



# Bridge Builders' Network Newsletter

October 2008

## Of mice, men and God

During the last week I have had two contrary experiences. The first was having my research proposal for my Doctorate of Ministry rejected by my supervisors. This was after five months of very significant work on my part, and despite having had the proposal approved at various earlier stages. I am struggling to come to terms with this development, going through bewilderment, anger and despair as I consider the time, energy and money that I've spent – all, it seems, wasted. I find myself oscillating between blaming myself, and blaming my supervisors – although I know that neither is productive. At the same time, I feel periodically excited by the possibilities, as I start again from scratch, and begin to brainstorm and discern with my colleagues what else might form a helpful research project for the future of Bridge Builders' ministry.

The second experience was having my plans for my father's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations come to fruition. My father had arranged for his children and grandchildren to join him for an evening meal in Oxfordshire, and to stay the night together at a hotel. Back in April I proposed to my younger siblings that we surprise my father with an outing the next day: a visit to a classic car show at Blenheim Palace (my father loves old cars), followed by a hot air balloon flight all together from Oxford in the evening – something none of us had done before. After many exchanges to and fro, I eventually had everyone on board with the proposal – and willing to pay – and I booked the balloon flight with a non-refundable deposit. All summer the prospects for the flight looked grim. Cloud, rain or too much wind could easily rule out flying; and the complications of getting all our family together meant that for us it was 21 September or never. The night before, two of the party experienced major anxiety about the flight, not alleviated the next morning when we received the call that the flight was going ahead! We were blessed with a beautiful sunny day. The car show was fun – but how would the flight

go? It turned out even better than I had dreamed it might. The flight was an hour and half long – about twice as long as initially expected – and after half an hour the two anxious passengers were loving it, as were we all. After landing we worked together to pack up the massive balloon – a good bonding experience. My father had enjoyed the most wonderful day, and was truly delighted: I was moved to behold him quite so happy – and everyone else in the group as well! It was a time of fullness and joy.

Things don't always work out the way we plan. As Robert Burns put it, "The best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley." Woody Allen added: "If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans." Indeed this is a theme that runs through the scriptures; witness the psalmist who says: "The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm for ever, the purposes of his heart through all generations." (Ps 33:10-12).

I have found this to be true in the work of conflict transformation. Sometimes things that we have carefully planned can take a surprising turn for the worse. In a recent mediation case, after three productive sessions yielding a full written agreement, all the work seemed to be undone at a subsequent meeting with some other parties. Sometimes God surprises us and a situation will work out better than we could have dreamed possible – and God's grace seems to be almost tangible. I think of some corporate wrestling a few years ago when the Mennonite congregation in London made significant changes to its leadership and decision-making structures, which have since stood the test of time and borne positive fruit. Through it all we are called to look at the bigger picture, and to put things in a new perspective – to take a metaphorical balloon ride, seeing the world in a new way – and to put our trust in a God whose loving plans and purposes endure for ever.

-Alastair McKay

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## NOTE FOR NEW MEMBERS

As a member of our Network, you receive our Bridge Builders' Network newsletter by email. This seeks to highlight programme updates, book reviews, opportunities to develop your skills and wider mediation issues. We hope that the newsletter is a helpful supplement to Bridge Builders' Network Days, and a way of exploring issues around conflict in the church. Please give us feedback on what is useful to you or what you would like to read about.

If you are interested in receiving previous issues of this email newsletter, reply to this email with your request.

NOTE: The BBN Newsletter is produced for the exclusive use of Bridge Builders' Network Members and friends, as distributed by Bridge Builders. If you wish to reproduce any part of the newsletter for an audience further than yourself, contact Sharon Kniss for permission.

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## From the Network



Due to the size of this season's newsletter, we have no "From the Network" entry. However, we welcome offers for future contributions. If you would like to offer to share an anecdote or reflection of where Bridge Builders' training has taken you, please send Sharon an email mentioning your interest.

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## STAFF UPDATES



### Looking forward to 2009 ... without Sharon

Yes, it is true, Sharon Kniss will be finishing her time with Bridge Builders in 2009. As many of you know, Sharon first joined the Bridge Builders team in summer 2006 as a Mennonite volunteer from the U.S. She has been serving with Bridge Builders as a mission worker and will be moving on elsewhere (only God knows) in autumn 2009, when her three year commitment finishes. In the midst of your tears of sorrow, we welcome your prayers as we begin the process of finding a successor for Sharon. The search process can often take quite some time, hence the need to start a year in advance. We will again be looking for a volunteer from North America and hope to have someone come on board willing to spend three years with Alastair and Colin (which we appreciate takes a really special - or crazy - person). Thank you for your prayers, and we've heard that Sharon is open to receiving job offers.

### Update on Alastair's DMin research project

As you may have realised from Alastair's foreword, the Evaluating Bridge Builders research project is not going to proceed as planned. We're currently looking at what, if anything, might be salvaged from the plans. The most likely survivor is a survey of all those who have completed the mediation and facilitation skills course since October 2004 (i.e. in the last four years) to explore more of what course participants have learnt and what they are doing differently. Of particular interest for us will be a comparison between those who have got involved in the BB Network and those who haven't. We will also consider doing some more thorough evaluation with participants on the new *Transforming Church Conflict* foundation course that is part of our replacement for the mediation and facilitation skills course.

We are currently brainstorming ideas for alternative projects that might prove the focus of Alastair's DMin research. One possibility is an action research project working with two churches as case studies, exploring current attitudes to conflict within the church, and what impact some training with BB might have on the culture within those churches - with a view to being able to offer a tool box of materials that could be provided for our course participants for them to take back with them. Another idea is to explore how we might better adapt our church consultancy model to a British (or at least English) church context, particularly to facilitate working with smaller churches. If you have an idea of your own, Alastair welcomes hearing from you.

### Colin faces north

Colin is pleased to see Bridge Builders making more inroads into the "Real North". (He claims that his home in Durham is more or less central in the UK.) During the past month he's had a day with a bunch of enthusiastic network members in Scotland, two enquiries about inter-personal mediation in places north of the Tyne, and a request for a training workshop in Durham. The last of these came from a network member's spouse, who had glanced at the programme of network days for 2008 and was disappointed not to be eligible for training on Dealing With Difficult Behaviour. So now there will be a version for all-comers that assumes no previous Bridge Builders training. Tell your friends. (28 February 2009 - look at the Cross Currents programme for more details: [www.menno.org.uk/crosscurrents](http://www.menno.org.uk/crosscurrents)) Who knows: maybe people south of Durham want help with difficult behaviour too?

## NETWORK REFERRALS



### Referral Fee Scheme Now in Place

In September, Bridge Builders introduced a fee-charging scheme for those who approach us with requests for training, inter-personal mediation or group consultancy services, and where we do not have the capacity to pick up the work. In such cases we then try to refer the request on to people in the Network. We now charge a fee to the person seeking the service, for providing the link-up with someone suitable (which could potentially be you!).

The reason for introducing this arrangement is the amount of work involved in trying to do the relevant "match-making", and the fee is intended to go some way towards recognising that work, as well as reflecting the benefit to the client. Providing such a link-up service has become a regular activity for Bridge

Builders, taking up more of our time than in the past. We can only see this increasing in the future, and we need to have a way to cover some of the costs, especially with our finances being tight.

The scheme arrangements are set out fully in documents which were sent to all Network members via email. Summary costs are as follows:

£25 for a training (e.g. workshop) referral  
 £50 for a mediation referral  
 £75 for an intervention referral

Many of you have offered feedback on this new development for Bridge Builders, and we thank you for this as we pioneer the new arrangement.

## DAY CONSULTATION: DIOCESAN MEDIATION TEAMS



### Making Mediation Work:

#### A Consultation on Diocesan Mediation Services

Wednesday, 6 May 2009, 10:00am – 4:15pm  
 Guy Chester Centre, Muswell Hill, London  
 £60 / £50 BB Network Members

Bridge Builders is running an open consultation day in May 2009 on the subject of diocesan mediation services. The following is excerpted from publicity which has just been sent around the country to diocesan bishops. Although it is specifically geared for those in the Church of England, people from other denominations are welcome to attend. Please look for publicity and booking information in your email in the coming weeks. We hope you will encourage interested colleagues to attend.

In recent years, the Church of England, along with other denominations, has been formulating strategies for handling church conflict more constructively. In this complex field, mediation is becoming more widely used as an option. At present, a number of dioceses are working on setting up some sort of system for using mediators. There is no agreed template, but there are common issues that need to be faced: finding the right people, deciding when and how it is appropriate to use them, and so on.

It is a good moment to be sharing lessons learned from experience. *Making Mediation Work* is a full-day consultation, designed to provide a forum for

discussion of the issues faced in establishing a diocesan mediation service.

The consultation aims to:

- Highlight key challenges that need to be faced
- Share experience and promote partnerships
- Help establish guidelines for good practice
- Discern how Bridge Builders can help in future

### *Who should come?*

We would like to have participants from as many dioceses as possible. It is "movers and shakers" we want to bring together: this is not a conference for people who simply want to know a bit more about mediation in general. Please apply if you already have a role in promoting mediation within a diocese, or if you are going to be getting the ball rolling.

You are also welcome to attend if you have a similar role in another denomination. Some of the discussions will focus on issues particular to the Church of England, but principles of good practice will apply more widely.

### *Format*

A significant part of the consultation will consist of structured group work. Discussions will be prompted by presentations from Alastair McKay, Judy Hunt, and Steve Mansfield. There will also be opportunities for question and response, and networking.

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## PROGRAMME UPDATES



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### Bridge Builders' Network Days 2009

Please find below our Winter Network Days for 2009. We continue our around-the-country tour of the popular *Gilmore-Fraleigh Style Inventory* review day where, amidst other teaching, we show you how to make the style cards! You'll also find a new day on *Changing the Church Conflict Culture*, where we'll take a look at what happens when we idealistically take our Bridge Builders ideas back home and attempt culture change. And importantly, we continue our promise of offering a *Mediation Process Review* day each season - the next one will be in Leeds.

#### WINTER 2009

14 January 2009 in Durham [NB: Wednesday]

Antioch House, 9:30-4:15

*Gilmore-Fraleigh Style Inventory*

22 January 2009 in London

London Mennonite Centre, 9:45-4:15

*Changing the Church Conflict Culture*

22 January 2009 in Leeds

South Parade Baptist Church, 9:30-4:15

*Mediation Process Review*

29 January 2009 in Coventry

Earlsdon Methodist Church, 9:30-4:15

*Changing the Church Conflict Culture*

#### Further Network Days in 2009

*(more details will come shortly)*

23 April 2009 in London

30 April 2009 in Leeds

11 June 2009 in Manchester

11 June 2009 in Scotland

10 September 2009 in London

10 September 2009 in Leeds

7 October 2009 in Durham

8 October 2009 in Coventry

#### New Network Joiners!

This is the last newsletter before we first run our new foundation course, Transforming Church Conflict (19 - 24 October in Sheffield). "Graduates" of the course who join you in the network will have had more extensive training than we used to offer in facilitation and other skills, but none in formal inter-personal mediation processes. However, we still remain committed to running mediation review days, and will welcome our

new TCC graduates as observers or role-play disputants on these days. Old-timers may have noticed that the content of network days has been broadening in response to members' requests (it's no longer called a "Mediators Network") and we've offered more topical days in the last two years than in the past. We intend to keep a mixture that will extend everyone's conflict transformation skills.

#### Forthcoming Training Courses (open to booking)

Please see our website [www.menno.org.uk](http://www.menno.org.uk) for full brochures and application forms.

##### Training of Trainers

18 - 20 November 2008, London Mennonite Centre

##### Transforming Church Conflict: A Foundation Course for Leaders

8 - 13 February 2009, Guy Chester Centre, London

##### Church Leadership & Family Systems

2-5 June 2009, London Mennonite Centre

**NB: Early Bird Discount! Book by 31 October 2008**

\*Please note this early bird discount is in place to ensure we will have enough participants to run the course. Please encourage your friends to book on.

##### Mediating Interpersonal Conflicts

22-26 June 2009, London Mennonite Centre

##### Consulting with Church Groups

In the earliest days of Bridge Builders, our skills training courses with Dick Blackburn included some input on congregational processes, but we do not consider that it offered sufficient training for undertaking interventions with churches in conflict. So, every other year since 2003, we have run a course on congregational interventions, entitled "Congregational Conflict Consulting". This course was originally developed with leadership from Dave Brubaker, a North American practitioner, but has become fully Anglicised and is now led by Alastair and Colin. For September 2009 we are adapting the content slightly and changing the title. The course will now cover intervention approaches that are applicable to a range of groups (but still including congregations). It's a must for anyone who wants to serve as an external consultant or mediator to groups in times of conflict. More information will be available shortly.

## RESOURCES



### Peace & Conflict Organisations – UK

#### [Part 1]

The following list of organisations is intended to provide a starter resource list for further investigation by interested persons. Many times engagement with the ideas that Bridge Builders endorses about peace cause individuals to discover new passions for peacebuilding work in a number of contexts. This resource list is therefore intended as a hint to the enormous amount of peace work which is already going on in the UK, and to encourage networking with similar organisations, initiatives, or further training as desired. Although Bridge Builders supports peace initiatives in both secular and religious contexts, the organisations listed do not necessarily represent the views or beliefs of Bridge Builders or the London Mennonite Centre.

Use the following links to jump to a particular section:

[Mediation](#)

[Faith & Peace](#)

[Church / Denominational Peace Groups](#)

### Mediation

*Activist Mediation Network*

<http://www.activistmediation.org.uk/index.html>

New organisation, with volunteers, hoping to connect transformative mediation with activist organisations

*ADR Group*

<http://www.adrgroup.co.uk/>

"Alternative dispute resolution" body provides courses, accreditation, and mediators for commercial and family mediation.

*Based:* Bristol (Head Office) & London

*Aik Saath Conflict Resolution Group*

<http://www.aiksaath.com>

Training in conflict for Slough area, especially young people, including peer mediation.

*Based:* Slough, Berkshire

*Conflict and Change*

<http://www.conflictandchange.co.uk/>

UK's first community mediation organisation, 1984. Focus: conflict resolution, schools work, training, community development

*Based:* London E6

*Hertfordshire Family Mediation*

<http://www.hertsfms.f2s.com/>

Family mediation organisation based in Hertfordshire.

*Hillingdon Community Mediation*

[www.hcmediation.co.uk](http://www.hcmediation.co.uk)

Community mediation, training, and consultancy.

*Based:* Yiewsley, Middlesex

*The Hope Project*

<http://www.hopeproject.co.uk>

Focus: schools, organisations, churches – to handle conflict better

*Based:* Stourbridge, West Midlands

*Kingston Friends Mediation*

<http://www.kfmediation.org/>

All types of mediation, including training

*Based:* Surbiton, Surrey

*Mediation Northern Ireland*

<http://www.mediationnorthernireland.org/>

Offering mediation and conflict transformation training and intervention for individuals, communities, congregations, leaders, clergy and organisations

*Based:* Belfast, Northern Ireland

*Mediation Sheffield*

<http://www.mediationsheffield.org.uk/>

Community Mediation in Sheffield

*Muslim Mediation Service*

<http://www.muslimmediation.org.uk/>

Originally connected with Conflict & Change, around since 2003. Aim: To promote conflict resolution based on the Islamic values of fostering unity, peace and understanding amongst Muslims and in the wider community, primarily in Newham.

*Based:* London E6

*National Family Mediation*

[www.nfm.org.uk](http://www.nfm.org.uk)

Provides mediation services for couples separating or divorcing, training for family mediators, and maintains a network of not-for-profit family mediators.

*Based:* Exeter, Devon

*Peaceworks*

<http://www.peaceworks.org.uk/>

Mediation and training, including for schools

*Based:* Bognor Regis

*The Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Foundation for Peace*

<http://www.foundationforpeace.org>

Peace education, community and peer mediation, work with victims and survivors of violent conflict, campaigning.

*Based:* Warrington, Cheshire

*Resolve*

<http://www.christianmediation.org.uk/resolve.htm>

Advising, mediating and/or arbitrating in business and church disputes; teaching biblical response to conflict

Based: Brighton

*The UK College of Family Mediators*

<http://www.ukcfm.co.uk/default.asp>

Primarily set up for family mediators, this body now seeks to offer training, accreditation, network, and referral services for family and community mediators.

Based: Bristol

**Faith & Peace***Churches Racial Justice Network*

<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/CB/14>

Coordinating the work of churches across Britain and Ireland on racial justice issues

Based: Churches Together in Britain & Ireland, London

*The Corrymeela Community*

<http://www.corrymeela.org/>

Dispersed Christian community of reconciliation in Northern Ireland; resource centre, residential centre

Based: Belfast and Ballycastle, Northern Ireland

*Fellowship of Reconciliation*

<http://www.for.org.uk/> (England)

<http://www.cymdeithasycymod.org.uk/> (Wales)

Promoting peace/justice through spiritual development, witness and service; reconciling people with God and each other

*International Centre for Reconciliation*

<http://www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/bkgground.html>

Network of groups/individuals working for peace/reconciliation worldwide: supporting Cross of Nails centres

Based: Coventry Cathedral, Coventry

*Iona Community*

<http://www.iona.org.uk/>

Working for peace and social justice, rebuilding community and the renewal of worship

Based: Isle of Iona, Scotland (community centres), Glasgow, Scotland (offices)

*Matt 5-9*

<http://www.matt5-9.co.uk/>

A new website for Christians involved or interested in resolving conflict and harm within the church.

*Peace School*

<http://www.peaceschool.org.uk/>

Peace School is a year long programme exploring what it means to be a peacemaker in every area of life; local and global.

Based: Leeds

**Church / Denominational Peace Groups***Anglican Pacifist Fellowship*

<http://www.anglicanpeacemaker.org.uk/>

Witnessing to the pacifist understanding of the Christian faith within the Anglican Communion

*Baptist Peace Fellowship*

<http://www.baptist-peace.org.uk/>

Keeping issues of peace and justice before the Baptist churches and denomination

*Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ)*

<http://www.carj.org.uk/>

Black, minority ethnic, and white Catholics promoting awareness, understanding and action on issues of racial justice

*Justice and Peace Scotland*

<http://www.justiceandpeacescotland.org.uk/>

Advising the Scottish Bishops Conference regarding social justice, international peace, human rights and world development

*Methodist Peace Fellowship*

<http://www.for.org.uk/mpf>

Pacifist witness in the Methodist Church

*National Justice & Peace Network*

<http://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/>

National networking between Catholic diocesan Justice and Peace groups, religious congregations and Christian agencies; annual conference

*Pax Christi (British Section)*

<http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/>

Founded in the Catholic church, promoting peace education and non-violence; campaigning on arms trade, nuclear proliferation

*Quaker Peace and Social Witness*

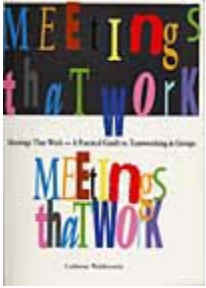
<http://www.quaker.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=89989>

Promoting peace and social justice in Britain and overseas; international reconciliation

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## ***Recommended Titles from Metanoia Book Service***

<http://www.metanoiabooks.org.uk/> or in person: Will Newcomb, at the London Mennonite Centre (0208 340 8775 / 0845 4500 214)



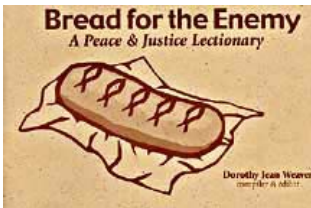
### **Meetings that Work**

From British author Catherine Widdicombe, co-founder of Avec, this book provides a Christian voice on the work of facilitation and good meetings. "[This book] aims to engender in you, as group worker or facilitator, an attitude and a habit of open and critical questioning about what you are doing, why you are doing it, and how you could do it more effectively."



### **Coming Home**

Now eight years old, this book continues to provide inspiration for people who are searching for new perspectives on Christian faith and church life. *Coming Home* is a collection of stories of Christians from diverse communities across Britain and Ireland discovering Anabaptism as an ecumenical force for renewal, a returning to a radical expression and practice of faith. The book also includes reflections on the history of Anabaptism in the British Isles, its current forms and visions for the future.



### **Bread for the Enemy**

The Biblical concept of peace embraces personal peace with God, peace in human relations, peace among nations and peace with God's creation. *Bread for the Enemy* takes the reader through the Bible exploring traces and hints of this multifaceted peace (shalom). Set out in 52 weeks with seven readings each week, the lectionary provides accessible readings for daily or weekly devotion and contemplation.

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## ***Google Group***

If you have not yet joined, or if you have any concerns or problems related to signing up to the group, please email Sharon at [bb@menno.org.uk](mailto:bb@menno.org.uk).

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*Grace and Peace to you from the Bridge Builders team: Alastair, Colin, and Sharon*