

The Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BAPTIST FREEDOMS



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COVER: The Rev. John Boyd photographed by Warren Hoeg on the occasion of John's retirement service in April 2015.

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From the Editor

BY SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

¶ This edition is dedicated in memory to the Reverend John Boyd. John's sudden death on 23 May, 2024, came as a shock to all of us. John had a monumental influence on the CABF and the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, having served twice as President and in many other roles. I was pleased to see John was one of several Baptist ministers honoured recently at Oasis, the Canadian Baptist of Atlantic Canada assembly, held in Moncton at Crandall University in early August. As John's picture flashed on the screen, I was struck by the irony of it all. John, with his persistent questioning and challenging of 'convention', was considered by many Atlantic Baptists to be a liberal gadfly. However, John's vision of the Church as a broad and diverse family was grounded in his understanding of historic Baptist principles.

Henry Fish Waring (1870–1936), the minister who John himself credited with leading First Baptist Church, Halifax away from fundamentalism, used to remind Christians that Lordship and liberty need to be our friends. Take away the Lordship of Christ and we lose authentic Christianity. Take away liberty, and we replace the voluntary nature of Christ's Lordship with coercion. John understood the important relationship between Lordship and liberty, and he worked tirelessly to see this relationship more fully realized among Atlantic Baptists especially. We are pleased to publish in full the eulogy delivered by the Rev. John Churchill at John's funeral at First Baptist, Halifax on 31 May. Also featured in this edition is an important conversation on MAiD held at Bridgewater Baptist Church on June 1, 2024. The participants, the Rev. Sarah Scott, the Rev. Joseph Green and the Rev. Dr. Aaron Kenny, each bring a wealth of experience and wisdom to this topic.

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

Eulogy in tribute to the Rev. John Boyd

THE REVEREND JOHN CHURCHILL

*Given at First Baptist Church Halifax
On Friday, May 31, 2024*

¶ Today, is personally difficult, but also a privilege to contribute to this service honouring and giving thanks for the life and influence of our good friend, John Eric Boyd.

We are not here to lift John up as some infallible source of truth and goodness, but to pay honour to him as a man of deeply considered convictions who had a profound influence on the lives and thinking of individuals and organizations in the Baptist world and the greater community.

I don't know when or where they took form.

Perhaps in John's home where he, the eldest of 8 children, was guided and watched over by the beautiful souls of Eric and Margaret.

Perhaps in the Windsor Baptist church, where in the early days my father - the family's minister—often remarked on how this family of 10, all packed into one car arrived so orderly, calmly, and neatly dressed ... John's recollection was a bit different.

Perhaps it began under the mentorship of the Rev. Dennis Veinotte, the subsequent pastor of Windsor Baptist.

Or maybe it began at the Acadia Divinity College in conversations with M.R. Cherry, Charlie Taylor and colleagues, or at the Chapel as assistant to Rev. Dr. I. Judson Levy—a great man of faith and influence. John was Dr. Levy's first chapel assistant—a position daughter Alaina and son Adam would later hold.

Or perhaps it was in his days of student ministry in Kentville Baptist, Advocate, and Apple River.

But early on, John became convinced that some theological and Baptist principles were paramount. They became his rudder as he

steered his way through the life and ministry of church communities in Mahone Bay, Amherst, and First Baptist Church Halifax and as he navigated his way through discussions and even controversies. As he ministered in different contexts these beliefs deepened and expanded to encompass more people and more causes in God's kingdom.

First, John was rooted in the Baptist historic principle of what we sometimes refer to as *Soul Liberty*. That is, the right and responsibility of individuals to work out their own understanding of faith, guided by Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and faith community - unbounded by creed or doctrine.

John reminded us that this liberty goes hand-in-hand with enlightened Biblical scholarship. There was no greater advocate or example of informed Biblical scholarship than John. He believed that ministry required a life-long studied approach of scripture and the world.

In an address to a joint session of the CABF and Ontario Gathering in 2017, John opined, in his often sardonic style, that it was a travesty that in many Baptist Churches there are long-time laity who have never heard of Biblical scholarship. John suggested that

Moses did not write the Pentateuch and David did not write the Psalms. Jonah wasn't swallowed by a whale and Daniel does not predict Russian dominance of the Middle East. Jesus never condemned homosexuality or limited ministry to men or taught that being a disciple could make you prosperous.

John's pointed critique accompanied by a wry sense of humour and calm temperament often allowed him to come in below the defenses of those with contrary opinions while energizing receptive minds.

John was a champion of honest disciplined scholarship. In speaking at the CABF Vin Rushton lecture in 2015, he said

People need the tools and lens through which to read the Bible and interpret it. Those with theological education must fearlessly step up and offer authentic, effective, faithful ways of reading the Bible.

His challenge continued:

Because of the privilege of our training, Ministers, especially, must claim our responsibility and opportunity to lead as teachers and theologians within the spiritual community.

John eagerly enlightened others, but never in a strident or rancorous way. His vision was one he attributed to Rev. Vin Rushton, an ABF founder: a fellowship of unity with diversity that would always be stronger than the unity based on rigid theological uniformity.

John's commitment to theological education was evidenced in, amongst other places, his support of the Atlantic Seminar in Theological Education, serving terms as its Chair.

John believed that scholarship should ultimately be reflected in worship and preaching.

John confessed that in his formative early church-going years, he was often bored by the worship service—nothing unusual at that stage of life despite how riveting we clergy believe we are.

But one day John mentioned this on their crowded after-church trip home. John's mom, who, John said, often had a way of going straight to the point, responded: "We don't go to Church to be entertained, John; we go to worship God and learn how to live. God is the audience, not you."

It was evident throughout his ministry that his mother's admonishment had taken root.

John had a high sense of worship but never was it behind the veil; it was a journey that moved all people along in the drama of God's saving grace.

An important part of John's view of credible good worship was enlightened effective preaching.

John offered this no-holds-barred observation about preachers:

Some are inspiring and helpful, but too many are bland, shallow and barely truthful.

Not leaving the matter on a negative note, John, as he often did, presented the vision. In Ottawa he said,

How wonderful it is, though, when a sermon lifts you up and carries you on a journey of exploration, discovery, inspiration and transformation. The best are masterpieces of rhetoric, deep reflection on

current issues, rife with theological consistency and integrity, inspiration and evangelism.

The truth of John's criticism of this and other tepid pastoral attempts often pierced the pretence of many a preacher and roused hearers to a self-pledge not to be "one of those."

John's sermons were full of substance, well researched and convincingly delivered. As a member of the Port Williams United Baptist Church, we often called upon John during our times of need. It was a special event when John visited us to lead a discussion or to preach, which he did so willingly and cheerfully.

John championed ecumenicity.

He said publicly that we should never do alone what we can do with fellow Christians. He told us that to do otherwise was to fracture our Christian witness.

In his 2015 Rushton Lecture, on the threshold of his retirement, John said,

If you treat others as competition, or worse as adversaries...we contribute to the decline of spiritual influence and live a lonely existence

John fostered inter-church cooperation and understanding in his time as chair of the Atlantic Ecumenical Council and as a liturgical writer for the Canadian Council of Churches Week of Prayer for Christian Unity program.

While in Mahone Bay, John, was influential in working with the other churches in town to form the Mahone Bay InterChurch Council. In bringing the Council to life, one church initially resisted joining.

John said that one of his most prized possessions was a letter he received from this church sometime after he had moved from Mahone Bay to Amherst. The letter from the congregation thanked him for helping them become part of the InterChurch Council. John said it "meant the world to me."

Obviously, the church's joining was helped by John's abilities to listen to their concerns, explain, and encourage them beyond their hesitancy.

A natural extension of John's view of God and Christian faith was his embrace of Interfaith discussion, and cooperation.



John believed that religious leaders must be intentional about knowing one another, understanding one another, and connecting with one another.

John was an integral part of the formation of the Interfaith Council of Halifax—now Interfaith Harmony Halifax. I was always impressed and a bit envious when he mentioned the regular interfaith meetings he was part of that regular gathering to discuss lectionary readings. It struck me as a “rich” experience.

John was totally committed to inclusiveness.

Over time, John’s foundational beliefs deepened and expanded and led to a wider more inclusive view of the Kingdom of God as a community without prejudicial barriers, ready to accept all, even those hounded by prejudice and discrimination or placed beyond the embrace of acceptance.

Woven through John’s foundational beliefs and perhaps crowning them was a passion for inclusion. Especially inclusion of those shunned and demeaned for their culture or sexual orientation.

John was one of the first Baptist ministers in Canada to perform a same-sex marriage. This did not come without much publicity, controversy and sadly rebuke by fellow Baptists. Like other controversies John had been a part of, he affirmed his beliefs, mobilized allies, and did not waiver.

I think the ordination of the Rev. Arla Johnson and her installation as minister of Inclusive Community at First Baptist Halifax was a fulfilment of John’s vision of the shape of a true Christian community.

The story of John’s influence and advancement of the full inclusion of LGBTQ persons in Church life is a story of this Church.

As we clearly see in John’s obituary, he was part of many significant organizations, boards, and associations. I want to pay special tribute to John for the guidance and whole-hearted support he gave to the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship—the ABF—and its successor the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms—the CABF.

It is hard to imagine the CABF’s survival and growth, and now in its present rejuvenated form without John’s guidance and support. John’s views often gave wise direction to deliberations.

It is hard to think of the CABF without John.

In the 1970s, John found the turning away from historic Baptist beliefs by the main body of Maritime Baptists intolerable. John's commitment to Baptist principles and his ability to clearly and strongly articulate them created turbulence for him from time-to-time, especially at Baptist assemblies. I remember some in the audience sucking air and being less than kind in their remarks as John approached the mic in the middle of debates about Baptist 'orthodoxy', local church autonomy, or ecumenical relations. I, as well as others, I am sure, wondered why we did not have the courage or ability to identify the issues with such pin-point clarity as John did and speak out our truth.

Especially in the early days of the CABF, John took criticism in his stride and pushed on. And some of the rest of us wondered why our passion and courage waned in comparison.

John held beliefs passionately but never arrogantly or in a nasty manner like some who took issue with him. Others were never beyond his acceptance.

John served the CABF, twice as president, as a member of Council, and of late, as chair of the Website Committee. John looked after the CABF's Website, Facebook Page and YouTube channel. He was also Secretary of the Credentials Committee where he took great delight in meeting and supporting clergy new to the CABF. John was the first clergy credentialed by the CABF.

In John's musings at the 2015 Rushton lecture, he said this about Stan Hasty, Executive Director of the Alliance of Baptists - someone he greatly admired. The Alliance is an American organization akin in origins and principles to the CABF and on whose Board John sat, but these words could also apply to John. We just need to substitute Alliance with CABF.

His cogent analysis, wise observations, dedicated leadership and passion for freedom gave the fledgling Alliance/CABF a credibility and reach far beyond what their numbers would ordinarily allow and showed that even when you were swimming against the stream of the majority, you could make a positive difference.

We listened to John because he had a fine mind. He was fulsome in his discourses, articulate with words carefully chosen. Some-

times we might have wished for the briefer version and the short way home. But that would not have been John.

He was a storehouse of historical information often punctuated by humorous anecdotes about personalities.

John energized us because he was courageous and often a relentless advocate. John had influence because he made sense, and he challenged us to get our thinking and action together.

If I have made John into an infallible saint, or an unquestionable authority figure on matters of theology and beliefs, I have failed to honour who he was.

John concluded his 2015 Rushton lecture with the 3 most important things he had learned in his 40-plus years of ministry. For those who did not see him as an evangelical or pious person, they would be shocked. The title of his Blog “Faith is for Living” tips his hand.

His top three were the importance of faith, that drives out fear; faith based on trust and love.

John knew biblical scholarship, history, theology, current affairs but all this was a clanging gong because at the basis of John’s beliefs and activity was his faith, trust, and love.

Today, in our time of need as his absence is so striking and stinging, I think John might leave us with this thought of his:

The constant word from the moment the angels sang to the shepherds, to the night in the upper room there is this word to those who would follow Jesus: “Be not afraid.”

John, good friend, mentor, esteemed colleague, valued part of the lives of so many churches and organizations, clarion and committed voice, dear family member ... as unprepared as we are to say “goodbye” to you, today, we honour your memory and are grateful to God that you enriched our lives and our faith with your deep and generous spirit.

Let us live on and “Be not Afraid.”

The Rev. Dr. John Churchill is a member of Port Williams United Baptist Church in Nova Scotia. In addition to his years of ministry, John has 20 plus years of additional experience in consulting, and teaching finance and management at Acadia University.

Pastoral Conversations *about MAiD*

A CONVERSATION WITH THE 2024 RUSHTON
LECTURE PRESENTERS SARAH SCOTT AND
JOSEPH GREEN & HOST PASTOR AARON KENNY

AARON: In recent years, Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) has become one of the most contentious topics in faith communities across Canada. In ministerial circles, I have encountered a range of responses including the cynical, the combative, and, to be honest, the utterly exhausted. Your presentation exemplified humility and love for those of us called to support others through death and grief. For anyone who has not yet watched the Rushton Lecture, what are you hoping they will take away from it?

JOSEPH: In my segments of the presentation, the two main themes I addressed were exploring our operating (or default) image of who God is and connecting that image to the presence of God in our lives. I contend that how we understand God's character directly links to how we understand God to be active and present in our lives and the world. My challenge to churches and their leaders is to explore those images, their roots in the biblical narrative, and through the lived experience of the beloved in our churches. This is an easy way to help prepare the church for the moments of both still waters and the darkest valleys that life presents.

SARAH: My largest offering to the lecture was the audacious hope that we would raise MAiD off the taboo topics list, and foster open, empathetic, supportive conversations about death in our Spiritual Care communities. It was a plea not to reduce this important matter to another polarizing issue but to use it as an invitation to demonstrate our capacity to care for one another in a safe way. Just as talking about a birth plan is poorly timed when a person is ac-

tively giving birth, talking about values and viewpoints on death is best done early and often.

JOSEPH: The fact remains that this preparation is often rather the exception than the rule. Often we hear the question - "How can churches be relevant?" Having conversations that prepare people for death and dying are ways the church can add value to moments we all will inevitably face. The patients I see who have explored these questions, and have a sense of who God is to them, often have different kinds of conversations with me than those who are trying to develop a theology under pressure with limited time. The other thing we hear is that when the church is present to suffering it reminds people of God's presence. This is not an insignificant ministry for churches. Helping to bear one another's burdens is as old as time, and it does reveal the fruit of growing in and being shaped by a God rooted in a relationship.

AARON: Reflecting upon our time together, I believe Joe's point was demonstrated in the spirit of the gathering. Our common prayer in preparing for the Rushton was that it would provide a safe and gracious space for people to grapple with this subject. This was evident for everyone who participated. This was not a debate for or against MAiD, but a much broader discussion of how we walk with one another in dying.

JOSEPH: Today, it is almost as if talking about death and dying is taboo. Maybe this is general avoidance and potentially linked to another taboo topic...our emotions. Maybe this is linked to a general future focus of most churches. Don't get me wrong, I'm looking forward to the future as well, but my future promises don't help me escape the real and present moments where our God speaks into my present suffering and lament. Can't we have both? Both the promise of the future and God's presence in the here and now? To acknowledge our present suffering and to lament of our loss does not betray or cast a shadow on our relationship with the Triune God or what God says awaits us for tomorrow.

SARAH: My hope is that we would strengthen our shared understanding of just what IS our Theology of Suffering, how can churches better actively support those experiencing Life Limiting Illnesses, and how can we deeply listen to those who are dying and hopefully facilitate enduring connection and deep confidence. The fact that I observe persons choosing MAiD while actively keeping this information from a faith community that traditionally they felt support from, continues to trouble me. I'm confident that we can serve one another better. Above all else, listen to one another, learn from one another, love one another.

The 2024 Vincent Rushton Memorial Lecture "Responding to MAiD: Spiritual Reflections, Experiences and Question" was presented by Rev. Sarah Scott and Rev. Joseph Green at the Bridgewater Baptist Church, on June 1, 2024. A video recording of the devotion and lecture is available at www.c-abf.ca.

Rev. Sarah Scott was ordained twenty years ago at the Bridgewater Baptist Church, where she served as an associate pastor. She is a graduate of Acadia Divinity College and the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care, and she is credentialed with the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms. She has ten years of experience serving in pastoral ministry with Baptist, United, and Presbyterian congregations. And ten years of experience in chaplaincy ministry. Sarah is currently working full-time for the Nova Scotia Health Authority holding three permanent positions, at Valley Hospice as a Spiritual Care Chaplain, doing community patient visits for the INSPIRED COPD program as an Advance Care Planning Facilitator, and for Valley Hospice Foundation providing Grief and Bereavement Support. Sarah lives in Woodville Nova Scotia with her husband John and their two teen daughters, Rowan and Piper.

Rev. Joseph "Joe" Green was raised here on the south shore of Nova Scotia, where his father, Rev. Dan Green, served in a few different pastorates. Joe met his spouse, Amber, in Hubbards and they will be celebrating 20 years of marriage this year in their seaside home in St. Margarets Bay. Joe's Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees focused on religious diversity in Canada and how religious traditions change and inform the Canadian

mosaic. Joe attended Acadia Divinity College and graduated with an MDiv in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care. He has served as the Director of the Taylor Centre for Chaplaincy at Acadia Divinity College. He pastored CBAC churches for 10 years before being called into full-time chaplaincy with the Halifax Region United Baptist Association serving at the Queen Elizabeth hospital sites. Recently, Joe has accepted the role of Spiritual Care Coordinator for the Central Zone of Nova Scotia Health.

The 2024 Vincent Rushton Memorial Lecture

¶ The Reverend Vincent Vernon Rushton (1920–1999) was a beloved pastor and founding member of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship (the precursor to the CABF). In many ways, Vincent Rushton was a bridge builder within the wider Canadian Baptist community promoting a vision for the historic Baptist identity that celebrates unity without uniformity. Following his death in 1999, the annual spring gathering formerly known as “The Friends of ABF Lunch” was renamed in Vincent Rushton’s honour. Since the year 2000, the Vincent Rushton Memorial Lecture has continued to be held each June as a gathering for fellowship and education on relevant matters for faith and ministry of the Church in Canada. Over the past twenty-four years, the lecture has featured various topics presented by both leading academics and ministry practitioners. A complete list of past lecturers and video archive is available www.abf.ca/events/past-events/past-lectures.



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