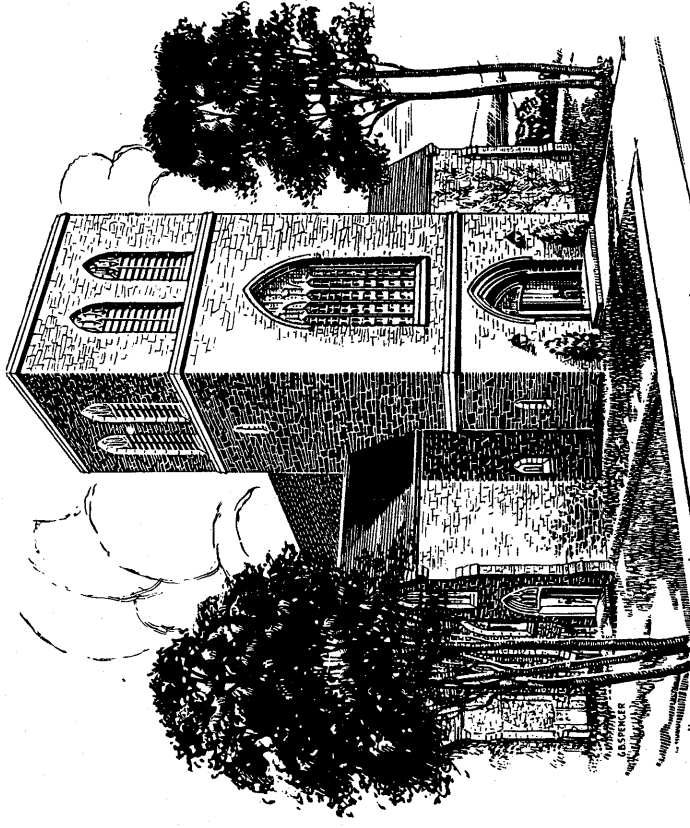


# BULLETIN

of the  
Atlantic Baptist Fellowship  
September, 1985



## First Baptist Church

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Where the  
The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship  
Will Meet

September 27-28, 1985  
(See page 12)

## Editorial Comment

As readers will know I am attempting to fill the editor's chair recently vacated after a nine year occupancy of the Reverend Dr. I. Judson Levy. My very first task must be to thank him for the excellent work he has put into the more than thirty numbers of the ABF Bulletin that he has produced. His clear grasp of Christian essentials, his love for the unity of the Church, his wide knowledge of the activities of the modern, world Church, and his deep spirituality, have been so well reflected in his work. There can be little doubt that the survival and influence of the ABF are in no small measure due to his work. Thank you, Judi!

Retirements are very much in the air just now. Harold Mitton has retired from the principalship of the Acadia Divinity College and Andrew MacRae has been called to take over that important and demanding task. We wish these brethren and all who have recently retired our best wishes and happiness in the future.

Some who retire continue to work hard. Among these we mention Gerald Harrop, whose valuable little book **Armageddon**, dealing most usefully with the difficult subject of eschatology, and costing about \$5.00, is obtainable from him (address: Blandford, R.R.# 1, Hubbards, Nova Scotia B0J 1T0). Royalties from the sale of this book the author is donating to the relief of the starving peoples of sub-Saharan Africa.

The Fall Conference of the ABF promises to be a good one. The topic "The Broken Family and the Healing Church," is timely and the special speakers are well fitted by training and experience to speak to it with authority. The Reverend David H. Shaw, BA BD (Acadia), was ordained in 1965 and has served pastorates in Nova Scotia and Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. For eight years David was director of the Family Counselling Agency in Whitehorse. He is currently serving as pastor of the Perea Baptist Church, Nova Scotia. The Reverend Earl D. Ward, BA BD (Acadia), STM (Andover-Newton), was ordained in 1947 and has served pastorates in the United States and Nova Scotia. Earl served from 1970 to 1983 with the Nova Scotia Commission on Drug Dependency in educational, prevention and counselling work. Both these men can be counted on to give us accurate, up-to-date information and advice on this most important topic. See page 12 for further details.

In conclusion we print Hans Van Nie's sermon delivered at Wolfville, 23 June, 1985. Hans had just returned from Kenya where he had been monitoring the distribution of famine relief on behalf of the Baptist Federation of Canada.

M.R.B. Lovesey

The officers of the ABF are:

President: Rev. Robert Matthews, P.O. Box 261, Annapolis Royal, N.S.,  
B0S 1A0

Vice-president: The Rev. Dr. Gerald Harrop, Blandford, Nova Scotia.

Secretary: Mrs. Gwen Atherton, Camp 4, Site 19, Sandy Point Road, R.R.  
#1, Saint John, N.B., E2L 3W2

Treasurer: Mrs. Evelyn Smith, 13-A Marilyn Drive, Dartmouth, N.S.

B2Y 3X8

## Atlantic Baptist Fellowship Spring Conference

### FRIDAY EVENING

Those attending the conference were welcomed to the facilities of the First Baptist Church, Wolfville, by the chairperson of the Board of Deacons, the Reverend Dr. Allison A. Trites. The opening act of devotion was led by the president of the ABF, the Reverend Bob Matthews, who spoke on the theme of worship.

The guest speaker of the evening, the Reverend R. Diane I. MacVicar, was introduced by a long-time friend, the Reverend Roger Prentice, who spoke of her educational background and ministerial experience. A graduate in Arts of Mount Allison University and in Divinity of the Atlantic School of Theology, Diane is an acclaimed minister of the United Church of Canada. She has served three pastorates and is currently serving the United Church at Sydney Mines, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Since May of 1985 she has served as president of the Maritime Conference of the United Church of Canada. For a fuller biography of Diane see the May 1985 Bulletin, pages 6-7.

Diane's address dealt with the topic of the role of women in the church, especially in its ordained ranks and is given, in some detail below (see page 12). It was delivered with force and conviction and listened to with rapt attention.

The evening session was completed with the service of Holy Communion conducted by the interim minister of the Wolfville Church, the Reverend Dr. Murray Armstrong.

### SATURDAY MORNING

After a devotional conducted by the president, a panel discussion of the theme of the previous evening's address was held. Chaired by Dr. Gerald Harrop, the panelists were Ms. Cherry Paris, the Reverend Ida Whitehouse and the Reverend Diane MacVicar.

Cherry Paris, known to many as Peter Paris' sister, has had a long experience in social work and currently serves as Human Rights Commissioner for Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia. Wishing to be known as a person rather than a feminist, Cherry said she sees male and female as complementary rather than competitive. In her opinion, Nova Scotia in 1985 is still a sexist society. Despite the fact that the role of women in society is changing, the change has not gone far enough. She felt that woman's emancipation comes not from leftist politics but from the Bible, and that the church must do more to promote it. Our churches still have a long way to go before we get real sexual equality.

Ida Whitehouse pointed out that the real requirement for the ministry is the call of God and not whether the person desirous of entering the professional ministry be male or female. In response to a question from the floor Ida said that the recent addition of a baby to be family had increased rather than decreased both the quality and the quantity of her ministry, for she finds she can now empathize with women and their problems much more than formerly. Many more women are now seeking her advice and counsel than before the arrival of her first child.

The excellent quality of the presentation of the evening before, and the opening statements of the panelists, evoked a very good discussion of this

most important and relevant topic for the life of today's church. Several feared the "current trend to a new conservatism" might inhibit the additional future use of women in the ranks of the ordained ministers. One questioner wondered whether a case at law could be brought against a church which did not appoint a woman to the pastorate on the grounds of sexual discrimination, a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom.

The last hour of the morning was devoted to a general discussion of Convention affairs and problems. In his introduction to this section of the conference the president was at pains to point out that the objective of the ABF is to improve the life and work of the convention. The following topics and concerns were considered: the pink paper, "Highlights of Recent Council Meetings," sent to ministers; guidelines for the selection of the Convention's nominating committee; the mounting debt of the Atlantic Baptist College; procedures of ordination; possible changes in ordination educational requirements; communication between ABF and Convention; the possible Canadian Inter-Faith network for religious broadcasting.

#### SATURDAY AFTERNOON

The last session of the conference, following lunch provided by the ladies of the Wolfville Church, was devoted to necessary business of the Fellowship. The minutes of the last meeting were dealt with and a financial report given and accepted.

The report of the nominating committee concerning the slate of officers for 1985-86 was presented and accepted (see page 2 of this Bulletin).

The president intimated that the next meeting of the ABF Council would be held at the Convention Assembly in Wolfville on Friday, August 23, in the basement of the University Chapel at the end of the day. The Fall Meeting of the ABF will be held in the First Baptist Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 27-28, 1985: theme "The Broken Family and the Healing Church."

The retiring editor of the Bulletin, the Reverend Dr. I. Judson Levy, was warmly thanked for his services by Dr. Gerald Harrop and was presented with a purse of money in appreciation of his excellent work carried on over nine years.

A statement of the objectives of the ABF, prepared by Dr. Harrop, was accepted after discussion and minor adjustment. This statement is printed below.

The Reverend Roger Prentice was congratulated on his appointment to the chaplaincy of Acadia University. The secretary was requested to send letters of sympathy to several ABF supporters who are ill.

An excellent and well-attended conference was concluded with expressions of thanks to all speakers, participants, the host church and all who contributed to its success.

#### THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP (approved by the Spring Session, Wolfville, June 14-15, 1985)

is a community of Baptist churches, laypersons and ordained ministers. It is supported by voluntary contributions made by persons and churches sympathetic to its aims, 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

##### INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT

May 1, 1985 to June 14, 1985

April 30, 1985, Balance on Hand	\$2,708.84
<b>Receipts:</b>	
Churches	270.00
Personal Donations	200.00
Bond Interest	80.00
	<hr/> 3,258.84
<b>Expenditures:</b>	
Bulletin	\$1132.22
Honorarium	200.00
Total	1332.22
	<hr/> 1,332.22
June 14, 1985	\$1,926.62

##### PROPOSED BUDGET 1985-86

April 30, 1985	Balance on hand	\$2,708.
	Churches	3,400.
	Individuals	1,500.
	Bond Interest	120.
	Offerings	75.
		<hr/> 7,803.

##### Expenditures:

Bulletin - 4 issues	\$5,100.
Speakers	600.
Secretary's Honoraria	300.
National CGIT	200.
A.E.C. Dues	25.
Delegate's Expenses	100.
Administration	150.
	<hr/> 6,475.

Balance

1,328.

# Ministry of Women

by  
**Diane MacVicar**

As we explore the role of women in the Church, with a particular view to the ordained ministry, it will be an interesting exercise for us to view this 'not-new' subject by means of a 'not-new' method of theological reflection.

When we reflect theologically we attempt to "search out essential saving truths for our time and place, for our faith and action." John Wesley proposed a straight-forward method for theological reflection which offers a very balanced approach. He saw four main sources for Christian Theology: **SCRIPTURE, TRADITION, EXPERIENCE and REASON**. Wesley viewed these four sources as interdependent, no one more or less important than the others, and each involving the others. This "model" for doing theological reflection is known as Wesley's Quadrilateral. We may enter our journey at any point, but the other sources are very soon brought into play. We tend to begin with:

**SCRIPTURE:** in matters of faith and practice, scripture has authority for us. It enables us to test the present (experience) as well as the past (tradition). Wesley admonished "Let scripture judge scripture" with the emphasis being that the parts need to be read in the light of the whole.

**TRADITION:** We have history, expressed through creeds, statements of faith, oral traditions, ways of "doing" and "living out" our Faith.

**EXPERIENCE:** Many come to decision-making from their own, or the Church's, or the community's experience. The Holy Spirit uses Scripture and Tradition to bring us to truth. The validation of experience is more than individual opinion. It must include corporate or community witness as well. There must also be space to acknowledge and affirm the validity of the variety of experiences.

**REASON:** is a gift from God and is engaged at every point; it orders our theology and guards against both a misguided interpretation of Scripture and a faulty interpretation of experience.

**SCRIPTURE:** At first glance the scriptures do not appear to be particularly supportive or affirming of women in general, let alone in any position of leadership or authority. The views and attitudes regarding women are such as to keep them dependent, discriminated against, regarded as inferior, even at times as "non-persons". These views were upheld in the religious as well as political and social spheres of life. There is no question but that ancient Israel was a male-oriented and male-dominated society. The oldest laws were given to men. The sign of covenant membership was designed for men only in the rite of circumcision. Only men were permitted to serve as priests.

The church, however, has stood most firmly upon the teaching of Paul as it has maintained its male-dominated leadership over the centuries, zeroing in most particularly on portions of 1 Corinthians 11 and 14. We would hardly expect the apostle Paul not to be a product of his age and time. It would be a difficult exercise for him to adapt quickly his social thought to conform with his radical new theology.

However, in the creation narrative we receive an image of wholeness as we read:

"So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female."

(Genesis 1:27 T.E.V.)

The creation of men and women was seen as intentional, mutual, and the crown of the created order. Humanity is seen as participating in the nature of God, reflecting, one might say, the masculine and feminine aspects of the nature of God, the encompassing breadth of personality.

In the Old Testament, the woman is seen as equal to her male partner in the realm of parenting. Proverbs in particular teaches and affirms the nurturing role of women.

The only religious profession generally open to women throughout Israel's history was that of prophetess. A charismatic gift, prophecy was not considered a respecter of persons. This fact is considered a "testimony to Israel's best statements about woman recognizing her as an equal with man, and with him jointly responsible to God and to cohumanity. That Israel rarely lived up to the vision is all too apparent, but the vision should not be denied." (Constance F. Parvey, **Religion and Sexism**, p77)

In the church, and among women and men, we have done a great disservice to St. Paul. We have read him with one eye, heard him with one ear, refused to share his faith-life journey into new realms. In 1 Corinthians 12 the apostle gives us one of the most magnificent descriptions of the Christian community to be found anywhere. The church is the body of Christ, and he emphasizes the need for variety and diversity of function as well as acceptance and acknowledgement of the separate parts in order to experience and affirm the world. It was Paul who said, "So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women; you are all one in union with Jesus Christ," (Galatians 3:28 T.E.V.)

"The subordinated role of women in the Christian tradition is not so much a problem caused by Paul as it is a problem of how the Christian tradition has since chosen to interpret Paul." (Parvey)

Many accepted Biblical realities are no longer acceptable today, e.g. slavery; the sentence of capital punishment for social crimes, and moral and domestic indiscretions or sins.

We need constantly to be aware of the temptation to utilize "proof texts" rather than participate in the larger struggle of a wholistic approach to an understanding of Scripture, particularly as the light of the life of Jesus Christ illuminates such understanding.

Jesus has been referred to as the "first feminist". Whether or not you find that offensive, it is undeniable that Jesus' attitudes towards women were revolutionary in His time. Some of His deepest theological truths were revealed first to women (John 4:1-42; 11:20-27). Some of His closest friends and most faithful disciples were women. In His interaction with His close friends Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) it would appear that Jesus was recognizing differing gifts of ministry and service.

It was through a woman that God chose to reveal Himself in the incarnation of His Son. It was woman who first heard the news of Resurrection and were admonished to "Go and Tell".

In the Church of the New Testament "Not only were there 'devote women of high standing', women with some political muscle, and women with independent resources in the primitive Church, but there were also women who were students of scripture following the 'Mary' rather than the 'Martha' model. Acts make special reference to the fact that in Berea, a Macedonian city, both men and women 'received the word with all eagerness, examining

the scriptures daily to see if these things were so (17:11-12)." (Parvey)  
"In Acts women are also designated as prophets. As prophets they were given authority to address themselves to central meanings of the faith: to inspire, clarify, and bring new insights." (Constance F. Parvey)

#### TRADITION

"The later Church, when it lost the vision that the Kingdom was coming, also lost the theology that enabled it to live as though the Kingdom were at hand. As a consequence, it inherited two seemingly widely divergent messages: the theology of equivalence in Christ; the practice of women's subordination. In attempting to reconcile them, it maintained a status-quo ethics on the social level through the subordination of women, and it affirmed the vision of equivalence on the spiritual level by projecting it as an otherworldly reality." (Parvey)

"The present-day church, in order to recover its kinship with the primitive Christian message, will have to overcome this sexist equalist and dare to live out in all areas of its institutional and spiritual life this first-generation formula of 'neither male nor female' in Christ." (Parvey)

Throughout its history, the church has relied heavily upon women to fulfill teaching and leadership roles. Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, Youth Groups have, to a large extent, been staffed by women. And where would the average congregation or community be without the existence of its Christian women's groups? Women have upheld the large arm of missionary outreach within the church, and have been at the forefront of many campaigns re social and moral issues, e. g. the Women's Christian Temperance Union. "One might on rare occasion become a saint, but certainly not a priest; one might become a teacher, but certainly not a theologian or bishop." (Parvey)

A great variety of Sisterhood and Deaconess Orders have arisen over the years. Without in any way downplaying their place, work and influence, it still must be said that their existence has also perpetuated the distinct line between what is considered an appropriate, suitable or accepted role for women as opposed to that recognized for men.

#### EXPERIENCE:

Here I will be very subjective as I deal only with the life and experience of my own denomination — the United Church of Canada — and my vocation as an ordained minister for 19 years. In 1986 we will mark the 50th anniversary of the ordination of the Rev. Lydia Gruchy, eleven years after church union. The decision to ordain a woman was marked by time, debate and struggle, but her ordination set a new path before our church from which we have not turned aside. Today, ten per cent of our ordained ministers are women; fifty per cent of our seminarians are women.

My own sense of call to ministry was one which was first heard while I was a child. It grew and consumed me, and I felt like Paul "... for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!"

Through the course of the years I have found without exception that when congregations and individuals find themselves with a minister who happens to be a woman, there is an openness and responsiveness to the individual's gifts and abilities in ministry rather than an obsession with the preconceived idea of what a woman minister might be like.

It must be re-emphasized that a sense of call must not only be experienced

by the individual concerned, but tested and validated by the community, the church.

#### REASON:

Our God calls and equips whomsoever He chooses. We may think "How odd of God to chose the Jews", but God is not limited either by us, or by our ideas of how He should conduct His business!

Is it reasonable to suppose that there are spiritual gifts for ministry that are pre-determined by one's sex? Is God limited as to who He uses in His work and in what capacity? Is there anything more important than that the will of God be done and His Kingdom come? Does the prayer that the Lord of the harvest would send more labourers into his harvest not include the "whosoever" hears and responds and "does the will of my Father in heaven"?

See 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:1-16.

Let each of us walk worthy of the high calling wherewith we are called.

## Some Theological Reflections on an Experience of Working in African Famine Relief.

by Hans Van Nie

You can well imagine that when one is faced with large scale hunger and suffering, one begins to reflect about the universal problems of evil and injustice. And similarly, the feeding of hungry people puts one in touch with the dynamics of healing and grace. I have no profound insights to offer into the nature of evil and injustice, healing and grace, but the reality of these issues was overwhelming in my experience of the last few months in Africa.

The only way that I know of showing you that reality is by taking you with me into a biblical reflection of the universal human condition, and we go right to the beginning of human injustice, to the story of Cain and Abel. This is a story of human dissatisfaction. Cain knows there is something incomplete about himself and his daily life. Something is missing — he wants and needs more than what he has. He senses the problem in his inner spirit. The fruits of his labours are inadequate, even his offering to God, the token fruit of his work and of his very being is not acceptable. The scripture simply tells us: "And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard".

We really cannot know why Cain's offering was unacceptable. Later reflections in Jewish theology and also in the New Testament suggest that Abel was the more genuine, the more faithful in his religious duties, and therefore the more acceptable. But the original story makes absolutely no

mention of the brothers' relative faithfulness and piety. In fact both brothers have performed their religious duties with equal responsibility as far as we can tell.

And yet Cain felt inadequate, something was wrong, he did not measure up, surely even God himself must find him deficient! Here is our link with this story — the sense of dissatisfaction and inadequacy that we share with Cain. When we become aware of our association with Cain, our usual tendency is to disassociate ourselves from him, and we are tempted to reflect with disapproval about the follies of jealousy, anger and hatred, while our thoughts focus on the renowned question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Perhaps we could pat each other on the back while I go on to prove to you that indeed we have been our brother's keeper, haven't we just participated in a noble effort to feed our hungry neighbours in Africa?

But this was **not** part of my recent experience in Africa. If I had to focus my reflections on a phrase from the story, I would choose Cain's words to Abel when he says, "Let us go out to the field". I am well aware that these words are missing in our standard Hebrew text, and perhaps they don't even belong in the story, but in my recent experience of the story, these words play the crucial role.

I don't believe that Cain actually intended to kill his brother out there in the field. He felt inadequate and inferior as we have already observed. Perhaps he wanted to prove himself to Abel, perhaps even help him in some way or share something clever with him, some knowledge, some expertise, something to show Abel that he, Cain, after all was not a failure. But he did not mean to kill him. We do not **mean** to cause the deaths of our brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours.

And so, we find ourselves out in the field with Cain and Abel. In the fields of Africa, where the age-old fraternal relationship is developing on centre-stage:

Come, let us go out into the field (says Cain), and I will show you some clever new ways to make use of the land. You could grow cash crops, coffee and tea, cocoa and hemp. Never mind that these use up your valuable food producing acres — I will give you money for these crops — and money can buy you anything.

Let us go into the field, and I will show you where to build runways of concrete and tar. Just think how impressed your neighbours will be when my silver birds touch down on your soil bringing important visitors to your land. My fighter jets will also come to sleep in your airfields and protect your country.

Let us go into the field and I will lend you money to build oil refineries where you can produce fuel for my thirsty airplanes and the fancy vehicles I need to drive around your country. I will lend you money to build tourist lodges of international five star standards where my wealthy friends can go to relax! You, of course, will find employment in these establishments, you will be getting some salary, every month.

Let us go into the field, and if we happen to find that there isn't any food anymore for you to eat, never mind, I will send you food, millions of bushels from my own fields of plenty. I will not let you starve because I need you as a market for my own industrial products.

And Cain rose up against his brother Abel . . . and killed him. One day, there in Africa, I caught a glimpse of Cain. I was staying in a comfortable church guest-house run by a North American mission in Nairobi. I had a nice room. There was a full-length mirror. And staring out at me from that mirror, there stood Cain.

His face was white, in a world where most are dark.

He was well dressed, in a world where many wear rags.

He was well fed, in a world where many are hungry.

And in his pocket he had an airplane ticket, back to the land of Nod, where he was doomed to live a fugitive and a wanderer, a prisoner of his own failures.

But this is not the end of my story, if it were, I would not have bothered jotting down these lines.

There was a sound in the air, there in Africa. A noise. A howling unpleasant noise. I came to realize what it was — that noise. It was the voice of my brother's blood crying to the Lord from the ground. And when I first began to hear that noise and I began to realize its consequences and implications, I joined my thoughts with those of Cain who exclaims, "My punishment is greater than I can bear".

It was not only the blood of Abel that was crying from the ground. He had not been the only victim. There was more blood, crying even louder. The sound of the blood spilled in the present day African Holocaust merged with the sound of the blood spilled nearly 2000 years ago in a crucifixion at Golgotha. And when the noise and the din became truly unbearable I heard a voice, and the voice said:

"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

And at that moment my sense of identity with Cain vanished.

I became one with Abel.

I felt the presence of death, of hunger, of suffering.

I no longer cared about the injustice of it all.

There was no justification for anything anymore.

I only knew that I was hungry.

We, the people of Africa were hungry.

We suffered and we waited.

There were promises of food and yet we waited.

And we waited one hell of a long time.

Finally, food arrived. Corn and beans from Canada. But it was **not** food from Canada. It came straight from above as far as we were concerned. It was manna in the desert. It did not appear as a result of the well-meaning charitable efforts of some good Christian folks in Canada . . . It was an act of God. A merciful and miraculous response to our unceasing prayers. We had been fed, and the food was providentially and therefore rightfully ours.

Our meals were a holy communion, a joyful encharist.

Christ himself was there among us, giving freely of his body and blood for our redemption.

Thanks be to God!

# ABF Fall Conference Agenda

ABF FALL CONFERENCE, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, HALIFAX, 27-28 SEPT., 1985

Theme: The Broken Family and the Healing Church

## Friday

- 6:45 p.m. Registration (those attending must make their own overnight arrangements)  
7:15 p.m. President's opening remarks  
7:30 p.m. Theme presentation by the Reverends Earl Ward and David Shaw  
8:30 p.m. Holy Communion conducted by officials of the Church.

## Saturday

- 9:00 a.m. Devotional, conducted by the Reverend Dr. Gerald Harrop.  
9:30 a.m. Panel discussion of theme. Panelists: Ms. Janet Swansburg, the Reverends Elizabeth Legossie, Earl Ward and David Shaw.  
11:00 a.m. Coffee break  
11:15 a.m. Discussion of Convention concerns.  
Noon Dinner  
1:30 p.m. General ABF business  
3:00 p.m. Dismiss

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