



## Minutes CABF Council Meeting June 2, 2020 (Via Zoom)

**Present:** Lee Nicholas-Pattillo (Chair), David Allen, Joyce Allen, John Boyd, John Churchill, Don Flowers, Dave Gibson, Scott Kindred-Barnes, Hugh Kirkegaard, Marlene Knowles, Harriett McCready, Bert Radford, Sheila Stanley, Jeff White. Guest: Davita de Rosche, student from Wake Forest Divinity College

**Call to Order:** President Lee Nicholas-Pattillo called the meeting to order, and John Boyd opened the meeting with prayer.

**Agenda:** The meeting on June 2, 2020 was a special meeting of Council with a specific focus on exploring how to integrate the Strategic Framework approved at the AGM on October 5, 2019 into the fabric of how CABF operates and to make decisions on priority actions.

Bert Radford had initially requested time on the agenda to discuss developments with the Canadian Council of Churches but, after a brief introduction and difficulties with sound connections, the matter was deferred to a later meeting as it was not time sensitive.

### **Discussion:**

Referencing notes from the March 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, Chair Lee reviewed where we are now with our strategy and asked for updates on each of the key theme areas of our framework – i.e. Proclaiming, Convening, and Supporting.

### **Proclaiming:**

Don reported that he and Hugh had met just before the Covid pandemic shut everything down. Some reflections/questions:

- What is our elevator speech? What is/are the compelling reasons why churches and individuals will want to be part of CABF?
- Determining the response to this question may be very timely. Are we able to comment on CABF relevance in terms of our current realities?

- In a time when in-person meetings are not practical/recommended/allowed, how can we re-vamp our internet presence? Don has some thoughts on this that he would like to propose at a future meeting – perhaps in July?
- A key part of our history/origin related to the withdrawal of the former Atlantic Baptist Convention from the Canadian Council of Churches. Will the Canadian Baptist Ministries application for affiliation change our definition of who we are? Does that move dilute our uniqueness/relevance?
- Expect a call from the proclaiming working group to seek input. Also look for recommendations on a more engaging internet presence.
- Scott suggested that it is important to distinguish ourselves based on faithfulness grounded in autonomy and freedom of conscience, on reaching people in different demographics and in the context of freedom meaning being open and inclusive. One significant challenge to these key messages/distinctives is that there is currently a perception in some congregations that CABF is elitist, that we think of ourselves as better than others. Ironically, one congregation holding this view was a founding member of the original Atlantic Baptist Fellowship who rose in protest of Convention's withdrawal from the Canadian Council of Churches. Prior to the Atlantic Convention's participation, the Canadian Baptist Federation and the CBOQ had been active with the CCC.
- Harriett noted that some Baptist congregations have no idea what being Baptist means – e.g. surprised that autonomy of the local church is a fundamental tenet. We need a larger approach at the 10,000-foot level that looks at our origins but is also short and to the point – i.e. can be communicated in two minutes. A current concern is that there seem to be fewer moderates and more who are rigid in their thinking and pushy.
- Dave suggested that there are three things that set CABF apart – membership in the Canadian Council of Churches, the autonomy of the local church (more dominant in CABF) and the independence of Baptist clergy. Punishing clergy centrally contravenes local autonomy. Inclusion for CABF is broad in interpretation – e.g. women in clergy, diversity ethically, sexual orientation.
- In terms of benefits of belonging to CABF, being able to interact with those who are like-minded, who share common beliefs by being open to diversity in belief is important.
- Is our mission statement referencing Baptist too exclusionary? If we contextualize this as “I am a Baptist who...” the answer is no.

**Convening:**

Don has had separate conversations with David Csinos and Rusty Edwards, and the discussion will continue. Initial thoughts are to organize a youth event, likely in the fall of 2021.

Jeff has had two preliminary conversations – one with Lee and one with Sharon White and Arla Johnson. Key questions:

- What is distinctive about what CABF offers to divinity students?
- Why should a divinity student contribute to CABF?
- Are we talking to students at Dal re CABF?”

If we were to do a video about CABF, it would have to be gripping and inviting. Contrary to previous perceptions about ADC relative to AST, Lee learned from her discussions that various perspectives are being openly discussed at ADC.

John C. reminded us that we may not need to reinvent the wheel. A lot of good work went into a brochure done years ago outlining history and purpose, etc. John B offered that CABF had been invited to have a booth at the Festival of Ministries in 2000.

John B. suggested that the Fall AGM may present another opportunity for convening, specifically for pastors.

- What is it like to be a pastor in these times? How do you provide pastoral care in a pandemic? How do you do key functions every day?
- What other thematic meetings might be helpful and supportive?
- Is there an appetite for this?

Lee is willing to prepare a list of pastors along with ideas.

Scott suggested that this could be a topic for a future Bulletin with the help of Rusty and Don.

Harriett wondered if we need to think of new rules re the Annual General Meeting – about 90 days post emergency measures due to pandemic?

### ***Supporting: Pension and Benefits***

David Allen had distributed a spreadsheet about pension and benefits. He has learned that it is not a major problem for a church within CABF to become a member of an existing pension plan such as ACTRA, Christian Charities, or others.

Matching what CABF currently offers would likely be a primary interest for future participants, so knowing what CABF offers would be a good baseline piece of information.

Two key roles to identify are who the carrier and administrator are.

Gathering as much info as possible is an important step. With Council's permission, David suggested approaching 3 providers and then coming back to Council to determine the key criteria for participation. Dave Gibson suggested connecting with First Baptist Church Halifax (FBCH) about their experience, and he will connect with Clyde Evans who has had a key role in discussions with the agent for the insurer. John B. noted that the CABF has an option for retired clergy to continue participation in the benefits plans as their own expense, something the FBCH plan does not provide.

Lee thanked those reporting and participating in the discussion on the three strategic theme areas and asked for other ideas related to implementing the strategic framework.

- How do we ensure our supports function? Do we need to revisit any of the Constitution to better support the work we do?
- Is there an opportunity during Pride Month to do something innovative, supportive, thoughtful, creative? It was agreed that Arla would be a good resource with whom to consult about support for the Pride Parade. Davita volunteered to assist.
- Supporting our fellow Baptists in Cuba: Are there groups who can support outreach to Cuba? Tightening embargoes have made contributing gifts, money, etc. a genuine challenge. Cuba is not a qualified recipient through CRA. Canadian Baptist Ministries has had some success so that may be a potential channel for sending support. It was agreed that exploring this topic further through Gary Nelson and/ Scott Sterns would be a good next step.

- CABF Sunday: Lee suggested that a possible new initiative would be to visit churches and have a CABF Sunday where we would introduce/re-introduce CABF and also provide a pastor to give the sermon. Congregations might want to contribute a percentage of the offering on that day to CABF, but it was agreed that we should not tie an expectation of money to the offer to come.

Next Meeting: Special meeting to review proposed changes to the CABF Constitution on June 30 at 9:30 a.m.