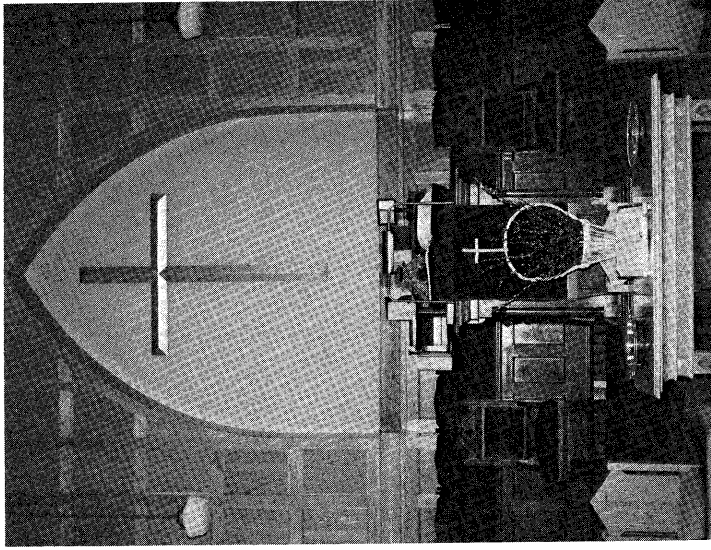


BULLETIN

of

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

October, 1983



United Baptist Church
Port Williams, N.S.

**WHERE THE
ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
WILL MEET**

October 28-29, 1983
(See pages 7, 8)

Editorial Comment

In this issue of the Bulletin, considerable space is taken up in matters relating to our conferences. First, a report on the Spring conference held at Chester, N.S. last June. In many ways, this was a most interesting and profitable conference with a large attendance. An attempt is being made to convey something of the interest and challenge experienced by those who were present. From this, attention is turned to the COMING FALL CONFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE AT PORT WILLIAMS, N.S. OCTOBER 28-29. With the theme: "New Testament Witnessing", this promises to be another stimulating occasion. (For details see pages 7, 8). There will also be a very important business meeting.

Attention is called to two very important ecumenical gatherings that took place this past summer — The Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches, and, nearer at home, the Atlantic Ecumenical Conference held in Wolfville. We have two feature articles, on the WCC Assembly by our representative, Rev. John Boyd, (further notes on the WCC are also given), and a report on the AEC by Dr. Dorothy Lovesey. We extend our thanks to both Mr. Boyd and Dr. Lovesey. Further material on the WCC Assembly will be given in the next bulletin.

As our churches are now launching their programs for a new year of activity, we pray for all God's guidance and strength that His name may be glorified and His will for these difficult days be known and obeyed in all we seek to do.

The next issue of the Bulletin will be in February, 1984.

I. Judson Levy
Editor

A Prayer for All Saints' Day

O God, we give Thee thanks for all the saints who in times past bore the burden of Thy kingdom's work, giving themselves to Thy church without stint or restraint; for apostles and saints of ancient times, whose faithfulness set the great foundations of the church in the swirling tides of history; for all our own forefathers whose courage and piety built here in our town and time a sanctuary for our prayers and worship. Now make us bold that we may prove ourselves to be worthy of them, fulfilling our vows to thee by deeds earnestly done and rejoicing always in Thy presence, where we are strengthened for every task by the grace of our Lord and our fellowship with one another in Him. AMEN

Samuel H. Miller: Prayers For Daily Use.

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While The Bulletin is mailed free of charge, donations to help pay the ever-increasing cost of publication and mailing is gratefully received, and should be mailed to the treasurer: Mrs. Evelyn Smith, 13-A Marilyn Drive, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 3X8. Receipts for income tax purposes, will be mailed.

The ABF Spring Conference Report

The Spring Conference of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was held in the Chester, N.S. Baptist Church on June 17-18, 1983, and was chaired by the president, the Rev. Gordon Gower, with the Rev. Philip Griffin-Allwood as secretary. There were three sessions — Friday evening and Saturday morning and afternoon. At the opening session, following coffee and registration, Dr. Allen Gibson, pastor of the Chester church, extended a welcome to the church.

The theme of the conference was "Contemporary Medical Ethics" — a close examination of some current situations regarding which many people must make some serious decisions. The theme lecturer was Dr. John Thomas of the Philosophy Department, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, who handled the subject with keen insights growing out of much serious study and careful thought, and, at the same time, showing a sincere Christian concern for those people who are called upon to make decisions in these areas. The subject was dealt with in two lectures and discussion periods — on Friday evening, "Ethical Issues Surrounding the Beginning of life", and on Saturday morning, "Ethical Issues Surround in the End of Life". In a brief report it is impossible to give to our readers the full content of these lectures, or to convey to them the impression made on those present and thus privileged to be part of the discussion. We are indebted to Dr. Thomas for the following brief summary given at our request.

Moral Dimensions of Modern Medicine

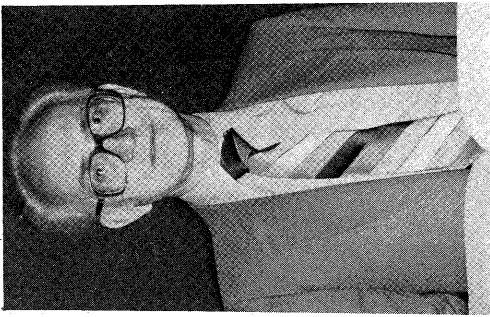
J. E. Thomas

Every day in one of Canada's hospitals a doctor decides that one of his patients has no hope of meaningful life and withholds the medical treatment required to keep patients alive. Candidates for non-treatment include severely defective newborns, accident victims suffering from extensive damage to brain and/or spinal cord, and terminally-ill patients.

Our moral options seldom involved a straightforward choice between right and wrong. More often we have to choose between two goods or rights as when we choose between the woman's right to control her own reproductive processes and the fetus' right to life. Sometimes we are forced to choose between two evils; between continuing existence at a vegetable level and terminating treatment. So often our choices are tragic in the sense that once we have looked at both sides of any of the serious problems posed by advances in modern medicine, we can never again be quite comfortable looking at it from only one viewpoint.

Some of the hardest choices we have to make involve deciding between sanctity of life and quality of life. Severe handicap and debilitating illness not only undermine the quality of life of the sufferer but also of the family responsible for ongoing care.

There was a time when sufferers from severe spina bifida, or extensive brain damage, whether caused by an accident or a stroke, died over a short period of



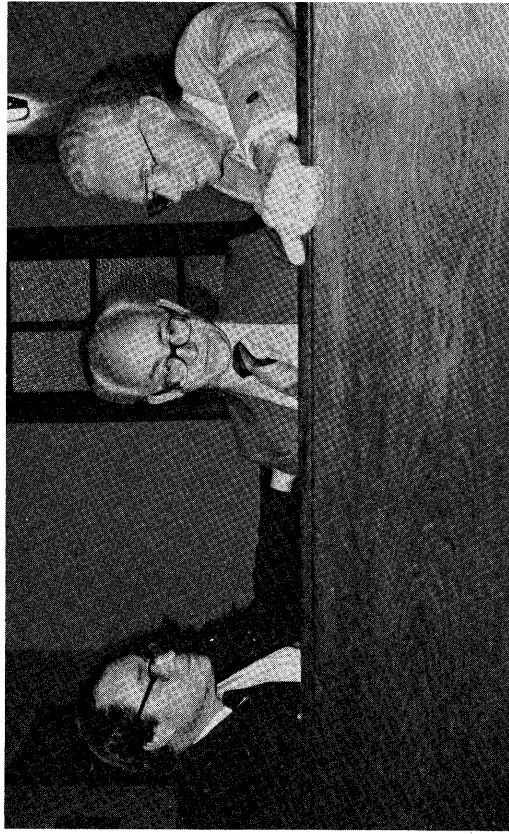
Dr. John Thomas

time. We now have the technical skill to keep such people alive, even though we may not serve their best interests in doing so. Our skills in simulating the physiological processes that underpin life are not matched by skills in restoring the mental and spiritual functioning essential to our humanhood.

As Christians we need to consider whether we should be exceeding energy and resources in sustaining biological life. Does reverence for life demand that we treat life as an absolute value or rather as a precious good to be preserved as a condition for the promotion and development of other values like self-consciousness, the ability to envisage a future for oneself, and the ability to relate to others? May it not be that biological life is a relative good and our duty to preserve it a limited one?

Acceptance of the premise not only has implications for physicians who treat patients but also for those of us who minister to them, whether lay persons or clergy. When we learn a friend or loved one is dying we ask frantically "What can I say?" The next question is likely to be "What can I do?" It is to be hoped that finally we will ask "What can I be to this person?" There's not a lot we can say, little that we can do, but we can be one who will sit at their bedside, hold their hand, and walk with them on their pilgrimage towards death.

Following each of the lectures, there was a response by the reactors — Dr. M. R. Cherry, of the Acadia Divinity College Faculty, who gave a theological response, and Dr. Athol Roberts, a medical doctor from Charlottetown, P.E.I., who gave a response from the medical viewpoint. The insights opened up by these two leaders did much to sharpen up the issues that were then discussed in an open discussion. Again we wish that it were possible to share the real content of these periods with our readers, but unfortunately this cannot be done. It is



Drs. Cherry, Thomas and Roberts

hoped that those who were present have been, and will be, willing and able to share something of this discussion with others in their churches, and wherever this may be possible. All who were present felt that this was a very worthwhile discussion and were enthusiastic and unanimous in expressing their thanks and appreciation to the three leaders.

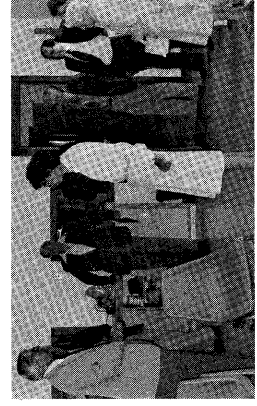


Dr. Gibson and the deacons of the Chester Baptist Church.

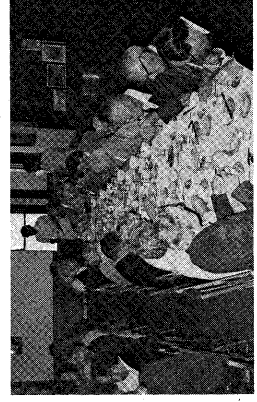
COMMUNION SERVICE — Following the discussion period on Friday evening, a service of Holy Communion was conducted by Rev. Dr. Allen Gibson and the deacons of the Chester Baptist Church. This period of quiet worship has been a very important part of all ABF Conferences, one always anticipated the people who attend as a source of great spiritual uplift. This was no exception.

VISIT TO BONNY LEA FARM — Something different, both interesting and rewarding, was the visit to Bonny Lea Farm, a few miles from Chester, an educational and training centre for young people whom we speak of as handicapped either mentally or physically, or both. We visited this place on Saturday morning as the beginning of the day's activities. Members of the staff took the visitors, in small groups, on a tour of the buildings and facilities. We were very impressed with what we saw and heard. A most worthy work is being done at Bonny Lea in the training of certain people who, as a class, are all too often neglected by our society. This is a place where each is accepted as a person in his or her own right, and each with a potential for service and fellowship in our society. Many of us, I feel confident, were enlightened as to the work that is being done there, and thrilled by the evidence of that which is being accomplished as the work goes on month by month and year by year. This visit was for our conference much more than an entertainment feature, but as a learning and challenging experience. This is but one of the worthwhile things being done in which our churches must become more deeply involved. From now on, the name "Bonny Lea Farm" will be more than a name to us, and as we think of our ABF Spring Conference, we will want to share, as a challenge, with our churches. The Conference voted a small amount of money to help support this — a token only because of our limited resources, but, even more, a symbol of a deeper interest, and, we hope, of more support from our churches.

Following the morning session, the conference enjoyed a chowder luncheon



At Bonny Lea Farm



At the Noon Luncheon

prepared and served by the ladies of the Chester church. This was a delightful experience, both for what was set before us, and for the opportunity for pleasant and meaningful fellowship. Our thanks, expressed then, and now heartily repeated, to the Chester ladies for their gracious hospitality.

THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship took place on Saturday afternoon, and was the closing session of the conference.

The report of the treasurer was given by Mrs. Evelyn Smith. Most of the report was as given in the interim report, and printed in the last bulletin (See May Bulletin, page 7). Some additional figures were given noting transactions that had taken place during the month of April. An additional interim report was given for the period ending June 17. The treasurer was able to report all bills paid with a cash balance. A proposed budget for the year 1983-84 was presented by the treasurer, and accepted by vote of the assembly. It was noted there, and repeated here, that, in view of the constant increase in operating expenses, interested churches and individuals are urged to increase their support during this year to whatever degree that might be possible.

The report of the nominating committee naming the officers and members of the council for the coming year — moved by Rev. Robert Matthews, seconded and carried. The full list follows this report.

It was decided to hold the **ABF Fall Conference** October 28-29 at Port Williams, N.S. The theme is to be "New Testament Witnessing", and the theme speaker is to be the Rev. Dr. Allison A. Trites of faculty of the Acadia Divinity College.

The assembly accepted the resignation of the Rev. Philip Griffin-Allwood who served the fellowship well as secretary for a number of years. While we regret the necessity of the resignation, which was accepted with regret, we congratulate Philip on his plans for further study, and our prayers and good wishes go with him. The president extended the thanks and good wishes of the fellowship.

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE 1983-84

- Past President:** Rev. John Boyd
First Baptist Church,
Amherst, N.S.
- President:** Rev. Gordon Gower, Hantsport, N.S. B0P 1P0
- Vice-President:** Rev. Robert Matthews, Annapolis Royal, N.S.
B0S 1A0
- Secretary:** Rev. Donald Jackson, Port Williams, N.S.
B0P 1T0
- Treasurer:** Mrs. Evelyn Smith, 13 Marilyn Drive,
Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 2X8
- Bulletin Editor:** Dr. I. Judson Levy, Box 823, Wolfville, N.S.
B0P 1X0
- Bulletin Manager:** Rev. Byron Corkum, Box 68,
Lawrencetown, N.S. B0S 1M0

MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

- Dr. G. P. Harrop, Hubbards, N.S.
Dr. F. H. Sinnott, Port Williams, N.S.
Rev. Vincent Rushton, Canning, N.S.
Rev. A. R. Colpitts, Tantallon, N.S.
Mrs. James Stanley, Amherst, N.S.
Mr. Kendall Kenney, Bridgewater, N.S.
Gwendalyn Atherton, Saint John, N.B.

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS:

- Rev. Willis Henderson, Sydney, N.S.
Mr. Hillyard Nason, Saint John, N.B.
Rev. Philip Griffin-Allwood, Louisville, Kentucky
Mr. Jack Matthews, Amherst, N.S.

A Brief Historical Sketch of Port Williams Baptist Church

This church had its roots in Sunday School work, as a Mr. James Newcombe started a union Sunday School here around 1845. Later Rev. A. S. Hunt came over to hold services in Port Williams, from First Cornwallis Baptist Church, and eventually succeeded in leading the people in Port Williams to erect a building of worship in 1868, which became with some changes, the present building.

The Port Williams Baptist Church formed in 1913 a pastorate which combined the churches in New Minas and Canada, continuing that way until 1963, when New Minas withdrew and called its own pastor. It is interesting to note that the Church of Christ, Disciples, which had been built in Port Williams in the early 1900's, closed in 1923 with some members going to the Baptist Church, also the pews, baptism, furnishings and bell.

In 1957 a legacy from Tobin Lockwood enabled the church to be renovated and the Lockwood Hall to be added, for youth work in the church and community. This hall has had much use over the years and has been showing signs of wear and tear lately; this summer with the help of a government grant, three young people, college students, led by one from this church, Susan Crouse, have completed a thorough renovation of the hall leaving it in sparkling new condition inside and out.

Over the years The Port Williams Baptist Church has had many outstanding pastors: Rev. O. N. Chipman was president of Convention in 1926-7; Rev. B. R. Hamilton who followed him in this church had very successful evangelistic services with Rev. W. A. Robbins as evangelist and his daughter Mae as Musical Director. Many will remember Rev. R. S. Gregg and Rev. Ernest Churchill. Rev. Arthur Eddy added many to the church in a brief pastorate and during Rev. Hinson MacLeod's ministry the present parsonage was built. Dr. Frank Sinnott and Rev. Murray Shaw, recent pastors, are still living here in Port Williams, Frank retired and Murray teaching school, both still active in the church and a great blessing to the present pastor, Rev. Don Jackson.

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship Fall Conference will be held in this church Friday evening and Saturday, October 28-29, and all who attend are assured of a warm welcome from the people and pastor, Rev. Donald Jackson, who is a past president and currently secretary of the ABF.

ABF Fall Conference Programme

Place: Baptist Church, Port Williams, N.S.

Date: October 28-29, 1983

Theme: New Testament Witnessing

Theme Lecturer: Dr. Allison A. Trites, Professor of New Testament, Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, N.S.

Friday, October 28

- 7:00 p.m. Registration and Coffee
- 7:30 p.m. Hymn, Scripture and Prayer
- Welcome to the Church — Rev. Don Jackson
- 7:45 p.m. Lecture and Discussion: Witness according to Paul Hymn and Offering
- 9:00 p.m. Communion Service — Conducted by the Rev. John Churchill Refreshments and Fellowship in Lockwood Hall
- Saturday, October 29**
- 9:00 a.m. Opening Worship — Rev. Roger Prentice
- 9:20 a.m. Lecture and Discussion: Witness according to James Coffee Break
- 11:00 a.m. Report on the Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches and discussion: Rev. John Boyd
- 12:15 noon Luncheon served by the ladies of the Port Williams Church
- 1:15 p.m. Worship — Rev. Harry Ward
- Business Session. Important business to be discussed including concerns arising from the recent Convention Assembly. Closing.
- 3:00 p.m.

THE MEMBERS OF THE ABF COUNCIL ARE REMINDED OF AN IMPORTANT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON, OCTOBER 28. ALL MEMBERS ARE URGED TO BE PRESENT. THE MEETING WILL BE AT THE PORT WILLIAMS CHURCH.

Overnight Accommodation

The people of the Port Williams Church, through their minister, have offered to entertain as many as they can in their homes. Anyone who is interested is asked to send his, or her, name, as early as possible, to: Rev. Donald Jackson, Box 89, Port Williams, N.S., B0P 1T0. For the convenience of others who may prefer to stay in a motel, we list some of the motels in the area:

Old Orchard Inn, Greenwich
Country Squire Bed and Breakfast, Port Williams
The White Spot, New Minas
Mayflower, New Minas
Ho Lane, New Minas

Anyone planning to stay at a motel should make reservations in advance.

Introducing Our Guest Speaker

Dr. Allison Trites is a native of Fredericton, N.B. He is a graduate in Arts of the University of New Brunswick, in Theology from Eastern Seminary, Penn., and Princeton, N.J. He holds a doctorate from Oxford, England. He has served on the faculty of Acadia Divinity College since 1965, and currently holds the position of Associate Professor of Biblical Studies (New Testament).



Dr. Allison Trites

Dr. Trites has received many academic awards and honors, and has written widely for various Theological journals. His most recent book is *New Testament Witness in To-day's World*, published by Judson Press.

He is a family man. He met his wife, Gene, in England, and they have two boys, aged 15 and 13. He is deeply involved in Convention and local church life, having served both on the Convention's Board of Ministerial Standards and the Board of Deacons of the Wolfville United Baptist Church, and currently is chairman of the latter. There he also teaches the Adult Sunday School Class where his expertise in New Testament Studies is much valued.

Allison Trites is not only a fine scholar, but a compelling communicator of the message of the New Testament, both to students at Acadia, and to churches over a wide area.

About Persons

The ABF Bulletin extends congratulations and good wishes to Mr. Robert MacQuade, of Moncton, N.B., as he becomes the president of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces — and also to the Rev. Dr. Eugene Thompson who soon will assume his duties as the Executive Minister of the Convention. We assure both of these men of our prayers that God will give wisdom and strength that they may give wise and courageous leadership that our convention, in accord with the best Baptist tradition, may become wide enough in scope and outlook to accommodate a variety of thought and concerns, held together in the bonds of Christian love.

A hearty welcome home is extended to the Rev. Roger Prentice as he returns to our convention after four years of study in Baptist history, with special emphasis on worship at Regent's Park, Oxford University, England, and is now the minister of the Annapolis Royal pastorage. His induction was on September 7. He was active in the work of the ABF in its early years, and, for a time, was the editor of the ABF News Letter prior to the beginning of the ABF Bulletin in its present form. ABF welcomes Mr. Prentice in the expectation of his continued interest and support.

The ABF Bulletin and all members of the ABF extend sincere and loving sympathy to Dr. Frank Sinnott in his recent double sorrow in the death of two of his sisters, early in the summer, within a period of a few weeks.

It is worthy of note, and a source of great satisfaction, that three Atlantic Baptists were present at the WCC Assembly in Vancouver — the Rev. John Boyd representing our ABF and the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, the Rev. Willis Henderson representing the Industrial Cape Breton Council of Churches and the Rev. Dr. J. K. Zeman representing the Acadia Divinity College. We have an article by Mr. Boyd in this issue, and we hope to have articles by Mr. Henderson and Dr. Zeman in the next bulletin.

Council Session 'A Celebration'

— by Rev. John E. Boyd

It began in the Pacific Coliseum, where the Vancouver Canucks play hockey, as 12,000 people from the surrounding communities joined 3,000 delegates, observers, visitors and members of the press gathered at the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches for the celebration of the theme "Jesus Christ: the Life of the World".

Conducted by the Very Rev. Lois Wilson, former moderator of the United Church of Canada, the celebration included music by a 750-voice choir, creative dance by Native Canadians, and an inspiring address by Jean Vanier, son of the former Canadian Governor-General and founder of L'Arche Homes for the Handicapped.

In his address Vanier, a Roman Catholic lay theologian, said, "I live with people who are outcast because they have a handicap. Therefore, I come today to speak in the name of those who have no voice." Vanier challenged the assembly as he said, "Jesus is calling us to make community with the littlest, the weakest, and the lost of the world."

The first two days of the Assembly were taken up with discussion on the reports of the moderator, Archbishop Ted Scott of Canada, and the general secretary Philip Potter. Both men vigorously rejected the accusation made by fundamentalist groups that the WCC is Communist-backed and supportive of terrorism.

"The two current ideologies competing for control of the world, communism and capitalism, are both no longer responding adequately to the challenges that confront us," Scott declared, stating the WCC has no apology to make for its support of those seeking to overcome injustice, oppression and racism.

Potter called on the nearly 300 member churches to see their mission as standing in solidarity with the poor and oppressed. "I hope that we will take a clear and unequivocal stand for God's will for peace and justice, which are inextricably bound together, and not be tempted to echo the doomed policies of the nations, from which we come," he said.

The first week of the Assembly was largely spent in laying the theological foundations for the reports and decisions to be voted upon later. Two issues emerged as dominant concerns of the delegates.

The first was justice.

Dr. Allan Boesak, black South African theologian and president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, brought the delegates to their feet in sustained applause when he outlined the Christian belief in justice for all, and especially for those who live as he does in a situation of oppression, racism, and poverty.

"In too many places, too many children die of hunger and too many people just disappear because they dare to stand up for justice and human rights. Too many are swept away by tides of war and too many are tortured in dungeons of death. And even in the face of all this, too many in the Christian Church remain silent," he said.

The second issue which grasped the attention of the Assembly was peace in an age of nuclear madness. Here the debate was among those who advocated the abolition of nuclear arms — even if that meant the risk of unilateral disarmament in the West — and those who advocated a gradual process of bilateral disarmament.

Many Third World delegates pleaded that the issue of peace not be

separated from the issue of justice. They feared that the agenda of First World Christians would be so taken up by the question of peace that the poor of the Third World would be lost in the shuffle.

As Boesak put it, "... in the Bible peace and justice are never separated. Peace is never just the absence of war, it is the active presence of justice."

The second week of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches began with a presentation of the issues delegates would be discussing in small groups. The eight issues were: witnessing in a divided world, taking steps toward unity, moving toward participation, healing and sharing life in community, confronting threats to peace and survival, struggling for justice and human dignity, learning in community, and communication with conviction.

The discussions quickly took on more than an academic tone. Women, youth, and disabled persons wanted the churches to begin immediately to open their programs and ministries for their participation (Issue group 3). "Spend more money on human rights; talk is cheap!" delegates were told when Issue Group 6 made its report.

One clear and united action taken by the Assembly came at the end of the second week when several thousand participants gathered for a peace rally and all night vigil on the eve of the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Former Justice Tom Berger led the gathering in a memorial moment on behalf of all those who died, and for those who lived, but with great suffering.

Following the rally, a peace march wound its way through the streets to the worship tent where delegates and visitors prayed and sang together all night. The cause of world peace, and the sacrifices necessary to attain it were clearly central concerns of all who attended the Assembly.

At business sessions delegates elected a new 145 member central committee. Nominations from the floor ensured a greater number of women and youth members on the committee. In addition, seven new presidents were elected, including the Very Rev. Lois Wilson of Canada.

The Assembly closed with the adoption of the reports and recommendations of the various committees and issue groups. In its message to its 301 member churches, the assembly stated that evangelism and action for peace and justice must not be separated. Christians "are called to tell the good news that Jesus Christ is the Life of the World, and to renew their commitment to peace and justice."

To be at the Assembly was to be with people of culture and religious traditions from all over the world. Delegates from Orthodox and Anglican to Baptist and Pentecostal traditions sat side by side in discussion and fellowship. Christians from the United States and Christians from Central America prayed together for peace and justice.

This cosmopolitan and ecumenical spirit had its climax at a service of Holy Communion conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the Sunday of the assembly's second week. Using a liturgy based on a recent (1982) convergence of opinion of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, more than 3,500 participants shared Communion across many denominational barriers, some for the first time. No wonder there were tears of joy in our eyes.

As a Baptist from Canada, I was proud to be part of this international ecumenical event. I was excited to see the strong emphasis on worship, Bible Study, and evangelism, and I was challenged by the call for greater attention on issues of justice, peace, and authentic Christian Community.

I believe that we Baptists are missing a tremendous opportunity by not belonging to the World Council of Churches. At the very least, we should be

deeply involved in the ecumenical movement in Canada. We have so much to gain, and so little (if anything) to lose!

The reality is, though, that our denomination does not place ecumenical relationships on a high priority, and isn't likely to in the near future. For those of us who are interested, I would make these three suggestions.

1. Be involved in the debate on justice, human rights, and peace in our country: you are bound to be rubbing shoulders with your fellow Christians there, for these are clearly items high on the agenda of the ecumenical movement.

2. Be involved in your local council of Churches, and if there isn't one, try to organize it. The Atlantic Ecumenical Council will offer you assistance.

3. Purchase a copy of the Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry document and begin a study in your local Church, preferably with Christians of other denominations. This document is on the "cutting edge" of future discussions on Church unity.

I would like to thank the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship for the moral and financial support I received that made it possible for me to have this exciting "foretaste of heaven."

The 17th Atlantic Ecumenical Conference

The seventeenth biennial conference, held at Wolfville, Nova Scotia, 6-8 September 1983, organized by the Atlantic Ecumenical Council and sponsored by Acadia University, the Acadia Divinity College and the Wolfville Inter-Church Council, attracted some 75 registrations. The theme of the conference was "Jesus Christ the Life of the World: Vancouver Follow-Up." The main speakers were two major Canadian ecumenical figures: Mrs. Heather Johnston, a past president of the Canadian Council of Churches and a vice-president of the World Council of Churches; and the Reverend Father Thomas Ryan, associate director of the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism, Montreal.

I

Under the chairmanship of the Reverend Murdo Marple, president of the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, and after welcoming speeches by representatives of the sponsoring bodies, the conference began with an over-view of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Vancouver, B.C., July 24 to August 1983, given in the form of a dialogue between the theme speakers. It was stated that such assemblies have three principal functions: to celebrate faith, to survey and evaluate the past, to set directions for the future. Father Ryan, who constantly emphasized the close inter-relationship of thought and action, referred to the Lima Report (often called the BEM Report since it deals with the main doctrinal matters that often disrupt the unity of the Church, namely Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry). This report, the outcome of years of study by leading representatives of the churches' thinkers, attempts to state the Church's beliefs about baptism, eucharist and ministry, in such a way that the apostolic faith is safeguarded and the unity of the Church is promoted. It is now placed before the whole Church in its brokenness and a proper response to it is sought. Responses should be made by 31 December 1985. The hope is that the world may see a Faith and Order Conference by 1987 and a genuine world ecumenical council gathering by the year A.D. 2000 at which agreement on the three contentious theological areas might be reached.

Vancouver constantly tried to see things in wholes rather than in parts. Faith and Order must never be separated from Life and Work, as already indicated. Similarly, peace should never be divorced from justice — a point that was emphasized repeatedly both at Vancouver and Wolfville.

Father Ryan spoke of the difficulties the Roman Catholic Church has in joining the World Council of Churches, but he rejoiced in the growth of ecumenical interest in his church since Vatican II and its willingness to co-operate fully with the WCC as far as conscience will allow. He also said that Vancouver set guide-lines for dialogue with non-Christian religious groups. Here respect for other faiths must be paramount. Such improved attitudes by Christians towards those of other faiths may be considered as a contribution to the peace of mankind.

Mrs. Johnston said Vancouver was concerned with children, youth and the disabled. She felt women's place in the Church is improving, although the ordination of women is a controversial matter.

In the question time that followed, the two speakers stressed that Vancouver had poor press and TV coverage. The media majored on controversy and a few isolated incidents of reprehensible behaviour by ultra-conservative groups and ignored the good and positive aspects of the event. Mrs. Johnston said, "It was a marvelous experience to be at Vancouver," and thought that the bad reporting was largely due to reporters' ignorance of church worship and concerns.

II

At the Soiree, held in the Manning Memorial Chapel on the Acadia campus on the Tuesday evening, which was designed to give opportunity to the conferees to meet each other and the theme speakers, the music was provided by Professor Clarence Ledbetter (organ) and Professor Robert McCarthy (flute). Brief mention was made of the history and aims of the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, and the two theme speakers graciously spoke of their spiritual pilgrimages and ecumenical experience. Father Tom Ryan has told his story in a recently published book, *Tales of Christian Unity: The Adventures of an Ecumenical Pilgrim* (Paulist Press).

III

Wednesday morning and afternoon sessions were devoted to World and Canadian issues raised at Vancouver. Regarding the theme, "Jesus Christ the Life of the World," the Assembly stressed that life is a gift of God, that it confronts and overcomes death, that life in its fullness is basically a spiritual matter, that it is bound up with the matter of unity. Father Ryan spoke of the rights of aboriginal people in Canada, the plight of refugees, migrant peoples, women, children, the disabled, and referred to the WCC's programme to combat racism.

The presentations and discussions caused the emergence of many problems. Amongst them the following. Is diversity sufficiently recognized in the search for unity in the Lima Report? Is Jesus the only way to God? Is there a danger of losing the distinctiveness of Christianity in inter-faith dialogue? How can one be concerned with all the problems in the world? Is not the cost of large ecumenical gatherings too high?

A public service of ecumenical worship and witness was held in the Manning Memorial Chapel on the Wednesday evening.

IV

Thursday morning was largely given over to a discussion of the future. Mrs. Johnston saw the priorities for the future in the following areas: the continuing search for unity, fostering trust between Christians and church bodies, creative, theological work, evangelism, commitment to social concerns, women's rights, ecumenical learning. Father Ryan felt that the theological schools must do a better job in teaching ordinands and church workers about the ecumenical movement and he stressed that the gap between "high-level ecumenism" and "grass-roots ecumenism" must be closed. He added, "We must all face the basic question, Does Church unity really matter?"

The conference was voted a great success. Thanks to the speakers the Assembly

at Vancouver 1983 became alive, meaningful, encouraging and challenging to all participants in the 17th Atlantic Ecumenical Conference. Proof of this was given in the demand that the conference be repeated in two years' time.

Dr. Dorothy M. Lovesey

The World Council of Churches in Assembly

Much has been written about this great church event — and, beyond question, much will be written in days and even years ahead. Many varying opinions have been expressed — and many more will be. It would be absurd to expect that all who attended, or all who speak about it, would say the same thing. If, by any chance, this could happen, then it could mean only one thing — that nothing significant was said or done. One gathers some very interesting comments from those who have been nearest to the event. A daily newspaper CANVAS, was published each day of the assembly. From scanning some of its pages, I have gleaned a few comments and impressions from various writers. No attempt will be made to identify them. We just pick up the paper and let various people speak. The Editor.

Worship obviously was at the very centre of the program — and for many its most significant part.

"This is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes."

Wesley Ariarajah was surprised and delighted. He and others involved in planning for worship at this Assembly had hoped it would have a much stronger presence than at other assemblies, but they hadn't dared expect the impact worship would have at this event.

"We're surprised that so many people have understood what we intended," Ariarajah of the WCC staff told a press conference yesterday. "This is a praying Assembly. And the worship is at the centre of our life here."

It began with the opening worship. A child was handed across the altar to Philip Potter, WCC general secretary. He cradled it in his arms for a long moment, then handed it back across the altar to its mother. The act was intended as a "symbol of life," and it brought joyful tears to many worshippers in the crowded Tent.

There were other strong symbols. The Tent itself was a reminder of the tabernacle, the Tent of worship in Hebrew tradition. It's a temporary structure, appropriate for the worship of a pilgrim people.

And the many languages, rather than becoming a barrier to worship, became for many a symbol of the unity in the richness of diversity.

"I stopped in the middle of the Lord's Prayer," one worshipper said. "I wanted to listen to all the voices, in so many languages, praying all together. And then somebody next to me whispered, 'We're speaking in tongues.' And we really were. It sounded like glossolalia. It felt like it too."

This Sixth Assembly, one artistic observer suggested last week, is a great and glorious "patchwork" of people, ideas, issues, events, songs, worship and confession.

And yet persons from those vastly different liturgical and theological traditions have worked and worshipped together during this Assembly in a new way.

The worship took place in a tent, erected and used for that purpose only. This is what it meant to one person.

It's that big, yellow tent that, for me, will be the enduring symbol of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

Not just because it was the centre for the most exciting and participatory worship that WCC Assemblies have ever seen, but because, perhaps, it symbolizes the pilgrim church we must become.

No stained glass or comfortable pews here; denominational rivalries and loyalists acknowledged but Christ overriding all; no fusses over pomp and prestige but a simple — if massive — tent. Moveable, temporary, capacious, in its own way, as awe-inspiring as any traditional cathedral.

Vigil night as I walked across the back lawn of the Vancouver School of Theology, the soaring words of Desmond Tutu still raising the hair on the back of my head, I turned and the Tent was lit up from the interior lights, its white and yellow stripes softly stark in the chill, dark night.

It was well after midnight. As with most others, my body and brain were weary, emotions were near the surface. I needed to be alone to "come down." But once more, as we have so many times in the past two-and-a-half weeks, I turned and went back into its warmth, to its prayer, to its security.

On August 4, 839 delegates had registered for the Assembly. But that only begins to say who is here, as CANVAS well knows. The press run was extended from 5,000 to 5,500 copies and still they are exhausted by day's end.

By August 4, according to Brita Baker, who operates the Assembly's computer, 3,178 persons had registered officially. That includes observers, advisers, regular and co-opted staff and stewards.

But it does not include more than 700 persons — more precise figures will be available today — who have been present at the whole Assembly as accredited visitors.

Two new churches were received into the membership of the Council.

The two newest member churches of the Council, whose applications were formally accepted, demonstrate again the increasingly inclusive nature of the WCC.

Like many of the new members, the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of South Africa are the autonomous offspring of mission work. In common with the mostly North Atlantic churches which founded the WCC, these new churches share a commitment to the unity of the church.

"We wanted to identify ourselves with the worldwide church," said Jablani Sidney Ngobe, general secretary of the South African Presbyterian Church. "We have been isolated for a very long time. We should be one with the whole church."

The leaders of both churches are eager for their groups to learn from others and to contribute to the sharing of ideas in the Council. "It is very enriching to know how people in other parts of the world respond to the commitment of being faithful to Jesus Christ in the different situations in which they are living," said Tomas Tellez, the executive secretary of the Nicaraguan Baptists.

Some Evangelical Christians at the Assembly have affirmed their part in the ecumenical movement and committed themselves to be "more actively involved in all efforts seeking the unity and renewal of the church."

An open letter, completed at the weekend, says the Vancouver Assembly has "challenged stereotypes some of us (evangelicals) have had of the WCC" and showed again the "distortions" in the popular evangelical ideas of the council and its work.

The letter also takes a strong line against fringe groups which have picketed the Assembly and distributed "scurrilous" literature.

"We deplored their tactics and hung our heads in shame over their sweeping denunciations," said the letter. "Their actions in our judgement constituted false witness against their neighbours."

Being Kinder Than Is Necessary!

In Barry's Play "Little White Bird," a young husband, whose wife is critically ill, thinks about their relationship thus far, and found satisfaction knowing that he had always been kind to her, but was moved to resolve that "from now on, I will always be a little kinder than is necessary." This calls to mind one of Jesus' best known stories. A man, travelling on the Jericho road, was beaten, robbed and, in a helpless condition, was left to die. Two people passed by and did nothing for him, not even meeting the minimum requirement of concern. Then a third person, a Samaritan, came along and attended to the immediate needs of the wounded person. He was being kind, and no one could have blamed him if he had done no more. But he did more. "The next day he produced two silver pieces, and gave them to the innkeeper saying, "Look after him, and if you spend more, I will pay you on my way back." This was doing more than could be expected — he was being kinder than was necessary!

Another saying of Jesus is suggested at this point: "If any one would sue you for your coat, let him have your cloak as well; if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." In the circumstances of that day and place, this meant doing more than could be demanded or expected. It is a situation in which one is free to refuse, but also free to offer more if so inclined. The real test of character is not doing what one is forced to do, but going beyond that. We are free to refuse, but we also are free to do more. This is particularly true in little things. As someone has said it: "In the big things we show ourselves as we wish to be seen, but in the small things as we are."

This thought of being kinder than necessary is more than a mere moralism. It rests on a solid religious foundation. To that we now turn. It points to the attitude of God toward us as understood in the context of the Christian Faith. Here it is in Biblical language: "God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). This is the Gospel — the good news of God's action for us in Christ. Note the word here used is Gospel, not justice.

The Gospel is different from, and more than, justice. Justice seems very magnanimous when it is being given, but quite different when it is being received. It is one thing to say, "I gave what he(he) deserved." Turn it around now and say "I received just what I deserved." Quite different — isn't it? It is justice to be forgiven as we forgive. Does this prospect please you? I suspect not — certainly it is a prospect that does not satisfy me. The good news — The Gospel — is that God does not deal with us according to what we deserve. He is more loving than we can understand and more forgiving than we deserve. In the language with which we begin this meditation, God is kinder to us than, by our own standards, seems necessary.

Now for a closing word, back to our dealings with each other. There are many things that make life hard and ugly. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to make life a little easier, and more beautiful, for someone. This can be done by being kind to those persons with whom we come in contact, the unlovely as well as the lovely — even being kinder than, at the moment, seems necessary. The Bible puts it plainly: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32).