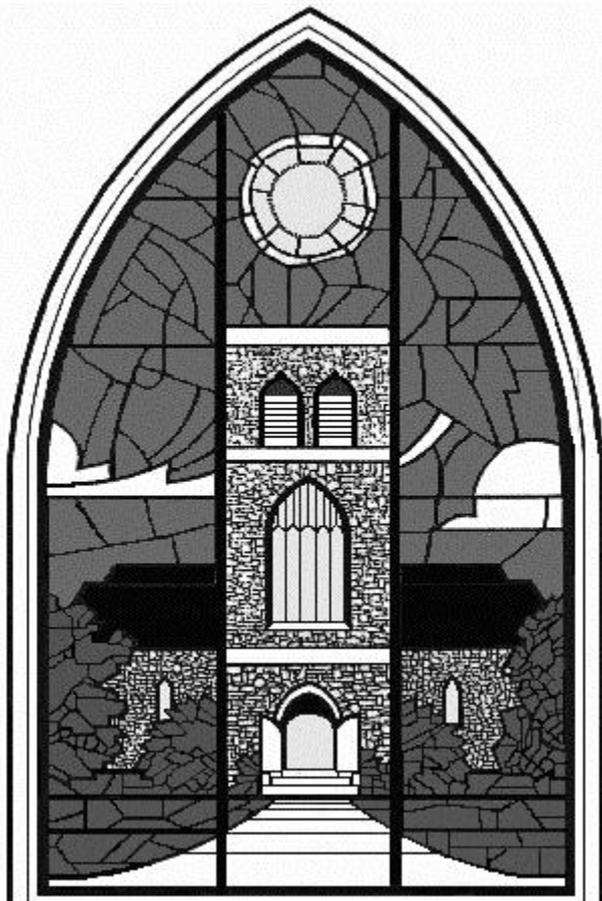


The Bulletin

An Atlantic Baptist Fellowship Publication



First Baptist Church, Halifax
Site of the 40th Anniversary of the ABF

Fall, 2011

From the Editor.....

*“Freedom is Dangerous...
(So control your neighbor as yourself.)”*

Sarah Janisse Brown

In her writing, Sarah Janisse Brown has opened a very sensitive subject when she says *“Is freedom too dangerous for the common people like me? We fear that our neighbors would abuse their liberty if they were free.”*

While she was referring to the growing number of restrictions imposed by local governments, her words struck a resonant chord with me as I struggle with the tightening up of control among Baptists here and in many other locations. It is as if some have reached the conclusion that to give churches and individuals real freedom, we run the risk that they may actually use that freedom in ways which might frighten or threaten.

A case in point: when the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches based its new incorporation by-laws on the similar document which the BCOQ had completed after much study and discussion, the committee preparing the draft for CABC usage carefully removed one key phrase which guaranteed freedom for CABC churches. The message that comes across is that people and churches in the CABC cannot be trusted with the same level of freedom which is enjoyed by Canadian Baptists elsewhere, and it became the duty of the CABC leadership to protect us from ourselves by reversing the wording so that it became more restrictive.

A few weeks ago, a controversy erupted in a Toronto school as reported by Kevin Underhill in *Forbes*. *“Phase one was to limit the children to ‘sponge or other soft balls’ because things like baseballs, soccer balls, footballs, and tennis balls are just too dangerous to be entrusted to children.”*

It is tempting, for those who consider themselves the protectors of the faith (and faithful), to presume the right – even duty – to keep all dangers at bay, even at the cost of removing individual freedom and choice. And, to treat churches like children who might get hurt if they ask the wrong question, or choose a dangerous path. Far better, it seems, to restrict their boundaries, and keep them ‘safe’.

The Apostle Paul faced a strikingly similar quandary with the new converts at Galatia. They were being told that the only ‘safe’ Christianity was within the restrictions of Jewish Law, including circumcision. To try to live outside the full structure of the Law was dangerous – how could they possibly know what to do without the Law to guide their every step, their every breath? Paul’s response was dramatic: *“Christ has set us free! This means we are really free. Now hold on to your freedom and don’t ever become slaves of the Law again.”* Gal 5:1 (C. V.)

We who cherish freedom are not looking for the right to be reckless and thoughtless. We acknowledge that with such freedom comes the awesome responsibility carefully to study the Scriptures, faithfully to pray, and obediently to follow the Spirit’s leading. But we reject any proposition that freedom is too dangerous to be risked, and too precious to be squandered on ordinary people and churches.



[Rev. Dr.] Dan Gibson,
Pastor, Arlington Baptist Church
President, Atlantic Baptist Fellowship
Vice President, Canadian Council of
Churches, 2003-2006
Chair, Communications Committee
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Report on the ABF Fall Assembly September 30 & October 1 2011



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray & Rev. Hedley Hopkins greet each other

Condensed minutes of 2011 Annual General Meeting:

The 2011 Annual General Meeting took place at First Baptist Church Halifax. The meeting was called to order at 1:24 pm with approximately 38 members and several guests attending. After the meeting was opened in prayer by President, Rev. Jeff White, Hedley Hopkins presented a brief history of ABF; what it meant to him to be a long time member of ABF; and how he saw ABF as a safe place where anyone could come and talk about anything, share experiences and discuss issues-of-the-day.

A motion was made to adjourn the Annual General Meeting to a Committee of the Whole in order to review the amendments/recommendations for the proposed constitution.

This was done and the Annual General Meeting resumed in a reasonable time with a list of amendments/recommendation. The majority of these amendments/recommendations were passed unanimously.

Following the discussion and report on amendments and recommendations a number of other motions were made and carried:

- The amended draft of the By-Laws be accepted.
- The Executive Council continue their work to incorporate ABF.

- ABF seek membership in the Canadian Council of Churches.
- The President's Report was accepted.
- The Nomination Report was accepted.

Additional business included:

- Referral for all members to use our new website (www.atlanticbaptistmembership.ca)
- All members were advised they could communicate with the new ABF Council at abf@ns.sympatico.ca; or by going to our website.
- ABF Council would start work on determining a new name for ABF.
- Membership fees were set: Individual membership fee would be \$10 annually and Church Member membership would be an annual donation.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:25 pm.

We are very thankful for the wonderful hospitality provided by the congregation of First Baptist Church, Halifax, who treated us royally. A highlight of the weekend was the Communion Service held in the Sanctuary, with the leadership of FBC officiating.



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, the 18th senior pastor of the historic First Baptist Church in the City of Washington, DC spoke at the evening and morning sessions of the ABF Annual Meeting. His topics were:

1. *Being a Baptist Congregation in a Changing World*
2. *Being a Baptist Leader in a Changing World*

Dr. Haggray used real life examples such as church signs to lead us toward a useful concept of what the church should and must be in the

contemporary world..



Your ABF Executive

Left to right: Rev. Dr. Roger Prentice, Rev. Jeff White, Lee Nicholas-Pattillo, Rev. John Boyd, Dr. John Churchill, Rev. John Tonks, Rev. Dr. Dan Gibson, Rev. Renée Clark

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Treasurer: Open at this time

Past President: Rev. Jeff White
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Committees:

Bulletin: Open at this time

Website Rev. Dr. John Churchill, Webmaster
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Email: roger.prentice@acadiau.ca

Program Committee

Rev. John Boyd, Chair

Telephone #: 902.422.5203

Email: srminister@eastlink.ca

Representation

Alliance of Baptists

Rev. John Boyd

Atlantic Ecumenical Council _____

*Baptist Peace Fellowship
of North America*

Rev. Joao Matwawana

Rev. Dave Ogilvie

Canadian Council of Churches

Rev. Dr. Dan Gibson



**Host Minister:
Rev. John Boyd**



**Retiring President
Rev. Jeff White**



The Lord's Supper in the Sanctuary



Business Sessions

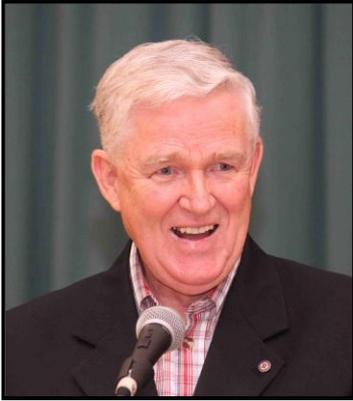


Wonderful music by FBC musicians



**..Devotional speaker
Rev. Dr. Ida Armstrong-
Whitehouse explored
the biblical theme Eagles**

Guest Editorial



Rev. Hedley Hopkins

*(based on his address given at the 40th
Anniversary Celebrations of Atlantic Baptist
Fellowship October 1, 2011)*

If I was to introduce someone to the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, I would say that Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is a safe place for you to think your true thoughts out loud. Forty years ago, when Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was formed, I was in Latin

America. When I came back home, it became my experience over the years that Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is indeed a safe place to share publicly one's innermost thoughts. It is also that space in which you allow others the same privilege.

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him,

*"If you continue in my word, [then] you are truly my disciples;
and [then] you will know the truth,
and [then] the truth will make you free."*

*"As for you, if you hold fast to my teaching, then you are truly my
disciples; and you shall know the truth,
and the truth will make you free." [Weymouth]*

*"If you are faithful to what I have said, you are truly my disciples.
And you will know the truth
and the truth will set you free!" [Phillips]*

*∴, "If you keep on obeying what I have said, you truly are my
disciples. You will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free." [C.E.V.]*

*∴, "If you stand by my teaching, you are truly my disciples,
you will know the truth,
and, the truth will set you free." REB*

These verses are not talking about written truth. They are talking of personal communications - concrete and particular - between the risen Lord and His disciples, His learners. This is dynamic truth revealed to the disciple, or a group of disciples, from

the one who is the Incarnation of Ultimate Truth. Receiving this specific revelation puts one *in the crisis* of obedience.

Such truth challenges our interpretation of Scripture. This should be no surprise to us. Even in Matthew's gospel in the Sermon on the the Mount, Jesus is saying, "*You have heard that it was said, But I say to you ...* " (Matthew 5:38) Here He is reinterpreting the scriptures.

In my last tutorial at Regent's Park College, Oxford, UK, I worked on Luke - Acts with New Testament tutor Larry Kreitzer. In particular the focus was on the encounter between Peter and Cornelius. There we see the Holy Spirit doing away with the ancient Jewish food taboos and the prohibition of table fellowship with Gentiles. It is a remarkable example of the Spirit trumping the people of God's understanding of their sacred writings.

Paul, in a similar vein, was led to do away with the need for the Mosaic Law and circumcision when he proclaimed salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ alone. (Romans 3:23) This, too, was a huge reinterpretation of scripture. This trumping of scripture by the Spirit of Truth has continued since biblical times.

It wasn't until the mid 19th Century that the Spirit used the poetry of John Greenleaf Whittier to communicate to the Church that slavery, accepted in the Bible, was a heinous crime against one's fellow human beings. The abolition of slavery was another profound reinterpretation of the Bible.

During those times, and building on the work of Galileo and Darwin and other great scientists, the ancient Assyrian world view was rejected and modern science took its place to help us understand the truth about the nature of the universe. Sadly, there are still, in our day, pastors promoting a false breakdown between science and religion. But there is no conflict here. All truth is one. It fits together in an integral whole.

In my Seventies now, I know something of the struggle women have gone through in our denomination to be accepted as worthy as men for any vocation within church or society. So many years later, the Spirit has finally gotten through to us that "*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*" (Galatians 3:28 NRSV) We have been taken beyond gender, and

every human distinction, to oneness in Christ. All human beings are thereby open to any call God in Christ should put upon them.

Now, in this day, the Spirit is busy reinterpreting the place of homosexuals in our midst. He is trumping the people of God's understanding of scripture by showing us that homosexuals are as fully human as all others and that there is a God given way to express homosexuality in permanent and loving relationships (Gen. 1 :31 a).

The truth that Jesus reveals is saving truth. It is dynamic. It is relational. It demands obedience. He promises "*If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*" (NRSV)

What does all this have to say as an introduction to Atlantic Baptist Fellowship? It declares that Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is a safe place to share this way. It says that here one can publicly grapple with today's issues. Here one finds and gives, support to be open and truthful.

Happy 40th Anniversary Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. God bless you!

Update on the Canadian Council of Churches



THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
LE CONSEIL CANADIEN DES ÉGLISES

As decided at the Annual Meeting, a formal application for membership has been made to the Canadian Council of Churches. Our application was received and has been endorsed by their Constitution Committee who presented it as a Notice of Motion to the next meeting of the Governing Board, which will be held in Ottawa during May, 2012.

It is expected that the motion to accept us as members of the CCC will be approved at that time, and your President plans to be there for this historic event.

Check out the CCC at their website:

<http://www.councilofchurches.ca/en/>

You will find lots of interesting news , including the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, as on the following page.....

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 18th to 25th, 2012



The roots of the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* go back to the 1800s; it is one of the oldest, most widely observed ecumenical events in the world. The materials on this website are designed to be of service to you not only during the Week itself, but throughout the year. Let them help you find ways to express the degree of communion already given to the churches, and to pray together that we may be more fully united one with another, and all of us with Christ.

Why This Week

The *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* is held from January 18 to 25. This is the octave proposed by Paul Wattson in 1908, because it begins with the feast of St. Peter and ends with the feast of the conversion of St. Paul. Finding ways to pray together during this January week means that we are in harmony with people around the world, which brings its own graces; in this way, we join with all who are praying, reflecting, studying, and even eating and drinking together to celebrate and pray for Christian unity.

The Canadian Writing Team

The theme and a focus biblical text are prepared by an international Joint Committee of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. National and regional councils of churches work to adapt and add to these resources as appropriate to their local context. The Canadian resources are produced by an ecumenical Writing Team coordinated by The Canadian Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Witness. The team, made up of members from constituent churches of the CCC, meets in February and April to prepare the text and adapt the worship service for Canadian churches for the following year.

Resource Kit

A resource kit, including posters, bulletins, and a formatted order of service, is now available for order directly from the Canadian Council of Churches.

We Need a New Name!

One of the highlights of our Annual Meeting was the unanimous vote to seek incorporation. When the information about incorporation was explained by Gary Nelson, he reported that for various reasons, the name ‘Atlantic Baptist Fellowship’ has already been rejected by the registrar for incorporated names, and that we must find a new name if we intend to incorporate. (We can continue indefinitely with our present name if we don’t seek incorporation).

Having clearly decided that we will incorporate, a new name is essential. Preliminary discussion related to a number of issues which need to be addressed. Do we wish to remain identified as ‘Baptist’? Is our ‘Atlantic’ designation now too small – should we be more regional or even national in scope? Since the word ‘Fellowship’ is problematic to the registrar (as there are already some ‘fellowships of Baptists’, and that could lead to identity confusion), what term would we choose to describe our unique and cherished relationship with each other?

So, we pass the question on to all of you, our members and friends. Please send us your ideas and suggestions for a new name. The name you suggest may just become as significant part of Canadian church history!



**Our legal expert,
Gary Nelson**



**Our dedicated Secretary,
Lee Nicholas-Pattillo**



Small group discussion of the Constitution



Fine food and fine fellowship



*Thanks to David Gibson
for the pictures of the Annual Meeting at FBC Halifax*

ABF Membership

Information required for ABF Membership:

1. This is an application for:

Individual Membership

Church Membership (requires church motion)

2. Individual's name: _____
or

3. Church's name: _____

4. Mailing address for the Individual or for the Church:

5. Contact name for Church membership:

6. Email address for the Individual or for the Church:

7. Telephone # for the Individual or for the Church:

This form can be used for either membership – Individual Membership and Church Membership. It is **important** that churches who were not represented at the 2011 Annual General Meeting (held October 1, 2011) advise that they wish to retain their membership with ABF.

Fees: Individual \$10 annually;
Church: An annual donation

Send your completed membership to

Attention: Rev. David Ogilvie

c/o Port Williams United Baptist Church

P.O. Box 301

Port Williams, Nova Scotia B0P 1T0

Or send your completed membership form [to abf@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:toabf@ns.sympatico.ca)