

The Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BAPTIST FREEDOMS



Winter 2021



The Bulletin is published three times a year by the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms, formerly the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. It is meant to be an informative magazine about Baptist concerns and news of the Church in the world.

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SET IN BASKERVILLE TYPES & PRINTED FOR THE
ASSOCIATION IN KENTVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA,
BY GASPEREAU PRESS LIMITED

ON THE COVER

Mother and Child by John Clinton Cawood

Lessons for the New Year

BY SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

¶ Covid-19 has forced us all to rethink how we understand the Church. Many of us are asking what the Church is going to be like when life returns to ‘normal’. In a recent article, Oxford theologian Paul Fiddes has facetiously, yet perceptively, challenged Baptists to examine our ‘Zoom Ecclesiology’ according to the three key theological concepts that shaped dissenting churches of the English Reformation; covenant, fellowship and body. Will believers who view the local Christian fellowship as an expression of the body of Christ in a covenant relationship with God, be more likely to return to local church life when restrictions are lifted? Or, will people be inclined to attend church online when all this is over? Only time will tell. The theme for this issue, then, is: *What have we learned from the Covid-19 Pandemic?* Additionally, readers will find a summary report of Dr. Spencer Boersma’s lectures from the CABF Fall Assembly held virtually in early October 2020. Dr. Boersma’s talks are shaped by an important ecumenical motto; “*In the essentials, unity; in the non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity.*” May this motto, made popular in the English-speaking world through the puritan pastor Richard Baxter, find a clear expression through the CABF of the post-pandemic world.

The Rev. Dr. Scott Kindred-Barnes is the Senior Minister at Wolfville Baptist Church in Nova Scotia.

What Did You Learn During Covid?

BY DON FLOWERS, JR.

¶ It sounds like one of those ‘first day of school’ assignments, doesn’t it? What did you learn from Covid? What did you learn from ‘not’ having church for six months? What did you learn from restrictions on travel, on isolation, on quarantining? What did you learn?

There is the flippant answer! I learned how to become an Internet Evangelist! I learned how to do Zoom and YouTube, to film services and then edit them and then upload them to the internet. (Hint—it takes a lot longer than you think!).

And all of that is true! I did learn to do many things that I had never done before. Somehow I missed the How to Minister During a Pandemic class in seminary!

This has been hard—on all of us. We have been forced to re-examine assumptions that we had never thought of before. Does worship count if the preacher is the only one in the sanctuary? Is it really communion if I use coffee and a donut at home? How do we grieve when we can’t share the Ordinance of the Casserole? In short, what does it mean to be the Church?

This pandemic has forced us to ask many questions, that to be honest we really don’t want to ask. Several years back I was meeting with some minister friends when one asked very seriously, “Ten years from now will people be getting in their cars on Sunday morning and driving downtown to worship? And if not, what will that mean?”

That is where we are! And the truth is we don’t know the answers! We are still in the middle of this pandemic and it will take us time to understand what it will mean, how it will shape our theology,

how it will change our churches. I am reminded that the plagues of the past forced the Church to adapt in many and various ways.

How will this plague change us? I think it is too soon to tell. We have shown that we can do hard things. I just pray that we will be willing to struggle with the hard questions and the hard answers. The future church depends on it!

The Rev. Dr. Don Flowers Jr. is the Minister of Port Williams United Baptist Church in Nova Scotia.

Chaplaincy Community Vision

BY HEATHER MCGREGOR

¶ What drew the people in the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia, to raise a million dollars in the 1990s to ensure that their new regional hospital would have a chaplain in perpetuity? It was the astonishing vision of a group of hospital staff, a seminary professor, area clergy, and two local community chaplains.

With the building in progress of the new Valley Regional Hospital in the 1990s, the Pastoral Services Advisory Committee of the old local hospital had a problem. The territory served by the new hospital covered the whole valley area. This meant there would be patients from some distance away who might require pastoral care. The clergy in the area closer to the hospital, were already stretched with their obligations to their own churches. It was felt to add many persons unknown to that list, was a need beyond the capacity of the local churches. How would the Advisory Committee address this pastoral dilemma?

Both the Hospital Executive Director, Peter Mosher, and Head Nurse, Jane MacPhee, who had responsibilities for Pastoral and

Palliative Care, had worked in other hospitals with chaplains. They brought their positive experiences with hospital chaplains to the issue facing the new Valley Regional Hospital. The Rev. Dr. Dennis Veinotte, who held the Clinical Pastoral Education Professorship at the Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, NS, also had a vision for a chaplain at the soon-to-be Valley Regional Hospital. He cared about the wider needs of the community of the Annapolis Valley where he lived. He was hopeful of placing students on the units for practical training in pastoral care. Rev. Howard Taylor and Rev. Earl Ward, both community chaplains and Fr. Gerald Saulnier of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Kentville were active in furthering this vision. The hospital board also supported it.

The first step was to contact government officials, to see if they would fund the position, either fully or in part. At that time, the government had other priorities.

How then, to proceed to obtain the funding needed? The Valley Regional Hospital Foundation was approached by Valley Health to raise funding for the Chaplaincy Services Program. Dr. James Perkin, President of Acadia University from 1981–93, was appointed Chair of the committee while the Rev. Dr. Freeman Fenerty, a long-serving and well-loved Valley Baptist minister, became Honorary Chair. Dr. Perkin laid the groundwork for eighteen months and made presentations to major denominational bodies in the Valley, demonstrating the need for a chaplain. He delineated three tasks: 1) educate clergy and the church community about the need for a chaplain; 2) approach the business community; 3) educate the community on the different roles community clergy and hospital chaplains play.

The Foundation lists forty churches, including six women's auxiliaries or leagues, a missionary society, and a Men's Fellowship group. Some of these continue their yearly donations to this day. There were also large gifts made: \$200,000 from the Valley Health Services Association; \$60,000 from the VRH auxiliary; \$20,000 from the EKM Foundation. There was business support, as well as a few estate bequests, and many individual donations from 1993–96.

To complete the million-dollar campaign, a \$75,000 On the

Home Stretch to Victory campaign was launched. Public Appeal was led by Co-Chairs Jim Keith and Bill Swetnam in May 1997.

Recently, Father Gerald Saulnier, reflected back on the time when so many in the Valley worked together to meet this pastoral need, saying: “We wanted a person who was *open*, no matter what faith, or no faith, that the patient happened to have.”

For well over twenty years now, Valley Regional Hospital has had a highly trained chaplain available to its’ patients, families and staff, supported by concerted community effort and vision.

The Rev. Heather McGregor (formerly Embree) is a member of Wolfville Baptist Church in Nova Scotia where she serves on the Board of Deacons. From January 1998 to June 2010 she was the Coordinating Chaplain at the Valley Regional Hospital in Kentville, NS. Heather wishes to thank the following people for their assistance with this article: Peter Mosher; Jane MacPhee; Connie Veinotte; the VRH Foundation; Rev. Dr. Debra Orton; Father Gerald Saulnier; the Charles Taylor Foundation for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care.

Finding Common Ground Amidst Diversity

BY SPENCER MILES BOERSMA

¶ It was a privilege to speak with the CABF on this important issue back in October. Here is a summary of the two lectures for the readers of *The Bulletin*. If you are interested, I believe the recordings are still available.

For the first lecture, I told my own story of faith, one that is a journey of understanding how the church is diverse and how my thinking changed over time. I point out that for many of us who were raised with a certain more fundamentalist set of convictions,

the issue with this paradigm is that it really cannot undergo deep fallibility, nor can it come to grips with the ambiguity and diversity in Christian faith. I found this position by having a faith crisis in my seminary experience as well in having to leave my denominational family due to my views of women in ministry. I point out that theological conflict is an odd thing as churches often do not fight about issues like Christology, which ought to be most important, but rather things that are bound up with a tradition's historical distinctives, matters of sexuality, matters of worship aesthetics, and things we have built strong emotional attachments to.

The second lecture outlines two dominate approaches to unity: a more conservative one that deals mainly in doctrinal uniformity and enforcement and the other is more liberal, appealing to autonomy as a safeguard. Both have their issues: The first runs into the problems outlined in the first lecture, while the second is often unable then to create consensus and have some minimal circumference. Thus, autonomy is a procedural virtue, not an end in itself. So, I suggested a set of tactics or strategies for building consensus, within the virtues of autonomy, loosely based on the ecumenical motto, "In the essentials, unity; in the non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity." They are as follows:

IN THE ESSENTIALS, UNITY:

- The Bible, as Baptists, is our starting place and best resource.
- More than that, what does the Bible consider essential? Look at its statements of essentials.
- Keep the resurrection central. As viewed by Paul (1 Cor. 15), the resurrection is the chief conviction on which all else hangs.
- Use the creeds to offer a (fallible) doctrinal minimum.
- Following the creeds, keep the Trinity central as it secures God's character as essentially love.

IN THE NON-ESSENTIALS, LIBERTY

- Emphasize the diversity and dynamism of Scripture.
- Talk about the difficult passages of Scripture to build a culture of humility and thoughtfulness.

- Use biography and tell the stories of modern diverse paths of faith.
- Use testimony as a liturgical practice to share the diversity of experience of faith in a congregation.
- Reclaim stories of saints in sermons that tell the wideness of traditional orthodoxy.

IN ALL THINGS, CHARITY

- Remember that Scripture offers the law of love to guide its own interpretation and application.
- “It is one thing to believe the right things, another to believe the right way.” Be wise to recognize not just what beliefs say but how beliefs function for a person.
- Emphasize our common work as mission builds unity.
- In dealing with deep disagreement, remember one’s character often goes further than one’s arguments.
- There is no silver bullet to make conflict go away or to deal with bullies, but we can view every conflict as an opportunity to grow in truth and love.

The Rev. Dr. Spencer M. Boersma is the Assistant Professor of Theology at Acadia Divinity College. Dr. Boersma was the guest speaker at the CABF Fall Assembly held virtually through First Baptist Church, Halifax on October 2–3, 2020. These notes represent only a summary of his talks. Dr. Boersma wishes to thank the organizers of the Fall Assembly, particularly Jeff White and Don Flowers: “I want to express my thanks for the friendship and hospitality extended to me by many of the pastors and others in the association. I look forward to the many ways we can encourage one another in the years to come.”

At Trosly-Breuil

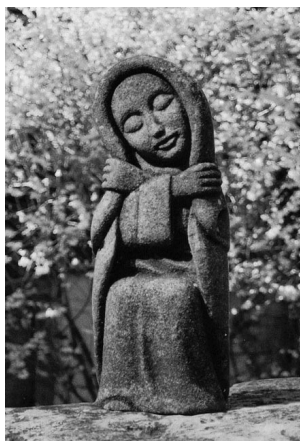
BY WENDY ELLIOTT

Crouched like a small sparrow,
Head cocked, listening,
Her posture scribes a circle.
The hands that wrap her form
Are not chilled in a damp medieval church.

Outside the chapel that was once a barn,
She is carved focus.
Eyes closed, her still face appears blank,
But the tiny stone figure is concentrating,
Not on prayer or meditation or a Buddhist chant.

This Madonna's body language is replete
With acceptance,
First for her own timeless failings
And then mine.

Wendy Elliott is a member of Wolfville Baptist Church. Back in the late 1990s, she visited former L'Arche Homefires staff members, Michael and Trish Renaud, and the original L'Arche community in France. Exploring the Trosly-Breuil area she came across this little statue outside the chapel.



The Art of Ministry While Socially Distancing

BY DERRICK MARSHALL

¶ Life and ministry under the current circumstances, with Covid-19 turning all our lives upside down, is weird. None of the familiar markers of ministry are there – gathering together for worship, church socials, committee meetings, etc. How does one minister to people when you are required to keep away from them?

Just before March break the Canadian Armed Forces were told by its Chief of Defence Staff that our first duty was to stay at home and remain healthy for subsequent duties. I wondered how to reach out and look after fellow members in uniform, and their family members, while staying home, healthy and safe.

I began making telephone calls or reaching out on Facebook Messenger, which allowed me to see people as I spoke to them. Then the ubiquitous Zoom conferences began so that the Formation Halifax chaplain team could hold their meetings ‘face-to-face’, if not in person. We all slowly began to realize that ministry is still possible, since it is primarily about forging and enriching relationships, and that it was still possible to do this through the incredible resources which a technological age make possible.

I decided that I would resolve to pray the Daily Offices at home in my personal study, to stay closely connected to God through a stressful and bewildering time of anxiety, for my own spiritual resiliency. Then, it occurred to me that others might also like to participate in this activity. So, I created a Facebook group entitled “Morning Prayers” and I began recording myself reading the Morning Daily Office (using Phyllis Tickle’s series of prayer books, *The Divine Hours*) each Sunday morning. Anyone who wished to join the group could be led in prayer. I also began posting written

prayers each morning, which people could read for themselves at their leisure, along with a suitably inspiring photo.

In April a Cyclone helicopter (call sign *Stalker*) crashed in the Ionian Sea, on Operation Reassurance. This hit home personally. I was on 'OP Reassurance' in 2018–19 with *HMCS Ville De Quebec* and had flown in its Cyclone helicopter for its first tour. This tragedy rocked Nova Scotians and the military community hard and it was evident that Halifax military chaplains needed to engage people in person. I was tasked to provide personal spiritual support and comfort to the family of Captain Brenden Ian MacDonald, the Crew Commander of *Stalker*. There are some things which Zoom, Skype or Facebook Messenger simply cannot convey or replace, such as the comforting presence of a supportive and caring friend and mentor in the midst of such momentous tragedy and loss.

I made the notification with 423 Squadron Commanding Officer and its Chief Warrant Officer on 30 April. I spent the next several weeks with the family, accompanying Mrs. MacDonald to the memorial established to the fallen in Shearwater Chapel, attending the ramp ceremony in CFB Trenton, in Ontario with the family – all of us wearing masks as we did so. During the ramp ceremony Mrs. MacDonald asked me to accompany her to meet privately with the Prime Minister and then the Minister of National Defence for moral support, a humbling privilege. Afterwards, I supported Mrs. MacDonald in various meetings with the Designating Assisting Officer through the maze of administrative decisions, obituary creation and general grieving process.

Since ministry is essentially about deep and intimate relationship—to God and to each other—it is still possible to effectively act as a 'bridge-builder' during a pandemic. It looks different today than before the pandemic but it is still possible, thanks be to God's grace, modern technology and safe practices when we are physically together.

Major (The Rev.) Dr. Derrick Marshall, CD is currently Halifax Senior Fleet Chaplain.

Book Review

David Bentley Hart, *That All Shall be Saved: Heaven, Hell & Universal Salvation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019). 222 pages. ISBN 9780300246223.

REVIEWED BY SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

¶ David Bentley Hart believes in universal salvation, and he wants to do away with the traditional doctrine of hell, finding it both philosophically problematic and distorting to a faithful rendering of the Christian faith. He asserts that “if Christianity taken as a whole is indeed an entirely coherent and credible system of belief, then the universalist understanding of its message is the only one possible” (p. 3). Hart develops his argument according to the Greek concept of *Apokatastasis*; that is, the theological assumption in which all created things are redeemed and joined to God through the restorative work of Jesus Christ. With this assumption clearly stated, Hart attempts to answer four essential questions pertaining to universal salvation: Who is God? What is Judgment? What is a Person? What is Freedom?

For Hart, God is the good creator of all, whose self-outpouring love is revealed in Christ. Humans are a reflection of the divine image. We are created according to divine design and “oriented toward a divine purpose, and thus are fulfilled in ourselves only insofar as we can achieve the perfection of our natures in union with God. There alone our happiness lies” (p.172). If there is a hell, claims Hart, it is entirely a state we impose upon ourselves; the kind where hatred within us turns the love of others—God and neighbour—into torment.

In arguing his position, Hart aligns himself more with the Eastern church fathers, especially Origen (c.184–c.253) and those indebted to him, rather than the Western Christianity of Augustine, Aquinas and various theologians of the sixteenth-century Reforma-

tion. Having moved from Anglicanism to Eastern Orthodoxy, Hart is transparent about his own journey of faith, and how, through his years of youth, the Western Church's seemingly contradictory teachings of both the love of God on the one hand and the doctrine of hell on the other, created a moral conundrum for him.

I am sympathetic to Hart's desire to reshape any talk of hell according to the *Apokatastasis*. The hope of the universal reconciliation of all will be viewed by believers [hopefully] as the best of all possible endings to the Christian story. Yet, I came away from the book wondering if Hart has given a fair account of human free will where one may unequivocally decide to reject God even to one's own misfortune and annihilation? After all, there is, even in Western Christianity, the teaching that life is only possible in and with God; without God there can be no life. Moreover, can God be both gracious and loving and yet also just at one and the same time? Not only does Hart come down hard on the "hopeful universalism" of Hans Urs von Balthasar, but his critique of Western Christianity in general takes on a polemical tone. This is particularly true when he critiques Augustine, Calvin and an unnamed evangelical writer described only as one "committed to the infernal orthodoxy" (p. 149).

It was Bernard Lonergan who said that the role of the historian is to keep the theologian honest. Well, Lonergan's principle needs to be applied often in reading Hart's book; especially when the arguments of theologians of the past are presented without sound reference to historical context. Our twenty-first century world is so distant, both theologically and historically, from the medieval and early modern contexts, that there are times when Hart's criticism seems to be setting up the straw man. Remember Thomas More spoke for many in the sixteenth century when he determined that heretics were worse than murders. Was More a monster to think this way? Not according to the thinking of his day. In early modern Europe, murders took a life but heretics damned a soul for eternity, or so it was widely thought.

Augustine and Calvin take some knocks in this book, when really greater focus could have been spent interacting with their modern theological heirs such as James K. Smith. A robust intellect like

Hart need not shy away from more thoughtful engagement with theologians closer to our own historical proximity. Russell Aldwinckle in the Canadian Baptist context comes to mind; as does Hans Küng (Roman Catholic), John Howard Yoder (Mennonite), and Karl Barth (Reformed). Depending on your own theological sensibilities, Barth is often “associated” or “accused” of universalism. Some interaction with Barth’s thinking, at least more than the one footnote I counted, would have undoubtedly strengthened the book. These frustrations aside, Hart is a persuasive rhetorician and this meaty book will benefit the thoughtful pastor and theologian alike.

News

☛ **BETTIE HASTEY:** The wife of the Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey died on 5 November in Florida, where they were residing. During her working life Bettie was on the staff of the former Sen. David L. Boren (D–Oklahoma). Stan and Bettie first became associated with the ABF/CABF in the early 1990s when he was the first Executive Director of the Alliance of Baptists. They last visited us when we met in Amherst in 2009. We offer our love and sympathy to Stan and family in their loss.

☛ **T. R. HOBBS:** We have also received word of another sad loss in the Canadian Baptist world. Rev. Dr. Ray Hobbs of Hamilton, ON, a retired professor of Old Testament at McMaster Divinity College, died on 6 November. Ray was a great friend of the ABF/CABF and one of the key founders and leaders of the Gathering of Baptists. We extend our sincere sympathy to his wife, Heather, and their family.

☛ **GEORGE P. ALLEN:** The CABF sends condolences to the family of David and Joyce Allen on the passing of the Rev. Dr. George P.

Allen on September 17, 2020. An ordained Baptist minister for 79 years, Dr. Allen's ministry extended to many committees and institutional bodies including the Home Mission Board of the United Atlantic Baptist Convention (UABC), the Committee on Rural Life, the Radio and Television Committee, the Board of Stewardship, and Acadia's Board of Governors. In 1958, he was elected President of the Atlantic Baptist Convention. During his many pastorates he served as Moderator in several Baptist Associations and as Chairperson of numerous committees. His contributions were further recognized when he was awarded an Honourary Doctor of Divinity degree from Acadia Divinity College in 1968, and pastor emeritus distinctions for both Clementsvale Baptist and Bridgetown Baptist Churches.

📌 DR. WILLIAM H. BRACKNEY has been elected secretary of the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Human Rights, Peacemaking, and Reconciliation. Dr. Brackney will also serve on the Commission of Interfaith Relations, for the same period: 2020–25.

📌 Congratulations to the Rev. Dr. Harold Mitton on celebrating his 101st birthday on December 20, 2020!



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE: \$20

Tax receipts will be issued for any donations of \$10.00 or more. Please make cheques payable to the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms or CABF and mail with this form to:

Joyce Allen, P.O. Box 217, 308 Main Street, Mahone Bay, NS, B0J 2E0