

ABF Fall Assembly



October 25th 26th

Avonport United Baptist Church

Ministry in a Multi-Faith World: Challenges and Opportunities

Our Guest Speaker for the weekend is **John O'Donnell**, Regional Coordinator for L'Arche in Atlantic Canada. L'Arche is an international, multi-faith network of communities for people with developmental disabilities, founded by Jean Vanier in 1964. John also works as an army reserve chaplain and as such was intimately involved in ministering to the families of the 1998 crash of Swissair Flight 111. He was subsequently invited by the N. S. Government to coordinate the religious dimension of the memorial services and burials that took place on the first anniversary of the crash. The Halifax Interfaith Council grew out of the contacts made during and after this tragic event. John presently lives in Dartmouth with his wife, Nancy, and two children, Bridget and Kathryn.

Friday, October 25th

6:30 p.m. Registration
7:00 p.m. Session 1 — Interfaith Ministry - Swiss Air Flight 111
8:00 p.m. Question and Answer Period
8:30 p.m. Communion - led by Rev. Gail Whalen-Dunn, Avonport , N.S.

Saturday, October 26th

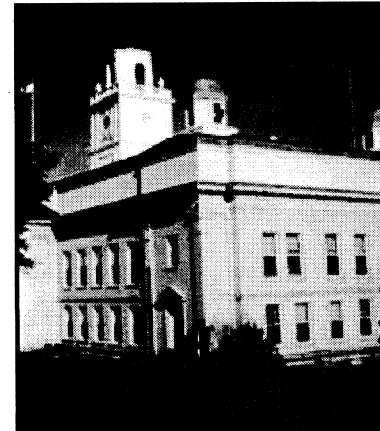
9:00 a.m. Business Meeting
9:45 a.m. Devotional — Rev. Jeffrey White, Windsor UBC
10:00 a.m. Session 2 — Interfaith Ministry - L'Arche
11:00 a.m. Discussion
12:30 p.m. Closing Lunch

A Quarterly Publication of the

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

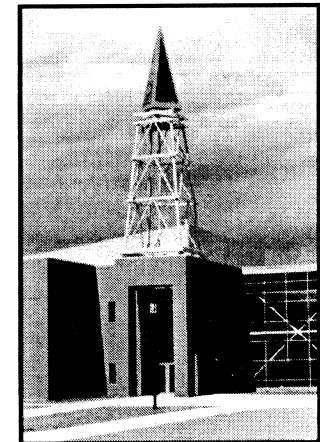
THE Bulletin

the *SUMMER OF 2002*



Acadia University's University Hall, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, was the site of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America's Peace Camp from July 22nd to 27th. (See pages 6 and 7 for a full report)

The Atlantic Baptist University in Moncton, New Brunswick was the meeting place for the annual gathering of delegates from the United Baptist Churches throughout Atlantic Canada. (See story on pages 9 and 10.)



Fall 2002

From the President

John E. Boyd

As I write this article I am wondering where the last few months have gone since we gathered in Chester for the Spring Assembly of the ABF. That was a wonderful event with excellent presentations by Dr. Henry Friesen and Dr. Ian Wilks and a very pertinent devotional by Rev. Dr. Tom Harvey. We were given much to reflect upon during the "lazy days of summer!"

I would like to report on one of the motions adopted in Chester; namely, to ask Convention Council to postpone for one year the vote on joining the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. This request was placed on the agenda of Council's Wednesday session during the week of Convention. After discussion the decision was made to continue on their original timetable.

Subsequently, the issue was brought forward on the Friday morning of Convention and I presented a motion asking that it be referred to Council for another year during which time the Associations and Churches would be provided with opportunities to fully consider the implications of joining the EFC. Although many voices echoed our concern over the lack of opportunity to fully consider the proposal, in the end the Assembly voted to deal with it immediately. (Several unconvincing reasons were given for urgency, the most ridiculous being that Baptist clergy were going to be sent to jail for refusing to do same-sex marriages - apparently joining the EFC would prevent that!)

During the debate I raised the troubling issue of EFC's requirement that their creed be signed as a condition of membership. This seemed to hit home and following the lunch break Vice President Malcolm Card announced that the Executive had met and decided that the Convention would not sign the creed but submit the actual motion to be adopted by the Assembly. The Motion indicated that not all Atlantic Baptists would agree with the EFC statement of faith, but that the majority would. After this announcement the vote was overwhelmingly in favour of joining the EFC. (In a recent conversation with the Executive Minister I learned that it is now Executive's plan to apply for membership in the EFC by substituting the *1905-06 Basis of Union* for the EFC's statement of faith.)

In reflecting on the outcome of this hurried debate and decision I would make the following observations:

1. It is clear to me that Council had not sufficiently considered all the implications of joining the EFC, including the use of a statement of faith as a test for participation. Information distributed by Council to Churches in May and to delegates at Convention stated that the EFC creed would have to be signed. It was only during debate that the Executive looked for another alternative and it was after the Assembly was over that the use of the Basis of Union was decided. All of this could have been given greater consideration and an even better proposal brought forward if our request for a one year wait had been approved. Still, the intervention of the ABF, First Baptist Church Halifax and others did affect the outcome overall.

2. Some of the discussion during the debate was homophobic and fear mongering. Although this was not the official position of Council, there was certainly a strong sub-text to the discussion that used the current national debate on same-sex marriages to increase the sense of urgency for joining the EFC. We will have to be vigilant as to the public pronouncements of the EFC on social and ethical issues now that Atlantic Baptists will be included as supporters.

3. Debate at Assembly, where issues must be discussed in three minute sound bites within a 45 minute overall time limit, is not the best way to make decisions on complicated or controversial matters. We need leadership from our Council on alternate ways to do this important work.

Inspiration from Jeffrey White

Jeffrey White

This summer, at the same time I attended the Baptist Peace Camp in Wolfville, my Roman Catholic, lay-preacher brother attended a much larger event in Toronto: World Youth Day. I did not watch much television that week (as every week), or read the paper or hear much on radio, but it did seem to me that the event got good media coverage, and by this I mean it was positive reporting. John Paul II and the thousands who met with him in Toronto were, for the most part, presented in a good light. But leading up to this visit certain negative comments about the Pope led me to look to him and find inspiration.

I heard from a neighbour, and various other sources, comments to this effect: 'The Pope is in terrible shape, he should retire and let someone else take over!' Yet for so many people who gathered in Toronto, youth, in fact, he was an inspiring figure, young at heart, and their spiritual leader!

This raised for me the question of the spiritual value of leaders in their decline, and of anyone in general who is disabled in some way. What do we actually believe about the human spirit, and a person's standing with God and with us when they are physically incapacitated or failing mentally? It seems to me that for many Catholics, the Pope is their spiritual leader no matter how capable he is or will be in the future to carry out his leadership duties. Is it not possible for others in the Church hierarchy to carry on the necessary work if he becomes unable to serve, and also have him remain as the beloved Pope?

It occurs to me that a person's value in this life is timeless, thanks to our Creator. When I visit people in nursing homes who are extremely incapacitated, few people would tell me not to bother, there is nothing left. And when such a loved one dies, the family and friends must bid farewell to the whole person they have known throughout their life, even when their personality or communication skills have been all but destroyed already by disease.

My first experiences of visiting in nursing homes was about 14 years ago when I went off to university and boarded at the home of Dr. M. R. Cherry. I remember well traveling with him on several occasions to Windsor, to visit people in the Elms such as Dr. I. Judson Levy. At that point in Dr. Levy's life, he was in terrible shape physically and mentally, and could barely communicate. Yet, through my years at university, some of the people who best knew Dr. Levy influenced me, and thus I in turn have been inspired by this pastor, chaplain and former *Bulletin* editor. But I never once was able even to have a conversation with him.

There is something in human life God has given us that is eternal. No matter how we change, we are the sum of our living, and more. It seems to me that if Jud Levy can influence me positively, John Paul II can influence many for God too, to the end of his days and beyond. And so can all of us, in Christ.

For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. (1 Corinthians 4:17-18).

To assist those attending the **ABF Fall Assembly on October 25th and 26th**, listed below, for your convenience, are some of the accommodations available in the Avonport and surrounding area. We look forward to seeing you at the Avonport United Baptist Church.

Evangeline Inn & Motel
11668 Highway 1, Grand Pre
(902) 542-1703
fax (902) 542-0757
www.evangeline.ns.ca

Grand Pre House B&B
273 Old Post Road, Grand Pre
(902) 542-4277
e-mail: grandprehouse@yahoo.ca

Old Orchard Inn
153 Greenwich Road,
Highway 101 Exit 11,
(902) 542-5751
fax: (902) 542-2276
www.oldorchardinn.ns.ca

Olde Lantern Inn
11575 Highway 1, Grand Pre
(902) 542-1389
e-mail:
olde_lantern._inn@yahoo.com

Blomidon Inn
i95 Main Street, Wolfville
(902) 542-2291
1-800-565-2291
fax: (902) 542-7461
www.blomidon.ns.ca

Blue Shutters B&B
7 Blomidon Terrace, Wolfville
(902) 542-3363
www.bbcanada.com/blueshutters

Garden House B&B
220 Main Street, Wolfville
(902) 542-1703
www.gardenhouse.ca

Gingerbread House B&B
8 Robie Tufts Drive, Wolfville
(902) 542-1458
1-888-542-1458
fax: (902) 542-4718
www.gingerbreadhouse.ca

Harwood House B&B
33 Highland Avenue, Wolfville
(902) 542-5707
1-887-897-0156
www.harwoodhouse.com

In Wolfville B&B
56 Main Street, Wolfville
(902) 542-0400
1-888-542-0400
fax: (902) 690-2826
www.inwolfville.ns.ca

Roselawn Lodging
32 Main Street, Wolfville
(902) 542-3420
fax: 902) 542-0576
www.valleyweb.com/roselawn

Tattingstone Inn
620 Main Street, Wolfville
(902) 542-7696
1-800-565-7696
fax: (902) 542-4427
www.tattingstone.ns.ca

Victoria's Historic Inn
600 Main Street, Wolfville
(902) 542-5744
1-800-542-5744
fax: (902) 542-7794
www.valleyweb.com/victoriasinn

Editorial Comment . . . God and Government

Recently, in one of our provincial legislatures, there was discussion whether the Lord's Prayer should begin their sessions. It was pointed out that Members had a choice of entering either before or after the prayer. In the year of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, this might remind us that the service of God is a focus for civil government.

Some Baptists will respond that we believe in 'separation of church and state,' and surely we do. This does not mean that we believe that the state should be godless, without being conscious of religious obligations, as each citizen, we would hope, would be. Laws should reflect the best of religious teaching and standards.

Forty-nine years is a long time to remember the details of a coronation - many today were not even alive in 1953 - but the most sacred moment (which was purposely not telecast because of this sacredness) was the anointing of the Monarch. She also received a Bible and sceptre to remind her of God's teaching and justice. She received Holy Communion to remind her of her fellowship in the Church. The coronation as a whole is a Christian service of worship. What does this mean to us?

In this Jubilee Year of her accession to the throne, we might renew *our* vows to ensure, by our voting and service, that our country will be consciously governed by the standards we believe to be Godly. Certainly we are aware that many in our nation have other faith expressions, and it is a challenge to keep a spiritual integrity when governing under these conditions. But it is a good challenge to discover what unites these faith expressions for the benefit of our dominion.

Last September it was a terrible mistake for the government not to have any spiritual content at the memorial service on Parliament Hill. That might have been the nadir of our government's failure to include society's need for spiritual expression. May we learn from these things. May our celebration of our Queen's Jubilee encourage us to pray with faith and longing, 'God save the Queen!'

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship



within
Convention

ABF BULLETIN

The **ABF Bulletin** is published quarterly by the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. Submissions: Articles must be less than 500 words in length.

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Deadline for Article Submission for Winter Issue, November 1, 2002

BPFNA PEACE CAMP 2002
 Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia
 Jeffrey White

You Know You're at Peace Camp When...
 Everyone around you wears a t-shirt, and the t-shirts say:

Let's Peace it Together
Help Stop Terrorism: Close the School of the Americas
United Nations, Geneva
A Certain Amount of Light: Faces of Cuba
Disarming the Heart – The Gospel of Nonviolence
Real Men Marry Preachers

It was a marvelous, fun and new experience for me to attend Peace Camp this past July. Over the years I have heard about the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America through the ABF, but there is nothing like meeting up with a large quantity of these Baptist peace makers face to face! The event was like the gathering of a close family, who cherish each other and the work they have in common; and yet they strove to be welcoming to newcomers. It was definitely camp, more so than a conference; very relaxed and informal (I arrived the first evening in shirt and tie – oops!). It was a thoroughly intergenerational event: every age and stage of life took part, from the joyful toddler who was blessed, to the 'raging granny' who inspired us with the telling of her life's work. It was fun, but only in part. The seriousness of this business of peace in our world was evident. As these (we?) peacemakers proclaim: 'Peace, like War, is Waged.'

The week began with a welcoming gathering on Monday evening. Our musical leader, Michael Hawn, challenged us with worship music from around the globe, as we literally tried to take up our theme: '...to Sing among the Peoples.' (Psalm 57:9) The music grew on me as the week progressed. Each day a new language, new tunes, new actions, new dancing! Again, I say: it was a camp, not a conference. The music often beautifully expressed and evoked the laments and the praises that grow out of the laments we shared. From the depths we cried out with these lyrics of Shirley Erena Murray:

*God Weeps at love withheld,
 at strength misused,
 at children's innocence abused,
 and till we change the way we love,
 God weeps.*

But we also lifted up our hearts, singing John Thornburg's beautiful hymn:

God the sculptor of the mountains,
 God the miller of the sand,
 God the jeweler of the heavens,
 God the potter of the land:
 You are womb of all creation,
 We are formless: shape us now.

With Tuesday morning and our first full day, our Bible study leader, Jerene Broadway, began a series of scripture studies that spoke clearly to 'the camp.' Our praises come out of lamentation; our cries of despair open up to the light and hope of God. As the studies progressed, they dovetailed beautifully with Barry Morrison's preaching each evening. The challenges and importance of these sessions impressed upon me this thought: is the Gospel that is often 'preached' on Sundays in our churches (by people like me) not big enough? Decades ago, J. B. Phillips suggested: 'Your God is Too Small.' Should we wonder if our

Gospel too small? Does God's Good News not speak to ethnic cleaning, First Nations justice, politics, economics, sexuality, ecology? How often we relegate the Gospel to 'soul-saving,' forgetting a soul, in the broadest sense of the word, is the whole person: body, mind and spirit. Does our God have Good News for every story in the newspaper and for every situation on our own street?

Dealing with these great and terrible issues in our world is what the BPFNA seems to be about, and the Peace Camp expressed this well. There was not even a business meeting within all the week's events... how refreshing! Instead it was a time of bringing to God and to each other the day to day business that was being done: telling stories, crying out for help, celebrating the peace and justice that amazingly breaks through into life.

Peace Camp is a time of learning. It is a cliché, but I know I learned above all else that I have much more to learn about peace and justice. It is mind boggling to hear about the Gleaners Project, the annual demonstration against the School of the Americas, Nagaland, the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Seeds of Hope, and so on... More important than the sketchy information I retained in my mind about such groups and projects as these were the people I met. Baptists from the US and across Canada who encouraged us by being here in Nova Scotia in a time and place that was named 'peace.' The conversations with new friends that happened between scheduled events are remembered long after the message of a sermon or workshop sinks in. The relationships among friends new and old who are Baptists and who are interested in peace was the life of the whole event. It is always invigorating to find yourself in the midst of people like you, kindred spirits, and realize anew you are not alone. Such was the joy of this fellowship for five days in Wolfville.

My advice to others is to be in touch with the Baptist Peace Fellowship, even be a member. Their resources and their connections with other groups are varied and numerous. And the gathering called Peace Camp was a valuable way to get to know the BPFNA. Why not join them in Keuka Park, NY next July?



Woodstock Friends from
 the Gathering in Ontario



Carol Anne Janzen (Edmonton)
 and **Roger Cann** (Wolfville)



Dorothy and Mitchell Thomson,
 Halifax ABF'ers

Singing From the Same Hymnbook

Roger Prentice

The phrase, 'singing from the same hymnbook,' is used to connote unity of purpose and action. Unfortunately, this can be less and less applied to Canadian Baptist Churches. More and more are singing from different hymnbooks.

Many older Baptists might remember with affection the old *Hymnary*, which was an edition of the United Church of Canada hymnbook, published for the Canadian Baptists in 1936. This was succeeded in 1973 by *The Hymnal* produced by the Baptist Federation of Canada. Many of our churches have used this latter hymnal, but they are now almost 30 years old, wearing out, and missing hymns that have been written since its publication.

There have been several attempts by Canadian Baptist authorities to either revise the 1973 book or to produce a new one. They have been unsuccessful. This is a shame.

That a denomination of our size is not able to print and use the same hymnbook is surprising and disappointing. It might be a sign of the demise of the 1944 dream of a united Canadian Baptist witness. There are several reasons for this.

Music is one of the most important elements of liturgy these days. It is used for a variety of reasons, some good and some bad. It is an excellent method of offering prayer and acts of commitment to God in worship. It is a great way to tell the Christian Story and to reaffirm our faith. In worship, these are valid activities when offered as our best expression to God. Unfortunately, music can also be used as an attraction, an entertainment, or a mindless mantra. Because most clergy and organists are not specifically trained in church music, it is inevitable that some of the bad uses have crept into many worship services. Differing purposes have meant that music used in churches can be diverse.

Many churches have gone through the divisive introduction of 'worship songs,' mainly under the guide of 'attracting the young people.' It may very well attract young people who are undeveloped in their appreciation of what is good music, but what does it do for them, and the church? Some pieces are mantra-like in repetition of words and scripture verses, falling into the trap of 'vain repetition' which our Baptist pioneers detested so much. Much worship music this becomes human-centred in subject and/or purpose rather than God-centred.

The above situation means that the canon of music sung in our churches, always diverse, is becoming varied in the extreme. The days when Baptist churches used many of the same hymns in worship are slipping away. This is a pity in a time when people are far more mobile than previously. Moving to another town or city, it is good to find something familiar. This was often the church, but is less likely now. How good it was to sing from the same hymnbook, if not necessarily the same hymns!

Canadian Baptists are becoming more Evangelical Consumer-like in their attitudes. Congregations are often unaware that they are now using American Evangelical church school curriculum, American Evangelical hymnbooks, and hearing American Evangelical theological opinion. If your church is not using the 1973 *Hymnal* check where the present hymn book is published; it is almost assuredly an American Evangelical book. If the congregation is preparing to retire *The Hymnal*, check to see what the committee, charged with replacing it, is examining. Personally, I would like to see a revision of the 1973 *Hymnal*. There are many wonderful and familiar hymns in its selection. There could be up to 40 or so hymns that no church uses that might be easily removed and new hymns inserted. There are many new and worthy hymns written during the past

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30 years, and some by Canadian Baptists. It would protect and enlarge the Canadian canon of hymns that are missing from hymnals published in other countries. Canadian Baptist scholars could improve the resources for worship by including a special translation of the Psalms suitable for responsive reading. Musical experts in Canadian universities like Acadia might volunteer to help with the editing and production. It would be worth the investment for Canadian Baptist unity, Canadian social presence, and witness. It would be wonderful if Canadian Baptists could 'sing from the same hymn book' once again.

Convention of Atlantic Baptists

Assembly 2002, August 21 - 24, Atlantic Baptist University

Timothy McFarland

The Convention assembly took place at the Atlantic Baptist University this past August. Over a thousand representatives and observers were in attendance. On the Wednesday evening opening, Sterling Gosman spoke and provided good insight on his time as president of Convention. Participating on a number of occasions was also his daughter Measha, a trained professional opera singer. She delivered testimonials of her faith both in spoken word and song. Other speakers included Dr. Allison Trites and Dr. Lois Mitchell. The themes in their messages centered on the need to adopt pragmatic changes with respect to the work of Christian ministry and social action in our world today.

Events which surrounded the assembly proceedings were numerous. The Acadia Divinity College Alumnae held a luncheon where the gathered honoured the Rev. Hedley Hopkins with an award marking his distinguished service over many years as missionary and minister. Candidates for ordination were presented to the assembly as well. All ordinands this year were passed by the examination council. Notable also was the youth event rally that took place on Friday night. Part of the youth ministry program entitled; Tidal Impact, over 1100 youth along with many adults were present at the rally which was held in the Moncton forum. The music and worship style was of a contemporary nature.

The assembly meetings were well attended if a bit crowded in the university gymnasium. A highlight during those meetings was the selection of the new vice-president. Candidates for this position were; the Rev. Dr. Ida Armstrong-Whitehouse, the Rev. Dr. Frank Guinta, the Rev. John Beers, the Rev. Lionel Moriah and the Rev. Byron Fenwick. Rev. Moriah was elected as the new vice-president. Incoming president of Convention is Dr. Malcolm Card of Woodstock.

The central topic of discussion in the assembly meetings this year had to do with a council motion for the Convention to join the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. There was a large amount of promotion for this resolution. On Thursday a representative from the EFC was present on stage to answer any questions during a time of discussion. Council members were also present to do so. Noticeable by its absence however, was any hint of information concerning Baptist distinctives, in particular those dealing with non-creedal sensitivities and the autonomy of the local church. The debate on the this motion was held the following day. A motion to defer this for one year, put forth by our president, the Rev. John Boyd. Rev. Boyd, along with First Baptist Church diaconate chair, Mr. Jim Stanley, were excellent in providing reasons for the motion to join the EFC to be deliberated on with more time than merely a few months. The council had earlier denied two requests made, one from the ABF and one from First Baptist Church Halifax, that the motion be deferred for one year. It was felt by many that the local churches and associations needed time to discuss this at many levels.

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One major question was whether or not Baptists, historically and theologically a non-creedal denomination, would be required to sign the EFC statement of faith. Arguments for voting on the motion, however, carried the day by insisting on a need for urgency to join with other churches in Canada in order to raise voice to current topics of national concern. The motion to defer was defeated.

Subsequently, after much debate on the original motion, and with some changes initiated by council, the assembly voted to join the EFC. The Rev. Terry Tingley had the last word in the debate with words of commitment on the vital importance on being a non-creedal people.

Another motion put forth was one from Grace Memorial United Baptist Church in Fredericton. Their motion was for the Convention to endorse a very specific definition of marriage with respect to same-sex and mixed-gender unions. Their motion wanted the definition of marriage to be defined in terms of mixed-gender unions only. This motion was carried.

The assembly this year was characterized by both positive and negative elements. On the positive side there was much interaction with those of opposing views who still feel a common ministry within the Atlantic provinces. On the negative side there seems also to be a growing intolerance, on the part of many, for expressions of faith and interpretation that are diverse within the Baptist family. While this type of sentiment is not in the majority it is on the rise. Next year's convention will be held in Wolfville at Acadia University.



Jim Stanley, Chair of the Diaconate,
First Baptist Church Halifax.

Atlantic Baptist Convention Delegates



Terry and Lois Tingley
Bayside United Baptist Church.

Assembly 2002
Moncton, N.B.
August 21st-24th

I Couldn't Agree More! M.R.B.Lovesey

We have all, I am sure, had the pleasant experience of being delighted with a letter published in the Letters-to-the-Editor column of the local newspaper, which drew from us the immediate response: "That was a great letter, I could not agree with it more!" Such an experience came to me on June 25 of this year, 2002, evoked from a letter in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald, written by someone I do not know but whom I guess to be a member of the health professions and connected in some way with the Anglican community.

The correspondent was stung to write his letter by hearing of the adverse reaction given by some to the recent decision of the Anglican Church in New Westminster, B.C., to bless same-sex unions. This act, he feels, is in harmony with all that medical science has been saying about homosexuality for over thirty years. We might recall that as far back as the early 1970s medical science removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. Opinion on these matters must be given primarily to the medical scientists and not left to biblicists (quoting proof-texts such as Romans 1, et al) alone. Our correspondent closes his letter with the admirable suggestion that all of us would benefit from a good dose of the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral." I could not agree more!

The letter inspired me to re-read Donald A.D.Horsen's admirable book, published by the Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1990, entitled The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology. Dr. Horsen is an American Methodist Scholar, an expert in the life and writings of John Wesley. The book received the blessing of Clark H. Pinnock of the McMaster Divinity College, Donald G. Bloesch and Kevin J. Vanhoozer. Vanhoozer, of Edinburgh University, wrote: "Wesley's re-interpretation of sola scriptura to mean that the Bible is the "primary" rather than the "exclusive" authority for theology is precisely what contemporary evangelicalism needs to hear and appropriate." I couldn't agree more!

The basic question we all have to face as we build our own personal systematic theologies (something we all have to do whatever our age and educational level -- it's an unending job). The Wesleyan Quadrilateral (a phrase not used by Wesley we might say in passing) suggests that the rope of authority in religious matters is made up of four strands, not just one. Many parts of the Church make the mistake -- of saying there is only one. The Christian theologian should start with scripture (Bible), then move on to the exegesis of scripture given by the doctors of the Church (Orleans Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, the 16th century Reformers Luther and Calvin, John Wesley). This second strand can be called briefly Tradition or Church. Then thanks to the Enlightenment comes the third element, Reason (Science). The fourth strand is Experience, subjective religious experience, the validity of which is not to be denied. All four strands in the rope of religious authority must be given proper respect, their authority recognised.

Baptists in the Atlantic area are currently being exhorted to join the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada which would require signing the Fellowship's Statement of Faith, which seems to many of us as a fundamentalist creed. Baptists have always written Confessions of Faith but have never required agreement with creeds. The statement of the EFC makes the error of sola scriptura, for the very first of its seven articles states that the Bible is "the only supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct." This is a refusal to listen to science, biblical criticism, and indeed to all modern culture. I couldn't agree more with my letter-writer that we would all benefit from a good, strong dose of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral!

The Search for the Best

John Churchill

I once was a member of a Pulpit Committee that spent a year trying to find the perfect minister. At considerable expense, the ideal candidate was hired, moved and inducted. It was not long after that members of the church wondered if we had made a mistake. I learned two lessons from this: first, search processes are flawed and second, there is no perfect candidate. I have carried these two maxims into subsequent search committee experiences.

For the last nine months I have been the chair of our church's ten-member pulpit committee. The task has taken longer than any of us expected and at several points we have wondered if we have lost our way. I have learned several new things from this experience.

First, it is important to have one's theology clear. Fortunately, our committee has resisted the idea that God has designated a specific person for us and that if we petition relentlessly and correctly, that name will be revealed to us. This view perpetuates the myth that there is a perfect person. It also induces frustration with a God who sets up a guessing game and who could, if he desired, quickly reveal the name and save the committee time and torment. Prayer is critical and foundational to the work of the committee. However, as in many other experiences of faith, we have found that God is in the journey and His enabling spirit of discernment, patience, and humility must be sought to equip members for the task and to centre them on the goal of being Christ's body in this place.

Second, my understanding of a "call" has been enriched. It is difficult to believe that God directs potential candidates to apply or listens to the petitions of those who would like a call to a certain church – even more than one at a time! As candidates with whom we have held conversations have reminded us, the critical factors are not the condition of the parsonage, the beauty of the community, or the proximity to amenities, but the church's vision of its ministry. It is puzzling that those "led" to apply, do so without knowing the church's vision or values and if there is a match. Both parties must hear the call.

Third, the process requires skill to manage. In our first meeting we laid out our guidelines. A key one was that we would proceed by consensus. This means that we talk issues through until we agree, thus, avoiding the taking of votes and the danger of leaving the "minority" behind. In our first meeting we also specified the values that define our church (affirmation of the complete role of women in the ministry of the church, ecumenical, open membership, support of convention, affiliation with the ABF, etc.). This has been a critical screen in assessing candidates. Of vital importance is the defining of where we are as a church and our vision of ministry. Fortunately, our church had begun a "discovery" process and its findings have been invaluable in defining our leadership needs and in presenting our "story" to candidates. It is difficult to form a consensus amongst members who represent a variety of preferences and theologies. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges for a committee and requires that members be open and tolerant and keep in mind that they represent the church and not themselves.

Fourth, information is vital and problematic. We began by forming a "long list" of potential candidates who we thought might match our values and needs. This was pared down to a "short list" of people we wanted to interview. But to proceed in this direction information is needed. The critical question is: where does a pulpit committee get good information about candidates? Without "good" information, the committee is left to perceptions, biases, or damning judgements based on hearsay or one person's impressions. Intentional manipulation or unintentional influence is possible if information is not available to all. Perhaps,

our convention needs to adopt a system similar to that used in the Baptist Union of Western Canada where ministers are encouraged to keep an up-dated Profile on record with the convention office. The profile contains a personal biography, education, experience, perceived gifts, and a statement of the person's concept of ministry. These profiles should be made readily available to pulpit committees.

Partially because of a lack of information our committee decided to interview all of our short list. Even though this has not been the custom, we learned that it is becoming more common and more acceptable to candidates. The committee felt that the information resulting from a face-to-face conversation was necessary before we could proceed. All candidates were informed that we were talking to others, and they agreed. The danger that the committee may become entrenched in their preferences after personal conversations must be faced and managed.

Information must also pass freely from the committee to the congregation. Respecting the confidentiality of candidates with whom the committee is in dialogue, the church must be kept fully and regularly informed. Even if there is little new information, the committee should report frequently to the church. In the face of silence, rumours grow. The committee needs the support and understanding of the church, especially if the search takes a long time.

Fifth, it makes sense to have the Deacons Board form the nucleus of the committee. I would not have agreed to this idea prior to beginning the process but it adds important continuity. If the Deacons are part of the needs assessment, requirement specification, candidate consideration, and interviewing process, they have a good idea of the needs of the church, which they should have as Deacons, and they begin the working relationship with the new minister in the interview process.

Our committee looks forward to the day when we are out of work but we also realize that no new minister will be perfect but together we can fulfill all our callings.

Well Done!

The ABF has often found reason to criticize decisions or programs of our Convention. However, we would like to commend Convention Council for setting up a Working Group on Racism as a way to follow-up on the resolution against racism that was passed during Assembly 2000 in Halifax.

The Working Group has been meeting regularly for the last eighteen months and is making progress towards greater understanding of the issues facing us, especially with regard to our long and checkered history with the black community in Nova Scotia.

On September 5-6 the Working Group presented a sensitivity training workshop for Convention Staff - the Executive Minister, Regional Ministers, Area Ministers, the Directors of Finance, Evangelism and Social Witness and the Regional Coordinator for CBM. All but one staff member was able to attend - an excellent response! Presentations were made by Noel Knockwood, a spiritual leader of Nova Scotian aboriginals, Mayann Francis, Executive Director of the N. S. Human Rights Commission, Winnie Benton, a black social worker, and Brian Johnston, a police officer and Pastor of the Zion UBC in Truro.

When Convention Council meets on November 21-23 in Preston the Council itself will receive a half day session on sensitivity training. As well, the Working Group will continue to develop proposals and resources for the journey towards the elimination of racism. Well done!

PORT WILLIAMS: The Rev'd. Hedley Hopkins has retired and has moved to Falmouth where he and his wife Mary have established their retirement home. Dr. Keith Churchill has filled in for six weeks in the summer and on 22 September 2002 the Rev'd. Joao Matwawana will be taking over an indefinite term as Interim Minister.

TRURO: First Baptist Church Truro begin their ministry with the Rev'd. Andrew Crowell this September. 'Andy,' as he is usually called, began his fulltime ministry with that congregation as Associate Minister. Andy will be joined by his wife, Kathleen, after being married in the Manning Memorial Chapel, Acadia University, on Saturday, 17 August 2002.

ACADIA UNIVERSITY: The Chaplain, the Rev'd. Roger Prentice, offered the Prayer of Dedication at the official opening of the Irving Centre at Acadia University on Saturday, 14 September 2002. This magnificent structure also includes botanical gardens, laboratories for environmental science, new housing for a Nova Scotia plant and seed collection, and a 'campus meeting place' where the public might relax.

SYDNEY: The Rev'd. Sheila Smith has begun her ministry at the Sydney United Baptist Church, N. S., having moved there this summer from her former congregations in Milton, N. S. She is also the Vice-President of the ABF. She is succeeding the Rev'd. Andrew Crowell.

MANNING MEMORIAL CHAPEL, Acadia University After 26 years, Prof. Clarence Ledbetter has left the post of University and Chapel Organist, and will be succeeded as University Organist by Mr. Kenneth Hassell. Mr. Hassell is a former student of Prof. Ledbetter, and is well known by the University Community and chapel. The position of Chapel Organist (responsible for the Monday to Friday services) will be held by Prof. Owen Stephens, retired member of the School of Music.

REFUGEES FROM AFGHANISTAN: If a congregation would like to adopt a Muslim family who are refugees from Afghanistan, presently abiding in Pakistan, and seeking asylum in Canada, joining a son who is a landed immigrant in Canada and a student at Acadia University, please contact the University Chaplain, the Rev'd. Roger Prentice.

The **"Isaac Judson Levy Forum Lecture"** by **Dr. Bruce Matthews**, Dean of Arts, Acadia University, has been published by the Acadia Chaplaincy. It is entitled 'On a Theology of Religions.' They are available free from the chapel, and will be available at the Avonport ABF meetings this autumn. There is no charge for the chapel booklet.

Friends of the ABF

Friends of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

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.



To:
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1032 Club Crescent
New Minas, N. S.
B4N 4Z5

Please enroll me as a Friend of ABF

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