

# *The Bulletin*

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BAPTIST FREEDOMS



Spring 2020



*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

*The Prodigal* by Matthew Cupido

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# Editorial:

## *Transitions in Life and Faith*

SCOTT N. KINDRED-BARNES

¶ When I agreed to take on the editorial role of *The Bulletin*, I was keen to make the theme of my first edition, “Transitions in Life and Faith.” This theme seemed appropriate to the nature of the Christian faith as well as the ever-changing landscape of the church in general. Now, several weeks into the Covid-19 pandemic, and I am struck by just how fitting this theme is for what we are all experiencing at present. All of our lives are in transition. Our faith maybe strong but many of us are having to express that faith in new ways. Churches have had to be creative in how we navigate these uncharted waters. For me as a minister, life has become busier than before with both committee meetings and services moving online to Zoom, and pastoral visits happening over the phone. Now, I have the added blessing and pressure of helping to homeschool my five and eight-year old children. I didn’t anticipate having the opportunity sit and go through the characters of the Bible with my kids on a weekday!



The CABF has been very fortunate indeed to have Dr. Prentice put so much of his time and energy into this publication as our past editor. He deserves our heart-felt gratitude for producing a fine publication each and every time. He has left big shoes to fill. I can only hope to bring my own set of gifts to this task. I will try, as best as I am able, to incorporate those aspects of church life that I see as essential to our CABF story. I also hope ministries in the 21st century may continue to benefit from *The Bulletin* as we attempt to give voice to who we are, where we have come from, and how we might explore new and faithful ways of being Baptists today and in the future.

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# Dancing through Difficult Times

ANITA FLOWERS

*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. For the patch will pull away from the garment, and a worse tear will result. Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will spill, and the wineskins will be ruined. Instead, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.*—MATTHEW 9:16–17

¶ Spring is a time of transition, from the ice and snow of winter to the buds and blooms of the new season. We trade out heavy boots for running shoes and down parkas for jackets and hoodies. We open our doors again and watch for the green shoots of the crocus and tulips, bringing glimpses of color to the muddy browns of the earth.



We expect this seasonal change. It's a part of the rhythm of our life—both at home and in the church year. But this year, the transition to spring has come with a global pandemic. Routines are altered as children are home schooled and working at home becomes the norm. Our favorite restaurants are offering only take-out meals, shops are closed and even a simple trip to the grocery store has become an exercise in social distancing and hand sanitizer. Life is up-ended. Isolation is the new norm.

This change has brought hard times.

“Hard times require furious dancing.” This title of Alice Walker’s collection of poems reflects the African tradition of dancing as a way to meet the hard times of grief, sorrow, enslavement, and loss. Walker writes, “Hard times require furious dancing. Each of us is proof.”

Our oldest daughter, Alison, danced her way through years of ballet and jazz classes. Every wide-open space—a grassy lawn,

church hall, or wide sidewalk - offered the opportunity for an improvised dance, a series of grand jetes, pirouettes, and chassés with a little hip hop and jazz hands thrown in for fun. Always improvised, based on the mood of the moment and space available, the dance was ever changing, never the same.

Our current hard times, in Walker's words, "require furious dancing." Amidst the isolation and quarantine, we are finding new ways to dance. Families are playing board games and creating TikTok dances. Grandmothers are learning to video chat with grandchildren.

As a church, we are finding new ways improvise the dance of ministry to others. We are connecting by phone and Facetime, holding church meetings using Zoom, and creating online worship opportunities.

We are remembering and caring for those whose homes are not places of safety, for those for whom isolation brings the added risk of hunger or violence, for those who must work on the front lines of the hospitals and clinics, of pharmacies and grocery stores.

In the midst of the grief and isolation, I hope we choose to improvise wildly, to find new and creative ways to share the love of Christ with those both close by and far away.

In this time of change and transition, I hope we choose to dance.

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## *Reflections of a Former Editor*

ROGER H. PRENTICE

¶ It was a surprise that the day of retiring as Editor of this fascinating publication, the present Editor politely asked me to submit a written reflection on my years as Editor of *The Bulletin*. How could one refuse a new Editor?

The chief recollection of the past Editor is about



all the people who kindly and voluntarily wrote articles for our little magazine. Some were experts at putting into words their thoughts, and others bravely did the same for the first time—but all were of quality. They each ‘had something to say,’ sometimes on a topic given to them, other times something they wished to write and tell of their thoughts and experiences.

The most difficult part was to get news from the churches. Understandably, people did not think primarily of this publication as a place for their news, and when asked, often the response was, “Well, there hasn’t been anything too different this year.” Sometimes the Editor had to remind them of some of the interesting events which their congregation undertook. For those ‘on the spot,’ news within their church was commonplace, but they forgot that it would be news to others.

Bert Radford was a wonder: he could capture stimulating thoughts, especially for clergy, in his pieces about the church, personal devotion and growth. He so willingly agreed, when he was discovered to be very popular amongst our readers, to create something valuable for each succeeding edition. With authors like Bert, one could not help but be successful.

There were, of course, some unpleasant aspects to the job, too. The procrastinators were one evil: articles late or never arriving. The Editor had to write something very quickly to meet the printers’ requirements and deadlines. Then there were all the changes of address which people forget to send. There was an average of 5–6 returns at each mailing that had to be sent on and be recorded.

On the other hand, there were the lovely and welcome remarks of our readers. They were almost always very kind, even appreciative, about something in each edition of *The Bulletin*. Telephone calls, e-mails and written letters through the post, were so encouraging and so thoughtful from those who took the time and expense to pass on their tributes.

The Editor is a CABF volunteer and it takes many private hours, comprehensive notes, telephone calls, photograph taking, and imagining what new articles might be, and who might present them, to create a new edition. The Editor naturally appreciates the readers’ remarks, especially kind ones. None of us are profes-

sionals at editing and managing publications, so the understanding that the hours given is an offering to our beloved organization is gratifying.

Undoubtedly, the readership of the future will accord the same support, sympathy, and understanding to Scott, our new Editor, as they have to us who are now 'in the past.' *Dominus vobiscum.*

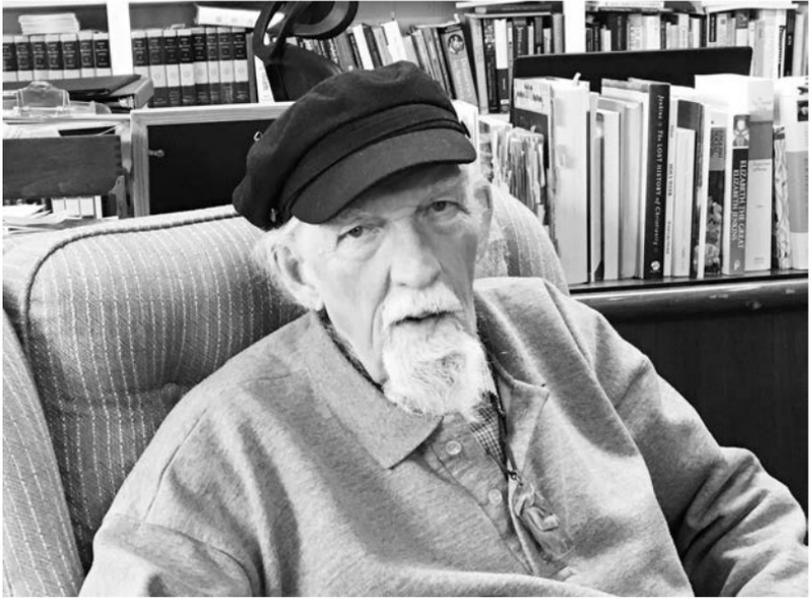
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## *Matth Cupido: An Artist with a Calling*

SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

*During the cold months of January and February I sat down with Matthew Cupido for a series of interviews on his life and calling as an artist. This article reflects some of our conversations.*

¶ In the fall of 1985, a young minister enters a church sanctuary in Kentville, Nova Scotia with his four-year son, William. The minister goes into the church to make preparations for Sunday morning worship but instead soon finds himself focusing on his little boy. William is transfixed by a painting that hangs on the wall of the sanctuary. Matth Cupido is the artist, and the painting features four fishermen in a storm-tossed boat. Their mouths hang open; their eyes are filled with terror. Yet, they haven't stopped fishing. They carry on with their task even as the storm rages. Look closely and one can see that these frightened fishermen are carrying on under the sign of Christ the Lord. William stares at the painting. He points. He approaches it to get a closer look, even pulling his father's sleeve to make sure he too looks closely. For William, this is a special encounter where the presence of God is brought closer, if only for an instance. It is one of those rare occasions that T.S. Eliot once described as "moments of annunciation." Such is the



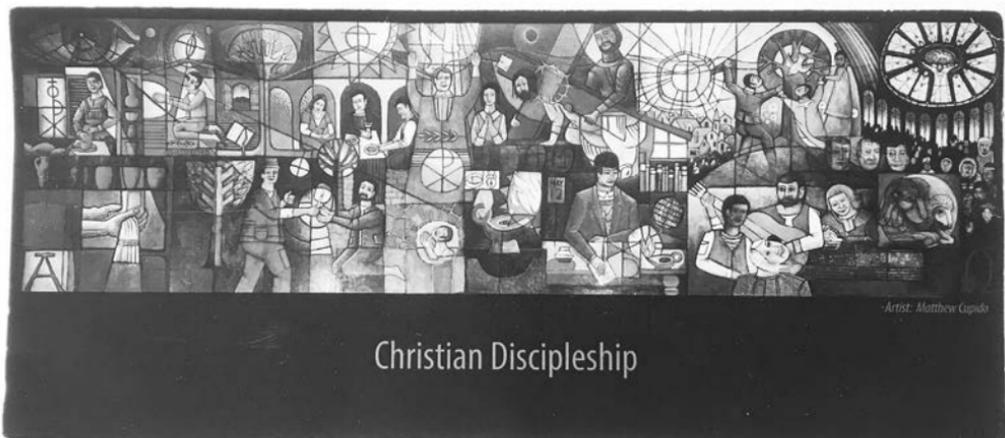
MATTHEW CUPIDO

power that art can have upon the soul. Eventually, when William grows up and becomes an adult, he will own the painting of the four fishmen. His father, fresh out of seminary and with little to call his own, would purchase this work of art paying little more than a thank you for it. Its value to this young father and son, however, is measured not in dollars and cents but rather in its power to lead them both to holy ground.

While trauma witnessed during the Second World War left Matth Cupido unable to speak for the first seven years of his life, he knew he wanted to be an artist from an early age. By age five he took to drawing on opened cigarette boxes. He would hang them on the wall for his family and friends to admire after church. Often congregants would donate pocket change for these early creations. Born in the Netherlands, Matth moved with his parents to Canada as a teenager in 1955. Since then, Matth has lived all over the country, displaying his art at numerous exhibits, and giving expression to some of the most important Biblical themes and characters. Today



ABOVE: *JOB 40: 3-5* BY MATTHEW CUPIDO. BELOW: *DISCIPLESHIP* BY MATTHEW CUPIDO, A LARGE PAINTED MURAL THAT HANGS IN THE FRONT HALLWAY OF ACADIA DIVINITY COLLEGE, WOLFVILLE, NS



he is known across the country for his rich prints and beautiful paintings which often exude Christian symbolism and a prophetic edge. Matth and his late spouse Willy came to Nova Scotia from Toronto in 1980 to attend a conference. They fell in love with the Annapolis Valley. In the years since they moved, Matth has continued to live in Canning, Nova Scotia, where the grief of his beloved wife's passing in 2015 still haunts him. "Job has always intrigued me; as a story and as a poem." Since losing Willy, says Matth, he has experienced a new level of grief and suffering himself: "The Book of Job is a poem of wisdom and insight, and it knows a lot about pain and suffering." He once did several monologues before a university audience where he took on the persona of the biblical character and brought him to life: "I am Job and I am going to talk to you about what I have gone through, and what we all go through at some point whenever someone criticizes what is dear to you." In Matth's case, he often faced criticism for living as an artist when there are so many other ways in life to make one's way. Willy was one of his greatest supporters; losing her, he says, has shaken him like nothing else.

In May 1984, Matth had an exhibit at The Carriage House Gallery of Wolfville titled "Dancing on the Mountain," a collection of works including acrylics, woodblock prints and construction pieces. Several interviews resulted from this exhibit. One interviewer, compared Cupido's career with that of Alex Colville. The latter's works continue to be known internationally after the artist's death in 2013. Yet, the artistic styles of Cupido and Colville are as variant as their careers. An interviewer once asked Matth why his art focuses so much on the Bible: "I paint for those people who love me as a person, as who I am." Said Matth, "And I am by confession a Christian. One's work becomes focused on that." When a naysayer used commercial standards to compare Cupido's career to those artists who have earned considerable sums of money by selling their paintings, Matth seemed unshaken by these critical remarks: "I do hope that for the rest of my life I can remain doing what I do with the same conviction as I have done before. And that's already blessing enough." Twenty-six years later, Matth's convictions remain the same.

While Cupido grew up in a Reformed context, he has also left his stamp on the Baptist world through the halls of Acadia Divinity College. When Dr. Harold Mitton was Principal of the College, the faculty approached Matth to paint a depiction of Henry Alline; the 18th-century evangelist known as “apostle of Nova Scotia.” Matth pondered this commission for some time before suggesting a larger project to the college. Dr. Charlie Taylor was particularly pleased by Matth’s new proposal. The result was a large folk-art mural known as *Discipleship*. The mural, rich with Christian symbols from both the Bible and church history, measures 4 × 16 feet.

In a sermon peached on January 16, 2005 at First Baptist Church of La Crosse, Wisconsin, the Rev. Dr. Timothy Ashley said the following words about Matth’s powerful mural that to this day still welcomes visitors to the college:

*At the centre of the mural at Acadia was a man sitting at a desk. Behind him was a calendar with the date May 12 on it. Many wanted to know what the date was about. Was it the founding date of the University or the College? I had to ask the artist himself. It was the day, when painting the mural, the artist learned that several of his family had been killed in a plane crash. And on that day, he said he felt surrounded by that community in love and support that held him up and together. So at the centre of who we are, we are a community of support for one another.*

For all the difficulties Matth has faced, he still finds strength through the Bible and the Church. When reflecting on the biblical character of Job, the subject of one of his most treasured prints, Matth says Job can teach us all something about seeing God amidst our more difficult times. “The mistake of Job’s three friends,” say Matth, “is that they sat like philosophers on a park bench asking why Job was made to suffer rather than offering real love and support to him.”

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# *Living as People of Faith Through this New Normal*

LEE NICHOLAS-PATTILLO, CABF PRESIDENT

¶ “For nothing will be impossible with God.” These words from Luke’s Gospel sound straightforward enough. Yet, the circumstances of this crisis make them difficult to absorb. Living with pre-recorded church services - without the warmth of Sunday morning greetings is difficult. Living without family get-togethers—their warm hugs and sweet greetings is a challenge. Living at a distance from one another without exchanging warm handshakes and friendly gestures is so much harder than many of us expected! Fortunately, I’m able to take daily walks. And how refreshing this is!



I have seen messages of hope, encouragement and love etched with chalk on the sidewalks and driveways written by people of all ages. Here are some I have seen: “Be kind, be safe, stay home.” “This will pass, so wave while you are passing.” “Things will be okay.” “I’m going to hug everyone when this is over.” “Please call us if you are a senior and need errands done.” “Stronger together; but stay six feet apart.” “We are in this together.” “Thank you, Health Care Workers,” and “Hug a teddy bear. It will do for now.” I’ve also seen rainbows, peace signs, suns, and hearts! All this makes me wonder: “How can all these people be wrong?”

I encourage you to do your best for the safety and wellbeing of yourself and those you love. So many have already said: “the world as we once knew it, will never be the same.” God’s love and support remains the same as before Covid-19. 1 Peter 5:10 reads: “And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.”

It is easy for us to see that our clergy have played a really huge part as frontline workers. The CABF clergy have been wonderful as they have addressed the challenges of our “new normal.” They have maintained our services—in different ways—but successfully! For this, and so much more, we thank them!

Until we gather again in person, the CABF Council will continue our work on your behalf. We will continue our meetings of Council and Committees online. Through this time of the “new normal,” I want to encourage you to maintain your social distancing, along with your belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. We will get through this together. We will survive!

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## *Resilient Faith*

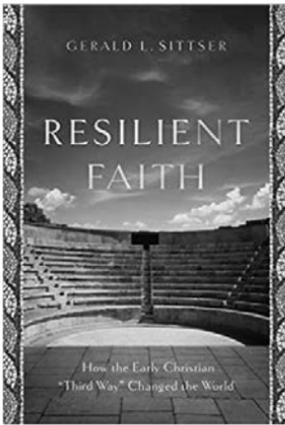
BOOK REVIEW BY ED COLQUHOUN

Gerald L. Sittser, *Resilient Faith: How the Early Christian “Third Way” Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019), 222 pages.

¶ Is it possible that the modern decline of its influence has situated the Church in a position much like it occupied before Constantine began the Christendom project? If so, what can we learn about the way the Church flourished in the pre-Christendom period? Gerald Sittser makes a compelling case for the affirmative regarding the first question and has more than a few suggestions regarding the second.



He argues that “the decline of mainline churches, the lack of growth in evangelical churches, the rise of ‘dones’ (Christian drop-outs) and ‘noners’ (those people who refuse to identify with any religious tradition)” have returned society to a state more like the



“pagan” Roman Empire than not. The early church entered a world of “brutality, social stratification, abuse of power, greed and materialism,” “deeply divided by gender, ethnicity, education and socioeconomic inequity.” At the time of the Empire, in the eyes of some Romans, there were three Ways—the way of traditional Roman religion, the Jewish way and the Christian Way. In this situation, some traditional Romans noted to their puzzlement that Christians looked after unfortunates better than many of their

fellow citizens, lived exemplary lives (for the most part), and, in times of crisis like when plague struck, were found in the front lines of self-sacrificing service. They were able to engage the culture and participate in it without compromise, resulting in rapid growth in numbers.

In order to spell out how this was done, Sittser takes his reader on an engaging journey with “leaders” of the early church (he cleverly avoids calling them “fathers”). Sittser states that he is “not exactly a pure academic, nor a popular writer”; however, by situating his “scholarly” reflections in the endnotes and annotated bibliography, he has produced an introduction to Marcion, Eusebius, Chrysostom, Augustine, and many more “leaders” that is appealing to the general reader. The book is also a useful introduction for the committed student. A master of precis, he is able to demonstrate in the scope of a few paragraphs their contribution to the growth of Christianity and their relevance to today’s Church. These leaders worked to clarify belief, study the sacred writings, and establish devoted Bishops. The “Way,” mentioned in the title, refers to learning to follow Jesus. By establishing house churches embedded in their neighbourhoods and a system of induction that resulted in rigorous formation for all new Christians (not unlike athletic training), the Church was able to grow in influence and numbers.

The vision of the early Christian movement, with its insistence that Jesus Christ reveals a God of love, survived the scorn of the

Empire; even lasting a long time at the apex of Imperial power. Modern culture often seems to have entered what many see as the post-Christian era. Sittser contends that, with the guidance of our early leaders, “the best hours of Western Christianity might be ahead of us.”

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## *News & Notes*

☛ **RUSHTON LECTURE 2020:** On 16 April the CABF Program Committee met online. At that meeting it was determined that the 2020 Rushton Lecture will be cancelled due to Covid-19.

☛ **ACADIA UNIVERSITY:** In late February, Acadia appointed the Rev. Dr. Marjorie Lewis as new University Chaplain. Lewis comes to Manning Memorial Chapel with a wealth of theological learning and plenty of practical ministry experience. Lewis holds a PhD from the University of Birmingham, a Master of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies from the Atlantic School of Theology, and a Bachelor of Arts in Theology from the University of the West Indies. She also holds a diploma in Clinical Supervision from United Theological College of the West Indies and several accreditations in counselling and ministerial studies. Congratulations to Dr. Lewis and to Acadia University!

☛ **FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OTTAWA:** The Rev. John Perkin of Mount Allison University has been called by First Baptist Church Ottawa as the new Minister of the Congregation. For the past 27 years John has had an outstanding ministry as Mount A’s University Chaplain. The undergraduate courses that John developed while serving as Chaplain are among some of the most appreciated classes in the university. The CABF sends our best wishes to John and Dodie as they prepare to move to the Nation’s Capital. Congratulations to both John and First Baptist Church Ottawa!



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