 1960 and with the addition of those involved in Roman Catholic churches a figure of 40% for attendance once a month would seem reasonably accurate. Certainly, by 1998 it was identical to the Australian figure of 20%. I have estimated weekly attendance to be about 20% in 1960. Again, by 1998 it was identical to the Australian figure of 10%. These figures are similar to patterns of decline in Britain from 18% to 7.5% and Canada from 55% to 22%. Even

in the USA, often seen as immune from these trends, it has fallen from 49% in 1958 to 40% in 2000.

For a considerable period of time, this decline was explained by the secularisation thesis, which, under the influence of leading sociologists, declared that, as society became increasingly modernised religion would eventually disappear. However the thesis has had a hard time of it over the past 20 years, and Peter Berger, one of the leading proponents, said in 1998 that this was the "one big mistake" that he made in his career. Rodney Stark and Roger Finke in their recent book, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* title one of their chapters, "Secularisation, R.I.P." and it is now hard to find sociologists who still hold to the secularisation thesis in the sense of the ultimate demise of religion.

What has emerged in more recent research done in western countries is that despite the fact that the church has been experiencing serious decline, people have continued to

remain overwhelmingly religious. An article in *American Demographics* on religion concludes that “Amid the crumbling foundations of organized religion, the spiritual supermarket is on the rise. Numerous surveys show that Americans are as religious as ever - perhaps even more than ever.” Similarly in Canada, where church attendance is at levels much closer to that in New Zealand than is the US, the leading researcher of religious trends declares that “Belief in a supernatural dimension of reality is widespread and shows no sign of abating.” Australian researchers state that “the myth of Australia the secular society needs to be put aside” when 85% believe in God and two thirds say they pray, half that number once a week or more.” It is more difficult to make the same kind of absolute statements about New Zealand because the research data available is much less. The most helpful, the Massey ISSP Survey carried out in 1991 and 1998, indicates if anything a slight increase in religious believing. For instance certain belief in God was indicated by 31% of people, up from 29%; belief in life after death was up from 57% to 60%; and 30% of people indicated they prayed several times a week, up from 22%.

What all this means then is that in New Zealand, as in all western countries, despite declining levels of church involvement, we have not seen the gradual extinction of religious believing as the twentieth century ran to its conclusion. This has created the paradox of a highly spiritual culture yet declining involvement in organised religion. In other words, it appears that people who are seeking spiritual experience and meaning in their lives are not finding it presented in a form that meets their values and aspirations in what the church has continued to offer. The thesis I have been developing is that this has occurred because while the values, attitudes and styles of the surrounding culture underwent a profound change beginning with the counter culture of the 1960’s and coming home to roost with a vengeance in the 1990’s, in what is now known as postmodernity, the church has continued to be shaped by a set of values, attitudes and styles that belonged to a previous era. As a consequence, whenever it has knocked on the door of the vast majority of the under 50’s they have responded, “No thanks I’m shopping elsewhere”.

It seems to me that of the many trends that have emerged, five in particular have impacted significantly on the church. These are individualism, privatism, pluralism, relativism, and anti-institutionalism. The consequences of these trends are that organised religion has been having a rather hard time of it over the past four decades. It means that an increasing gap has grown between religious believing and belonging. While people are apparently increasingly concerned to nurture the spiritual dimension of life, find answers to questions of meaning in life, prepare for whatever happens at the end of physical life, they see organised religion in the form of the institutional church as being increasingly irrelevant to those issues. Increasing numbers “believe without belonging”. Sociologist Wade Clark Roof, in his most recent book, writes that “A decade ago these questions were raised by Boomers who felt at odds with the religious culture of the churches; today these same concerns are most likely raised by those younger, the Generation Xers. In either instance, it is less a protest of religion in the deepest sense than a response to institutional styles that are unfamiliar or seemingly at odds with life experiences as these people know them.”

It is not hard to find theologians and sociologists who warn that the crisis confronting institutional religion in western countries like New Zealand is massive, if not terminal. One of the most colourful comes from an Anglican Church leader describing the plight of his own denomination: “...not only has the fat lady sung but the cleaners have left, the security guards have turned out the lights and locked the doors, and the wrecking ball waits outside for tomorrow’s demolition work. But even so, a few men and women in purple shirts still huddle together in the now dark stalls, chatting excitedly of all the great operas they are going to stage.”

However, many Christians within the evangelical tradition argue that their experience does not match these gloomy predictions and immediately point to all kinds of evidence to contradict them. The success of the Alpha course; the surge of new ethnic churches; the growth of some large Pentecostal and charismatic churches; the rise in ‘born again’ religion and growth of megachurches in the United States are all indications that a robust evangelicalism seems immune from the trend toward decline and secularisation afflicting more traditional forms of institutional Christianity. I remain rather sceptical about such claims. Klaas Blockmuehl, an evangelical, said that Christians in general had given very little thought to the challenges posed by secularisation and that evangelicals were “often content if they add to their numbers even when the overall state of Christianity deteriorates.” As someone who identifies with and belongs to the evangelical tradition, and is a member of, and until the end of last year worked part time on the staff of, one of the largest churches in New Zealand, that phrase has been a challenging rebuke.

A significant factor in the rather unrealistic perspective of many evangelical leaders has been the focus on church growth. This movement operates by basically looking at churches that are growing, tries to draw out reasons for the growth of those particular churches, and then claim that if all churches would only apply these principles they could all grow. The problem is they have never really looked hard enough at either how the growth of those particular institutions fits in to the broader patterns of religious and cultural change in society, or at where the people coming into these churches have come from.

When we talk of the decline of the church, it is of course somewhat problematical, as the rates of decline have been somewhat uneven. Steve Bruce, one of the few sociologists still committed to the secularisation thesis, summarises the general pattern when he states that when we talk of the decline of British churches we should more properly talk of the decline of liberal and mainstream Christianity, as we find a general pattern of resilience as we move from ‘left’ to ‘right’ across the Protestant spectrum. Conservative elements have generally survived the best and a number of groups have shown marked growth. When I began my research for my PhD, I believed that by researching these kinds of churches, and finding what it was that made them effective, it would help provide material that would be helpful for the church in New Zealand in understanding how to go about its mission. In large part, that was my motivation. However as I gathered data, interviewed people and observed how the patterns in these particular churches fitted into the wider patterns of religious and cultural change I became less sure. While these churches have played a very important role in helping to maintain and conserve a vital

**"As the spirit of vengeance and violence spreads across the nation, we need to center ourselves in this fundamental gospel teaching. [Luke 6:36-38] I recall when Timothy McVeigh was convicted for blowing up the Oklahoma City Federal building, murdering over one hundred people. While news commentators, politicians, victims' family members, government officials, and ordinary churchgoers called for his execution, I found myself wondering how Jesus would respond to McVeigh's crime. What would Jesus do?"**

**The gospel gives us the answer: "Let the one without sin be the first to cast a stone." We are not allowed to kill. We are not allowed to execute anyone. As followers of Jesus, we oppose the death penalty. We practice compassion, forgiveness, mercy, and reconciliation – even toward those who kill our loved ones or ourselves. We refuse to condemn anyone to death. Like Jesus, we grant clemency to everyone and, in the process, we dwell in the clemency of God."**

**- Jesus the Rebel (81)**

and living Christian faith within an increasingly post-Christian New Zealand, I have become increasingly less certain that they will provide the models for effective mission to the growing percentage of New Zealanders who are genuinely nonchurched.

I was first put on to this line of thought by North American research, particularly in Canada, which indicated that the vast majority of those who were in growing evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal churches actually came from other conservative churches or were the children of church members. These made up around 90% of the total, 70% and 20% respectively. Only 10% came from outside of this church community. The reason for the growth of conservative churches the authors claimed was because conservative churches had higher than average birth rates, did a better job of retaining children and attracted more people ready to switch churches. It was not because they were more effective in mission, as many conservative church leaders believed. Two further factors prompted me in this direction. One was reflection on my own experience as pastor of a Baptist church which grew rapidly in the late 1970's and 1980's and saw a significant number of baptisms. I realised that the vast majority of those either came from other churches, or were young adults who had been brought up in church and were now returning after sowing their wild oats. The other was doing research on the church I am currently involved with, which is one of four case studies I am doing. This is a church which is held up as one of the most

successful churches in New Zealand, having grown from an attendance of under 100 in the 1960's to over 1500 by the 1990's. It is a church that has had a strong focus on evangelism, and is regarded as providing a model for how to go about mission in contemporary New Zealand. Over 1100 people attended its most recent leadership conference, including many from Australia. As I read through multitudes of church reports, I found a repeated concern expressed during its time of most rapid growth in the mid 1970's through to mid 1980's. A concern that so many new people were coming from other churches, and a desire to see more "unsaved people" coming along and coming to faith. When descriptions were given of the kind of people being baptised it was obvious the majority of those came from church backgrounds, as at the church I had led during the same period.

As a result of this, I decided to research the backgrounds of those now attending the church. The results were even more marked than I had imagined. What it showed was that 87.7% of those attending the church had been attending another church as adults before they came to this church. Of the remaining 12.3% who had not attended elsewhere as an adult, 5.2% had gone to Sunday school or youth group at the church, 3.1% to Sunday school or youth group elsewhere, and only 3.9% came from a genuinely nonchurched background. Interestingly the largest group of attendees at this church, 33%, came to it from mainline Protestant churches. I then wanted to find out if this pattern was true of other churches that had experienced growth over this period. I researched three other churches that had grown significantly: a charismatic Anglican, an evangelical Presbyterian, and a Pentecostal church. The results were similar with in all cases at least 75% having come from other churches and only between 2.7% and 4.0% having a nonchurched background. Interestingly with the Pentecostal church, the pattern was similar to the Baptist church in that the largest single group were those from mainline Protestant churches, in this case 38%. In terms of the percentage from a nonchurched background there was no difference between the Pentecostal and mainline churches.

Since doing this research, I have found the pattern is very similar in other western countries. Sally Morgenthaler in the US asks, "How do we explain the growth of the megachurch? Simple: musical chairs - church hopping growth. And it represents more than 80% of the people who have come in our doors in the past decade. The megachurch's feeder system is the smaller church, and disgruntled believers who have quit their churches." In Canada, additional research by Don Posterski and Irwin Baker has found that 5.5% of church attendees come from an unchurched background, and that there is no difference between mainline and conservative churches. Finally in Australia the NCLS research has found that 7% of church attendees are newcomers, of which 4% are returnees to church life after a period of time away, and only 3% are actually involved in attending church for the first time. Again, they find no significant difference between Pentecostal and Anglican churches.

These rather disturbing figures indicate a basic flaw in the logic of church growth thinking. This claims that the way to have effective churches is to look at those churches that are being successful (in terms of numerical growth) and then seek to copy what they do. It stands to reason though that if most of the growth in growing churches comes from other churches

then it is impossible that if all churches applied the same principles all churches would grow. The problem is we have confused the growth of some churches with growth of “the” church. We have confused growing churches with being effective in mission. What has happened is merely a reconfiguration of existing church goers. Where people go to church has changed, and some churches have grown at the expense of others. In New Zealand in the 1950s, the vast majority of the 20% or so in a church on Sunday went to either mainline Protestant or Roman Catholic churches. By 1999, the percentage in church had halved to about 10% and over half had moved to evangelical, charismatic, or Pentecostal churches. True some of these people had stopped going to church for a time, but it is a mistake to confuse the awakening of their faith for the first time as an adult, or the renewal of a lapsed faith (though both of these are to be celebrated) as effective mission to that large and ever growing percentage of New Zealanders who have never had Christian faith as part of their story and are therefore the genuinely nonchurched. If most of the growth of evangelical, charismatic and Pentecostal churches in New Zealand over the past three decades has been from people out of mainline Protestant churches (as the research clearly indicates it has been), what will happen when that pool runs dry?

Indications are that in New Zealand (as well as in Australia so I understand) the rapid growth of Pentecostal churches has come to an end in the late 1990’s. Peter Brierley’s research indicates that in fact this has happened in Britain also and indeed world wide. In the U.S. George Barna’s research indicates also that numbers of the boomers who moved across into megachurches in the 1980’s and early 1990’s are now drifting off disillusioned.

It appears then that how we do church, and consequently how we communicate the gospel, only makes sense to those who have “church” somewhere in their history. The problem is this is a diminishing percentage of the population, so in the retail terms, increasingly applied to the church in a culture where everything is commoditised, the market for church is shrinking rather than increasing.

One of the most significant pieces of research I have seen recently was done this year among students in Dunedin by a person employed by the Presbyterian Church to work in this area. What he found, with information obtained from all of the Christian groups and churches in Dunedin, was that out of the 23,000 students only 700 were involved in any way with them. That equates to 3.2% of the total. If this represents the future of the church in New Zealand, it looks grim indeed.

I believe these rather sobering facts present many significant challenges for the church and I want to focus on two of these for the remainder of this paper. Our understanding of conversion and understanding of the forms church life takes.

A significant area of research in sociology of religion since the 1960’s has been trying to understand conversion. Johann Lofland and Rodney Stark were the first to actually go and watch people convert to a new religious movement. Up until that point, most scientific explanations saw conversions as an attempt by individuals to address the deprivations they felt. What Lofland and Stark found was that attachments lie at the heart of conversions and that conversion therefore tends to proceed along social networks formed by interpersonal attachments, and is a process rather than a sudden event. Since then many studies have found the same to be true in an immense variety of religious groups around the world. Thus in

looking at how people make religious choices, Stark and Finke, propose that in making those choices “people will attempt to conserve their social capital [interpersonal attachments] and so under normal circumstances, most people will neither convert nor reaffiliate.” This then explains why children usually adhere to the faith they were brought up in. By doing so, they protect their relational and kinship ties.

Research shows that most people who are in religious organisations have stayed within those in which they were raised. Some have applied social learning theory, widely used in psychology, as an explanation of how religious commitments are made. This emphasises the role of observational learning and the modelling of behaviour, suggesting that socialisation occurs when important cultural agents model and reinforce certain attitudes and behaviours. It seems clear then that basically people in western countries are socialised into the faith, and that very few are to be found in churches who have not received a basic understanding of Christian beliefs and behaviour during their upbringing as children or adolescents, or both.

In the light of this how are we to understand the process of conversion, something that has traditionally been so central to conservative, evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity? Again, I think that sociology provides some helpful insights. A number of researchers on conversion prefer to use the term “alternation” rather than “conversion” when discussing some kinds of religious transformations. In most cases, the use of the term “alternation” recognises that some religious changes in people’s lives are significant, but they are not full blown conversions. Rather, they involve the integration of a series of elements that result in less disruptive life changes than defined by conversion. In fact, a general conclusion from the social psychological literature is that the nature of personal transformation is rarely radical enough to qualify as a conversion.

The term “alternation” was originally suggested by Peter Berger to refer to the possibility that “an individual may alternate back and forth between logically contradictory meaning systems.” Berger preferred the term “alternation” to the more religiously charged term “conversion.” Richard Traviassano, however, has suggested that conversion and alternation be used to refer to two quite different types of

**“Jesus also summons us to be human with one another by forming small communities, where relating is more personal. Once this happens, the barriers between individuals melt away and we discover the human bonds that connect us to one another. We befriend one another and, in the light of prayer and grace, in the aura of Jesus’ words about God’s reign, we find ourselves wanting to share what we have. We want to celebrate the presence of Jesus in our midst by joining him in a picnic celebration.”**

**- Jesus the Rebel (71)**

**“Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?” How would Jesus have us answer this question? How does he want us to live our lives? How can we heal those in our midst?**

**Jesus wants us to live God’s law of doing good and saving life by refusing to respect any law that legalizes evil and destroys life. He wants us to live in communities of faith that heal its suffering members, for healing each other is at the heart of God’s law and religious life as far as Jesus is concerned. He wants us to disrupt the status quo that oppresses the poor. He wants us to take the same risks he took for the sake of the poor and oppressed. He wants us to call upon the poor and the oppressed to stretch out their hands in open defiance of the murderous oppressive authorities.”**

**- Jesus the Rebel (58)**

transformation. He defines conversion as the negation of a former identity. Conversion is a radical and fundamental shift in identity that results in clear changes in values, ethics, morals, and lifestyle behaviours. Alternation, on the other hand, implies some linkage and continuity between the past and the present. The ensuing identity and lifestyle grows naturally out of its predecessor.

This distinction is I believe helpful in understanding the kinds of transformations or changes that people undergo. In alternation a supportive network and an ideological framework is already present. In conversion, a whole new world is entered; the past no longer has a direct bearing on the present. Conversion is non-cumulative. Alternation is cumulative. Our analysis suggests clearly that most of what is reported in church growth stories and counted in “conversion” statistics is alternations rather than conversions. An additional difficulty is that in much church growth literature conversion and recruitment are confused in the focus on gaining new members. Since most people come from within “the tradition,” rather than outside the church, very few have actually been converted. As a consequence, particularly within the evangelical tradition, we need to rethink the metaphors and symbols we use to describe the kind of changes we are calling people to do and the kinds of commitments we are asking them to make. The fact that we have used the language of dramatic conversion to describe what is in reality either a consolidation of some existing identity a person has, or a reaffirmation of their previous identity, maybe after a period of experimenting with some alternative identities, has deluded many church leaders into believing they have been seeing a constant stream of “new converts to Christianity” coming into their churches, when in reality they have been

witnessing some significant milestones in the ongoing development of those who were already in the fold of faith. It has made us feel comfortably successful and hidden from us just how difficult the real challenge of seeking to convert people to the faith who have never been a part of it.

At the beginning of this paper, we suggested that in western culture religious believing increasingly had become separated from religious belonging. Historically orthodox faith has seen Christianity as having both dimensions. Faith needs to be communally expressed; it has both social and cognitive dimensions. In our examination of religious commitment and conversion, we have suggested that it can be explained largely in terms of socialisation. Sociologists claim that faith is both socially transmitted and socially maintained. If this is so then it is clear that the critical challenge that we face is, not how to find better explanations of the faith, a sharper apologetic and more polished presentation, so that people through understanding might come to believe. Nor do we need to radically change the nature of what we believe in order to make it more palatable to people, as liberalism attempted to. The rapid decline of most liberal churches clearly indicates that is not the critical issue.

This focus on belief is part of the legacy of the enlightenment with which we are still shackled. A number of thinkers have argued that the church in the west, in both its evangelical and liberal forms, tied its coat tails to, and was basically shaped by, the values of the enlightenment. As the church generally resists change, rather than engaging positively with it, it has continued to hang on to this paradigm much longer than the rest of the society in which it exists. Scottish theologian John Drane suggests that churches are “the last modernist, Victorian bureaucracies that are left.” One of the strongest illustrations is the whole evangelistic crusade movement that reached its peak in Billy Graham. For Graham the gospel was reduced to a matter of individual belief and conversion a matter of a rational choice. It was buying into the beliefs of Christianity, clearly and logically presented. So it became “Steps to peace with God” or “The Four Spiritual Laws”. People were asked to “only believe.” In a culture where people still belonged within a basically Christian community, and had social networks that reinforced those beliefs, then making a commitment to affirm or consolidate those beliefs, which were already a part of their “ideological framework”, was relatively easy. Many responded, as was demonstrated in the large crowds and high number of responses during his 1959 Crusade in New Zealand. However as the culture changed from the beginning of the 1960’s, as baby boomers moved out of church in increasing numbers, the social networks that maintained a sense of belonging were fractured. Thus when Graham returned to New Zealand in 1969 the social connections to church, the sense of belonging was much weaker, and so crowds were considerably smaller and responses dramatically less.

Research by sociologists amongst baby boomers and their religious journeys indicates quite clearly that the reason the majority left church was not to do with disagreement over belief, but rather a disengagement from the way they were being asked to belong. In other words, the forms in which belonging was expressed and the behaviours they were asked to engage in, became increasingly disconnected to the style and forms in which they expressed their belonging and behaviour in other

areas of their life. It became irrelevant. For all the talk about church change and renewal, for all the energy expended, the ways in which we belong have remained fundamentally unchanged over forty years of the most rapid change in human history. Eddie Gibbs, Professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary, suggests that the “popular models of church today, such as the ‘megachurch’ concept, the ‘seeker church’ and the new ‘cell’ church model are only tactical attempts to breathe new life into old structures.” They may make church more appealing and attractive to those who already belong or have recently departed. They still though have a form of life that is increasingly distant from, and irrelevant to, those who are one, two, three, or even more generations removed from the church, as the majority of those in countries like New Zealand and Australia now are.

If conversion comes about primarily through socialisation, as we have suggested, it indicates that belonging needs to happen before believing can occur. Without a social connection, it is unlikely to happen. Hence, the critical challenge we face. How do our churches become the kinds of community to which those outside may make some kind of connection, and therefore might possibly someday end up belonging, and so eventually come to believe? I think there are three key areas of challenge with which the church in countries like New Zealand and Australia, need to grapple: the shadow of Christendom, the stranglehold of clericalism, and the idolatry of church. Let’s look at each of these in turn.

**1. The Shadow of Christendom.** The forms of church life that exist today have been shaped and formed by existing for eighteen hundred years in what has been known as Christendom, a period where western culture and society was shaped by a Christian understanding, with the church a significant player in determining the values and culture of that society. While that state began to break down in the nineteenth century, it still continued to at least be given lip service until the second half of this century. What has emerged in the west since the end of the war, and particularly since the “cultural revolution” of the sixties, is a society whose values and culture are no longer shaped by a Christian understanding. The church meanwhile has continued to maintain forms, values, language, and rituals that come out of that framework. These are intensely meaningful and helpful to those brought up within that church (or Christendom) culture, and it is their concerns that largely shape what churches do. However they are meaningless (when they can actually be understood) and irrelevant to the vast majority of those brought up in post sixties western culture; hence the diminishing involvement in churches, as we have seen, amongst Baby Boomers and even more so among Gen Xers. Most of the attempts to renew, or build new kinds of churches, are still largely determined by the inherited forms and patterns of the past. A case in point that illustrates this is the huge emphasis still placed on coming to worship on Sunday as the primary point of commitment for Christians. Sunday as a special day for worship was a product of Christendom. In the post Christendom culture in which we live, it is just another day of the week for increasing numbers of, particularly young, New Zealanders, and for many attending a church service is not possible with work, family or sporting commitments. Yet for so many churches, it is still the only real option offered.

Or take what happens in services. Shaped by our Christendom heritage the main fare is worship in the form of

**“Why is it that most people support war? Why do people give in to the patriotic, nationalistic fervor behind militarism and support the slaughter of fellow human beings? Why do people choose destruction instead of life?**

**...we choose destruction instead of life because we are faithless. We do not believe in the living God. We do not worship the God of non-violence, the God of peace, the God of life. Instead, we worship the idols of death and place our faith, hope, trust, and security in our weapons. And because of this, we follow them down the wide road to destruction.**

**Why do so few find the narrow gate, the narrow path to life? Because it is hard to be sane when the culture around us is insane. It is hard to speak of peace in a permanent war economy. It is hard to insist on life when life is cheap, when the next war seems inevitable, when our leaders glorify the way of destruction...Given the trouble and persecution we invite if we oppose the culture’s road to destruction, we prefer to mind our own business, make our money, pay war taxes, submit to the culture’s apathy, and not waste time struggling in a ‘hopeless cause’ against the insurmountable imperial mindset that breeds war.”**

**- Jesus the Rebel (51-52)**

corporate singing and listening to a 30 or 40 minute monologue, with no opportunity to interact. Where else in our society do we attempt to create a sense of belonging and community in this way? Where else do these forms of communication happen? I think the experience of Alpha illustrates this. Both in Britain and in New Zealand this seems to have had some success in getting people to think and talk about Christianity, and often to come to some kind of faith commitment (although I suspect the vast majority of those are not too distantly removed from the church). What I found in talking with people in Britain though was a growing concern that very few of the vast numbers going through Alpha seemed to be ending up in a local church. On asking that question of those involved in running courses in New Zealand, I have invariably found the same response. My hunch is that people are coming into a context where they can share a meal together, meet, and discuss in an open non-judgemental way with a group of equals their life and spiritual concerns, where their story is respected and they find people who care about them as persons. In other words, it provides a way of belonging with which they can connect. Then they are told, sorry this is just the

introduction, the real thing happens on Sunday at 10am or 7pm. After a few weeks of attendance, they drift off never to be sighted again, thinking, "This is not what I understood Christianity was all about and is just irrelevant to my life and needs".

We need to see new forms of church developed that are not shaped by the values and forms of Christendom but by a genuinely mission encounter between the gospel and culture of 21st century New Zealand. My belief is that these cannot be developed by those of us who have lived in the church for thirty or twenty or maybe even ten years (and so are already shaped by the inherited culture) but must be developed by those who have been brought up in the context of that culture and who have come to faith out of it. In other words, we need to change from a patronising "come" mentality - this is what we have developed to meet your needs - to a "go" mentality, where we seek to sow the seed of the gospel in the lives of communities of people outside of established churches and see what new forms and shapes that new life creates. This of course raises all kinds of issues of authority and control and so brings us to the second point.

**2. The stranglehold of clericalism.** Fundamental to Christendom is the distinction between clergy and the laity. "A professionalized cast of Christians, with its own hierarchical gradations, is separated from other Christians by various forms of ordination and induction." While the markers of this separation may have changed, from 'priest' to 'senior pastor,' from 'Roman tunic' to 'blue suit and white shoes' and from 'confessional' to 'corner office,' it is still kept firmly in place. Everyone knows who calls the shots and who gets the money. As we have seen one of the core value changes of the sixties, was a deep seated anti-institutionalism. Roof, writing about this in a religious context, notes in his long term research that "Boomers in great numbers questioned religious authority when they were growing up and have remained somewhat distrustful of institutions even as they had aged." While many contemporary churches endeavour to disguise any signs of hierarchy and talk a language of tolerance and "permission giving," to outsiders they appear dominated by hierarchies and deeply concerned over issues of control. In most churches whether something is allowed to happen or not, whether it is some new venture by young people, or a new ministry that someone wants to begin, permission has to be sought from the appropriate authority before it can begin - usually in the end the "man" at the top. In a culture, which encourages you to do your own thing and follow your own dream people bristle at this kind of control over what often seem to be fairly minor things. "Who can tell me who can meet in my home or what we do there?" "Why shouldn't a group of us be able to meet together to worship the way we want to when we want to?" Often people suspect the real issue is that the leaders are afraid of losing control of what people think or do. One of the values that have become central in our culture is that people resent being told what to do by others and want to have a say in decision making. Most innovative and growing companies achieve this by devolving a lot of decision making down to small groups and teams. In most churches, however, there is still a small and central decision making body dominated by the minister, staff, vestry, or elders. Feeling they have no say in what is happening increasing numbers of thinking church goers are drifting off, while, given the postmodern suspicion of control, few are

attracted in to an organisation that smacks of this kind of culture of control.

Another area of great suspicion is in regard to money. It is a regular and seemingly increasing preoccupation of most churches, inevitable given the declining levels of giving among Christians and the increasingly expensive costs of running a church and supporting a ministry. Partly this is also a consequence of the current emphasis on the importance of seeking to grow large churches with modern facilities and technology, and increasingly dependent on the contribution of full and part time paid staff. If church leaders appear to be preoccupied with questions of status, control, and money, they will inevitably find a growing reaction among many people. A suspicion that the church is out to get your money ranks high on people's negative perceptions of church. In a culture where church was central to the social order and priest or minister performed many important social and cultural functions for society as a whole, a privileged professional class could be warmly regarded but in today's climate, they can so often be seen as seeking to maintain or grow the institution for their own benefit. As we look for new forms of church life, so we need to look for new forms of ministry that are non hierarchical, inclusive and open, which will loosen controls in church life and free up resources to be used in helping people rather than supporting and meeting the needs of the institution. Indeed it is sobering to note, on the one hand, the continuing decline of institutional forms of religion, and on the other hand the rapid spread and growth of the relatively uncontrolled, eclectic, loosely networked forms of spirituality in the alternative religious movements, that can be loosely defined as "New Age".

**3. The idolatry of church.** I recently talked with someone who had just begun as the pastor of a church. He had spent his first period of time meeting with people in the church and asking them how they viewed the church at the moment. What he heard repeatedly went something like this: "I am just absolutely flat out and stressed out at the moment. My job is taking about fifty hours a week, my wife is working a fairly pressured job and the demands of the children both in their education and leisure activities just seems to increase all the time. And all I ever hear from the church is they want more. We should be supporting their programs more. They want to start off a new ministry and need people to run it. We need to be giving more." That perspective is not unique to that church. It is a refrain I hear repeatedly from people who are married, with significant work and family commitments. I believe that one of the problems we face today is that the local church has become an idol. This is a consequence of the church growth and church management approaches, which have interpreted the gospel in terms of what happens to the church. It becomes the focus and centre of attention. A church leader in Canada told me "We keep asking the wrong question. We keep asking what the right form for the church is. We should be asking what does it mean to be an authentic follower of Jesus today - and the church should take its form out of that." It seems that so often today our preoccupation is with the church as an institution instead of living out the gospel. We become focused on keeping the institution going, on making it bigger and better, on what is happening at church, inside the institution. It becomes idolatrous, and in the end, any idol takes from life rather than gives life. Research on church leavers indicates that has been the experience of many, and those looking on from the

outside say I don't want to have any part of that.

The gospel is not primarily about building churches, it is about living in the world with a spirituality shaped by gospel values. The local church exists in two modes: gathered and scattered. It is gathered when we meet together to worship corporately, to encourage and disciple each other so that when we are scattered in the world we can authentically live as Christians and so bear witness to the gospel. Jesus is primary; the church is secondary. The problem is we have made the church in its gathered form all pervasive and forgotten that it loses its rationale if it is not primarily resourcing its members for their life when it is scattered. When this happens people say, as they are in increasing numbers, it is simply irrelevant to my life. What is desperately needed is a whole change of perspective about "church" as an institution (in other words, when it is gathered) that actually puts it in its right perspective. Rather than the church in this sense demanding that people serve it, it should be seeking to serve people by resourcing them so that they can live as authentic followers of Jesus in the world, at work, at home, in education or in leisure and so point others to him. Dietrich Bonhoeffer described Jesus as "the man for others," the one who was willing to give away his own life that others may live. The church that goes by his name is called to follow his pattern and give away its own life that others may live.

For the church to be the church in New Zealand and Australia in the twenty first century, I believe these are three of the major issues with which we need to wrestle. What will the church be like when it manages to break free of the shadow it has inherited from its form in Christendom, when it is no longer dominated by the control of the clergy and when rather than demanding that its members serve it, it in fact seeks to serve them so they can live their lives in the world as Christ intended. Peter Brierley, the key researcher on the church in Britain, and a deeply committed church person, said to me in an interview "I believe we are entering a time of churchless Christianity." What he meant was not that Christianity will no longer exist in communal forms, it inevitably must if it is to survive let alone thrive, but that the forms of Christian community that it will take, the way belonging is expressed, will bear little resemblance to "church" as we have known it. I don't know what exactly it will look like, but I do believe it will be vastly different from the form of even the most innovative of those churches regarded as contemporary. Roof who we saw earlier claims that the absence of Boomers and Gen Xers from churches is less a protest of religion in the deepest sense than a response to institutional styles that are unfamiliar or at odds with their life experience, suggests that three key parameters will be that it "privileges open discussion, shared experiences and attention to spiritual development." Those qualities will be a good place to begin because the way ahead will not be pointed to by some great guru pointing the way ahead from inside the institution, but rather a collective sharing of insights of all who claim to belong.

One final helpful sociological insight comes from looking at the nature of "sets." Sets refer to the way we group categories of people or things together. In examining this, mathematicians speak about a variety of different types of sets, and one helpful distinction is that between 'bounded' or 'closed' sets on the one hand and 'fuzzy' or 'open' sets on the

other. A closed set has a clear boundary, and things either belong inside the set or are outside it. Open sets on the other hand have no sharp boundary and categories flow into one another. In western society after the Reformation, the church has often functioned as a closed set. It was clear who was in and who was out, there were a variety of boundary markers, and for someone to come into the set they had to come through these, often defined in terms of belief and the various rites associated with it. The usual institutional factors of hierarchy control and sanction came into play. This model is most marked in the conservative, evangelical, and Pentecostal stream. In an open set, the focus is not on the boundary: who is inside and who is outside. Rather the nature of the set is determined by a focus on the centre, which holds the set together. In the case of the

**"What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus today?...Following Jesus today in a land [world?] of nuclear weapons, rampant racism, and widespread economic injustice means actively going against our culture of violence. As the culture promotes violence, we promote Jesus' non-violence. As the culture calls for war, we call for Jesus' peace. As the culture supports racism, sexism, and classism, we demand Jesus' vision of equality, community, and reconciliation. As the culture insists on vengeance and execution, we pray with Jesus for forgiveness and compassion. As the culture summons us to be successful, to make money, to have a career, to get to the top, and to be number one, we race in the opposite direction and go with Jesus into voluntary poverty, powerlessness, humility, suffering, and death.**

**Discipleship to Jesus, according to the gospel, requires that we love our enemies, demand justice for the poor, seek liberation of the oppressed, visit the sick and imprisoned, topple the idols of death, resist militarism, reject consumerism, dismantle racism, create community, beat swords into plowshares, and worship the God of peace. If we try to engage in these social practices, we will feel the sting of discipleship and the gospel will come alive.**

**On that day, we will know what it means to be Jesus' disciple."**

**- Jesus the Rebel (28-29)**

church, this is obviously Jesus Christ. Thus the concern is not on who is in and who is out (institutional concerns), but rather whether people are moving toward the centre, Christ (gospel concerns). If conversion is regarded as a process, and belonging needs to be experienced before believing happens (and hopefully eventually behaving results), then it is obvious this model of church needs to be that which is embraced. The church is then an open community of people who are seeking to help each other in their journey with Jesus. To do this they then need to 'privilege open discussion, shared experiences, and attention to spiritual development.'

*Kevin is a New Zealand Baptist pastor who is pursuing a PhD on the topic above. He is a regular reader of ON THE ROAD and teaches at the Bible College of New Zealand. This is an edited version of his work. For more information, contact him at [wardk@xtra.co.nz](mailto:wardk@xtra.co.nz).*

## A Dream In The Making

BY ROSS AND DIANE COLEMAN

I (Ross) remember sitting in the classroom of a metropolitan theological college. In the room was a map of Sydney with coloured pins denoting where all the churches of that denomination were located. It was an impressive display of colour. Except one thing - there were a number of areas on that map that had many coloured pins and some other areas where there were no pins at all.

If you know Sydney, you will be aware that historically the church has had a good presence amongst the more affluent suburbs while struggling to penetrate the less well off areas. It is not just a scenario for one denomination – the whole church has struggled to have an effective presence in poorer inner urban areas. One of those areas that had no pins was the inner southern area of Sydney known as Green Square, Mascot, Rosebery, and Eastlakes.

The area has people from fifty different nationalities. Residents include refugees, long term immigrants, unemployed, urban professionals, the homeless, young families, and empty-nesters. Also in the area are Department of Housing high rise flats, industrial estates, lots of aeroplanes, high density luxury apartments and all with minimal Christian presence.

We believe God calls Christians to be a prophetic people both to our culture and to the church. And yet we are aware that the expression of our faith is increasingly more irrelevant to the challenges of living in post-modern Australia. The emerging church at the beginning of the 21st century needs to explore what it means to be followers of Jesus in culturally relevant ways. All of us are called to be a missionary people. The accompanying articles in *ON THE ROAD* explore these issues.

We will be heading to the inner city area discussed above (that had no pins) in mid March. As we relocate, we take with us a passion for Jesus and energy to make Him known. We don't pretend to know all the answers – we're not sure of all the questions. Pray with us as we listen and work with our new community. We feel both excited and daunted by the possibilities. We are excited that the Anabaptist Network sees this venture as an opportunity to express in action the core values of the movement. We are daunted at the scope of the challenge – it seems huge!

We do sense a strong conviction that God's heart is for the

**"...Mennonite (Anabaptist) witness... must be rooted in the life of at least one worshipping community. A 'disembodied' verbal witness has its place, but it is only a partial place. We will not really get our message across unless we live it."**

**-Alan Kreider in *From The Ground Up* (p78) speaking about Mennonite witness in Ireland**

less well off. Coupled with the values of the Anabaptist tradition (eg. peacemaking, shalom, justice, community) it is our dream to build a series of missional communities throughout the area.

Currently we minister in the south western suburbs. Having a heart for the inner city and yet working in an outer suburban setting, we were faced with dissonance between our beliefs concerning God's heart for the poor and marginalised and how we could implement this in our lives. Even though both of us have years of working with people who have been in prison, who are poor and on the margins of society, the move to the inner south of Sydney provides many opportunities to stretch us personally and spiritually.

To make the dream a reality we need your help. We welcome people who will work with us as well as others who will pray and support us. We distribute a monthly prayer update for your informed support.

Ross is the present secretary of the AAANZ Executive Committee and Diane served in that role in the past. You can contact Ross and Diane at [coleman@ispdr.net.au](mailto:coleman@ispdr.net.au).

## A Lenten Reflection

BY ROSS COLEMAN

In last Saturday's Sydney Morning Herald (9/2/02), Hugh Mackay wrote a brilliant article titled "Gimme, gimme, gimme! (Just can't get enough)". Mackay critiqued our consumer culture that says I want more – more sport, more choice, more money. And we want it now! Towards the end of this article, Mackay writes:

*"Perhaps our desire for more, more, more is a thinly disguised attempt to distract ourselves by constant stimulation, constant change, constant excitement, constant entertainment, and the illusion of constant renewal. But distract ourselves from what? That's the mystery, and I suspect the answer is: The Mystery. The more we can busy ourselves with the quest for more of everything, the less likely we are to engage with awkward questions about the meaning of our lives. So we keep asking other, easier questions – what else is there? What's the next big thing? What am I missing out on? – designed to postpone the moment when we might have to pause and consider the point of all this frenetic grasping." (p26)*

At times, I felt as if Mackay was making a commentary on the church. What would the church be like if we stopped our frenetic grasping and embraced Him who is Mystery? What would our message be like if we dared to live a radical lifestyle that matched our rhetoric?

Often we have reduced conversion and Christianity to a privatised, moral, and spiritual decision. We avoid subjects like the environment, justice, the poor, economics because they are seen as marginal to the Gospel. When we have a faith like this we, as Mackay suggests, ask the easy questions.

BUT to follow Jesus impacts all our life. Following Jesus is standing against the values of our culture and asking the hard questions of each other. I think it's about time we got real in the church and confessed that we have embraced the gimme, gimme culture. We have opted for something other than the Mystery.

As we continue in the forty days of prayer and fasting, I invite you to hear God's perspective through reading about Jesus in the Gospels. Therein is a call to live that is not "gimme, gimme" but "How can I serve?"

## **Veteran Mission Worker Describes Her View of the 'Missional Church'**

**By MELANIE ZUERCHER**

Newton, Kan. (COM/AIMM)—As Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada continue to consolidate their structures, vision and identity, both are building on a pillar called "missional church." Although it might be a new term, it's not a new idea: that mission is the foundation on which all of the work of the church should be constructed. Mission workers with years of experience in their overseas assignments are among those who can help to articulate what this means for Mennonites/Anabaptists in the 21st century.

Donna Kampen Entz has worked with her husband, Loren, in the West African nation of Burkina Faso since 1978, when the couple were among the pioneers of Mennonite mission work in that country. Entz took time recently to reflect on what she has learned in more than two decades of mission work and her vision for a missional church.

"My vision of the missional church is to recover a reality of both the early church and the Anabaptist movement," she says, "where every believer was both a theologian—or Bible teacher—and a missionary.

Instead, today we have specialists: pastors 'doing' church for believers and missionaries 'doing' mission work for congregations. It really lets everyone off the hook.

From my experience teaching Bible overseas, I see only one important place for a specialist in the North American church. Because the

gap between our North American culture and that of Hebrew and Greek culture is so great, we need to have highly trained people in the church to be cultural interpreters—not telling people what to believe or how to act, but simply explaining the cultural background so that people together in dialogue can discover in community what 'the Word' means for them."

Entz sees at least two other major challenges facing individual

congregations and the denominations as they work toward the "missional church" goal. One involves North American attitudes toward money and the other the calling out of young people.

"There is a big word we face in mission work [overseas] and that is 'syncretism'—when traditional practices are brought into the church," she says. "I think capitalism with its individualism has been incorporated into the church [in North America]. We in the church handle our money the way the world does. There seems to be a fear of talking about financial struggles or of being accountable about what to do with our money."

"To be empowered to be a missional church, we've got to first be vulnerable about our finances," she continues. "The first thing the early church in Acts 2 did was to change its way of handling money—sharing it in common but more important, being open and honest about it. The story of Ananias and Sapphira is not anti-rich—it's more about saying the money is not ours to do with individually what we want."

Regarding young people, Entz says, "To be a strong missional church, the young people need to have some kind of significant cross-cultural experience before they're 25 and too settled into paying off debts, marriage, children, etc.

Being a missional church, says Entz, is not an easy proposition. It requires a willingness to be vulnerable, to be open, and to listen to the voices of Christians from other cultures. It means hard work on the part of each local congregation.

"I see the need for us to have such deep relationships, especially crossing economic barriers, so that compassion will just flow. Can we trust the African church to teach us the value of good relationships?"

"My guess is that a lot of the compassion energy in our churches is tied up with people being too busy and distracted. I'm encouraged that many are making more human choices about balancing work, family, church, etc."

Living the past 18 months in North America, Entz says, she has struggled with the pressure she feels to "get things done, and even worse, to be at every appointment 'on time.' It's ironic—the neighbour women on either side of us would spend as much time with me as I'd give them, but I'm too busy writing and speaking about mission."

She concludes, "I pray that being alert to these issues may strengthen the missional church."

**"Being a missional church includes how we live our lives together as a congregation before the watching world. Our being needs to match our doing."**

**-Mission-Focused Congregations: A Bible Study, 4**

**"One of every six people in the Mennonite Church USA today has had some form of mission or service involvement."**

## Micah Network Consultation

BY LES FUSSELL

The Micah Network is a coalition of evangelical churches and agencies from around the world committed to integral mission. One hundred and forty leaders of Christian organisations involved with the poor from fifty countries met in Oxford in September 2001 to listen to God and each other for mutual learning, encouragement and strengthening as we serve the cause of the kingdom of God among the poor. The focus of papers and case studies was "Word and Deed Mission". Papers and case studies issued at the consultation can be requested from David Boul ([david@boul.co.uk](mailto:david@boul.co.uk)).

Following are some excerpts from the conference declaration. To read the complete document go to: [www.micahnetwork.org](http://www.micahnetwork.org) or e-mail the Secretary at [sec@micahnetwork.org](mailto:sec@micahnetwork.org)

### The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission

As we gathered, we heard of the devastating effects that globalisation is having on poor communities around the world. We recognise the importance of the market for a healthy economy, but we reject giving the market ultimate status, allowing consumer goods to define personal identity and leaving the plight of the poor to market forces. We name this as idolatry. Although globalisation is contributing to the creation of more open societies, on the whole it means the massive exclusion of the poor. Perhaps the most critical social task for the church in our generation is to offer a compelling alternative to the unjust imbalances in the world economic order and the values of its consumer culture. God is calling us to build global twin towers of justice and peace. We need to create a coalition of compassion.

### Integral Mission

Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world, we betray the word of God, which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing, and saying are at the heart of our integral task.

We call one another back to the centrality of Jesus Christ. His life of sacrificial service is the pattern for Christian discipleship. In his life and through his death Jesus modelled identification with the poor and inclusion of the other. On the cross, God shows us how seriously he takes justice, reconciling both rich and poor to him as he meets the demands of his justice. We serve by the power of the risen Lord through the Spirit as we journey with the poor, finding our hope in the subjection of all things under Christ and the final defeat of evil. We confess that all too often we have failed to live a life worthy of this gospel.

### Integral Mission and the Church

God by his grace has given local churches the task of integral mission. The future of integral mission is in planting and enabling local churches to transform the communities of which they are part. Churches as caring and inclusive

communities are at the heart of what it means to do integral mission. People are often attracted to the Christian community before they are attracted to the Christian message.

Our experience of walking with poor communities challenges our concept of what it means to be church. The church is not merely an institution or organisation, but communities of Jesus that embody the values of the kingdom. The involvement of the poor in the life of the church is forcing us to find new ways of being church within the context of our cultures instead of being mere reflections of the values of one dominant culture or sub-culture. Our message has credibility to the extent that we adopt an incarnational approach. We confess that too often the church has pursued wealth, success, status, and influence. But the kingdom of God has been given to the community that Jesus Christ called his little flock.

Les Fussell is National Director for Australia Baptist World Aid

## Mission-Focused Congregations: A Bible Study

Edited by Lois Barrett, Faith and Life Resources  
(A Division of Mennonite Publishing House).

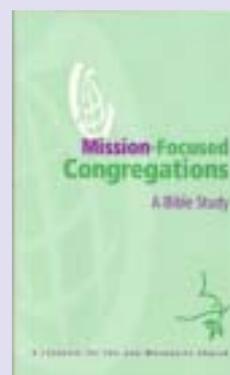
This resource helps adult groups understand what it means to be a "missional church." Seven sessions use New Testament texts to explore how missions can flow throughout the life of the church. Each session asks: What is the context of the Biblical text? What is God doing? How are we being called and sent? This study will help your whole church rethink missions.

*This study is equally rooted solidly in the scriptures and in the reality of life. While written for group discussion, this material may also serve as a guide for personal reflection. It is a resource for preparing sermons or lectures on the purpose of the church.*

— Dan Nighswander, general secretary, Mennonite Church Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba

### Mission-Focused

*Congregations is a most timely resource. It furnishes a clear biblical framework for understanding the nature and purpose of the church and it encourages the congregation to cultivate a lifestyle aligned with God's mission in the world. This Bible study addresses the fundamental need every congregation has: to attune itself continuously to being the witnessing-serving body of Christ in*



*the world today.*

— Wilbert R. Shenk, teacher, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California

*This study does not tell us "how" as much as "why" we should take the call to be a missional church seriously. Use the study to inform, but even more, to inspire — to help us tap into energy that God has given us to be a faithful church.*

— Jim Schrag, executive director, Executive Board, Mennonite Church USA

## AROUND THE NETWORK

We found the following article about Tim Costello. What sustains you? Write and tell us and we will share it with others around the network.

### “What Sustains the Reverend Tim Costello”

*The Weekend Australian Magazine*, December 15-16, 2001, p.58.

“There are three things I do regularly that form a triangle of support in my life and that very much sustain me. The first thing is my daily devotions of prayer, meditating on the scripture, and just being quiet. Each day...I write up a personal journal in my quiet time...

The second thing is running, which I do every second day...I probably come up with my best ideas and extend my imagination when I run...

The third area is a group of guys who I've met with on Friday mornings for breakfast for the last ten years...It's a support group of friends who talk honestly, keep what we talk about in confidence with each other, and are there to support each other.

### OIKOS and AAANZ Melbourne Event With Stuart Murray Williams

Saturday 29th June

For more information contact Bessie Pereira at  
[bessiep@jeack.com.au](mailto:bessiep@jeack.com.au)

We discovered this new organization endorsed by a number of leading Australians including Tim Costello.

### Australians for Just Refugee Programs Inc

“We believe that Australia's policies toward refugees and asylum seekers should at all times reflect respect, decency and traditional Australian generosity to those in need, while advancing Australia's international standing and national interests. We aim to achieve just and compassionate treatment of refugees, consistent with the human rights standards which Australia has developed and endorsed.”

**Patrons:** Malcolm Fraser AC, Rev Tim Costello, Rev Bill Crews AM, Carillo Gantner AO, Ian Macphree AO, Lowitja O'Donohue AC CBE, Dr John Yu AC, Dr Nouria Salehi OAM

#### National Purposes:

- To build community support for our goals through education and media campaigns
- To promote national communication about strategy, and exchange of ideas and information
- To foster and lobby for alternative policy models
- To promote informed and constructive debate
- To cooperate with other organisations with similar aims
- To provide resources to support community and other initiatives in line with these strategies.

To find out more and register your support, go to:

<http://www.justrefugeeprograms.com.au/>

## Urban Church Planting Conference

### Mission With An Anabaptist Twist

21-22 June 2002 Morling College, Sydney

Anabaptists of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century were mostly urban people who started fellowships of radical, non-violent Christians all across Europe. What does the Anabaptist tradition have to say about urban church planting in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Australia? What might such churches look like?

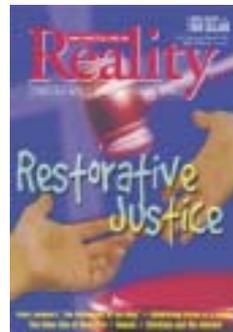
These questions will be explored in a two-day conference sponsored by the AAANZ with special guest presenter Stuart Murray Williams from the Anabaptist Network in Great Britain.

See [www.anabaptist.asn.au](http://www.anabaptist.asn.au) for further details and registration form.

**Limited Space Available  
So Register Early!**

### Chris Marshall Article

Check out the latest issue of *Reality* at [www.reality.org.nz](http://www.reality.org.nz). The theme is Restorative Justice and includes an excellent article by Chris Marshall entitled “Crime, Crucifixion and the Forgotten Art of Lament”. Chris addresses criminal justice concerns by reminding us of the criminalisation of Jesus and the forgotten art of lament.



### Peace Church: Sustaining Discipleship for Building Community in a Violent Time

A Bi-National Conference Sponsored By The AAANZ

24-26 January 2003

Sydney (region)

The World Council of Churches has named the current decade the “Decade To Overcome Violence”. What does this mean for us as individual Christians and as congregations? What might an Australian/New Zealand “Peace Church” look like? How do we overcome violence and sustain peacemaking in our homes, churches, schools, work places, and society? What does the Anabaptist tradition have to say about 21<sup>st</sup> century violence?

The AAANZ will gather in the Sydney region (site yet to be announced) to explore these issues. The gathering will also be a time of worship, fun, and fellowship geared for the whole family. There will be a mix of large and small group input and interaction with resource people focusing on the conference theme.

**Mark your calendars now  
and watch ON THE ROAD for further details.**

## AROUND THE WORLD

### New doors open for mission in Ireland and United Kingdom

LONDON (Mennonite Mission Network) - Dancers' bodies weave through pulsating light to the throb of the in-house band, Xcommunicated, at Club X. The X is not the "adults-only" variety, but the Greek letter, chi, a symbol for Christ.

"Club X isn't a Christian version of a secular nightclub — it's much, much better," announces the website of Grace Christian Fellowship. "Club X demonstrates how contemporary radical Christianity actually is," said Tom Burke, head elder of Grace Christian Fellowship. "We believe that our young people, sometimes called 'generation X', can be transformed into a generation that loves and serves the Lord Jesus Christ."

Serious Bible study, mission, and using the arts to worship in creative ways are also important components of Club X's ministry.

Located in, Cork, southern Ireland's second largest city, Grace Christian Fellowship is one of the many vibrant Christian communities in Ireland and the United Kingdom that are discovering the Anabaptist Network. The Anabaptist Network grew out the ministries of the London Mennonite Centre and provides a forum for Christians of many denominations to explore how Anabaptism can revitalize the church.

Tim Foley, a Mennonite Mission Network representative based in London, has been in conversation with the elders of Grace Christian Fellowship about the possibility of collaborating in short-term mission. The multi-ethnic congregation has grown from 10 to 180 members in five years and would welcome relationships with Anabaptists that span national boundaries.

Another community desiring short-term mission workers committed to Anabaptist beliefs is London's Round Chapel and its neighbourhood project, Round Here. Round Here reaches out into its inner-city community through a food co-op, community meals, a credit union, providing Internet access, and just welcoming people in for tea and a chat.

Urban Expressions, another London member of the Anabaptist Network, sends teams of church planters into the under-churched sections of London. These self-supporting teams move into a community and search for new, home-based ways of being the church.

"[The teams] are not in a rush," Foley said. "They introduce Jesus gently, starting from people's lived experience. [To start conversation,] one team showed the video, Full Monty, [an R-rated 1997 comedy nominated for four Academy Awards for its portrayal of a group of working-class British men who form an exotic male dance troupe after their steel factory shuts down]. These were ordinary blokes, just like them, striving to make sense of the bleakness of their lives."

Another Urban Expression church planter has played pick-up basketball games with community youth every night for six years. "He hasn't preached yet," Foley said. "This seems small, but it's big."

Conscience, a campaign for the legal right to have the military portion of taxes spent on peace-building initiatives, also would welcome a volunteer to help with research, administration, publicity, and lobbying.

These are a few of the exciting opportunities for short-term mission that Foley sees unfolding. "I'm eager to get started," he said. "I could use 12 people straight away, and they don't have to be young. They just need energy. We're not looking for degrees or highly qualified people. We're looking for culturally sensitive Anabaptists who are willing to model Christ in loving and serving others."

Foley also serves as one of the pastors at Wood Green Mennonite Church in London, the only Mennonite church in the United Kingdom. He and his wife, Rachel, have a son and are awaiting the birth of their second child.

If you are interested in a short-term mission assignment in Ireland or the United Kingdom with the Mennonite Mission Network and are willing to be self-funding, contact: Diana Cook at Mennonite Mission Network, 500 S. Main, Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370; e-mail: [service@MennoniteMission.net](mailto:service@MennoniteMission.net)

### Christian Peacemaker Teams Afghanistan Report

BY DOUG PRITCHARD

Afghans whom members of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) delegation in Afghanistan met during the first two weeks of January are uniformly hopeful and excited about the current opportunity to rebuild their country. They have endured 23 years of war and devastation driven by outside forces, and now they believe that the world has seen the folly of feeding such terrorism.

CPT witnessed a joyful reunion while waiting in an office of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, as colleagues returned from around the world to take up their posts and create a new government.

But early in every conversation, Afghans also voiced their concerns about "security." There are still heavily armed men walking the streets of the cities and maintaining "checkposts" along the highways. CPT's hosts were unwilling to take the delegation more than twenty kilometres south or east of Kabul because of the danger. They were also reluctant to take their own organizations' vehicles out of their office compounds because many have been seized. During its week in Kabul, CPT learned of the murders of a Swedish aid worker and a prominent local businessman. There were seventy armed robberies in one night alone. When knocking on various gates trying to find a particular address, the CPT delegation in Kabul found themselves facing young boys carrying semi-automatic weapons.

For many years, the care and feeding of young men has been in the hands of "commanders," leaders of gangs of ten to a hundred men in a district. They in turn are beholden to "big commanders" who may control one or more of Afghanistan's thirty provinces. The big commanders depend upon the small ones for their power but cannot feed them all and so give them free rein to rob and plunder. Some of the biggest commanders, and their foreign backers, were responsible for many atrocities in the fighting of 1992-1996 but are now part of the interim

government.

“This is our biggest problem,” said the director of one Afghan aid organization. “These men have no education. They only know how to get food with a gun. We have to get rid of their weapons and find them jobs.”

Leverage over the commanders has been hard to find in the past. However, CPT has learned of a local village that recently sent 100 people to the Ministry of Defence demanding action after a murder in their area. Afghan aid groups are seeking funds around the world to educate and employ former fighters. Many communities are restoring the power of the “shura”, or community council, as a counter to the artificial power of the commanders. Everyone is watching to see whether commanders will have a lesser role in the next government, which is to take office in May.

Haji Nasrullah, a leader in the village of Charasyab, twenty kilometres south of Kabul, returned to his land last year after fifteen years as a refugee in Pakistan. He told the CPT delegation, “We are not with the Taliban or the commanders or the Russians or the Americans. We are neutral and just want peace and to live in dignity. Peacemaking is our way and our mission. We are ready to sacrifice ourselves and our families to peacebuilding.”

## Two bullets plus two bullets

BY DOUG PRITCHARD

“I don’t like my school books,” an Afghan teenager told the CPT delegation in Pakistan. “The math books have questions like, ‘Two bullets plus two bullets is how many bullets?’ The poetry books have poems made up about the Soviets, and the war, and the mujahadin instead of our own Afghan poetry.”

“Yes,” added her sister, “And math questions like: ‘There are ten Russians in a tank. The mujahadin kill five of them. How many Russians are left in the tank?’ I hate these books.”

Afghanistan has suffered twenty-three years of war. Four million refugees like these girls have fled to neighbouring countries. They hope that they can return soon and contribute to rebuilding their nation.

The manager of an Afghan organization committed to peace-building told the CPT delegation that these school text books pose a real problem. They were published in the 1980s by the Centre for Afghan Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha for all grades one to twelve. The project was funded by USAID and millions of the books were printed in the two main Afghan languages, Dari and Pashto. The authors hoped to use images “familiar to Afghan children.” One book has violent images or examples on 43 of its 100 pages.

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989 and the collapse of the Afghan Communist government in 1992, the US withdrew its financial support for Afghan education. A revised edition of the Nebraska textbooks was published but, without the US subsidy, these books are more expensive. Therefore, the original, militarized textbooks are the ones people can afford and they remain on the market. Nevertheless, they perpetuate a culture of violence, which neither the school children nor their parents want.

The parents hope that the USA and other wealthy nations who have intervened in Afghan affairs again this year will not

turn away as quickly as they did in 1992. They hope that these nations will support the Afghan people in a sustained effort to end physical, social, and cultural violence.

## Mennonites And Catholics Find Common Ground On Adult Baptism

ASSISI, Italy - Global Anabaptist-related churches may be surprised to learn that Catholics believe in baptizing adults on confession of faith. Wasn’t voluntary adult baptism at the root of the turmoil and persecution of Anabaptists in the 16th century in Europe?

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper were topics discussed here 27 November to 3 December 2001 at the fourth of five Mennonite/Catholic Dialogues begun in 1998.

“There is much more convergence between a Mennonite and a Catholic understanding of baptism and the Lord’s Supper than has generally been assumed,” said Helmut Harder of Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada), who presented a paper on these topics. He added that the Catholic spokesperson’s “reading” of the import of Vatican II and subsequent discussion is that adult baptism is becoming normative in the Catholic church, with less emphasis on infant and child baptism. Catholics accept persons baptized in non-Catholic communions, if it is done with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Larry Miller, executive secretary of Mennonite World Conference and a member of the Mennonite delegation, said in a recent interview that he felt an “affinity” with this Catholic theology and practice of baptism. “It is significant for Mennonites to hear the Catholic position on the theology of adult baptism and of its frequency,” said Miller.

Mennonite and Catholic participants in the dialogue on sacraments agreed that “the primary sacrament is Christ and the Body of Christ (the Church),” said Harder. They also agreed that the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper should be spoken of as “signs,” pointing to a reality beyond themselves. For the Catholics, noted Harder, the emphasis on the objects themselves conveying salvation may be lessening.

He added that the Catholics found it attractive that the Mennonite paper on a theology of baptism and the Lord’s Supper saw participation in these ordinances as bringing spiritual change to the recipient and to the community of faith.

The general focus of the Mennonite-Catholic dialogues has been better understanding and the healing of memories and prejudices, said Miller. Mennonites carry painful memories of the persecution endured by their 16th-century ancestors. Catholics, on the other hand, see the Anabaptists’ departure from the church as an abhorrent fracturing of the unity of the Body of Christ.

The location of the most recent conversation allowed Mennonites to visit the site of the vision of St. Francis, who taught much about peace and reconciliation, and his favourite places of prayer.

Before gathering in Assisi, some of the Mennonites visited Rome, where they met with Pontifical Councils on Christian Unity, Justice and Peace and Interreligious Dialogue. They also toured St. Peter’s Basilica, the Sistine Chapel and the Redemptoris Mater Chapel.

## Mennonite and Baptist Conversation on Evangelism and Peace Witness

Philadelphia, PA.—Ten years had passed since the Baptists and the Mennonites sat down together for bilateral discussions. What, if anything, might they learn from each other? In what areas might they encourage each other?

“A Conference on Evangelism and the Peace Witness of the Church” took place at Eastern College here on January 10-12, 2002. Attended by about 85 persons, the academic conference was co-sponsored by Mennonite World Conference and Baptist World Alliance. About two-thirds of the attendees were Mennonite; only three or four of the whole group came from outside North America.

Amid the pulse-taking, several mutually held convictions emerged: 1) strong support for the “Believers Church” motif; 2) the need for a high Christology; and 3) a sense that the common threads related to the beginnings of these two groups should be explored more.

But the contrasts were more pronounced. Size was one—though the Baptists are a more recent confession, there are about 50 times more of them than Mennonites. Some attendees asked why this was and whether this was in fact directly related to the theme of the conference. Were the Mennonites less effective in winning persons to their churches through the years? Or were the Mennonite ideals of discipleship and peacemaking too intimidating for most seekers?

“Personal conversion” and “baptism” were two themes that emerged repeatedly from the presentations of Baptist speakers. “Peace” and “reconciliation” were the two most common themes from Mennonite presenters.

Several of the Baptist speakers included rather dramatic stories of their personal conversions to faith in Jesus Christ; none of the Mennonites did. Several of the Mennonite presenters included stories of their involvement (sometimes dramatic) in missions of peace, reconciliation, and justice; only one or two Baptist speakers did so.

“The Baptists have taken the commission to evangelize as primary,” noted one Baptist, quoting a Mennonite, “and the Mennonites have taken the second commandment of loving the neighbour as more primary in their life.”

“Baptists have been good obstetricians but bad paediatricians,” observed Denton Lotz, General Secretary of Baptist World Alliance. Larry Miller, Executive Secretary of Mennonite World Conference, responded, suggesting that the Mennonites need to learn more from the Baptists about missions and evangelism. “Many Mennonites are missionary-minded. So what’s the difference between us?” he asked.

Numerous suggestions were made throughout the conference on ways the two groups might encourage each other. It was noted several times that the Baptists and the Mennonites in the Soviet Union had worked closely together and, having migrated to Germany in recent years, often continue to do so today. Also, in countries around the world where Christians are in the minority, Baptists and Mennonites often have a closer relationship.

No formal structures are being proposed by either side, simply an occasional bilateral discussion which brings greater understanding. “We don’t seek to convert each other in these

bilateral discussions,” Miller observed, “but we learn to know each other better.”

Two poignant moments occurred near the end of the conference. One Baptist leader cautioned Mennonites on letting their peace witness become too one-sided. “Our people in the Soviet Union suffered a great deal for many years under the repression of that government,” he said, “and the Mennonites expressed very little witness against the horrors of the gulag. You should have.”

Later a Mennonite leader stood and with considerable emotion confessed, “I have been touched by your personal conversion stories. I wish I had that sense of conversion and assurance of salvation.” Then he added wistfully, “What confuses me is that so often the persons and groups who profess such a conversion turn out to be the most hostile as Christians to our concerns for peace and justice. Why is that?”

Both moments suggested the need for more conversations between these two groups.

## Anabaptist centre in Korea becomes a reality

After years of planning and even more years of dreaming, the Korea Anabaptist Centre has become a reality, with an opening celebration held 2 November.

Around 100 individuals from all over South Korea gathered that day at the historic Seoul Union Church, the grounds of which contain the “foreigner’s cemetery” with the gravesites of the first Protestant missionaries to Korea (Methodist Henry Appenzeller, whose mother was a Mennonite, and Presbyterian Horace G. Underwood). They celebrated the opening of the centre with a prayer and worship service and a “peace seminar.” Participants reflected the diversity of interest that Anabaptism has attracted among Koreans. Members of Jesus Village Church in Chunchon were instrumental in planning and carrying out the event, and there was a strong showing by Mennonite Vocational School graduates and former staff. MVS was one of the ministries of Mennonite Central Committee following the Korean War.

The work of the Korea Anabaptist Centre consists of developing Anabaptist resources, educational and exchange programs and networking among the growing Korean Anabaptist network. They will be working with individuals, groups and churches to actively participate in the mission of God by cultivating biblical discipleship, peace and Christian community and by providing resources, education, training and relationships in the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith tradition.”

## What can we do about evil?

**By JOHN REMPEL**

(This is the text of Rempel’s presentation during “The Church Responds to September 11, 2001,” a seminar for church leaders hosted by Mennonite Central Committee East Coast on 7 December 2001.)

AKRON, Pa. — It is sometimes said that there are two kinds of pacifists. The one kind runs from evil because they find it overwhelming. They overestimate the power of evil. The other kind underestimates the power of evil because they think that good intentions and good institutions are enough to overcome it.

The Bible teaches us that the world is fallen. It's not hard for us to believe that after September 11. In his resurrection, Christ broke the power of evil: it can no longer compel us to do its bidding. But it still lashes out to harm what it can.

Paul urges us not to be overcome with evil but to overcome evil with good. He doesn't say, "run from evil" or "fight it on its own terms" but overcome it with good. How can we do this? We can live victorious lives as Christians and as a church. Our victory is to be able — even though we admit that we sometimes fail — to return good for evil. This takes the form of individual acts of charity, of acting collectively through church agencies, and of supporting government agencies when they do good instead of evil.

But what happens when evil turns the tables and threatens to overcome good? What do we do when evil is so entrenched and ruthless, so committed to destruction that people who respond nonviolently are helpless? What is our responsibility when innocent lives are at stake?

Let me identify four factors that need to be held together and considered together as we respond to questions such as these.

First of all, evil in human institutions is never only on one side. If the comparison is between Christ and the devil, we know that Christ is all good and the devil is all evil. But even the best individuals and communities are not totally identified with Christ. The attacks on New York and Washington were barbaric. But some of the policies Western countries implement to control the economies of developing countries are also barbaric. So, part of our response to an evil situation is to repent for our complicity in bringing it about.

Secondly, security is ultimately not a material matter for Christians. I have heard so many people since the terrorist attacks talk about their crippling anxiety over what will happen to our country, our living standard and about personal job security. I share those worries. But if we have the gift of eternal

life our security cannot, finally, be taken from us. Even if people kill us, they cannot take away our life. When we believe that the "good life" can only be safeguarded by wealth and power, we fall prey to the claims of government that only their military actions can provide security. Let me acknowledge, though, that one of the stark realities of a fallen world is naked evil. I need only mention the names "Hitler" and "Stalin" for you to agree with me. Part of the tragedy of life is that force is sometimes necessary to restrain evil. Romans 13 is a hard passage for peacemakers to hear, but Paul tells us that God uses government to do so. Based on the whole teaching of Jesus, we need to remind ourselves that this is an extremely limited role. Violence is sometimes able to restrain evil but only good can overcome it. Our role as nonresistant Christians in relation to government is to counsel the state to respond with the least violent option. I want to give you an example of how this might happen from my work with Mennonite Central Committee at the United Nations.

On September 11, Mary Robinson, the U.N. Commissioner for Human Rights, stated that the terrorist attacks against the United States were "a crime against humanity." This is a technical term in international law to designate a violent attack as a criminal act and not an act of war. For such criminal acts, there exist international conventions, for example, against hijacking. The international community has ways of initiating a prosecution of criminals and organizing a police action against them. Even police actions are troubling from a nonresistant point of view, but they involve much less violence than open warfare.

You should know that both the United States and the United Nations suppressed Mary Robinson's statement. No country wants to accept limitations on its absolute power to act militarily. It might have been possible to set up a criminal tribunal, but we were never allowed to hear of that possibility.

Finally, we sometimes mistake differentness for evil. When we don't understand an individual or a group, we are afraid of them. Once we're afraid, we become suspicious. And when we're suspicious, we find ways of legitimizing violent behaviour. There are many people around us and in the world at large who look and believe differently than we do. Let us not think that because they are different they are responsible for everything we believe is wrong with the world.

— John Rempel serves as Mennonite Central Committee's U.N. Liaison in New York.

## 2003 Mennonite World Conference Assembly Check List

Update 2, the second of occasional Mennonite World Conference news sheets, is a handy resource for congregations and individuals as they begin to plan for Africa 2003, the next MWC assembly. It is available on the MWC home page ([www.mwc-cmm.org](http://www.mwc-cmm.org)).

Update 2 offers an invitation to "imagine how your church's life can be enriched by participating in a global congregational gathering!" It offers churches ideas on how to participate and suggests a timeline beginning now. It also lists main events for the 11-17 August 2003 gathering in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, answers questions on registration, travel and concerns some people raise about the country and hotline avenues for more information.

**"A major transformation of culture, from one celebrating violence to one practicing non-violence, requires reaching masses of people and transforming that unconscious sense of who we are and what makes life worth living. Thomas Merton, the beloved Trappist monk, understood the necessity of this when he said, '...non-violent action must establish itself in the minds and memories of modern [people] not only as conceivable and possible, but as a desirable alternative to what [they] now consider the only realistic possibility: namely political technique backed by force.'"**

**- *The Missing Peace/ The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History*, James C. Juhnke & Carol M. Hunter, Pandora Press, 2001, page 10.**

## BOOKS AND RESOURCES

### *Stories from Below the Poverty Line*

BY GEORGE BEUKEMA, HERALD PRESS, 2001.

I love stories. I also like good storytellers. In his book *Stories from Below the Poverty Line*, George Beukema reveals the skills of a master conveyor of stories. By joining stories of his many adventures as a young child to those in his adult life, Beukema masterfully provides some excellent material for biblical and theological reflection.

Each of the nine chapters is based on a theme around which is woven a tapestry of stories from rural Michigan to the challenges of life in inner city New York and Cleveland. George Beukema currently pastors a multi ethnic congregation in central Chicago.

In the first chapter (with the theme of courage), Beukema recalls his move as a nine-year-old to East Harlem in New York with his parents who were ministers. One evening there was a great commotion in the kitchen. George was to find out later that Jimmy, a mate of his from school and church, had been murdered. Apparently, Jimmy intervened to help resolve a dispute between some people and was killed. That evening as George lay in bed he looked at the picture that hung on the wall in his bedroom. "It was quite different from the one hanging in my Sunday school room in Michigan. This Jesus was dark and his face full of lines and scruffy marks. His head tilted up, and his mouth hung open like either he was laughing or crying, I couldn't tell which. I figured that this must be the Jesus of East Harlem – Jimmy's Jesus." (p23)

In a later chapter under the theme of "Special revelation", he tells the story of an old man called Earl. He lives on the streets of Chicago and has all his earthly possessions squashed into his backpack. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Earl's backpack is stuffed with the treasures of his street friends as well. Earl has chronic insomnia and can go without sleep for eight to ten days at a time. Because of the danger of living and sleeping on the streets, Earl keeps his friends' stuff. When he collapses in exhaustion they in turn look after him. Beukema quotes a letter written by a college student who had met Earl: "When Earl explained that only a third of the stuff in his backpack was his, and that the rest were things he carried for his homeless friends, then I realised that the homeless may know more about community than most Christians. We have much to learn from them about what it means to be the church." (p49)

If you like stories, you will enjoy this book. However, *Stories from Below the Poverty Line* is not just something to read and put down. It is not just a compelling read for those who may be called to urban ministry. It is a book challenging God's people everywhere to more seriously reflect God's agenda for those on the fringe of society.

I felt very privileged reading this book because I entered not just into a city but into Beukema's world sensing his emotions. I heard him scream out to God as the injustices of the inner city overwhelmed him; I felt his tears as he struggled with some very difficult situations and I observed a man that at times faced fear and danger. Through it all, I saw a man passionate about his God and the people for whom God cares deeply.

The book issues a challenge. This is a book written about American cities and people. Where are our stories that proclaim

God's heart for the poor and marginalised in Australia and New Zealand? Who are the George Beukemas amongst us already doing the Kingdom work? Who will go and be a George Beukema amongst the materially poor but spiritually rich people in our cities? Maybe there are some local stories yet to be told.

REVIEWED BY ROSS COLEMAN

### *Jesus and the Gods of the New Age: Communicating Christ in Today's Spiritual Supermarket*

BY ROSS CLIFFORD AND PHILIP JOHNSON, LION PUBLISHING, 2001.

We spoke recently with friends who visited a Mind, Body, and Spirit Exhibition in Sydney. It is one of the regular New Age spirituality festivals that draw thousands of people each year. The authors of this book ("a completely revised, updated, and expanded version" of their previous book *Sacred Quest*) have had stands at New Age festivals since 1991 as a way to practice "incarnational mission" - an approach to evangelism that "leaves the fortress of the church and enters the seeker's world." (29)

The Introduction describes this book as one "that presents a practical, field-tested model of how to share your faith." (8) After an opening chapter on "Incarnating the Good News," the authors describe the different New Age ideas and practices on offer in our modern spiritual marketplace.

What is New Age spirituality? The authors say:

*"Trying to define New Age spirituality has been compared to nailing jelly or bean curd to a wall. This is because it has no central organizing body...and no confessional statement of belief...There is no founder or central leader...As these customary features of organized religion are absent, precise definitions are problematic."* (18)

They provide this helpful chart showing what has influenced New Age thought:



Their approach to mission among New Agers grows out of this understanding of New Age spirituality:

*"[It is] a distinct culture with its own cosmologies, spiritual myths and symbols and a spiritual language that gives seekers an attractive vision of who they are and who they might become. As a culture in its own right, New Age spirituality constitutes a mission field. Once we start conceiving of it as a mission field, we must necessarily begin considering how we will present the unchanging good news of Jesus Christ."* (23)

They encourage us to be like missionaries of old who "joined the tribe and communicated the gospel in culturally meaningful ways." (26)

The authors have eleven chapters that describe their contact with “seekers” at New Age festivals and give a helpful summary of New Age spiritualities from Angel Phenomena, Goddess Worship, and the Zodiac through to the Cosmic Oneness Paradigm, Near-Death Experiences, and Jesus’ Missing Years. They cover other topics that make this book a mini-encyclopaedia or handbook on New Age spiritualities.

They argue that “this spirituality is addressing serious questions to the church – to see it as a mirror in which we find ourselves reflected for what we have neglected to do as Christ’s disciples.” (25)

Thousands are not lining up to come to our churches or to Christian Resource Exhibitions. They are attending these festivals. The authors take seriously the deep spiritual hunger that this represents in these people and the stories in the book illustrate that the authors care for these seekers as people and not just potential bums on the pews. The authors recognize that we are all on a spiritual pilgrimage and we should share genuinely with people who are at a different place on that journey. As Christians, we should not be attacking or belittling New Age seekers but should be building relationships with them out of true love and compassion.

**REVIEWED BY MSH**

## New Releases from Herald Press

- ***Where Was God on September 11? Seeds of Faith and Hope***, by Donald B. Kraybill and Linda Gehman Peachey

“If the church is doing its job - binding wounds, comforting the grieving, offering food to the hungry - I don’t think people will wonder so much where God is when it hurts. They’ll know where God is: in the presence of his people on earth.” -Philip Yancey

The events of September 11, 2001, have stirred anew many old and enduring religious questions. Why does God permit evil? How should people of faith respond to violence and terror?

This collection of essays, articles, sermons, and letters reflect the heartthrob of more than 70 Christian leaders and thinkers as they struggle with profound questions of faith and seek to be people of peace in a world of terror. As seeds of faith and hope sprouting from the rubble, their reflections provide excellent resources for individuals and groups searching for meaning and hope in the midst of terror.

The writers in this journal of faith call for hope and practical peacemaking, exploring biblical themes of forgiveness, enemy love, and nonviolence as alternatives to revenge and militant justice in reacting to terrorism.

- ***Mommy Stayed in Bed This Morning: Helping Children Understand Depression***, by Mary Wenger Weaver. Illustrated by Mary Chambers.

“An excellent resource for children to learn about mental illness. Simple, yet accurate.”

—Crystal Horning, M.S., N.C.C., Mental Illness Consultant

This unique picture storybook for children ages 4-to-8 shows the impact of a parent’s struggle with depression through the eyes of a preschool child, David. Always viewed through David’s eyes, the scenes depict symptoms of depression and therapeutic interventions for children. Readers see David’s

range of emotions and the many people who help him find the way to happiness and security.

Through this story, Mary Wenger Weaver helps children recognize their fears and anxieties, and then points to ways of discovering health and wholeness. This sensitive and honest portrayal provides talking points and identifies sources of support for children and family.

“Useful in clinical work with children and families who have parents with chronic mental illness.” -Donna Minter, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist

ALL HERALD PRESS BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE FROM PROVIDENT BOOKSTORES-E-MAIL:

[PBSORDER@MPH.ORG](mailto:PBSORDER@MPH.ORG)

## New From Pandora Press U.S.

- ***Fractured Dance: Gadamer And A Mennonite Conflict Over Homosexuality***, by Michael A. King, (co-published with Herald Press)

Michael King analyses a Mennonite denominational body’s deliberations over excommunicating a congregation for its stand on homosexuality.

This study of how persons understand—or misunderstand—each other amid conflict will engage students and scholars of hermeneutics, rhetoric, communication, conflict, Gadamer, homosexuality, “culture wars”; church leaders and pastors; anyone interested in how true understanding unfolds—or not—amid conflict.

“King argues for genuine dialogue as a path not to mealy-mouthed compromise but to transformation. While showing that such dialogue has proved elusive in relation to homosexuality, King holds out hope that traditional Mennonite commitments to community, humility, and *gelassenheit* (yieldedness) may yet make it possible.” —Gregory A. Clark, Associate Professor of Philosophy, North Park University and member, Reba Place Fellowship

“This dispassionate analysis of the conflict over homosexuality is welcome and necessary. As one who loves lively debate far more than refusal to discuss controversial topics, this book encourages me to continue the dance-fractured though it may be at times!” —Reta Halteman Finger, Assistant Professor of New Testament, Messiah College

Explore book and see order options at:  
<http://www.PandoraPressUS.com/fd/fd.htm>

- ***Crowned With Glory And Honor: Human Rights In The Biblical Tradition***, by Chris Marshall (copublished with Herald Press, USA and Lime Grove House, in Auckland, New Zealand).

This book, likely to become a classic in its field, argues that Christian faith has something distinctive to say about human rights and that biblical values make important contributions to contemporary understandings of human rights.

“The book I have been waiting for since I made the commitment to be a Christian who stands for peace and justice. Marshall builds the bridge between the secular language of human rights and biblical perspectives on *shalom* that has been sorely lacking. Christian activists who have been hesitant to bring their faith into the picture should read this book, as should

human rights advocates wondering how to persuade Christians to get on board. It may not be the longest book you read this year, but it could be the most important.” —Mary H. Schertz, Professor of New Testament, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

“A wonderful book. It will be enormously helpful to Christians who love ‘the least of these’ (Matt 25:45).” —Glen Stassen, Lewis Smedes Professor of Ethics, Fuller Theological Seminary.

“Provides a compelling case for the relevance of Christian faith for enriching a human rights culture. It is also a reminder to secularized people that there is a need for a deeper motivation to protect human rights than merely individual or group interests. A timely contribution to sustain the ongoing struggle for a humane society!” —Gerald J. Pillay, Professor of Theology, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

“Through six forays into biblical theology, Marshall examines the interface between Judeo-Christian Scripture and human rights. An important contribution to the moral agenda of the twenty-first century.” —Willard M. Swartley, Professor of New Testament, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

Chris Marshall, Auckland, New Zealand, is a theologian with a keen interest in how biblical perspectives can inform contemporary ethical debates. He is author of *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Justice, Crime and Punishment* (Eerdmans, 2001) and other books. Marshall’s *Beyond Retribution* has been nominated for the 2003 Gravemeyer Award, received recently by Miroslav Volf for Exclusion and Embrace.

Explore this book and see order options at <http://www.PandoraPressUS.com/cwg/cwg.htm>

- ***What Does The Bible Really Say About Hell? Wrestling With The Traditional View***, by Randy Klassen, (copublished with Herald Press)

This passionate proposal that hell must be seen in the context of God’s love will appeal to church leaders, students, discussion groups—who will find study helps plus extensive responses blending support with critique—and all interested in a careful yet accessible exploration of the biblical view of hell.

“Klassen is to be commended for writing this book. What he has done so well is examine carefully all significant references to hell in the Old and New Testaments and shown that none provides clear evidence of the existence of hell as commonly understood.” —Peter J. Dyck

Explore this book and see order options at <http://www.PandoraPressUS.com/wdb/wdb.htm>

## Websites Of Interest:

- **Antiwar.com**  
<http://www.antiwar.com> The title says it all.
- **Women Waging Peace**  
<http://www.womenwagingpeace.net/> A project of the Women and Public Policy Program (WAPPP) of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, works to break open diplomatic circles “by identifying the essential role and contribution of women in preventing violent conflict, stopping war, and sustaining peace in fragile areas around the world.”

- **The Lion & Lamb Project**  
<http://www.lionlamb.org/> The mission of The Lion & Lamb Project is to stop the marketing of violence to children.
- **The Peace Pulpit**  
<http://nationalcatholicreporter.org/peace/index.htm> Peace homilies each week by Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton.
- **Christian Peacemaker Teams**  
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0213/p12s01-wome.html> Aggressive pacifists’ put their faith on the firing line, Christian Peacemaker Teams strain to shield Palestinians and cool Israeli tempers, By Cameron W. Barr | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor
- **Fellowship of Reconciliation**  
<http://www.forusa.org/> FOR is the largest, oldest Interfaith Peace organization in the United States.
- **Mid-East Realities**  
<http://www.MiddleEast.Org> Making Sense of the Middle East. News, Information, & Analysis That Governments, Interest Groups, and the Corporate Media Don’t Want You To Know!
- **Reflections On Enemies**  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/001/36.62.html> Quotations to stir the heart and mind on hatred and forgiveness compiled by Richard A. Kauffman.
- **Peace Story of the Month**  
[http://thirdway.com/Peace/story.asp?S\\_ID=Current](http://thirdway.com/Peace/story.asp?S_ID=Current) A monthly mailing from the Peace Blend section of Third Way Cafe.
- **Recent Peace Agreements and Cease-Fires**  
<http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/cds/metadata/agreement.html> This list of recent peace accords and cease-fires reveals that despite the headlines of “intractable” ethnic conflicts, many efforts are being made to manage these conflicts more effectively.
- **Theology and Culture: Peacemaking in a Globalized World, International Historic Peace Church Consultation**  
Bienenberg Theological Seminary: Switzerland 25-29 June, 2001

This international consultation of Historic Peace Church theologians was held to provide reflection on their church’s peace theologies. It is one response to the Decade to Overcome Violence. Check out the papers and other information about the consultation at: <http://www.peacetheology.org/>

Some quotes about the consultation from the *MCC Peace Office Newsletter*, Oct-Dec 2001:

All three traditions [Mennonite, Quaker, and Church of the Brethren] shared a common move from expressing their peace convictions mostly as opposition to participation in war and violence, to indicating the need for justice and positive actions to build peace. — Judy Zimmerman Herr and Robert Herr

One issue requiring additional conversation is whether God is a pacifist. This discussion has very profound and I believe potentially fatal implications for peace theology. If God is revealed in Jesus and we agree that Jesus taught and embodied non-violence, and if there is nothing of God that is not revealed in Jesus (and in the Spirit), as standard Trinity doctrine proclaims, then God must be a “pacifist.” On the other hand, if God is not a pacifist, and thus intentionally uses violence in the world, then those who carry out God’s violence are actually doing god’s will – and who are we to oppose God/

God's violence, and why should we not help God/God's violence? – J. Denny Weaver

The use of violent force as a “last resort” to secure justice creates conditions that inhibit the achievement of justice. Too often we work under the false assumption that, if we cannot find a non-violent solution to a conflict, the use of violent force will take care of the problem. -- Mark Siemens

## Post September 11 Study Guide

AKRON, Pa. — At a time when world leaders are calling for vengeance, Jesus' parables offer life-giving alternatives. A new study guide from Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S., *The One who Showed Mercy*, examines heroes, victims, and villains in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Intended for use by congregations, Sunday school classes and other small groups, the guide highlights Jesus' call to move beyond predictable actions.

Available free from MCC, the booklet for group leaders provides background to the biblical text and guides for five study and reflection sessions. Each session offers insight from various sources, including stories of Anabaptist martyrs and a letter from a couple whose son died in the September 11 attacks in New York.

*The One who Showed Mercy* also includes handouts that can be copied and distributed to participants. Guidelines to help discussion leaders provide a welcoming atmosphere are given, as well as suggestions for the process of determining post-study action.

“We believe it's important for congregations to discern together, as a faith community, what God is saying to them and what an Anabaptist response is to terrorism and war,” explained Iris de Leon-Hartshorn of MCC U.S. She wrote *The One Who Showed Mercy* along with Titus Peachey and Kristin Reimer, also of MCC U.S.

To request a free copy contact Stella Toews at [stt@mcc.org](mailto:stt@mcc.org).

## Change And The Church: How To Initiate and Manage Constructive Change In The Local Church,

BY PETER CORNEY, AQUILA PRESS, SYDNEY,  
2000, 58 PAGES.

Change. Something we all have to deal with, particularly if we are interested in the life of the church. This little booklet gives some helpful suggestions and study guide questions to steer churches through times of change.

The author is Peter Corney, Director of the Institute for Contemporary Christian Leadership and former senior minister at St. Hilary's Anglican Church, Kew.

Corney quotes people like Hugh Mackay to paint a picture of the existing culture in Australia. He uses statistics and studies to predict where society and the church are heading. As an example, he talks about how “single person households are projected to rise by up to 113% by 2021. Ministry to single

people and couples without children will be a major area of ministry for churches in the future. The way we understand and speak of congregations, as ‘families’ will need to be re-thought. ‘Community’ may be a more inclusive word; certainly, this group will be looking for community. The ‘family service’ as the main worship event will have to be re-thought and other styles of gathering developed.” (3, 4)

One change that Corney does not spend much time addressing is the changing age of church leadership. In a 19 July, 2001, article in The Christian Science Monitor, Jane Lampman asks the question “Where are the young clergy?” (To read the complete story online go to <http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/2001/07/19/fp15s1-csm.shtml>)

The problem in churches used to be the greying of the people in the pews but now it is the greying clergy. Fewer younger people are taking up a ministerial career as well as attending church in the first place.

Lampman writes in her article:

“It is a real challenge for the church... because your under-30s are the generation walking away from the church ... Very few in leadership really understand the Gen X and Gen Y generations, [which are] looking for a different kind of church....

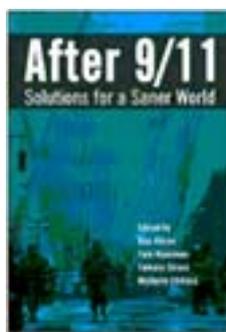
“The mega-churches that attracted boomers in the '80s were very much performance-based entertainment, and you could come anonymously... But your GenXers don't want anonymity and entertainment, they want involvement.” ...

“It's not just generational, but a deeper issue now labelled as the shift between modernism and post-modernism - a different way of thinking, perceiving, and shaping information. ... And it's wholly pertinent to forms of worship. A presentational Sunday worship experience - such as that you'd find at Willow Creek [the church near Chicago that first ignited the megachurch movement] doesn't make sense to them. What's important is engaging in the process, experiencing God and creating community at the same time...”

My guess is that these same trends are at work in Australia and New Zealand too. Anabaptism with its emphasis on “community” and “servant leadership” has something to offer the church in this changing environment.

REVIEWED BY MSH

## After 9/11: Solutions for a Saner World



After months of relentless news about terrorism, anthrax, war and the hunt for Osama bin Laden, the US conversation has taken a dramatic shift. Reflection has superseded the initial grief and anger. To capture the cutting edge of that conversation, AlterNet has released *After 9/11: Solutions for a Saner World*. The well-rounded collection of 42 articles untangles the knot of the post-9/11 landscape, tackling every subject from civil liberties to Islamic

fundamentalism to economics to sex.

Order from [www.alternet.org](http://www.alternet.org)

# THE ANABAPTIST ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND INC.

## 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:

- To nurture and support the Christian faith of individuals and groups in Australia and New Zealand who identify with the Anabaptist tradition.
- To network and link individuals, churches and groups of Christians who share a common Anabaptist understanding of the Christian faith.
- To provide religious services including teaching, training, pastoral care, mediation, and counsel to its members and others interested in the Anabaptist tradition.
- To provide resources and materials relating to the tradition, perspectives, and teaching of Anabaptists to both the Christian and general public.
- To convene conferences and gatherings which provide

opportunity for worship, teaching, training, consultation, celebration, and prayer in the Anabaptist tradition.

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.

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?

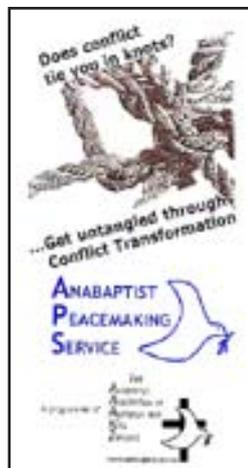
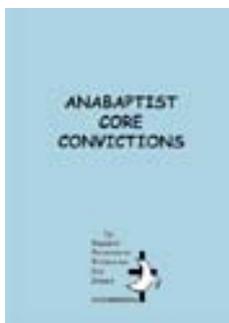
Anabaptism is a radical Christian renewal movement that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth-century Reformation. Whilst Anabaptism was a grass roots movement with diverse expressions in its early development, its enduring legacy usually has included the following:

- ◆ 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



**AAANZ**  
 c/o Mark and Mary Hurst  
 3/653 Princes Hwy.  
 Sutherland NSW 2232  
 Australia  
 ontheorad@today.com.au

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



## AAANZ Dates To Remember

**21-22 June Urban Church Planting Conference Sydney**

**29 June OIKOS and AAANZ Melbourne Event with Stuart Murray Williams**

**24-26 January 2003 Bi-National AAANZ Conference Sydney**

AAANZ publications available online or from the AAANZ postal address