

LIVING SPRINGS

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God's Party *On Ibiza*

by Eloise Armstrong

Only a month ago I was sitting on a beach watching the sun go down over a bright blue sea. The scene was idyllic and as hundreds of people quickly flooded onto Sunset Beach to watch the amazing view, there was a stillness as people sat in almost complete silence. The only sounds to be heard were the waves lapping on the shore and the music drifting out from the bars and clubs that lined the coastline. Without a cloud in the sky the sun quickly dropped, and as it began to melt into the horizon, the gathered crowd burst into spontaneous applause and cheers.

Who were they clapping for?

Throughout the summer thousands of young people come from all over Europe to Ibiza, a tiny island in the Mediterranean. Ibiza is a by-word in European youth culture, for the ultimate hedonistic experience – a holiday taken to the limit. As the club capital of Europe, Ibiza is home to Privilege, the largest nightclub in the world with a capacity of 10,000. Coming to Ibiza is an essential pilgrimage for a generation

seeking the ultimate experience – the best nightclubs, world famous DJs, groundbreaking music and beautiful beaches.

On Ibiza everything is pushed to excess. Each day is a non-stop party. Many don't sleep, but follow the crowd as they move from the beaches to the bars and then on to the nightclubs, some of which are open all day as well. Watching this awesome sunset from the southernmost tip of the island is part of this daily ritual, observed religiously by these pilgrims to party heaven.

This was my first visit to Ibiza and I had come with 25 other young

See Ibiza page 4



Sunset Beach on Ibiza

good news for a
postchristian
world

By the end of four Gospels, Jesus is asked one hundred and eighty-three questions. *He answers three of them.* In the postmodern, post-Christian world we're learning to live with having far more questions than answers.

Franciscan Father Richard Rohr speaks of "liminal space" – a space between what has been and what will be. Liminal space always involves being on the threshold of something. Rohr argues that much of spiritual nurture is the process of guiding people *into* – not away from – liminal space. Our tendency is to do one of two things when confronted with living on a "threshold" of time: either to run back to the familiarity of what has been, or to rush unreflectively toward the new.

Ministry in a postmodern world is all about living in this liminal, threshold space; holding in tension the good and the bad of what has been in the modern world, along with the wild uncertainties of the world that is to come.

The events of September 11 have thrown us kicking and screaming into liminal space. A few years ago, Brian McLaren (see interview on page 7) wrote an article entitled, **Postmodernism: They Say It's Just a Phase**. The cries of the death of postmodernity have been even louder after the terrorist attacks of September 11.

In contrast, for me the last few months have shown in an even more in-your-face way that the modern world is fading away, and that we really are on the threshold of something new. The full character of that something new is yet to be determined. The old rules of international relationships, and the old illusory comforts we took for granted simply do not apply.

The pages of **Living Springs** this quarter are filled with stories of people trying to live in this liminal space, trying to live as God's agents on the threshold of a new kind of world. Whether through prayer, worship, or relationship building, there is a common desire in the following pages to share the unchanging core of the gospel in ways that connect with people living in liminal space.

We may only have one answer to the multiple questions (many more than one hundred and eighty-three, to be sure) which confront us in this threshold time. But then Jesus the Christ is the only answer worth living for.

- Craig Pelkey-Landes
Editor

The Great Commission

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"
Matthew 28:18-20 (NRSV)



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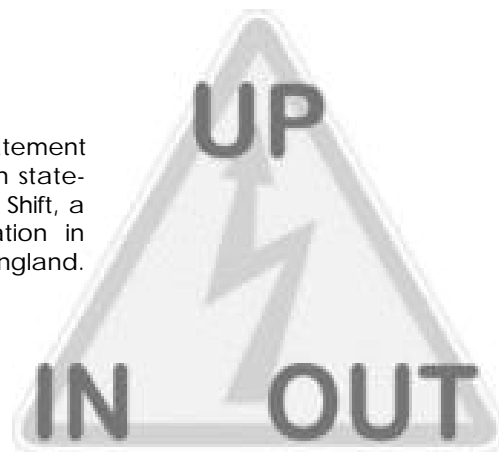
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The image statement (think "mission statement") from Shift, a congregation in Cheltenham, England.



IN THIS ISSUE ...

FEATURES

God's Party on Ibiza 1
Observe the power of prayer in Europe's party capital.

What Does God Want From Us? 7
An interview with postmodern prophet Brian McLaren

Traveling to TBS 11
Why would a Tuesday night Bible study draw over 1,000 youth and young adults every week? Find out why.

Washing Anti-Foot 14
A central Anabaptist worship symbol makes a big impact in post-Christian Australia.

It's About a Generation 18
Hear about Shift, a congregation in Cheltenham, England, reaching up, in and out with the good news.

DEPARTMENTS

Up Front 2
Introduction to the issue at hand

The Compass 20
A column navigating postmodern waters in the Anabaptist stream

Do you have a story to tell? We'd love to hear it. Our goal is to be a venue for story-telling about evangelism and social action in response to the Great Commission. Send submissions to the e-mail or postal address on this page.

coming next issue: **peacebuilding**

Rejoice oh people of [Ibiza] in the Lord your God, for the rain he sends are tokens of forgiveness.
Joel 2:23
(Living Bible)

Continued from page 1

people from Europe, not on holiday but to pray. As a 24-7 Mission Team, we came to pray continually on an island that the British press have called 'Sodom and Gomorrah.' We would intercede in one-hour shifts through the days and the nights. We would go out and make friends and see what happened

What would God do?

I knew it would stretch me beyond anything I had done before and take me out of my comfort zone, but I couldn't deny that Jesus was calling me to 'Go.' I guess God was changing my heart. I didn't want to pray from the sidelines anymore. I wanted to pray in the midst of the hurting and lost, to let my prayer be active, to let my actions be the answer to some of my prayers. We were going to Ibiza to take the power of prayer beyond church buildings and meetings and into the streets.

One of the churches in Ibiza had an empty shop building in the heart of San Antonio, the largest resort on the island. During our stay this became a 24-7 Prayer Room, a place for non-stop prayer for Ibiza.

In the evenings one team would do a six-hour shift in the prayer room, another team would go into the clubs to pray and worship and the others would stay in San Antonio town centre to talk with people in the pre-club bars. In daylight San Antonio, like any beach



Inside the prayer room set up on Ibiza

I didn't want to pray from the sidelines anymore. I wanted to pray in the midst of the hurting and lost, to let my prayer be active, to let my actions be the answer to some of my prayers.

resort, seemed quiet as people relaxed on the beaches and in the cafes; but as the sun set and the bars began to open, the streets quickly filled up. Literally hundreds of bars are crowded into an area less than a square mile in the town centre and San Antonio was packed with people drinking and promoters trying to get our patronage with offers of free drinks.

One evening we met Daniel as he laid in the gutter of one these streets in a pool of his own vomit. We went over to him to see if he was conscious. Daniel had been drinking and taking pills and after his friends left him to move on to another bar, he decided to lie down in

the street and wait for them. We helped Daniel to move out of the way of the traffic onto the sidewalk before figuring out how we could help him find his way back to his hotel.

Do you want a beer?

As we met people in the bars we asked them if they had any prayer requests, which we would later take back to the Prayer Room. As I walked past one table on my way to find the toilet one guy tried to offer my friend Kerry and me a free pint of beer each. We politely refused, explaining that we weren't drinking alcohol while we were in Ibiza. This guy couldn't believe it. "Why are you here if you're not going to drink?" I told him we were actually here to pray, which was probably the last thing he was expecting anyone to say. At first he was confused; since he was from Germany he thought he had simply misunderstood me, and it was some time before I could convince him that I really was a Christian who had come to Ibiza to pray. "I didn't think people our age believed in that anymore," he replied, "but you can pray for me!" So we did, right there in the bar.

Miracle?

When we arrived, the local Christians, noticing how many of us were from England, had joked about us bringing the rain. Ibiza, they told us, had been in drought for three years and they were all praying like crazy for rain. As a group of the boys were praying one night they began to dance and call out to God for rain to fall on the island. The next day we gathered together with the English and Spanish churches on the island to worship together in unity. What we didn't know was that at the same time God was calling another 24-

7 prayer team in Russia to pray for Ibiza and speaking to them about Elijah praying for rain that would end the drought.

As we drove home the first drops of rain in three years fell on the wind-screen and that night a storm swept over the island covering the island in torrential rain.

I'm beginning to understand that when I pray, I don't change God, but God changes me and radically touches my life and the lives of those I touch.

The significance of the rainstorm to those living on the island was more than we could imagine. It hadn't rained on the island in July since 1976.

As the rain got heavier the following morning one of our cars broke down. As everyone piled out of it to run for shelter through the streets of San Antonio, Lucy froze. A few days earlier she had seen a vision of a waterfall gushing through the center of town and now she found herself standing in the middle of that vision. "I just couldn't believe it," said Lucy. "I was looking at the exact waterfall I had seen in my vision, flowing down the street." At the top of the town it was gushing pure and clean but by the bottom of the street the water was filthy, washing away so much dirt." God had also given Lora a verse from the Bible earlier in the week, which suddenly brought everything into focus. "Rejoice oh people of [Ibiza] in the Lord your God, for the rain he sends are tokens of forgiveness" (Joel 2:23 - Living Bible).

That rainstorm was like a marker and as we hit the streets that night it was like operating on a whole new level. God was hearing our prayers and in the streets and bars we saw God heal people and open their hearts as we talked with them about Jesus.


Questions for Discussion

1. What would Jesus have to do with party-goers? Is there a Gospel for hedonists?
2. Why does God want us to pray? Is it primarily to bring rain, reduce crime, perhaps heal an in-grown toenail? Ibiza is pretty remote for the rest of us. What about our own strongholds, fortresses pretending to offer security? How might we articulate the vices of the rich, as well as the more obvious ones of the poor?
3. How strategic might our "invasions" have to become in the period following the September 11 attacks? Should we as ambassadors of the Prince of Peace be studying the Arabic language and the Muslim world? What roles can the followers of Jesus anticipate?

Carla and Jo prayed with two guys one night. One had a knee injury and couldn't straighten his leg and the other suffered from ingrown toenails. As they prayed they were both healed. The next day the two guys were so excited to see Carla and Jo again and to tell them that they were "still healed."

Ibiza is God's island and His promise is that "if my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." More and more we began to see these 'tokens of forgiveness.' Even the Chief of Police on Ibiza com-

mented that despite it being as busy as usual on the island "crime has gone down considerably since the 24-7 team has been in Ibiza praying, especially alcohol-related crime."

I'm beginning to understand that when I pray, I don't change God, but God changes me and radically touches my life and the lives of those I touch. When we pray we cannot remain passive, because God stirs us to be active and love the people we are praying for with our actions. Ibiza is a high-place for the emerging generation. It's high time that we left our godly ghettos to invade and inhabit such places for Jesus. What happens next is anyone's guess! 

Resources:

www.24-7prayer.com

Visit this site to see how the vision for a prayer team on Ibiza came about. Prepare to be stretched.

* ***The Imitation of Christ***. Thomas A'Kemis. Moody Press, 1980. A classic on prayer and devotion that aids in cultivating one's inner life with God.

* ***Invitation to Presence***. Wendy Miller. Upper Room Books, 1995. Using scripture as a bridge, and Jesus' ministry as a framework, Miller, campus pastor at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, provides a fresh approach to spiritual disciplines.

* ***Intercessory Prayer: How God can Use Prayers to Move Heaven and Earth***. Dutch Sheets. Regal Books, 1996. A textbook on prayer that will inspire your faith, deepen your understanding, and equip you as a person of prayer.

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives. Dallas Willard. HarperSanFrancisco, 1988.

MRN consultant Noel Santiago is available to provide support for prayer ministries at the congregational level.

* available at the Mennonite Resource Center in Souderton. See page 3 for details.

What Does God Want from Us?

an interview with Brian McLaren

Brian McLaren is founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church, an innovative, non-denominational church in the Baltimore-Washington region. The church has grown to involve several hundred people, about 55% of whom were previously unchurched.

Brian has been active in networking church planters and pastors since the mid 1980's, and has mentored many church planters and assisted in the development of several new churches.

*McLaren's first book, **The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix**, (Zondervan, 1998, rev. ed. 2000) has been recognized as a primary portal into the current conversation about postmodern ministry.*

Living Springs editor Craig Pelkey-Landes recently interviewed Brian.

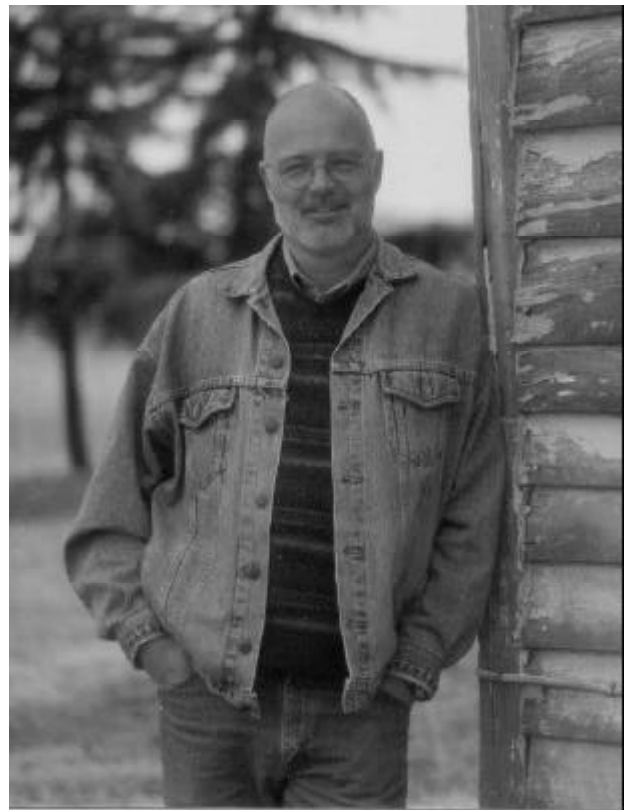
LS: I use a quote from you at the end of my e-mail messages. It goes, "If you have a new world, you need a new church. You have a new world." Why does the world need a new kind of church at this point in history?

One way to answer it would be to say that if the church is completely happy with its current results and effectiveness, then it won't want to change. But if the church feels that it is losing ground, being less than effective in mission for the Lord ... then it is time to ask some radical questions ... like: "What does God want from us? What is the purpose or mission of the church? What stands in the way of our church becoming what God might dream for us to be?"

Another way to answer your question would be to pose some additional questions: Why don't we worship in catacombs today? Why don't we avoid congregational singing, and instead, simply listen to choirs of pre-pubescent boys? Why don't we conduct our services in Latin? Why don't we require candidates for baptism to spit in the direction of the west, in renunciation of Satan? Why don't we sell indulgences? Why don't we launch armed attacks (Crusades) on the Holy Land? The answer to all those questions, of course,

is that those practices and adaptations belong to times past. Similarly, many of the things that we hold dear and count most familiar belong increasingly to times past, and just as our churches today represent innovations over the past, so churches of tomorrow will need to "reinvent" our churches of today.

A third way to answer the question would be to ask this question of every parent and grandparent in our churches: Do you really want your children and grandchildren to worship with you? What if your children and grandchildren need a church that equips them for life and mission in today's challenging world ... would you be willing to see significant change come to your church so that it could be the kind of church that really helps your children and grandchildren? Or would you rather they either a) drop out of church altogether, or





A celebration by members of Cedar Ridge Community Church.

b) migrate to other churches that are more helpful to them spiritually, leaving your congregation to gradually grow older and older until there is no one left?

That may sound a bit blunt ... but I think it's like going to the doctor: it's better for the doctor to tell you what you've got than to give you an aspirin and hide the truth from you.

A fourth way to answer the question would be to talk about the shift that many of us perceive to be happening in our world today ... a shift from the modern world to the postmodern world. That's the approach I've taken in many of my books. In short, just as the medieval world gave birth to the modern world (and at that juncture, new forms of being the church took form – including the beautiful Anabaptist forms) – many of us believe that as the modern world gives birth to the postmodern world, we will need to discover new ways of being the church.

LS: What kind of things have you been learning that might be helpful for churches wishing to reach unchurched (or overchurched) postmoderns?

Well, authenticity is key. People – especially preachers and other public people – have to find some way to “undress” and be themselves. And as I said, creativity is important – creativity seeking beauty. And the quality of lives, including the quality of care for neighbors and the poor, are key ... so there is this synergy between truth, beauty, and goodness. They have always been important, but now, I think more than ever.

As well, I think we all need to go back to square one and ask ourselves, “What is our story – not the modern version of our story, but the story as it will come alive in our new setting?”

LS: Give us some biographical information.

I was born in Olean, New York, a tiny little town in the snow belt, and lived for a short time in Illinois, but have lived most of my life in Maryland, near Washington, D.C.

I got my bachelor's and master's degrees in English from University of Maryland. I am one of those pastors who never went to seminary, so I lack that credential.

My wife, Grace, is a corporate consultant and trainer in team-building, Myers-Briggs, etc. We have four great kids, Rachel (20), Brett (19), Trevor (17), and Jodi (14).

Cedar Ridge Community Church, where I pastor, began in 1988. It grew out of a church that began in our living room in the early 80's. So, we've been involved since the beginning.

LS: Describe the differences between CRCC and, say, Saddleback or Willow Creek.

Well, first of all, they're huge and we're miniscule by comparison. I think the similarities are more important than the differences – we're Christians, we're

committed to helping unchurched people become vibrant disciples, we are about cultural relevance, etc.

In terms of cultural relevance, we are more focused on people who are a little “farther out” – more postmodern than modern, less sympathetic to Christianity, etc. That’s largely due to the fact that we live on the East Coast, which is a bit more liberal, cynical, etc., than Chicago or Orange County. Practically speaking, I often tell people that our services are like a hybrid of a seeker service, an episcopal service, and a Vineyard service. We typically have a song followed by drama and a sermon (like Willow), then move into communion (singing episcopal liturgy), and while people come forward for communion, we have more singing, etc. (like Vineyard). The idea of doing communion every week sounds a little strange to a lot of seeker folks, but it’s what we do in our setting.

LS: What was that transition time like, when you realized something needed to change, and you went to your leaders with the idea of starting over and becoming CRCC?

In our case, this time went surprisingly well. There was a feeling of excitement, hope, anticipation. For us, the hard time came about two years later, when the changes “took,” and people realized that their old church was gone and wasn’t coming back. Then, a lot of hard feelings arose, and people turned a little nasty at times. Frankly, I got a little defensive, too. A lot of people left at that point. They didn’t like the new feel. To some degree, they didn’t like the non-Christians and new believers that were becoming the new majority at

the church.

LS: Describe some of the ministry networking organizations you are currently a part of, and why they give you energy.

Well, I enjoy connecting with all sorts of people, from Mennonites to Assemblies of God to Anglicans to Baptists, and I think I learn from each group.

God is really at work everywhere, if we just have eyes to see it and not be focused on the problems (which are everywhere, too).

A few years ago, a group of us grappling with postmodernity found each other through the good work of Leadership Network. We are now working under the name “Emergent” (emergentvillage.org), and seeking to encourage and link networks of friends who are similarly seeking to serve the Lord in these strange changing times.

This is exciting, because there are some amazingly creative people out there, and when they find each other and cross-pollinate, it is very hopeful. And we need all the hope we can get, because the challenges are great and the difficulties significant.

LS: I’d love to walk down the street and hang out with a local postmodern church leader. What are your suggestions for making local connections with others reaching out to postmoderns?

Well, the Internet makes this more possible. There are some great discussions (for example, at www.faithworks.org) happening online.

In real life, emergent, the ooze (www.theooze.com), and other networks


He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. Luke 5:36-38 (NRSV)

Questions for Discussion

1. "If you have a new world, you need a new church. You have a new world." What is your reaction to that statement?
2. What has been stirring within you lately regarding God's desires for your congregation?
3. How do you finish the following prayers?
"God, we thank you for ..."
"God, we need you ..."

are trying to bring people together for face-to-face interaction and conversation, which is important.

Once word gets out, I think we'll all be surprised to find out how many people (and from what unexpected places!) will start finding each other. It's like there's this underground bubble of discontent, and it's bound to rise to the surface in the coming years. Let's hope it finds positive and fruitful expression!

That's really a major reason I've been writing (*The Church on the Other Side*, *Finding Faith*, *A New Kind of Christian ...* and next year, *More Ready than You Realize*, and *Pilgrim's Primer*, with Len Sweet) ... I think books are great conversation starters, and then the conversation spills over from pages to coffee shops, and then things get exciting. 

Resources:

* ***Church Leadership in the Emerging Postmodern Culture*** (audio tape). Brian McLaren. Mennonite Resources Network, 2001. An introduction to postmodernism, offering ten themes in the movement from modernity to postmodernity, along with the challenges facing congregations for engaging effectively with the world.

****The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix.*** Brian McLaren. Zondervan, 2000. For those tired of easy steps, easy answers, and facile formulas for church health, growth, and renewal. You know it's not that easy. Here's some honest, clear, and creative thinking about our churches, along with a passionate challenge to thoughtful action and profound, liberating change.

* ***The Aqua Church Challenge: Leadership Video Training Kit.*** Group Publishing, Inc., 2000. Based on Leonard Sweet's best-selling book, this video training program should successfully launch your church's leadership staff into the uncharted waters of the 21st century.

* ***Aqua Church: Essential Leadership Arts for Piloting Your Church in Today's Fluid Culture.*** Leonard I. Sweet. Group Publishing, Inc., 1999. A learning manual on self-navigating the "watery" world of postmodernism in today's church.

* available at the Mennonite Resource Center in Souderton. See page 3 for details.

Turning left onto Pennsylvania Route 23, headed towards Leola, I smiled relief. Once again I had successfully navigated the dangers of Harrisburg and Lancaster highways and now, two-and-a-half hours after I had first turned the key in my maroon Toyota Camry, I was almost there. Five minutes later, pulling into The Worship Center's extensive, and still nearly empty, parking lot, I quickly parked and hurried inside.

My watch read only 6:30, half-an-hour before starting time. I entered the sanctuary, walking down the left aisle to a seat near the front. Noticing the still vacant seats, awaiting the hundreds of bodies that would soon spill over them, and the musicians practicing worship songs on stage, an overwhelming awe filled me, not only because of the room's vastness and greatness, but also because of the way God moves there every week at Tuesday Bible Study (TBS).

All this began October 14, 1997, when six young people who had just returned from separate YWAM (Youth With A Mission) short-term mission trips decided to form a Bible study. Although they were not close friends at the time, Angie Stutzman, Ryan Kurtz, Diana Sharp, Doug Eby, Will Stoltzfus, and Mike Stoltzfus felt drawn together by a similar goal: "to see people our age commit their lives to God." The group grew rapidly, increasing from 10 people to 40 people in just two months. Then one Friday morning

Diana Sharp was killed in a car accident.

"We were shocked, shaken, and blown away," said TBS leader Mike Stoltzfus. "At first we didn't really feel like going on with the group. We were dealing too much with grief to have a desire to

continue. At Diana's funeral an evangelistic message was preached and many people accepted Christ as their Savior. We felt we should keep meeting Tuesday nights, so we did. God really used Diana's death to

impact a lot of people. It really caused many young people around us to take a serious look at their lives and where they were in their relationship with God."

Approximately 75 people came to TBS the week after Diana's funeral. The next week attendance reached over 100.

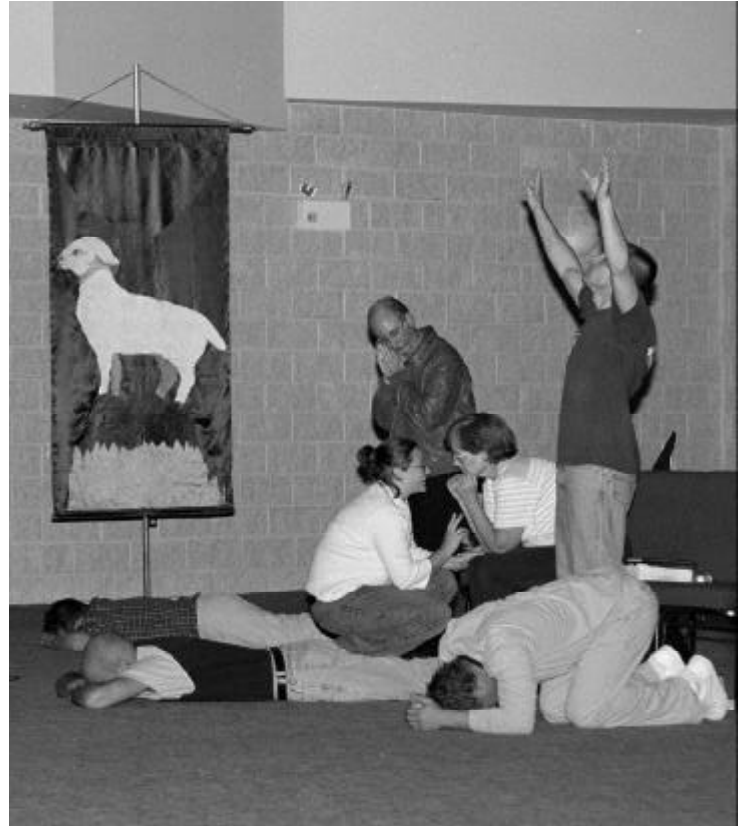


Photo Jonathan Stoltzfus

It is not about rebellion. It is not about looking good ... TBS is completely committed to the service and worship of Jesus Christ.

This article first appeared in the online magazine tangzine at www.tangzine.com

The leaders then felt led to invite Joanna Smoker to join the leadership team. Since then the Bible study has grown gradually to reach the current average of 1,050 people attending TBS weekly. I introduced myself to Mike Stoltzfus, the leadership team's selected leader, at TBS and interviewed him via e-mail. Following is some of what he had to say about Tuesday Bible Study.

"I think that TBS has grown large so quickly because there is a hunger inside of young people to really know God and Jesus in a personal way. I don't understand it, or know why, but God has chosen to bless our times on Tuesday nights. There is something powerful about worshipping God with so many other people your age. I believe that

... there is a hunger inside of young people to really know God, and His son Jesus, in a personal way.

anyone who comes can really sense God's presence there, and that is why people like it. We didn't expect the group to ever be very large, so the growth has surprised us from the beginning.

"We feel that the purpose of TBS is to be a place where young people can come together to worship God, get excited about missions, receive a desire to serve with their local pastors and leaders, and most important, to learn how to know Jesus in a personal way.

"One of the goals we have is to give people more opportunities to reach out through practical evangelism. We are planning a number of events in the summer and fall months that will hopefully mobilize dozens of the young people into the community around us to serve.


"The local leaders who have committed to helping us grow in leadership have been an incredible blessing! They have many years of experience in church leadership, which is exactly what we don't have. They are important to us because they challenge us in many ways, and also give us Godly input and wisdom on the decisions we make as a leadership team. They really keep us on track with our vision. I don't know where we would be without them!

"Being involved in TBS has been the most incredible experience of my life! I look forward to going every week and I feel so blessed to be a part of what is happening. Week to week I am challenged by the speakers that come to share with us. By God's grace I have learned so much. I feel that my desire to serve the Lord with all my heart is continuing to rise as God moves among us!



Photo Jonathan Stoltzfus

TBS is unlike anything else I've ever experienced; it is so real. It is not about rebellion. It is not about looking good. It is not about boosting attendance. TBS is completely committed to the service and worship of Jesus Christ. Through

the intense worship and the various speakers, through the individual sharing times and the fellowship afterwards, TBS has irrevocably touched my life and inspired me to new levels of growth and discovery in my walk with Christ." 

Questions for Discussion

1. Many churches struggle to maintain a viable youth program. Does highlighting such a "successful" interdenominational event annoy you or inspire you?
2. Observe the photos accompanying this article. How does such open passion in worship make you feel?
3. You can't just make something like TBS happen. How do you balance waiting on the Lord's will and timing with the desire for something remarkable like TBS to happen in your own "back yard"?

Resources:

Hope From the Margins: New Ways of Being Church. Stewart Murray and Anne Wilkinson-Hayes. Grove Books, Ltd., 2000.

Rethinking the Church: A Challenge to Creative Redesign in an Age of Transition. James Emery White, Leighton Ford. Baker Book House, 1997.

**** Postmodern Youth Ministry: Exploring Cultural Shift, Creating Holistic Connections, Cultivating Authentic Community.*** Tony Jones. Zondervan, 2001. Geared specifically to youth workers, this book explores the postmodern world with its emerging zone of rapid change - a world that places high value on community, authenticity, and even God, but has little interest in modern, Western-tinged Christianity.

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* available at the Mennonite Resource Center in Souderton. See page 3 for details.

Washing Anti-Feet

by Linford Stutzman

Australians are sometimes referred to as “anti-podes” (“with the feet opposite”) for, from the perspective of those of us living in the northern hemisphere, Australians stand with the soles of their feet against the soles of our feet, separated only by the earth – anti-foot.

My wife, two sons and I had lived in this up-side-down, feet-against-feet position for four years, serving with Eastern Mennonite Missions as church planters and Anabaptist resource persons in the city of Perth, Western Australia.

Then we were almost ready to leave Australia. Four years “down under,” four years of learning to drive on the “wrong” side of the road, trying to pick up Australian slang, learning the history of the penal system and the treatment of the Aborigines, four years of attempting to call Australians to follow Jesus in a society that began with the Christian church functioning as prison chaplains.

I had learned to love Australia

during those four years, this fascinating, vast, pluralistic island continent that could accurately be called the first post-Christian society in the world, and to

understand the reasons why church attendance is among the lowest in the world, where Christianity is actually declining.

Christianity was “bad news” from the very beginning for the convicts shipped off to remote Australia from the British Islands. These European settlers, unlike their fellow British citizens disembarking on North American soil, did not thank God for finding religious freedom when they arrived in Botany Bay. They were convicts,

and the clergy helped the soldiers keep them under control and prayed for them when they died from disease, violence and abuse. They were prisoners of mother England and its servant Church. They were anti-podes of both.

But an amazing thing happened during the following centuries. These anti-podean convicts began to stand on their



own anti-feet, and eventually to build one of the most successful, affluent, free, modern societies in the world. It is today, also one of the world's most secular societies.

As a German American Anabaptist, I felt a strange kind of kinship with Australians; my ancestors were also convicts once. Clergy also helped imprison our ancestors. At one time in Anabaptist history, we, like the convicts arriving in Australia, were anti-podes of Christendom. Perhaps, because of this, I was surprised to discover a great deal of openness and interest among Australians to Anabaptist understandings and practice of Christianity. Indeed, I became increasingly convinced that many Australian Christians were more Anabaptist in the way they practiced their faith than many North American Mennonites.

The pain of rejection and the uncertainty of the future in that ritual ... created an intensity to the joy that morning I had never experienced growing up Mennonite.

Shortly after arriving in Australia in 1986, my family became associate members of Trinity Uniting Church of Perth, an old, wealthy, historic congregation in the central business district. One of the reasons we were attracted to this congregation was because of the many ministries this church sponsored, including a peace institute. We soon learned that the congregation was not completely united in its ministries. The congregation was comprised of descendants of the British clergy and descendants of the convicts, high church and low church in the same congregation. Gradually, primarily because of the work of the peace institute, the congregation began to divide the more traditional members of the congregation viewing peace ministry as inappropriate for Christians to engage in, others,

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 —Mark Hunsley, Ph.D. M.Div.,
 Walnut Creek Mennonite Church,
 Walnut Creek, USA

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean.

**John 13:3-10
(NRSV)**

mostly the younger members interested in radical discipleship viewing the peace witness as central to the life and witness of the church.

The well-paid pastor was fully committed to the work of the peace institute. Under increasing pressure from the established families of the church, he resigned and began a house church committed to radical discipleship and practical witness appropriate to the secular Australian culture. My wife and I were invited to help organize and lead this little group. It began to stand on its own anti-feet. Participating in this little group of disciples who had, because of their faith commitment, been forced to leave the cathedral, the social prestige, and the wealth of the mother church, we felt like we were in Zurich in 1525.

I will never forget one of our last Sunday mornings in Perth. This little group of radicals had heard about foot washing and wanted us to teach them how Mennonites practice it. The group had gathered on the back veranda of one of those Perth homes with their huge back yards. We gathered in a circle, a motley group of individuals committed to Jesus and ejected from their church and misunderstood by their secular culture. The pain of rejection

I discovered in washing those anti-feet, just how beautiful are the feet of them who bring good news. How beautiful are the feet that follow Jesus at great cost.

and the uncertainty of the future in that ritual of humility and service, created an intensity to the joy that morning I had never experienced growing up Mennonite. It had to do with suffering for publicly following Jesus.

It occurred to me that beautiful Sunday morning on the back porch in Perth, Australia with the sun streaming down through the Jacaranda trees, and the Kookaburra laughing at us from his perch on the Eucalyptus branch above our heads, that in spite of being as far from Zurich as is possible on this planet, I had never felt closer, not even when we had lived in Pennsylvania. I was washing real Anabaptist anti-feet in Zurich.

I thought of Jesus, washing his

Lin and his family outside their home in Perth.



disciples' feet just before leaving them, feet that had followed him in public, feet that would bring them to the cross where they would observe their leader ridiculed and rejected by both the religious and social institutions of their culture. I was washing real disciples' anti-feet in Jerusalem.

I discovered in washing those anti-feet, just how beautiful are the feet of them who bring good news. How beautiful are the feet that follow Jesus at great cost. How beautiful are the feet that stand for Jesus and his way, when

everyone else seems to be standing on the past or running toward secular alternatives to the way of the cross. How beautiful are anti-feet in our post-modern culture!

May we Anabaptists also follow Jesus in concrete ways that contrast with our contemporary culture of false hope and needless despair, and in so doing make disciples who, with beautiful feet walk together, from everywhere around the world, through every culture, toward the coming Kingdom.
Lore Stuber, *the* *Journal of Mennonite University*

Questions for Discussion

1. What in my own culture do I identify with quite easily? Why?
2. What aspect of the gospel has potential to relate to the spiritual seeker in my culture? How will this good news be conveyed?

Resources:

* ***Anabaptist Theology in Face of Postmodernity: A Proposal for the Third Millennium.*** J. Denny Weaver. Pandora Press U.S., 2000. Drawing on post-modern, as well as black, feminist, and womanist insights, the author shows that peace-oriented Anabaptist-Mennonite thought contains seeds of theology that is biblical, but poses an alternative to the theology of Christendom, which accommodates violence.

* ***Anabaptists and Postmodernity.*** Pandora Press U.S., 2000. Answers such questions as what it means to be an Anabaptist today, and the extent to which postmodernity presents both problems and possibilities for Anabaptists.

* ***Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts: Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World.*** Paul G. Hiebert. Trinity Press International, 1998. How Christian mission should be done in an anti-colonial, postmodern era characterized by religious relativism and accusations of Christian imperialism.

* ***Living Into the New World: How Cultural Trends Affect Your Congregation.*** The Alban Institute, 2000. Gil Rendle. This video describes key trends in our culture that affect the work of faith communities.

* available at the Mennonite Resource Center in Souderton. See page 3 for details.

It's About a Generation

by Ian Meredith

They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved. Acts 2:46-47 (The Message)

“It’s about a generation. Up, In and Out.” ‘Up where?’ I thought, ‘Into what? Out?’

My wife and I had moved to a new town and were church shopping – seeking God as to where He wanted us to be. We knew we had moved here for a reason, not just for work but for God’s work. We had been invited to *Shift* – an evening meeting of 20s and 30s – and walked in to a café style atmosphere in a traditional old Anglican church. Excellent worship and excellent coffee, it had started well!

About seventy 20-somethings were there and the guy that did the ‘talky-bit’ spoke about the vision of ‘Up, In and Out.’ The need to be a radical community reaching UP to God; IN to each other; and OUT to the world if we wanted to make a difference, buck the trend of declining Christianity in our generation and see revival in our land. I was hooked.

We joined the church and joined *Shift*, and quickly got involved. The core of it is based around the vision and the fact that the vision is in the hearts of those committed to reaching out to our generation. Friendship and fellowship is of key importance, not only in attracting unbelievers but also in growing individuals in their faith.

The two streams are – reaching out

through friendship, not *doing* Christianity but just *being* Christians in the world; and discipleship of each other through fellowship, mentoring and discipleship.

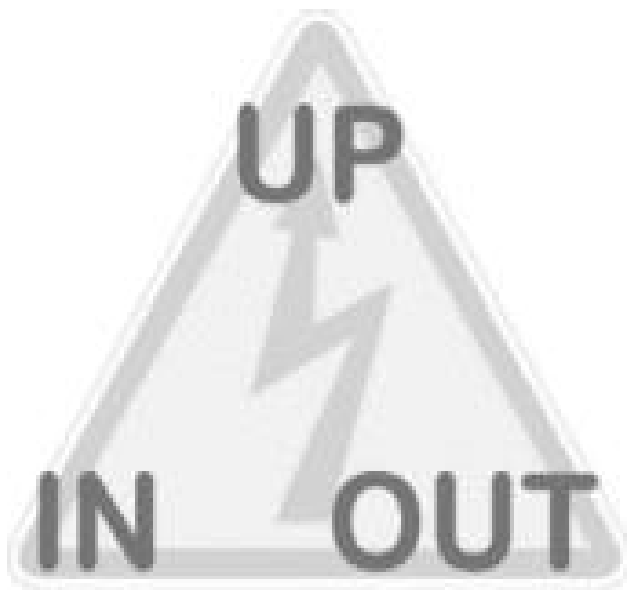
In our daily lives and activities we try to live out our faith whether in college, work, or more often the pub! My experience of our generation is that they are crying out for ‘something,’ they just don’t realize that that ‘something’ is Jesus. They have a deep need to belong

and crave real friendship. In only the last few months we have seen non-Christians getting involved and heard their testimonies that they ‘felt they were part of something’ and that ‘the people are really nice, genuine.’ Those testimonies are

now of how they have moved on to find faith in Jesus Christ. I thank God for the changes I have seen in these lives how, in their individual ways, they have moved along a path taking them from Belonging to Believing and onto Behaving.

In small groups we all meet regularly to chat, pray, receive teaching, go bowling and go to the pub (again)! Again I can recall many examples of lives changed. The changes in those involved in our group, with whom I am more closely acquainted naturally, are staggering and praiseworthy to God.

Discipleship and mentoring has also




played an important role in the growth of the individuals and Shift, building up leaders and making deeper more mature Christians.

I myself have grown enormously in the past year through the combination of small group fellowship, discipleship and the grace of God. My relationship with God is deeper and with more understanding. My prayer life and time spent in the Word is greater. I find the closer I get to God, the closer I want to get – and the more I know, the more I realize I don't know.

It's what Jesus does, or at least our best attempt at the moment to do what Jesus wants us to do. My reading of the Bible shows me that Jesus' life was the perfect model to follow. He spent His days sharing His time, sharing His experiences and teaching the truth to those around Him. And that is what we're trying to do, naturally. Too often church, group meetings and evangelistic events are so organized that they become unnatural

and unattractive.

Honesty and openness are two qualities rarely found in this world, and even less so in our generation. By just *being* who we are (that is who we have become now that we are forgiven and saved through grace) we are different and others see that. So long as we know the truth and stand by it, through prayer God will do the rest.

It's been a year that has changed me, and moved me on leaps and bounds with Jesus. My faith is stronger and my understanding deeper. Jesus has/is teaching and training me in His ways that I may serve Him more fully. I fail but by His grace he picks me up and helps me get started again. I'm on a journey and its only just beginning; who knows what I'm going to encounter in my lifetime. 

Ian and his wife live in Cheltenham, England, where Ian is a financial consultant.

Questions for Discussion

1. What surprises you about Ian's experience?
2. If true discipleship happens in the interplay of "up, in, and out", how do you experience this in your own life? In the life of your congregation?
3. What do you think of the "church-within-a-church" model that Shift has utilized?

Resources:

www.shift.org.uk

Check the web site for the group. Livin' it big time for Jesus in Cheltenham.

www.tribalgeneration.com

Shift is a Tribal Training Center in this growing international network. Listen to daily devotionals in the Fresh Air section. Walk through a virtual cathedral and find cool resources for the global church.

* ***Soularize: a Learning Party***. October 8-11, 2001 Seattle, WA (audio tapes). Hear main session speakers Richard Rohr, Leonard Sweet, Sally Morgenthaler, and Brian McLaren, plus several workshops.

The Cellular Level e-zine for cell leaders www.cell-church.org

* ***Life in His Body: A simple Guide to Active Cell Life***. David L. Finnell. Touch Publications, 1995. Field tested guide to the cell-based church emphasizing prayer, community, and vision.

* ***New Models for Ministry***. Dave Witmer. Eastern Mennonite Missions, 1995 (video kit). Ten video tapes and a leader's guide on cell group leadership.

* available at the Mennonite Resource Center in Souderton. See page 3 for details.

The Compass a column navigating postmodern waters in the Anabaptist stream

That Was Then, This is Now, and You are Here ...

by Will Schirmer

Has anyone noticed that the *Ozzie and Harriet* show has been cancelled?

Some people just can't let go of the past. I can understand that – I'm at the age now where I'm feeling very lost and very out of place.

Driving in traffic these days scares me. The malls are mazes of chaos and confusion. There are only so many coffee flavors I can try. It seems like more and more people I meet in the workforce just don't care. I don't like the new cars that came out this year. I don't like much of new anything – as I feel less and less connected to the world around me. There are times I want to retreat into a world where I would read the books I've collected, listen to the music I like, dig up some tangible nostalgia and reminisce about the good ole' days. This is a place we all feel secure and safe – it's predictable, manageable, enjoyable, and best of all – it's ours.

I would like to believe that my detachment from society is what the Bible speaks about in 1 Corinthians 5:15-20, particularly verse 17: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* Scripture also tells us to live according to the Holy Spirit to set our minds on the Spirit's desires (Romans 8:5), and to live as aliens and strangers in this land (1 Peter 2:11, Hebrews 11:13). I do feel out of place in this world, and yes, it is getting stranger. I know several Christians who wish they were living in a previous time period, or wished things were the same as they were "years ago." One time I shared with such an individual how some churches today approach evangelism as if it were the 1950's. The response I got was "Well, if people would act as they did in the 50's, and have the morals they did in the 50's, then we wouldn't have the problems we do today."

"You're right," I replied, "but they don't act as they did in the 50's, and we do have these problems today. Our job as a church is to meet people where they are and bring them the Gospel, not make them into who we want them to be first."

Some of us Christians, frustrated with today's lack of morals and increase in spiritual attacks, would like to go back to a time, place, and culture where it is nice, comfortable, and safe. It's predictable, manageable, enjoyable, and it's ours. But it's not God's! If we really have a hard time dealing with where we are, go back into the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus (Matthew 26:36-45; Luke 22:39-46). Jesus didn't have a life of comfort and safety – so why should we?

God made us who we are and when we are. We were not put in the wrong era. God put us here on earth at the right time, as part of God's plan – this was no mistake. So instead of moping around and complaining about how bad things are, and how good things used to be, spend your time and energy seeking what God wants you to do with your life here and now.

The neighborhood has changed, the corner store has closed down, your favorite car has rusted out, your friends have moved away, the kids are all grown up, and the *Ozzie and Harriet* show has been cancelled. But your life in this time and place has been renewed for another season.

Will Schirmer is a member of the MRN Advisory Council. He is currently working on a book about Mennonites and evangelism.

This column features various authors and changes weekly on the MRN Web site at www.MRN.org



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