

The Bulletin

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FORMERLY THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP



INDUCTION SERVICE OF THE
REV'D DR. PAUL RUSSELL EDWARDS
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH HALIFAX
L-R: DR. 'RUSTY' EDWARDS, DR. JOHN E. CHURCHILL,
THE REV'D NELSON METCALFE (COURTESY OF MR. WARREN HOEG)

WINTER 2018

Editorial: A Scholar and a Gentleman

At one of the early 1970's Assemblies of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship we had the honour of listening to the then-new Professor of Religious Studies at Acadia University who gave lectures on biblical literacy and understanding. They were so appreciated that they became the first publication of the ABF, now the CABF. We knew that we were in the presence of a thoughtful and profound educator as well as distinguished Baptist minister. These little booklets were still used from time to time in his classes at Acadia well into the 1990's.

We have just lost, a month ago, this man, Dr. J. R. C. Perkin, when he passed away on 13 December 2017 in the Valley Regional Hospital, Kentville. It brings truth to the cliché, 'it is the end of an era.' This is true for both Acadia University where he was the 12th President, and the Church. A Northamptonshire man, he and his growing family came to Canada in 1965 to teach at McMaster Divinity College, and in 1969 arrived in Wolfville. It was in the Wolfville Baptist Church that his funeral service was held on Monday, 18 December 2017. The church was filled with his colleagues and friends.

It is always sad when we lose a person of such quality, Christian personality and academic energy as Dr. Perkin. He was much recognized by society and university but probably the best accolade given to him will be by his students. So many are grateful today for his kindness, diplomacy and sensitivity that enriched their academic life at Acadia. The Church, too, has been enriched by his service, notably for the moving Christmas Eve and Sunday morning services at the old Covenanter Church in Grand Pre. Many have been inspired by his extremely popular Devotional Diary: Short Prayers for Busy People, Scripture readings and short prayers for each day of the year.

Each of us will feel our loss of a scholar and a gentleman who embodied the magnificent tradition of academia and ecclesiastical life that was so delightfully part of Dr. J. R. C. Perkin. May he rest in peace and his family comforted.

Roger H. Prentice—Editor

What I Learned from My Friend

The Rev'd Bert Radford

I learned much about life from my friend. I knew him for over fifty years. We were classmates in university and when our life work began we shared continually the struggles of making our way in our respective professions. I learned much from my friend for he was wise with both an innate wisdom and a wisdom honed by many years of thought and study.



I learned that no learning is worthless just because it will not lead to a job. My friend studied for a Bachelor of Divinity degree for three years. Early in our studies he had told me he would be going on to study for a PH.D and seek tenure as a professor. I asked him why he was completing the full three years of Divinity studies. He replied that all learning is important and should not be abandoned. His convictions and example taught me to value all education.

I learned to treasure the roots of my faith. We were both raised in rural farm communities and in our youth worshiped in small, isolated, rural Baptist churches. My friend, as he grew more sophisticated in his learning, explored minute analysis of Christian doctrine and immersed himself in the writings of a great, modern Christian theologian, but he never disparaged the roots of his faith, the belief and practice of the people of the land. We sang the old hymns like “O safe to the rock that is higher than I” and “Beneath the Cross of Jesus”. We sang lustily, enjoying the

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The colour cover was donated by a friend of CABF.

memories of singing these gospel hymns in other times and places. We were joined by the voices of the little congregations who had struggled to wrest a living from the dusty soil of the prairies or the rock-strewn scabble of the Canadian shield. I learned from my friend to cherish my heritage of simple faith that sustained our parents, and underlay our own Christian commitment.

I learned from my friend that a mind honed in ancient and modern philosophy, capable of dissecting an argument and exposing its inconsistencies and weakness, need not be a mind divorced from day to day practical living. I learned just a little of how to apply the basic learning I had in logic and philosophy to practical decisions that are a part of every day life. I learned that logic could be used as a tool to find common ground between seeming irreconcilable factions or to oppose and gently dismantle a grandiose argument which was leading a discussion astray.

As I observed over the years my friend serving faithfully in his local church I learned from him to honour the gathering of believers and to support it. I learned that the seamless robe of Christ should not be rent under any circumstance, and that the unity of the church is of primary importance. I learned that none of us, no matter how learned, can disparage the people of God.

My friend was Dr. Rodger Forsman, Professor of Philosophy at Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. I lived and worked in Ontario. Our friendship persisted all through the years and whenever we got together it was as if we had met everyday. Though his academic prowess and achievement outshone mine as the sun dims a flickering candle, at no time during our long friendship did he ever treat my thoughts and ideas with anything but his full attention. His responses to my ideas were precise, sometimes honestly critical, but always kind and respectful. From my friend, I learned the priceless value of true friendship.

The Rev'd Bert Radford lives with his wife Mae and are members of the Burlington Baptist Church, Ontario.

Joao's "Last Post" journey.

by the Revd. Dr. John Churchill,
member of the CABF Council

Those of us who have had the privilege of friendship with Joao Matwawana and all those who have admired this man of action and faith were greatly interested in his "Last Post" mission this summer to his native Angola and neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The idea of the mission has stirred in his mind and came to fulfillment with recent "calls in the night" from Africa. "Should I get married?



How should we handle this conflict? What advice do you have about this situation?" and many other questions posed to him as family chief. With the plea that he must come home "to die" to which Joao answered: "No, way!" Joao alternatively proposed a visit to pass on his power to the next chosen family chief. Joao also determined that this visit should inspire a greater spiritual commitment in his family.

On July 4, 2017 Joao arrived in Kinshasa. (It is interesting that Joao did not feel safe to visit Angola because of the pending presidential election and the association of a cousin with the opposition.) Joao was met by family who all contended for the honour of hosting him. But not all met Joao's most important criterion: an inside washroom.

While in the DRC, Joao presided over the installation of his nephew, Kiangala Antoine, as chief, participated in the ordination of another nephew, enjoyed large family reunions, and preached in one of the newest Baptist churches outside of Kinshasa.

Two things stand out to Joao about this trip. The first is a reminder of the Biblical basis for kingship. Joao references the Israelites who after Joshua and subsequently the period of the judges, wandered spiritually as a nation. Joao said this was the state of his tribe in the last few years and he wanted to remind them that in addition to the family chief,



The Rev'd Joao Matwawana

all have a living judge and king of kings: the Lord Jesus Christ. He directed that the investiture would have a religious element.

And the second is the joy and privilege of passing on identity and values to the new generation. Joao says that in Africa when an old person dies, it is like a big Library has been destroyed. No record is left except what was passed on orally and in relationship. Joao prizes the custom of young people in Africa who bring water, firewood, food, and palm tree wine to their elders in exchange

for the opportunity to listen to Grandpa's or Grandma's stories embedded with tribal history, customs, and values.

Joao returned home on September 4 and he thanks all who supported him with donations and prayers and especially God for protection and love during his trip. Even though Joao is no longer "chief," he will always command our love and respect for his life of service.

The Revd. Dr. Joao Matwawana is a Member-at-Large of the CABF Council. He and his wife Nora have impacted life in Angola, the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Canada. He is a Peace and Reconciliation consultant with CBM.



The former and newly installed chief.

The Hymn Gig

by Rex Deverell

Several months ago I received an offer I couldn't refuse. First Baptist Halifax asked me to write lyrics for the 190th anniversary. I owed that church. While Rita was Nancy's Chair at Mount St. Vincent University, we found a home away from home welcomed by impressive FBC people. It was a wonderful three years – singing in the best church choir I'd ever joined, and listening to John Boyd's inspired and inspiring sermons. So couldn't refuse.



The Music Director, Lynnette Whalstrom, the hymn tune – an old Celtic hymn, St. Columba, sometimes sung with the words “The King of Love my Shepherd is,” I told myself, this is going to be easy. I had experienced the church. I was given an occasion to write about, a celebration to celebrate, and a melody to marry to words. If I could write texts for operas, how hard would this be?

Well, I have to tell you it was hard. Halfway to the deadline I had multiple swatches of text, but only some of them matched the meter of the tune. And the rhymes didn't rhyme. And some of the verses charged off in whole new directions.

I knew what I wanted to say. That wasn't the problem. I wanted to say that this congregation has been a welcoming place – a place that stands for God's welcoming of us.

When I finally pulled everything together I discovered I had not one but two hymns. One was a kind of ballad recounting the history of the church from its rebellious beginnings. The other was a hymn of praise that tried to capture a people joyfully celebrating God's love in prayer and music. It was this second text that I sang with the choir and the congregation on Anniversary Sunday in September.

1. This vaulted room is all ablaze
With light and life and love
Prayers and songs and kindly ways
Will echo high above.
2. We listen for a better choice
We listen for the spirit
We listen for a still small voice
That calls for us to hear it.
3. Your love has filled this place with light
And love has filled our prayer
A love that has transformed the night
And taught us how to care.
4. A hymn of Christ's amazing love
A song of transformation
To touch the soul and make us whole
A holy invocation.

Looking back, It strikes me how the preconditions of the project stretched me beyond my comfort zone. They were both a hardship and a gift. The theme, the melody with its rigid patterns, the celebrative occasion provided an energizing framework.

If I were to theologize, it would be about how the Gospel itself is a framework - not for caging us - but opening us to possibilities in our present moment - and making us do some hard work. Is it a case of Bonhoeffer's distinction between cheap grace and costly grace? Maybe that would be to draw too much from the story of writing a hymn to an existing tune.

Rev. Rex Deverell is an award winning playwright, librettist, lyricist, and sometimes an actor, director, preacher. In 2016 Opera Nova Scotia premiered his Time of Trouble, an opera about the origins of the Sisters of Charity, Halifax (Elizabeth Raum, composer). Rex is a graduate of McMaster Divinity College

and Union Theological Seminary. Currently, he and his wife, Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell, live near Orillia, Ontario. Rex is a member of both the CABF and The Gathering of Canadian Baptists.

Doing Life and Faith Together

A THEORY OF FAITH DEVELOPMENT

by Rev. Jenny Drewitz, November 2017

The leadership of First Baptist Church Halifax are looking at how we can best support the faith life of all those present in the church community, and, how to we reach out to those beyond our walls who may not have a spiritual home. The writing of this article is quite timely. When we look back at communities of faith from Scripture, we see the impact of full community together.

Faith was done in full community, at all times and places, not through programs. Faith was lived and breathed, passed down to each member of the family though words and actions. Hear this familiar Deuteronomy passage, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deut. 6:4-9 NRSV). We can also read in the



book of Acts of households joining together in shared living, common meals and purses. The early church did life, and faith together.

So what does doing life and faith together as community look like for us now? Between dance, basketball, high stress jobs, caring for aging parents and launching children, the answer to this must lie in between. My guess is that it doesn't mean more programs and schedules. My guess is that it doesn't mean joining another committee with monthly meetings and tasks. My guess is that it means reaching out the beyond the doors of our church building, being involved in peoples lives in the greater community and bringing faith to the workplace, school and soccer field. Community happens around a shared meal and over a Facebook feed, in an open sanctuary that invites us to just come and be. Faith development is supporting and challenging the conversations of spirituality that are already happening within a safe place to question, wonder and grow together.

What does faith development mean to you? How are you living the passage of Deuteronomy 6? Whether you are home or away, lying down or up and about, my prayer is that there is a community of faith there to support you in love and you are there supporting others.

Rev. Jenny Drewitz is the Minister of Faith Development at First Baptist Church Halifax. She is the volunteer Baptist Chaplain at Dalhousie University and is the chair of the programming committee for the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms.

Peace

Peace is not a negative state, the mere cessation of war; it is active participation in the things which go to make up a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell.

*The Rev'd Dr. (Lieut. Col.) John Howard MacDonald, FRGS, CBE
Baptist World Alliance, 192*

News and Notes

The first of our new CABF Council met at First Baptist Halifax on Tuesday, 7 November 2017. It included for the first time a conference call, this one to Burlington, Ontario so that the Rev'd Bert Radford, Chair of the Publications Committee, could be present. It is anticipated this arrangement will make the Council more accessible to those who live afar.

The early stages of a long-term strategy conference was discussed at the above-mentioned Council meeting. It was felt that this would enable the CABF to discern new programmes and ideas that would enrich our growth.

The Port Williams United Baptist Church voted unanimously to call the Rev'd Don Flowers to become their new Minister. He is scheduled to take up his office on 2 January 2018. He is coming from Charleston, South Carolina, USA

We congratulate the Rev'd Dr. Carol Anne Janzen upon her retirement from the Acadia Divinity College and her many years of excellent service there. She will be continuing to serve as the Director of the Canadian Bible Society in the Atlantic Provinces, which will have as its headquarters in Truro, N. S.

The Rev'd Morley Shaw has informed us that he retired from long-term interim commitments at the end of December 2017. He concluded being the interim minister of Bedford Baptist Church at that time, serving them since September 2015. We wish Morley well in his next stage of retirement.

The Rev'd Nelson Metcalfe retired as Minister of Visitation at First Baptist Church Halifax at the end of December. He has been a stalwart of the ministerial team at the church and has received the affection of the whole congregation.

The Rev'd. Dr. Paul Russell ('Rusty') Edwards was formally inducted as Minister of First Baptist Church Halifax on Sunday afternoon, 27 November, with an inspirational and impressive service. Greetings were brought by the Halifax Region United Baptist Association by the Moderator, Ann Taylor, and the CABF by The Rev'd Dr. John Churchill.



*Installation of a new minister at First Baptist Church Halifax
The Rev'd Nelson Metcalfe, the Rev'd Jenny Drewitz,
the Rev'd Dr. 'Rusty' Edwards (Courtesy of Mr. Warren Hoeg)*

BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

But his angels here are human, not the shining hosts above;
For the drumbeats of His army are the heart-beats of our love.

Henry Burton (1840-1930)

“There's A Light Upon The Mountain”

The Hymnal (1973) No. 120

Thoughts for the Journey

by Dr. Roger Prentice

Listening to countless ‘Children’s Stories’ in church has brought to mind the question of how much we underrate the desire to learn and the intelligence of young people. So often stories, including Bible stories, are told without any explanation and interpretation about why they are being told to the People of God. Jesus spoke in parables and expected folk to understand their point. When the disciples didn’t, he patiently (most of the time) explained their meaning.

Now we have the spectre of young adults arriving at universities completely misunderstanding theology, prayer, worship, biblical interpretation and application. Many know not Jesus as much as the pharaohs of Egypt knew not Joseph. Worship can be experienced as ‘simplistic’ if left to their childish stages, when the churches allow it to become mere entertainment, redirected to people in pews, rather than to God. In the long run, this will actually defeat its purpose and turn young adults away from the church. Some will seek a real sense of mystery and worship in other religions and forums, others to educated explanations, but a good many will abandon faith altogether.

We must trust in the spirit of God, and allow faithful investigation into what Jesus intends for us. Rather than simplifying the faith and worship, these religious sensitivities of our young people need to be enriched with educated and intelligent explanations. In the right meaning of the word, it can be a ‘revelation’ to many university students that the Christian faith can be explained as well as experienced. Worship can be a worthy and dignified event with liturgical drama illuminating the word. They can find that prayer is a real event of the spirit rather than pseudo ritualism. Our faith should not be turned inward only with a ‘navel gazing’ desire, but outward where faith may be shared, explained, exhibited in a multitude of ways.

So let us revive a plan to develop faith in any who will listen. We might be surprised how many will give attention if we treat them and faith in the Way of Jesus with dignity, knowledge, and wisdom. Let us

study thoughts about the latest biblical discoveries; let us sing hymns that are intelligent and speak of the faith without 'vain repetitions.' Let us recognize the Spirit of Jesus in our sacraments. Let us take the Faith seriously ourselves with study, reflection, consecration and sacrifice so that discipleship will be in the footsteps of our Master.

The CABF has several members who are well trained in Christian Education/Faith Development. It could be that we might investigate how to interest our young people in a rich faith which they may explore and make it their own. Perhaps a useful curriculum could be created for churches that will provide a revelation to young people. We need to be creative, sensitive and value the inheritance from the past and a faithful look to the future.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

JANUARY 18-15



Churches over the land are preparing for the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity which is sponsored in Canada by the Canadian Council of Churches, the CABF being a full member. The theme this year is from the Caribbean: 'Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power' (Exodus 15: 6).

The Caribbean Christians today are of many traditions but see the hand of God as rescuing them from the vice of slavery to a uniting experience of God's saving action that brought an end to their slavery. The Caribbean ecumenical team chose the song of Moses and Miriam (Exodus 15: 1-21, a song of triumph over the oppression of Egypt and the safe crossing of the sea to Sinai, as the motif of this year's programme and services.

Just Google 'The Canadian Council of Churches' and download the resources and listen to a Podcast address about the theme and to answer questions.

CABF MEMBERSHIP FORM

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www.c-abf.ca



*Farewell, good and faithful servant: Ministers past and present
at First Baptist Church Halifax:
The Rev'd 'Rusty' Edwards, the Rev'd Jenny Drevitz,
retiring Minister of Visitation Rev'd Nelson Metcalfe,
the Rev'd Lynn Uzans, the Rev'd John E. Boyd (Courtesy of Mr. Warren Hoeg)*



*We welcome our new CABF President, Lee Nicholas Pattillo.
She has assumed the Chair from the Rev'd John Tonks. A member of
First Baptist Church Halifax, she is also our representative
to the Association of Baptists in the USA.*