

Wednesday, 19 July 2006



Bridge Builders

Transforming church conflict
A programme of the
London Mennonite Centre

14 Shepherds Hill
London N6 5AQ
T 0845 4500 214
F 020 8341 6807
alastairmckay@menno.org.uk
www.menno.org.uk

PRESS RELEASE: Bridge Builders' 10th Anniversary Celebration

Christians from many denominations came to the London Mennonite Centre on 6th July to celebrate the way God has worked through the Centre's conflict resolution programme, "Bridge Builders". Guest speaker Rt. Rev. Peter Price, Bishop of Bath and Wells, said how important it is to have peacemakers working "from the edge" to help churches transform the way they handle disagreement and conflict. Rev. Ernie Whalley, Senior Regional Minister of the Yorkshire Baptist Association, added, "We are very grateful for the rich training resource offered through Bridge Builders, helping us to grow as healthy Christian communities so that we can reach out to be bridge builders in our local communities."

The garden-party celebration was a sunny mixture of worship and singing, strawberry cream teas, and stories of how people had been affected by the 10-year ministry of Bridge Builders. Rev. Jackie Cray, speaking for the Mennonite Centre's trustees and management council, said, "Bridge Builders is a project that has prayer at its centre and has always been careful to seek God's direction. It has been led by Alastair McKay with a highly committed, visionary zeal and passion."

Good wishes poured in from many supporters who could not come to the celebration. A minister from Hampshire wrote: "I attended your training course in 1999: the best training I've ever undertaken. It's been hugely significant and I'm using the skills learnt on an almost daily basis at home, in church, and in other churches that need help. Thank you so much."

Rev. David Gamble, Coordinating Secretary in the Methodist Church signalled the need for a change of culture amongst Christians. "I am very committed to the concept of mediation as a way of dealing with conflict situations in the Church," he said. "As one who is responsible for our Church's complaints and discipline procedures, I know the problems that can arise when people feel forced to use an adversarial system. I therefore very much welcome the training and mediation services that Bridge Builders offers to the Church."

Artist Sue McKay created "instant images" throughout the afternoon. Her sketches captured the mental pictures that speakers and participants were using to describe Bridge Builders, and gave a vivid impression of growth, faith and mutual support.

Inaugurated in January 1996, Bridge Builders was launched under the joint leadership of Nelson Kraybill, then director of London Mennonite Centre, and Alastair McKay, current director of Bridge Builders. Their aim was to train Christian leaders and church members in Britain how to approach conflict more constructively, and to see conflict transformed, to facilitate growth and healing in the life of the Church.

Director
Alastair McKay

Council of Reference
Marigold Bentley
Viscountess Brentford OBE
Revd Elizabeth Caswell
Andrew Clark
Revd David Gamble
Rt Revd & Rt Hon David Hope
John Paul Lederach
Revd Will Morrey
Rt Revd Peter Price
Revd Ernie Whalley
Rt Revd Frank White
Lilamani Wickramaratne
Revd Dr Nigel Wright

London Mennonite Trust
Registered Charity No. 227410

Bridge Builders

Through workshops and week-long courses in mediation and facilitation skills, Bridge Builders has trained more than 2,500 people from all the major Christian denominations in the UK, and beyond. It now has three staff members, and has taken on dozens of mediation and consultancy cases. Over the last ten years, 400 people have become part of the Bridge Builders' Network, which offers ongoing support and training to church leaders.

Director Alastair McKay said, "Bridge Builders' vision is of local churches and their leaders functioning in healthy ways with a Biblically-grounded culture of peacemaking, reaching out to offer this life to the world. I am encouraged and excited to see how our vision has taken root among British church leaders and how they are carrying this vision into the lives of their congregations. This 10th anniversary celebration enabled us to step back and see how far along the road we have journeyed together."

ENDS

Director
Alastair McKay

Council of Reference
Marigold Bentley
Viscountess Brentford OBE
Revd Elizabeth Caswell
Andrew Clark
Revd David Gamble
Rt Revd & Rt Hon David Hope
John Paul Lederach
Revd Will Morrey
Rt Revd Peter Price
Revd Ernie Whalley
Rt Revd Rank White
Lilamani Wickramaratne
Revd Dr Nigel Wright

London Mennonite Trust
Registered Charity No. 227410