

# ABF PLANS SPRING PROGRAM '95

Dr. Walter B. Shurden is our speaker for the spring assembly, June 2 and 3, 1995. Dr. Shurden is the Professor of Christianity and the chair of the department at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.

He is a leader of the "moderates" opposing the fundamentalist take-over in the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination. He is the author of many books, the latest being **The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms**. His lectures will be on this theme.

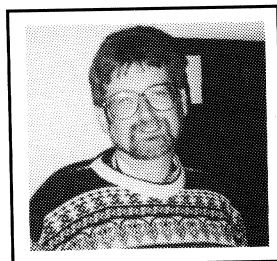
The assembly will meet at First Baptist Church, Halifax. It is hoped that many Baptists, including some not usually affiliated with the ABF, will take this opportunity to hear one of our most distinguished leaders.

Child-care for children ages 5 and under will be provided on the Church premises during the sessions and business meeting.

## EXCHANGE VISIT

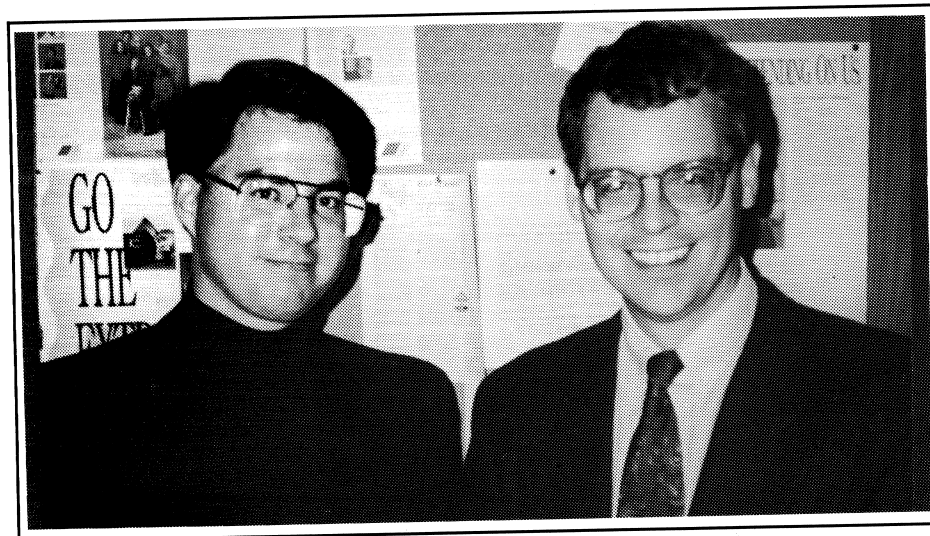
ABF'ers planning to attend the Baptist Alliance Convocation in Virginia March 3 - 5 (details page 5) are invited to participate in an exchange visit with members of the Beaver Dam Baptist Church, Franklin, Virginia. For details, please contact the Editor of the **Bulletin** immediately (902-852-4405).

## ABF PHOTO ALBUM



**Group:** (l-r): Brad Putman, Rev. Andy Crowell, Barb Cuthbertson, Jeff White, Margo MacDougall  
**Trio:** Rev. Roger Prentice celebrating 25 years of ordination with his mother (Mrs. Myra Prentice) and Dr. William Carey Harvey  
**Solo:** Rev. Byron Corkum  
**Duet:** Rev. Mel Scott and Marjorie Fountain.

# ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP BULLETIN



Enjoying activities during ABF fall meetings in Mahone Bay: Rev. Derrick Marshall and Gregory Cooper (above) and: Dr. Dorothy Lovesey, Rev. Hedley and Mary Hopkins.

**DECEMBER 1994**

## ABF EXECUTIVE

**President:** Elaine Anne MacGregor  
**Vice-Pres:** Philip Griffin-Allwood  
**Treasurer:** John Churchill  
**Past-President:** Edward Colquhoun  
**Programme:** Adele Crowell

**Bulletin Editor - Terry Tingley**  
**Bulletin Distribution:**  
Isobel Horton  
**FRIENDS of ABF Sec'y:**  
Dorothy Lovesey



## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

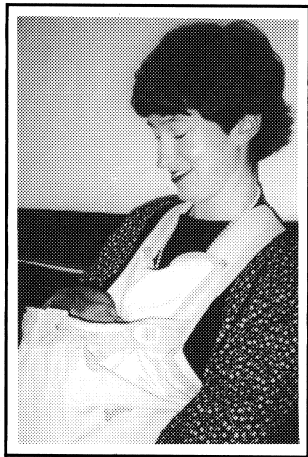
Being a Baptist is hard work. As outlined in his book, **The Baptist Identity - Four Fragile Freedoms**, Walter Shurden identifies four Freedoms which Baptists adhere to: Bible Freedom, Soul Freedom, Church Freedom and Religious Freedom. Soul Freedom calls for individuals to be responsible for their relationship with God. Church Freedom affirms that individual churches, by virtue of the wishes of their members are free to and responsible for determining their membership and leadership.

The exercise of these Freedoms requires Baptists to work on their personal spiritual growth and be involved in their churches decisions. It also means being involved with bodies that influence their churches' and individuals' abilities to exercise the four Freedoms. For me it means being committed to growing spiritually, to being involved in the decision making of my church, to meeting other Baptists and Christians, and to learning about and being involved with the Atlantic United Baptist Convention and the Acadia Divinity College.

I encourage you to be involved - to make your faith and its practice intentional. As you will learn from reading this issue of the "BULLETIN" many opportunities exist: Walter Shurden will speak at our SPRING ASSEMBLY; ABF members are welcome to attend the Alliance of Baptists Convocation in Vienna, Virginia, March 3 - 5, 1995; and information is provided about AUBC commissions, boards, and committees.

MERRY CHRISTMAS. May the joy and wonder of God's gift of the Christ Child fill our hearts.

-Elaine Anne MacGregor



Elaine Anne MacGregor  
and daughter Elizabeth

## NOTE TO CHURCH TREASURERS and FINANCE COMMITTEES

John Churchill

Please consider including the ABF in your 1995 church budget, if you haven't already. The money raised from churches and individuals allows us to sponsor two yearly conferences and 4 editions of the Bulletin each year. Our spring and fall conferences have presented such interesting and critical topics as: family values, violence in today's society, religion and mental health, and religious extremism. Our Bulletin publishes articles on current topics of religious and denominational interest such as: Baptist chaplaincies, Baptist perspectives on ministry, the church, and relations with other religious bodies, book reviews, and convention activities. Our budget also supports such worthwhile activities as a newsletter for women in ministry. For those not familiar with the ABF and its purpose, I would refer you to a statement of our objectives as published periodically in the Bulletin. We need your support to continue to provide a forum for the discussion of religious and societal issues from a historic Baptist perspective of freedom, openness, tolerance, and commitment to the Gospel of Christ.

## IS "AUTONOMY" A BAD WORD?

Gerry Harrop

Article II of the constitution of the UBCAP is in two parts:

(1) The responsibility of the Convention is to the Lord Jesus Christ; the command of the great commission to declare His saving grace; to the total man (sic !); and to the whole world.

(2) The policy of the Convention is to make available, as directed by the Convention Assembly, such inspiration, counsel, programs and personnel as required to fulfill this responsibility, *without overruling or interfering with the autonomy of the local church.* (italics added)

Dr. Walter B. Shurden (our next ABF speaker), put it this way:

"Church freedom is the historic Baptist affirmation that local churches are free, under the Lordship of Christ, to determine their membership and leadership, to order their worship and work, to ordain whom they perceive as gifted for ministry, male or female, and to participate in the larger Body of Christ, of whose unity and mission Baptists are proudly a part." (**The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms**, p 33)

Another way of stating this is to say that the Church of Jesus Christ achieves its visibility in a local community of believers who worship and walk and work together in covenant with each other and with their living Lord.

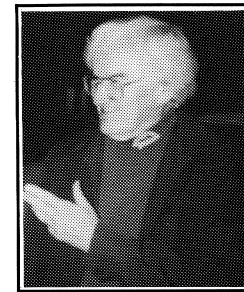
We can never take for granted this our charter of church freedom. Some feel that the churches of the Convention should somehow be **required** to have a common constitution. Fortunately this idea does not find much support. The charge has been made that autonomous churches are in danger of being dominated and disrupted by power-seekers and demagogues. This danger is always present in democratic societies--sacred and secular. My experience as a Canadian Baptist who has served in three of our Canadian conventions for over half a century, is that this kind of disruption has been more characteristic of conventions than of local churches. The contemporary example of this is the fissiparous cataclysm that has befallen the Southern Baptist Convention.

It has been pointed out that "autonomy" is not a scriptural word. This should really bother Baptists who shy away from "bishop" and "presbyter" preferring, in our ecclesiastical discourse such "Bible words" as: moderator, clerk, president, vice-president, convention, association and even (may God forgive us!) the oxymoronic "executive minister!"

Now to venture on to truly contentious ground. I would like to see the local church reclaim its authority to ordain its minister or ministers. The wider fellowship of Baptist churches certainly needs a list of persons qualified to be called to a full-time church vocation. But it is the church, and only the church as congregationally defined, that ordains. And it is the church which gives convention and association committees permission to advise it on the educational and character qualifications of candidates, **not the other way around**. The wider body does **not** give the church authority to ordain.

I was ordained in 1942 by a small-town Baptist church in Ontario. This church sought the advice of delegates from neighbouring churches to help it determine the authenticity of my conversion, call and faith-statement. But I was ordained by the Forest Baptist Church. Sometime I would like to discuss whether, in strict Baptist ecclesiology, I should have been ordained again and again as I took up new ministries.

In this increasingly impersonal age of mass communication there should be, somewhere along the Information Highway, a body of people known by name and face and not number, to each other and to the living Lord.



## RELIGION AND MENTAL HEALTH

### — THEME OF ABF FALL ASSEMBLY —

Religion can be destructive of our mental health. All of us have experienced this side of it. Many of us have been badly bruised by this hurtful religion reinforced by family, community, clerics and churches.

How can those of us who care about the church avoid these pitfalls. In particular, how can individual churches conduct themselves so that people are helped not damaged.

Henry Sharam, an ordained Baptist clergyman and practicing Jungian psychotherapist examined these aspects of religion with us. Using his expertise in Carl Jung's psychology, and his own religious background, he explored how to avoid destructive religious experiences, and instead have one that helps build our mental health.

## A SYNOPSIS OF HENRY SHARAM'S ADDRESS TO ABF ASSEMBLY

by J. Derrick Marshall

Using the Parable of the Good Samaritan as a vehicle for the spiritual reality of individuals, Mr. Sharam proceeded to interpret the story as a symbol of the human being's inner life.

All of us, like the traveller in the Parable, put ourselves in danger. We subconsciously set ourselves up for trouble in life. As we grow up our ego takes increasing control of our lives and we begin to insist on living life "our own way". However, this kind of defiant independence is precisely what sets us up for trouble, danger, and a "mugging" later in life. As we live out our own patterns we will eventually get "mugged" by opposite patterns of living.

The Priest in this Parable, the one who saw the beaten traveller on the road and passed by on the other side in order to preserve his own religious purity, is symbolic of that voice within our psyche which condemns. When we get "mugged" in life we hear the collective religious attitude of condemnation of ourselves, as sinful and unworthy of care.

The Levite in our Parable, the one who saw the wounded traveller and decided not to get involved in order to preserve himself, is symbolic of our self-abandonment. When we are hurt in life and most need self-care, we often abandon ourselves and "play it safe with our own hurt" by distancing ourselves from our own pain. This takes place through the abuse of drugs and alcohol, blaming others, and getting involved with others' pain rather than facing our own. We must learn to own our own pain before we can discover our true selves and find healing. To fail to do this is only to pass on our pain to others close to us -- our spouse, our family and our co-workers.

The Samaritan in the Parable is that hidden aspect of ourselves, our psyche, our "shadow Side", which we despise but which can rescue us in the final outcome. We must allow that aspect of our nature (which we have suppressed) to be re-discovered before we can find balance, wholeness and healing in our lives.

Mr. Sharam concluded his fascinating interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, as applied to our interior lives, with a call to each and every one of us to be watching for that Good Samaritan in our own souls. For he is probably a clue that God is trying to heal something within us.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT....

### ... NOMINATIONS CLOSED?

Delegates attending the '94 Annual Assembly of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces in Sackville, N.S., probably paid more attention to the report of the Nominating Committee due to the comments made by the editor of the **Atlantic Baptist**, in the summer '94 issue, re its "faults". Close scrutiny revealed a few members of the Nominating Committee were actually candidates for positions. No big deal? Perhaps. Experienced "parliamentarians" suggest, however, that if members of the committee are nominated for positions then they usually resign from the nominating committee and are replaced.

Hopefully, a more acceptable report will be presented to Convention's '95 Assembly.

## HAYWARD LECTURES '94

A Statement summarizing the thesis of Dr. Douglas John Hall

The end of Christendom would appear to be an inevitable reality in the Western world. While this is not an optimistic viewpoint, it can be the beginning of new hope. With the decline of Christendom the Church will be released from its duty as Chaplain to secular authority and can, instead, get on with the more important business of acting as Salt, Yeast, and Light to a dark and hurting world.

— J. Derrick Marshall

## THE ALLIANCE OF BAPTISTS NINTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION "For the Living of These Days"

March 3-5, 1995

Vienna Baptist Church, Vienna, Virginia

Confirmed Speakers: Nancy Tatom Ammerman  
Paul Duke, Mary M. Strauss, John Ewing Roberts, Stan Haste  
Musicians: C. Michael Hawn; W. James Abbington

(To be featured at opening night hymn festival)

Choirs: Myers Park Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C., Vienna Baptist Church,  
Shiloh Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.

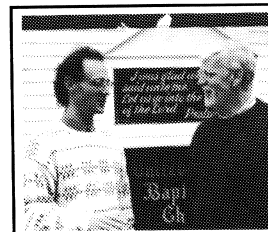
Convocation Hotel: Holiday Inn at Tysons Corner  
(\$69 daily rate, single/double), call direct, 1-703-893-2100

Travel: Travel Agents International, Raleigh, NC (800) 521-8529

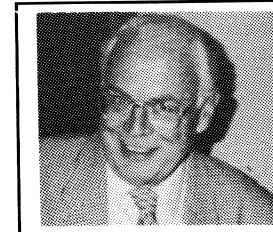
ABF'ers interested in joining ABF representatives planning on attending the  
Alliance Convocation please contact:

ABF BULLETIN EDITOR/PR DIRECTOR Terry Tingley - 902-852-4405 for details.

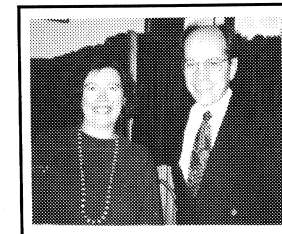
## ABF FALL ASSEMBLY PARTICIPANTS



Andy Crowell & Henry Sharam



Carl Dexter



Adele Crowell & Brian Keezer

## S.A.D.

Reg Dunn

Do you feel a little sad when the daylight hours become fewer? I do. When the sun has gone on a shorter work day? I do. When the lazier days of summer come to an end? I do. Every year the same changes. So one stiffens the upper lip and sets one's face toward the autumn, towards fallen leaves and fallen snow. No, perhaps you are not tinged with sadness; but, as I said, I am - not despondent, just a bit sad.

I've heard recently that I - when autumn comes - fall prey to a malady which now has a name: "Seasonal Affective Disorder". Or, "S.A.D." for short. I kid you not. I heard a medical person talking about this. He described the malady as seasonal but not serious. It's nothing but what can be handled easily by what the medical person called light therapy - whatever that is. Or you can just wait it out and it will go away. It always does.

But the autumn quickly moves into November - and that gives me "S.A.D." again, November 11th, Remembrance Day. For me, it isn't just the day; November no sooner comes and I am afflicted with S.A.D. The disorder diminishes as time goes by; nevertheless, throughout the year the "symptoms" appear, briefly, from time to time.

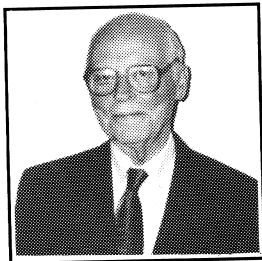
It is SAD, isn't it? Wars, deaths, crippled lives, brokenness all over the world. We commemorate all this brokenness, all this destruction, with parades, monuments, church services. More: the world's people haven't really learned not to go to war. Even as I write this, there are at least a score of "local" (as against "world") wars being waged.

I do not feel compelled any longer to be with other people when I "commemorate". More and more I want to get off by myself when that hour on November the 11th comes. I have a special "SAD-ness" just then. It flows over me, and then as is a natural and needed experience, the tide of remorse recedes. Life, goes on.

"Seasonal Affective Disorder".

And one clings to hope; more and more people are saying "NO" to war as a means of settling disputes and of dealing with threats, or perceived threats. "Alternatives to war" are being more seriously considered.

Maybe some day a generation of humans will muse about war as an "historical curiosity". Maybe they, unlike us, will not be afflicted in their Novembers by S.A.D.



## BOOK REVIEW

by M.R.B. Lovesey

Allison A. Trites, *The Transfiguration of Christ: A Hinge of Holy History*. Hantsport, Nova Scotia; Lancelot Press Limited, 1994, pp. 94.

This little book, by the John Payzant Distinguished Professor of Biblical Studies specializing in New Testament and Greek at the Acadia Divinity College, merits high praise as an example of *multum in parvo* and leaders of adult Bible classes are urged to use it with their groups. It is a very useful tool for group study, each chapter is furnished with questions for discussion. There is a select bibliography and a valuable appendix giving some prayers and hymns on the Transfiguration.

Professor Trites begins with a discussion of the historical accuracy of the event, of how we are to understand what happened, if it be possible to get behind the records to the historical core, if there be one. The first principle of the interpretation of the Gospel records must be the establishment of the literary genre of the pericope under consideration --are we dealing with history, or legend, or mythology, or mixes of these ingredients? Setting aside the widely accepted theory that the story of the Transfiguration is a post-resurrection story read back into the lifetime of Jesus, the view supported

(...cont. on Page 7)

## BOOK REVIEW

(...cont. from Page 6)

by Rudolf Bultmann *et al.*, Trites relies upon the arguments advanced by C. H. Dodd, "who," he says, "has subjected this theory to careful scrutiny and has found it to be weak on several counts." This reviewer is particularly pleased to see the use Trites makes of that eminent scholar, a former Yates Professor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis of Mansfield College, Oxford, and famed as the Director of the committee that produced the *New English Bible*. Trites concludes: "There is no reason to hold that they (the Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration) were misplaced post-resurrection accounts, and every reason, as we will see, to keep them in their strategic position in each of the Synoptic Gospels."

Our author rightly stresses the importance of the "strategic position" of the Transfiguration in the life of Jesus. It is placed in Mark, the basic Gospel, and followed by the parallels in Matthew and Luke, *after* Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi of the messiahship of Jesus and the first proclamation of the Passion, and *before* the Passion story itself--it is indeed a "hinge" upon which the whole story turns. The heart of the episode is the Voice from heaven, similar to the Voice from heaven at the Baptism, which commands the disciples to obey him who is the only-begotten (unique) Son of God, the Messiah, and the apocalyptic Son of Man who will establish God's Kingdom on earth through his sufferings.

It is interesting to note that such a perceptive modern writer, biographer and savant as A.N. Wilson believes there is an historical core behind the witness of the Synoptic Gospels. In his book, *Jesus*, published in 1992, he writes (p. 157): "I have no difficulty in believing that the story of the Transfiguration is something which actually happened within the earthly life-time of Jesus." "It is," he says, "one of the two key moments in Jesus' story, the other being the miracle of the loaves."

Trites explains why the Fourth Gospel has no account of the Transfiguration, in much the same way as A.N. Wilson does in his account of Jesus (p. 156): Wilson writes: "It is interesting to note that the Transfiguration does not occur in the Fourth Gospel, for the simple reason that it was not necessary, by the theology of that book, for such a moment to be included in the story. To the fourth evangelist, the glory of Jesus, and the glory of God in the signs of Jesus are revealed repeatedly. In that book, there is no need for a moment of enlightenment on the mountainside."

Our author proceeds to discuss the significance of the *place* of the Transfiguration, the differing ways in which Matthew and Luke handle the Marcan tradition, and the use of the event in 2 Peter. He investigates the symbolism of the narrative; the meaning of the experience for Jesus, for the disciples, for the Christian Church and for Twentieth Century Christians.

Following Barclay, Trites uses the word "hinge" to describe the significant moment of the Transfiguration, a usage that the present reviewer does not like very much. He would have preferred the author to use the word "moment" (as he occasionally does) following John Macquarrie see his *Principles of Christian Theology*, 2nd.ed., pp.279-290). And further, he dislikes the unfortunate alliterative aspirates of the sub-title!

In the concluding chapter of the book, Trites defends his interpretation of the Transfiguration and summarizes his understanding of its significance and importance. He writes: "For the Synoptists, the Transfiguration marked a vital stage in the revelation of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God... While the event brought to Jesus a fresh assurance of the Father's favor and divine approval of his course of action, it still serves as a challenge to present-day Christians. It summons us to develop the proper balance between work and worship, to make time for prayer, and to practise the presence of God. It reminds us that true discipleship involves suffering and sacrifice, and suggests the disciples share, present and future, in the glory of the risen and ascended Christ."

# CHURCHES JOIN TO OPPOSE CASINOS

## - A Study in Ecumenical Action

Roger Cann

### Joint Action:

On October 24 representatives of the Anglican, Baptist, Evangelical Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United Churches made a joint statement of opposition to the establishment of gambling casinos in Nova Scotia. The coalition of six Christian denominations presented their statement to broadcast and print journalists in a media conference at the offices of the Medical Society of Nova Scotia, in Dartmouth.

The moderator of the media conference was Rev. Margaret Sagar, of the Church in Society Committee of the United Church's Maritime Conference. To begin the conference, Dr. Genevieve Campbell-Carlson of the Medical Society summarized the opposition of Nova Scotia doctors to casino gambling because it is corrosive of a healthy life style. Rev. Martin Currie, the Vicar General of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Halifax read the statement on behalf of the churches:

"We firmly believe that the proposed casinos for Metro Halifax/Dartmouth and Sydney will irrevocably change our province's cultural, social and economic life in a manner that is detrimental to the majority of our people. Casino gambling does not promote the health and well-being of individuals, or of our society.

We are aware that significant evidence exists to show that, where casinos are introduced, the costs related to criminal justice, the treatment of gambling addiction and other socio-economic problems can easily outstrip the revenues gained by the government from casinos.

Therefore, we call on the government of Nova Scotia to abandon its plan to establish casinos.

As representatives of these churches in Nova Scotia, we emphasize the urgent need for all citizens to contact their Member of the Legislative Assembly, the Premier and the Minister of Finance as soon as possible. Nova Scotians must tell their government that the majority is opposed to their introduction of the gambling casinos in our province."

In response to questions by the journalists, Father Currie and Rev. Regis Halloran, the Chancellor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Antigonish, clarified their church's opposition to obsessive gambling and over reliance on games of chance in parish fund-raising.



Rev. Ron Baxter

Media representatives asked repeatedly what other action the churches were planning to take to oppose casino gambling. **Rev. Ronald G. Baxter, President of the Atlantic United Baptist Convention**, Rev. Victor A. MacLeod of the United Church Maritime Conference, The Very Rev. Austin Moore, Dean of the Anglican Diocese, and Rev. L. George MacDonald, of the Presbyterian Synod, basically made the same points: We have always been opposed to gambling. We have made our views known to the provincial government. We join in this statement to emphasize the unity of the churches on this issue. At present we do not have plans for further joint action on gambling or casinos. As churches we will not be telling our people how to vote. If the Government proceeds with establishing casinos the citizens of Nova Scotia will register their judgment at the next election.

Pastor Douglas Moore, Dean of the Evangelical Lutheran Church participated in the preparation and presentation of the statement. Others assisting were; Rev. Hillary Fraser of Grace United Church in Dartmouth, Mr. Wylie Johnson, Lunenburg, Rev. Dr. Roger Cann, Wolfville, and Mr. Ian Coll, Chair of People Against Casinos - Nova Scotia (PAC-NS).

### Coalitions:

The churches coming together for a joint statement to the representatives of the media, is an example of a style of ecumenical social action which has taken hold in Canada since 1972. This is not

the approved action of a mandated ecumenical body, but rather a "coalition" in operation.

The usual pattern of ecumenical coalitions is; tightly focussed on a specific issue, develops its own way of analyzing the issue and assembling the resources necessary, and to be strictly accountable to the authorities of the participating church bodies.

Since money is short for all church efforts at the present time, it is clear that the coalition style of ecumenical action represents an important economy. No salaries to be paid, nor physical plant to be maintained. It commends itself as the pattern to follow for the short term.

The short-lived coalition which was evident at the media conference demonstrated the desirable characteristics of an ecumenical group engaged in mission; self-selection, inclusivity, and decision-making by the total group. Those participating were there because of their concerns to voice objections to what felt was wrong, the establishment of casinos. There had been some difficulty for the group to form, because in the current ecumenical climate, church leaders are reluctant to advance themselves as the "convenor" for ecumenical action. This is where politeness has immobilized ecumenical action. Once there was a general understanding that several churches had taken a similar position on casinos, it was easy for them to coalesce.

Those who met at the earlier meeting on the 17th of October were most insistent that Baptists and Lutherans should take part. Representatives of those church bodies had been consulted in advance and they had given assurance that they would take part.

PAC-NS played a key role in the formation of the coalition. PAC-NS Steering Committee had discovered that all of the churches were of the same mind. That was not known by all the churches. Mr. Wylie Johnson of PAC-NS personally interviewed Bishop Peters of the Anglican Diocese. Bishop Peters endorsed the PAC-NS initiative and together with Mr. Johnson informed the other churches, and the coalition took life.

In the formation of a coalition, there should be an inter-play between the proposals of the initiator, and the interests of all those participating in the coalition. Some people need a plan of action set before them which they could provisionally accept until a better plan of action became clear to them. Others want to have a hand in determining all facets of coalition operations; leadership, direction, and mode of decision making. PAC-NS and in particular Mr. Wylie Johnson played the initiator's role perfectly. They set before the churches the need to prepare a joint statement and to release it to the media prior to opening of the Nova Scotia Legislature on the 27th of October. Then once the church representatives met, decision making shifted to the church coalition, PAC-NS became a resource to be called upon, and Mr. Johnson became a servant to the coalition and invited the journalists.

### Reflection:

Ecumenical coalitions are limited in their results. They accomplish specific tasks, or attend to specific issues. But they are limited in responding to the Spirit of God's call to oneness. Conciliar ecumenism on the other hand has sought to address the need for unity, and the Christian tasks of loving, trusting and sharing. For conciliar ecumenism, its difficult to know exactly what are they next steps. There is no road map. But we do have some direction. We know that we are called to develop amongst all Christians that trust and sharing and hope and love which is of Christ. To that end we must reduce those factors that make us merely "tribal" so that we may grow toward the oneness in Christ which is our common scriptural heritage.

Christian unity can be seen as both the consensus in the faith, and the fellowship which corresponds to this consensus. The consensus in the faith is something that is particularly essential for the Christian faith, and that a verbally expressed consensus can never have that essential importance when it is separated from the ecclesio-social community life.

Ecumenism presumes that some degree of consensus exists, which includes an agreement that unity is essential or at least desirable. Ecumenical dialogue, worship, or joint action, likewise, will be accompanied by similar agreements, formal or tacit, in each instance, otherwise they would not occur. The need in our context is to foster a broader and more inclusive consensus to emerge which will in turn strengthen ecumenical relationships. The more we agree on, the stronger will be the bonds of caring.

We do not need a complete consensus among churches to enjoy an ecumenical life-style, but rather merely what is necessary and sufficient to be able to develop the fellowship we have with one another in Christ. God will use the short-lived coalition of six church bodies in opposition to casino gambling for his purposes.

# GETTING INVOLVED IN CONVENTION

Rev. John Boyd

## CONVENTION COUNCIL

The Council is made up of a combination of staff and elected and appointed members. It carries on the work of our denomination between annual assemblies. Over the years much of the decision making authority of the Convention has been vested in the Council, sometimes at the request of the Assembly, but more often as a result of the reduced time at Assembly for discussion of business items. The Council meets for 3 days in September and April, and for one day prior to Convention. The "CEO" is Dr. Eugene Thompson, Executive Minister.

The Council has 6 Commissions with a staff person to advise and to implement decisions. They are:

1. Annuity/Finance - responsible for financial affairs, preparing the annual budget, looking after pensions, health and disability issues. Staff person - Daryl MacKenzie, Director of Administration and Treasurer.
2. Evangelism (Radio/T.V.) - responsible for providing guidance and resources for evangelism by Convention Churches. Staff person - Dr. Malcolm Beckett, Director of Evangelism.
3. Home Missions - responsible for directing our home mission activities; e.g. support for struggling churches, planting new churches. Staff person - Dr. Harry Gardner, Director of Home Missions and Church Planting.
4. Stewardship-Promotion - responsible for promoting the work of the denomination and support for the budget, and for assisting Churches in the development of good stewardship policies. Staff person - Rev. Douglas Hapeman, Director of Communications (shared with Social Action).
5. Social Action - responsible for our denomination's social ministries; e.g. chaplaincy, social and moral issues. Staff person - Rev. Douglas Hapeman, Director of Communications (shared with Stewardship-Promotion).
6. Christian Training (Campus-Camping) - responsible for assisting Churches in all areas of Christian Education, camping and campus ministries. Staff person - Marilyn MacCormick, Director of Training.

In addition, there are several Boards and Committees, among which are the following key Boards with a direct impact on issues of special importance to ABF Churches.

1. Board of Ministerial Standards and Education - meets with all candidates considering training for the Baptist Ministry to determine their fitness for the pastoral office, to direct them in their course of study, and to assist to some extent with financial issues. The Board must authorize a candidate to appear before the Ordination Council, signifying that all educational requirements have been met. The Board acts as the Credentials Committee of Convention, ruling on applications by ministers who come into our Convention from other places, deciding whether those who have moved into secular callings should retain their credentials, and considering issues of moral failure by pastors. This Board has significant responsibility and authority for ministry issues. (3 people are elected each year)

2. Board of Trustees, Acadia Divinity College - the Trustees work under regulations established by the College's Act of Incorporation. They have authority over financial and property issues, the hiring and firing of staff and professors, and virtually all aspects of the College's life. (The Senate is responsible for academic issues *per se*, although these are often subordinated to decisions made by the Trustees.) Since we look to ADC for our ministerial leadership, it is crucial that our concerns be reflected on the Board.

(...Cont. on Page 11)

# MARGINAL NOTES

by Grammateus

The children's hymn **All Things Bright and Beautiful** by Cecile Frances Alexander (1818-1895) originally had a stanza omitted in all recent hymn books:

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high and lowly  
And ordered their estate.

This was an appropriate sentiment, it seems, for a woman about to become a Bishop's wife in Victorian England. There was a time when the Church (not just the Church of England) could thus celebrate the social **status quo**. And I think it must be admitted, that many of us, while we would not utter such sentiments, by our avoidance of social action in the face of injustice silently agree with Mrs. Alexander.

Today's protest, emanating from poor, southern countries, is called "Liberation Theology." Among the neo-conservatives, the "religious right" and even some professional academic theologians, much fault is found with Liberation Theology. But its essential message sounds very much like the Word that came from the burning bush; the Word of the God whose name is too holy to utter:

I have surely seen the affliction of my people  
which are in Egypt,  
and have heard their cry  
because of their taskmasters;  
for I know their sorrows.  
And am come down to deliver them. (Exodus 3:7-8a KJV)

(ggh)

# GETTING INVOLVED IN CONVENTION

(...con't from Page 10)

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Convention Nominating Committee is made up of Association Moderators, or their appointees, plus 6 (?) members appointed by the President to provide "balance". The Committee is chaired by the Past President and includes the President and Executive Minister as non-voting members. The Committee usually meets on the second Friday of November. Your Association Moderator should be given names and addresses of those from our churches who are willing to serve in various capacities. Nominations by letter through the Executive Minister are another possibility, but far less effective.

## ORDINATION COUNCIL

The Ordination Council is made up of 1 or 2 representatives from each Association, and elected by the Association. The Council must give a 2/3 majority vote before a candidate can be recommended to a church for ordination. In recent times issues such as gender, biblical inerrancy and open membership have been raised as reasons why a candidate might not be suitable for ordination. The future of our ministerial leadership depends upon our right to ordain ministers whose theological and pastoral outlook is consistent with our understanding of being Baptist. We need to be involved in the choice of our Ordination Council members.

# A STORY OF COMPLIANCE AND DEFIANCE

## A Meditation by Stan Hastey

Text: Luke 15: 11-32

One commentator on our Gospel text has issued a warning to all preachers: "In some respects," he said, "preaching on this masterpiece of Jesus is a little like trying to improve Handel's Messiah or trying to refine the Apostle's Creed! We approach the task with awe knowing that once again, we are on Holy Ground."

That's certainly how I feel about the text. Yet one thought that keeps coming to mind is how much the story of this father and his two sons is virtually a textbook case of a "typical" family system at work. (By the way, I've put that word, "typical," within quotation marks in that in a more fundamental sense there is no such thing as a typical family. Every family, like very person, is truly unique, one of a kind.)

Here's how Barbara Harris applies this charming story to our text:

Older siblings frequently get the raw end of the deal, as the elder brother apparently does... My hunch is that he was not incensed by his younger brother's return, or even by his father's forgiveness of him, but by the celebration. Let the penitents come home, by all means, but let them come home to penance, not a party. Where is the moral instruction in that kind of welcome? What about facing the consequences of your actions? What about reaping what you sow? What kind of world would this be if we all made a practice of rewarding sinners while the God-fearing folk are still out in the fields?

Ah, but that is exactly what the story is about, isn't it? This is vintage Jesus, saying the unexpected, the nonsensical, the outrageous. His remarks were being addressed to those predictable nemeses of his, the scribes and Pharisees, whose whole existence revolved around keeping the minutiae of the law, all the law. They were the Fundamentalists of their day, for whom every jot and tittle of sacred text was to be protected against every intrusion of liberalism.

Their present problem with Jesus was that he had been observed eating with tax-gatherers and sinners. The former were despised not only because their regular contact with Gentiles made them ritually unclean, but also because the tax-collecting scheme in Palestine was rife with abuse, most of all the abuse of collaboration with the despised Roman occupiers and overseers. "Sinners" could be, in Pharisaic usage, those ordinary people whose life situation made it impossible for them to observe the ritual law as punctiliously as true righteousness demanded.

It was in response to this criticism that Jesus told not only the story of the father and his two sons, but those that precede it, the parables of the lost sheep and lost coin. These earlier, shorter, stories actually set us up for the longer, more detailed parable, the one that best of all explains the depth of the love of God for his children.

In his book, **Biblical Themes for Pastoral Care**, William B. Oglesby, Jr., notes the story of the father and his two sons is one of several similar stories in both Old Testament and New that give us the lives of two siblings as a literary device to illustrate both the self-justification of humans and the graciousness of God. In each case, one sibling is usually more compliant and the other more defiant (Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Orpah and Ruth, and Mary and Martha), each representing a type or category of human behavior.

The first-child type, Oglesby says, is usually a homebody and a conformist, while the second-child type more often is a wanderer and a rebel. The first sees "acceptance as dependent on acceptable behavior," while the other, having given up on trying to be better than the "good" first child, sees rebellion as the only way he or she will ever get the attention he/she needs.

(...cont. on Page 13)

Interestingly, according to the sociologist Robert Beavers, these tendencies actually can be demonstrated in the contrasting lifestyles of certain native tribes in our own country. Under the contrasting categories of "centripetal" and "centrifugal" family patterns, he notes the former are modeled in the native American Yurok tribe of the Pacific Northwest, who, unlike the nomadic hunter tribes, lived within a single valley. Their entire existence was centered between the boundaries of the mountains surrounding that valley. Members of the tribe thought of everyone living outside their valley so different as to be somehow defective and certainly to be avoided.

In contrast, the centrifugal family, Beavers contends, can be seen in the Sioux tribes which roamed and hunted across the American prairie, following the buffalo and the seasons. They came into contact with others and thereby crossed and changed their own boundaries regularly. As a consequence, they came to have little fear of outsiders.

James L. Philpott uses these family categories to help us understand the personality types of the two brothers in the parable. The elder brother, he says, represents the values and functions of the centripetal family. "He expected to be rewarded for his preservation of the livestock and the crops as well as his obedient life style," Philpott explains.

The prodigal son, on the other hand, representing the centrifugal family, was more daring. "Following the wind, travelling light, sharing resources, and looking for opportunity were important values (to him). The elder is suspicious of people who want to see what is on the other side of the mountain, while the prodigal has yet to meet a stranger."

And this: "Each style of family life has its own set of problems. The centripetal family has a more difficult time letting its children wander, instilling 'breakaway guilt.' The centrifugal family often lets its children have too much rein, launching them (out on their own) prematurely." All of that sounds familiar, doesn't it?

But what the story is really about is the timeless love of God. Although we call it "The Parable of the Prodigal," that actually is a misnomer. Jesus' own words were, "There was a man who had two sons." The parable is more about the father than the sons. The father is the central figure, not the boys.

And the story has one central scene, a scene beautifully captured in a painting you might want to seek out the next time you're in the National Gallery of Art, the Spanish painter Murillo's depiction of the return of the prodigal. In this wonderful painting, the boy is in rags, sunburned, bone weary and hungry. He has just collapsed into his father's arms, apparently trying to get out of his mouth the words of confession. But his father is so clearly overjoyed to have him in his arms he won't let him finish before ordering that the festivities begin. And adding energy to this scene, Murillo shows the boy's small dog jumping up onto him, likewise glad to see him home.

Yes, the rest of the story revolves around that scene, the first part concerning the rebellious profligacy of the younger boy, the last part dealing with the self-righteous obstinacy of older son. Right in the middle of this story of defiance and compliance is the figure of the father whose love encompasses them both.

Here's how Philpott makes the point:

The real story in the parable is the active invitation of God to both. God is impressed neither by the hard work of the elder nor the penitent heart of the prodigal. Each is invited to the banquet (in spite of himself). The gospel -- good news -- is the faithfulness of God as seen in the love and compassion of the parent...Both children are sinners and both children are welcome to the banquet which celebrates the fact that anyone who becomes dead and lost, in their own attempts to save themselves, can be made alive and be found by the generous and faithful love of God.

(Cont. on Page 14)

Robert F. Hull, Jr., puts it this way: "At the end there remains as the central character neither of the sons, but the welcoming father, an image of the God who waits for both Pharisees and sinners to come home."

There is, of course, one type of child who might feel left out of this parable, perhaps even left out of this meditation -- the only child. But here is the good news for you. You, too, are a part of this story, for God loves you as though he had none other to love.

The radical nature of that love, the love this story is all about, surely defies description or depiction. The great ballet choreographer George Ballantine tried to capture it, set to the music of Igor Stravinsky, in "The Prodigal Son." Yet the radical nature of God's grace was too much for the ballet to bear, for in the final scene when the prodigal returns, he moves from stage left forward, using only the upper half of his body, with the aid of a staff, to drag the immobile lower half across the length of the stage. Then, as the father stands immobile, the dancer/prodigal, again using only the upper half of his body, pulls himself up from the floor into the bosom of the father.

While the scene makes for a dramatic ending to a beautiful piece of work. Ballantine has not quite captured the gospel truth. For the way it really is, the amazing grace of it all, is that the father rushes across the stage at the first glimpse of the prodigal, this one who was presumed lost or even dead. He rushes across and gathers up the halting, limping, figure which is his son and joyfully clutches him to himself.

And despite the protest of the older son ("For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never..." etc., ad nauseum), the father gives divine voice to the words we yearn to hear, all of us, younger and older children, compliant and defiant, alike: "But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." Amen.

*Editor's Note: Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey is executive director of the Alliance of Baptists, Washington, D.C. This Meditation was presented at the ABF Assembly, June '94.*

## Next Issue: ABF BULLETIN

April 1995

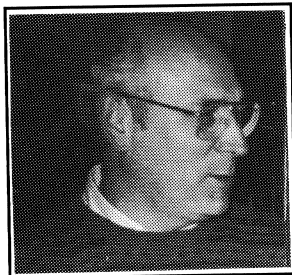
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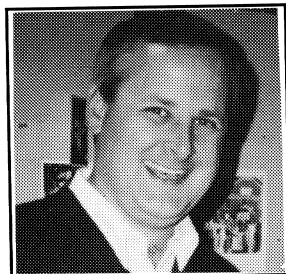
## ABF PHOTO ALBUM



David Allen



John Boyd



David Dexter

## Friends of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

## FRIENDS OF THE ABF — UPDATE

By Dorothy M. Lovesey

Dear "Friends":

At this joyous season of the year we wish all of our "Friends" and supporters of the work of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship a very happy Christmas and a New Year bright with gladness and hope.

On this occasion we would like to present the chaplain of Acadia University, a most devoted "Friend" and vigorous advocate of the ABF, the Reverend Roger H. Prentice, as he celebrates his twenty-fifth year of his ordination to the Christian ministry. Born in Saint John, N.B., raised in Halifax, N.S., Roger attended the Queen Elizabeth High School and Dalhousie University where he received his BA degree. Following completion of his BD degree at the Acadia University's School of Theology, he was ordained at his home church, the First Baptist Church, Halifax, on 17 September 1969. Later he furthered his studies at Regent's Park College, Oxford University, England, where his area of concern was Baptist Church History and Worship.

Services to various Baptist churches in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (Advocate Harbour, 1965-66; Sable River, 1967; Truro Heights, 1968-69; Amherst, 1969-75; St. Stephen, 1975-79; Annapolis Royal, 1983-85) has been a significant feature of his ministry, and his gifts have been recognized by appointments to important positions in Associations, Councils, Boards and Committees. The breadth of his interest is glimpsed in the range of his activities, from President of the Amherst Ministerial Association to that of Drama Instructor at the Annapolis West Education Centre in Annapolis Royal! His recognition of the importance of the Ecumenical Movement is seen in his work for the Wolfville and Area Inter-Church Council, his work on the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, and his activities as Chaplain of Acadia University. The ABF is grateful for his many services to the Fellowship, in particular for his presidency, 1988-90.

Remember always WE NEED YOU! ...

...Perhaps YOU TOO NEED US!

FRIENDS are sympathetic to the aims of the ABF, which are:

- (1) To witness to the freedom implicit in the voluntary principle in religion which is the essence of the traditional Baptist position;
- (2) To affirm and celebrate Baptist participation in, and witness to the whole, visible, catholic and evangelical church of Jesus Christ;
- (3) To strengthen the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces and to encourage it to strive for the above;
- (4) To provide a forum for the discussion of doctrinal and ethical questions and social problems and policies in that spirit of tolerance and mutual respect which issues from Christian love;
- (5) To publish, at regular intervals, a Bulletin which seeks to further these aims and which describes the activities of the Fellowship and announces the agenda for its general meetings which will be held in the spring and in the autumn of each year.

FRIENDS undertake:

- (1) To pray for the life and work of the Convention and the Fellowship;
- (2) To seek other committed Christians to join the Fellowship;
- (3) To become better informed about current ethical and theological issues;
- (4) To pay an annual subscription, minimum \$10.00;
- (5) To respond, as circumstances permit, to requests for financial support.

Please cut off along this line and mail to:

**Dr. Dorothy M. Lovesey:**  
P.O. Box 68, Wolfville,  
N.S. B0P 1X0  
Tel: 902-542-5264

Please enrol me as a FRIEND:

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