

The Spring Assembly of

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

First Baptist Church, Truro
May 30-31, 2003

Theme

WORLD CRISES AND THE CHURCH

Programme

Friday, 30 May

6:30 p.m. Registration and fellowship
7:00 p.m. Opening Devotions
7:30 p.m. Session One:

'Refugees, awareness, and church response'
Dr. Joao Matwawana

8:45 p.m. Coffee and conversation
9:00 p.m. Holy Communion

Saturday, 31 May

9:00 a.m. Opening Devotions
9:15 a.m. Business Session
10:00 a.m. Session Two:

'Hope for Peace and Reconciliation'
Dr. Joao Matwawana

11:00 a.m. Coffee and conversation
11:15 a.m. Session Three: Plenary Session
12:15 p.m. Lunch and closure.

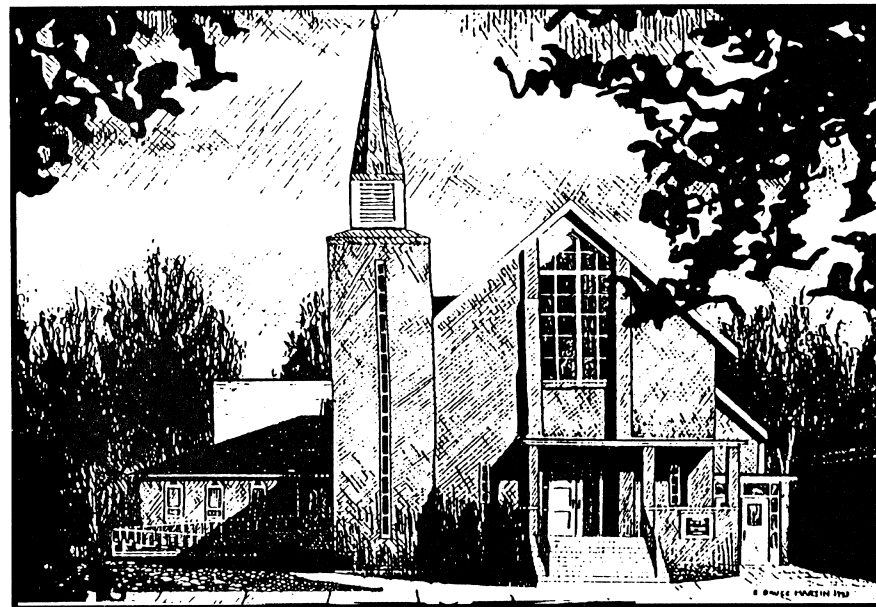
**Come for these important sessions and discussions.
Enjoy the fellowship of fellow Baptists. Leave with a
new sense of mission for our churches in today's world.**

A Quarterly Publication of the

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

the Bulletin

First Baptist Church — Truro



**Will host the Spring Assembly
of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship
May 30-31, 2003**

Theme — WORLD CRISES AND THE CHURCH

Guest Speaker

Reverend Joao Matwawana

Interim Minister of the Port Williams United Baptist Church.

(for programme see back cover)

Spring 2003

From the President

John E. Boyd

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship came into being in the fall of 1971 at a time of controversy and division within our Convention and as a response to decisions that many of us saw as a threat to cherished dimensions of Baptist identity. Of course, others in our Convention applauded the same decisions and saw the ABF as a threat to their cherished understanding of Baptist identity. Some have even suggested that the ABF caused the divisiveness, or at least made sure it did not die. From the beginning, however, the ABF was determined to be a voice within Convention, not against it. In fact, the ABF strove to be a true "fellowship" where different ideas and approaches could be explored in the context of freedom and understanding.

I believe the ABF has contributed to the health of our denomination by providing an opportunity and a vehicle for local churches to reflect on Baptist heritage and identity, to foster ecumenical relationships, to discuss difficult social and ethical issues and to think deeply about the role of the Church in contemporary society. Without this outlet there may have been a more serious division among Atlantic Baptists.

Disagreements over what it means to be Baptist continue to be with us and the ABF can play a positive and proactive role by welcoming all points of view to our meetings and conferences. When we model a fellowship that listens with courtesy, understanding and respect, we are showing what it means to love one another, the mark of Jesus' followers. So, through the pages of this Bulletin I would invite all our readers to join us in First Baptist Church, Truro on 30-31 May 2003 when Rev. Joao Matwawanna will speak to us about Peace and Reconciliation from the context of his exciting ministry in strife-torn Africa. In closing, may I thank all those who worked with me during these last three years as your President, and may we offer our prayers and best wishes for our new President, Rev. Sheila Redden-Smith.



Anglican Communion / Baptist World Alliance Conversations

Rev. Bruce Matthews

In January 2003 I attended meetings between Anglicans and Baptists, first in South America and then in the West Indies. I share some impressions gained on this interesting journey with my Baptists friends and colleagues. I preface these with a brief historical note about how an Anglican-Baptist international forum came about. In September, 1997, representatives of the Baptist World Alliance and the Anglican Communion met at Westminster to discuss ways by which bilateral conversations could be held. Ratified by the proceedings of the 1998 Lambeth gathering of the Anglican Communion's bishops, the conversations between the two denominations began almost at once, with meetings in Europe, in South East Asia, in Africa and, this year, in South America and the Caribbean. And so it was I went to Santiago, Chile, on 21 January as the Anglican co-chair of these ongoing efforts to relate to each other in the spirit of ecumenical fellowship and endorsement. The format of these ventures is for a small so-called 'continuation committee' of each denomination to meet with larger, local committees of Anglicans and Baptists in various parts of the world. My counterpart, the Baptist co-chair, is the Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford University. It is always delightful to work alongside such a fine person as the Rev. Paul Fiddes, and we have partnered in this initiative now for nearly four years. The other Baptist continuation committee members are Rev. Tony Cupit and Rev. Ken Manley, thoughtful and hard-working pastors of Australian origin who have added much to our meetings. The Anglican continuing members, apart from myself, include (for this year only) the retired bishop of Ottawa, John Baycroft, and Rev. Paul Avis, a leading Church of England theologian.

These conversations are not charged with working out a document of unification. Their aim is rather to break down the stereotypes and possible prejudices we have of each other, to encourage our denominations to be theologically self-critical, and to show the many important ways we share in the great Commission of Matthew 28.18: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And remember, I am with you

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always, to the end of the age.' ”

To facilitate this aim, we always begin our proceedings by having the two churches in that part of the world where we are convening tell each other the 'story' by which they live. These are fascinating glimpses into how we perceive our place in the evolution of Christianity, and in the great saga of mission outreach. The aim is to recognize each other as bona fide representatives of Christ's saving message. There has never been any question about endorsing the authenticity or integrity of each other's denominations. That's a given. But this does not shield us from the fact that we have theological differences, some quite sensitive. Two examples might be the Anglican insistence on an order of consecrated bishops, and the reluctance of some Baptists to recognize the efficacy of infant baptism, a situation that may lead to re-baptism of an already baptized convert to the Baptist denomination - something troubling to all Anglican theologians.

Of course , complex layers of one kind or another define both of our denominations, preventing any monolithic definition of either one, with Baptists divided amongst themselves over issues of 'open' and 'closed' church membership, and Anglicans marked by a wide variety of positions on ritual, liturgy and 'churchmanship', however defined.

Both denominations have theological liberals and conservatives, fundamentalists and those more intellectually engaged with the faith. Yet even with these obstacles obscuring the opportunity of fully understanding each other, we consistently discover that our two denominations share almost all of what we consider essential to be a Christian in the modern world, to confess what we commonly call 'an apostolic faith'. In the words of Hector Zavala, Anglican bishop of Chile, "we have had a long walk together".

The many representatives from Guatemala to Argentina, from Colombia to Brazil, had extraordinary stories to tell of common witness in a continent marked over the last few decades by convulsive political and socio-economic turmoil, by corrupt authoritarian governments, widespread violence associated with narcotics, conditions of dehumanizing poverty – seen in the ubiquitous sprawling slums or *poblaciones* that mark every major city – and the reactions of Christians to the conditions: from the Marxist-oriented Liberation Theology of the 1970's, to the loss of

membership in mainline denominations associated with unrelenting inroads more recently made by Pentecostal and neo-charismatic groups.

This latter challenge is paradoxical and troubling to both of us. Who can truly resent any legitimate effort on the part of Christian groups, however maverick and theologically bizarre, if they come to peoples burdened by squalor and hopelessness, offering them some relief from their intolerable conditions, usually with financial resources unavailable to local Anglican dioceses or Baptist conventions? Yet this phenomenon has indeed become problematic, and not just because it is in a sense a competition between older, historic settled denominations with roots in South American societies and well-endowed evangelicals from the U.S. or Europe. The real problem is seeking a common, working agenda with these charismatic movements, most of which will not associate in any way with the venerable (and I might add entirely honorable) majority denomination of the Roman Catholic church, or with the traditional Protestant denominations which have laboured for well over a century to bring the love of Christ to these distant lands.

Perhaps I can draw these few observations to a close on a more positive note. It is important to emphasize that our conversations are greatly appreciated in these societies we visit, in part because it is often the first time the denominations come together in a formal way to discuss their perceptions of each other, to break down misunderstandings that may have accumulated over decades, and to share in worship, including each other's central ritual of the Lord's Supper. To sing, in Spanish of course, 'How great thou art' or 'Amazing Grace', and to sense the wondrous common energy we share, is also to acknowledge the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit among us, and to give thanks for the new ground in ecumenical relations that we are breaking.

For all these things I acknowledge with gratefulness my modest ongoing role in this remarkable dialogue, and ask you to keep in your prayers our Baptist and Anglican sisters and brothers who labour in the Lord's vineyard so far away from us, under the celestial Southern Cross.



A MEDITATION

On John 4 v1-42 and Luke 4 v14-30

Michael Thompson

This piece is based on some of the concepts proposed by Saint Ignatius of Loyola. He may not always be well known to Baptists. However there is no harm in occasionally standing "outside the box". One can sometimes find something of interest and value there. Indeed one of the most dramatic examples of "going outside the box" must be Peter's dream. When as a man with a good Jewish upbringing, he saw all sorts of foods descending from heaven and was told to eat.

Furthermore if one can find something of value in Ignatius' works it does not mean that one has also accept the whole apparatus of the Vatican.

There are many different forms of meditation, but in his book, *"Finding Your Religion: when the faith you grew up with has lost its meaning"*, Rev. Scott McLennan

1) mentions a woman who was being helped in her spiritual life, by Francis, a Jesuit.

Over the next few months, Francis taught Janice more about Ignatian prayer, helping her see how concrete and full of faces it really is. As she has described it to Scott McLennan, "You make free use of your imagination to put yourself right in the midst of the Bible passage upon which you're concentrating. For example, as you read the Gospel story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4: 1-42, you might use all your senses to imagine the noonday sun burning your skin, the sound of Jesus' voice breaking the silence, the sight of sweat-stained clothes and dusty sandals, the smells of sheep and goats in the vicinity, and the taste of cool water from the well."

Recounting the story, Janice continued: "You could also imagine how the Samaritan woman progressively comes to see the face of God in Jesus. First he's just an exhausted foreigner passing through her land. Then he's a man talking to her -- inappropriately to a woman in public and to a non-Jew in asking her to share water with him. She may have thought that his state of exhaustion and thirst had caused him to behave in this way. But he begins to speak of the living water he brings, which is different from the well

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water. The woman takes his words literally and sees him as a purveyor of easily accessible and totally thirst-quenching water. She asks him for some so she won't have to keep coming back to the well every day to draw water. Next, though, he miraculously sees into her life, noting that she has had: five husbands. The woman starts viewing him as a prophet. *Jesus speaks of a new day coming when Jews and Samaritans will worship the one God not in special sacred places but simply 'in spirit and in truth'*. She says that she knows the Messiah is coming, and then all things will come clear. Jesus responds that he *is* the Messiah. After bringing other Samaritans to spend some time with him, she and they come to believe he is 'truly the Savior of the world'."

Luke 4, v 14-30 is a favorite of mine. Very often only verses 14 to 20 are read, but this, I believe, misses the full meaning of the piece.

Jesus was born, lived and died a Jew. These verses take place inside a synagogue located in an place where he had grown up as a boy. They were not uttered on a hill side, but inside the religious setting which would be familiar and important to him.

He enters the synagogue and is handed the book of the prophet Isaiah from which he reads a section. For members of the congregation of a synagogue to read pieces of the scriptures is common practice.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

And everybody is impressed with his reading and the way he has done this.

But then it would seem that he feels this is not enough. That there is something else to be said. Since in verse 24, in my Revised Standard Version, Jesus says, "*Truly, truly I say to you.....etc*" and in v 25, "*But in truth I tell you.....*".

It is very difficult to put oneself in the position of a first century person. However, when I imagine in my mind standing in the corner of that room observing what is going on, it seems to me

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that what Jesus may be implying is two main things, the first is, "You probably won't believe me, but". (ie. "no prophet is accepted in his hometown.") and then shortly afterwards says, "(But) Truly, truly I say to you.....etc" and a little later, "But in truth I tell you.....".

We are told that they had initially all spoken well of Jesus and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. But then what changed their mood and made them enraged with him was when he went on to point out, apparently quite truthfully, that, despite who they claimed to be, particularly in their relationship to God, God's favor had been directed to Zarephath of Sidon and Naaman the Syrian, neither of whom were Jews.

The second message then that comes to me is that Jesus appears to be saying, "Become aware of what is truly going on; what is happening. Get in touch with reality. Don't live in a state of fantasy, while believing it is reality".

God may have entered into a covenant with you, but that is not enough. In addition a covenant is an agreement between two parties not just one. Get in touch with reality.

Does this say anything to Christian churches in the 21st century? Does this say anything to the Baptist Church?

Of course, this is only my own interpretation and understanding. Indeed it is a meditation and not a theological exposition. However, it has been pointed out that each of us is our own "theologian". Therefore a personal interpretation is acceptable provided I do not also insist that others necessarily accept it for themselves.

References:

1. **Finding Your Religion: When the Faith You Grew Up with Has Lost Its Meaning** by Scotty McLennan, Garry Trudeau Oct. 1999 (ISBN: 0060653477)
2. **The Spiritual Exercises** were composed in 1521-48 by St. Ignatius of Loyola, (born 1491, died 1556.), the founder of the Society of Jesus. **The Spiritual Exercises** acts as a guide to help people find and understand God's will. It is a series of meditations, prayers, instructions, etc.

Editorial Comment . . .

Springtime Changes . . .

It is common in Springtime to hear of a number of changes in pastoral relations. It seems the time when ministers and congregations find God speaking to them in terms of new relationships. It is assumed to be a part of God's way to have ministers move from time to time. It brings the heartache of changing relationships, but also the satisfaction of new challenge.

Lately, it has not been unusual to hear of churches 'hiring' a minister, as if that person was a functionary, rather than a pastoral member of the congregation. It is as if it was the congregation who takes the initiative rather than God.

It might be a timely reminder to us all that as Baptists we believe that our relationships in a church congregation depend upon the Holy Spirit. This does not mean we escape the practical nature of these changed relationships, but that the Holy Spirit is the motivator for both minister and church.

A minister is called by God to serve a congregation. We believe that this happens through the thoughtful and prayerful work of both parties.

Ministers are ordained into a pastoral order of the Church. The church tries to discern this through a variety of means: licensing committees to ensure high standards, the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, and the Ordination Council itself.

To call a minister is not like hiring an executive. It is listening to the voice of God through the Holy Spirit. When this happens, then a new relationship can build based on the love of God. This listening sometimes is not perfect, and mistakes happen, but the ideal seems to work most of the time if one reflects over the many happy relationships that do occur over time.

It might be valuable to examine again the meaning, purpose, and biblical foundation of the ordained offices of the church. Solid historical research by competent Baptist scholars needs to be done to save us from sliding into a disrespect for the ministry, and its relationship to the Church as a whole.



A Programme of Civic Education, Peace and Reconciliation in Angola

Joao Matwawana

The Bible tells us in Nehemiah 1: 4-11 that Nehemiah was serving as cupbearer in Susa, the winter residence of Persian kings. He received a visit from his brother, Hanani, who reported that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down. Nehemiah's reaction, in verse 4, shows us where his concerns lay: not in maintaining a good position in the Persian Empire but achieving God's purpose for His holy city.

Twelve years ago Joao had the same experience. After receiving so much bad news from Angola, one day he decided to go back to Angola to help. While he was preparing to tender his resignation at the Halifax Correctional Centre, he learned that he was not welcome back home. How important is timing in all that we seek to do for God. God's timing is always perfect. Ours is not. After 25 years, the same people who called him an enemy were now calling him to return to teach them how to maintain peace and make reconciliation.

The cease-fire signed in April 2002 between the Angolan government and UNITA presents a new opportunity to break the recurring cycles of war, international mediation, and return to the conflict. For the first time, an agreement had been negotiated between the warring parties themselves within a framework where the dominant Government part had demonstrated magnanimity in its victory and a civil society force has emerged as a strong voice for peace and reconciliation. While progress has been made in the months since the cease-fire, the re-integration of ex-combatants along with war-affected IDP's has not gone according to plan. The process is much delayed, increasing the risks of local conflict between demobilized soldiers and local communities. Hundreds of thousands of weapons have gone missing.

The Angolan Council of Churches and other non-government agencies are planning to launch a 'Programme of Civic Education, Peace and Reconciliation.' The project aims to take advantage of the window of opportunity presented by the delay of the government's programme. Joao has been asked to be a part of the team of trainers. This project's goal is to promote post-war reconciliation.

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This will not be an easy task. Angola's decade-long civil war has seriously affected the demographic, social and economic character of the country with serious implications on the response that is required for a return to pre-conflict normalcy. We believe that this programme will help reduce the risk of conflict, as well as support the re-establishment of civilian government administration that can be responsible for safeguarding internal democratic rule of law. It will also support the process of national reconciliation and the socio-economic recovery of the country.

Joao is glad to be able to respond to their call for help. Because the Church plays a central role in forming public opinion in Angola, it is also the only civil social institution that has a national influence. Pray for the lasting peace in Angola.

~ Truro Accommodations List ~

Book early for the ABF Spring Conference May 30th and 31st 2003 in Truro. Another major conference will be held the same week-end as the Truro meetings will be held at First Baptist Church, Truro.

Palliser Motel and Restaurant (Opens 1 May)
Off Exit 14 of the 102
(902) 893-8951 (single: \$55; double \$59)

Stonehouse Motel
165 Willow St.
(902) 893-9413

Tidal Bore Inn
29 Truro Heights
(902) 895-9241

Rainbow Motel
341 Prince St.,
(902) 893-9438

Willowbend Motel
277 Willow St.
(902) 985-5325

Comfort Inn
Truro (\$107 single \$118 double - business rates)

MARY KATHLEEN MILES

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship expresses to the family and friends of Mary K. Miles deep sympathy and prayer as they mourn her death on 28 February 2003. She was a very committed member of the ABF who was active in its organization since the origin in 1971.

Born in Sydney, N. S. to Winston and Gene (Warren) Miles, she was a graduate of Acadia University (BA '68, BEd '69). She taught school in New Minas until she was employed by Acadia in the Admissions and Liaison Offices. Her devotion to the University was a hallmark for the rest of the community. Many will remember her on her trips to high schools to invite students to attend Acadia. She was seen daily taking visitors and prospective students on tours of the campus.

Two of her favourite places on campus were the Manning Memorial Chapel and the KC Irving Environmental Science Centre. It is almost impossible to imagine the chapel without her boundless enthusiasm for its worship and service, and the students who attended. She did many things for the chapel, including baking the communion bread biweekly, supervising the chapel kitchen, and planning the Easter breakfast at the chapel. She was especially delighted with the gift of the Environmental Science Centre and volunteered her time there, as well.

Mary was a member of the Wolfville United Baptist Church. She was a serving Deacon when she passed away. Always concerned for people, and for the ministry of the church, her deep dedication ensured that she was always present and informed about the congregation's activities

In the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, she was on the planning committee, and even for a short time helped to edit this Bulletin. Always present at the conferences, and enthusiastic about its principles, she was a strong supporter of the ABF. Wise, astute, compassionate, and friendly, Mary added to any group with which she was associated. We will miss her greatly and will attempt to honour her by carrying on the projects which she endorsed.

DONNA ISABEL MYERS

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is deeply saddened by the death of Donna Myers, wife of Donald Myers, both long-time members of our organization. Always faithful in attending ABF Conferences, Donna and Don have played a significant role in perpetuating the message of our open Baptist fellowship and principle. She passed away 21 December 2002 in the Queen Elizabeth II Sciences Centre, Halifax.

Born in Saint John, N. B., Donna was a daughter of the late Russell and Minnie Holt. After graduating from Saint John High School and attending Acadia University, she completed her studies in physiotherapy at the University of Toronto in 1947. She worked at the Nova Scotia Rehabilitation Centre and the Grace Maternity Hospital until her retirement in 1991.

Donna was a valued and loyal member of First Baptist Church Halifax for over 50 years. She served on many boards and committees, the Women's Auxiliary, and the Mattie Currie Missionary Society. In civic life, Donna enjoyed volunteer work at the Ward 5 Neighbourhood Centre, and was a member of the Waegwoltic Club and the Mayflower Curling Club.

Surviving in her immediate family are her husband Don, daughters Brenda and Heather, and sons Gordon and Ken. Donna's many friends will mourn her death greatly, and, not the least, those of us in the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. We will miss her wit and energy which she brought to every meeting. We value tremendously her contributions to our discussions and deliberations. We are very grateful for having known Donna and having her in our midst.

One of the great joys of the ABF is the broad range of friendships which we make in this organization, so when someone like Donna passes from us, it is felt deeply. We express our admiration for Donna, and pray for comfort and peace for her family and friends. She was laid to rest following a funeral service at First Baptist Church Halifax on 24 December 2002. The service was conducted by the Rev'ds. John E. Boyd and Timothy McFarland.

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Port Williams United Baptist Church received confirmation that the Rev'd. David Ogilvie will be coming to be their minister, beginning this summer. He is presently the Minister of First Baptist Church, Regina, Saskatchewan. Among special interests in which he is very interested is the local Wolfville Area Inter-Church Council, and the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. The congregation is an active member of both of these organizations.

Wolfville United Baptist Church has received the resignations of both of their ministers, Dr. Das Sydney, and the Rev'd. Craig Hiebert. Dr. Sydney will be leaving after 23 April to assume pastoral leadership in a Baptist Church in Kitchener, Ontario, while Mr. Hiebert left after 1 April to take up positions in the Acadia Divinity College.

The Acadia University Chaplaincy honoured Timothy and Maxine Ashley, and Kelvin and Roleen Ogilvie, at the annual Chaplaincy Banquet in April. The Ashleys are leaving the Acadia Divinity College and will be taking up positions in LaCross, Wisconsin. Timothy will be the minister of First Baptist Church, and Maxine will give leadership in Christian Education to Wisconsin Baptist Churches. Dr. Kelvin Ogilvie is leaving the Presidency of Acadia University and retiring. He has been a faithful supporter of the university chaplaincy and both couples will be missed very much.

Friends of the A B F

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.

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. Opinions and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the ABF or the Editors.

The **BULLETIN** is mailed to interested churches and individuals. Those wishing to receive the **BULLETIN**, and all details of changes of address, etc., are to be sent to the distribution organizer:

Mrs. Isobel Horton, 6 Bay Street, Wolfville, N.S., B4P 1W5

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Dr. John Churchill, P.O. Box 56, Port Williams, N.S., B0P 1T0.

Receipts for income tax purposes will be mailed.

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