

What is the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship?

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was formed about thirty years ago by a group of Baptist lay people and ministers who conceived it as a way of pursuing certain converging interests. First, they wanted to witness to historical Baptist principles. They also wanted to be involved with non-Baptist communions in joint worship, social action and ecumenical discussions of the nature of the Church. Finally, they wished to create a safe and welcoming environment where Baptists can share concerns and points of view with out fear of being marginalized. The ABF is not an executive body, carrying out programs, and advocating positions. It is a consultative body with the following aims:

1. To witness to the freedom implicit in the voluntary principle in religion which is the essence of the traditional Baptist position;
2. To affirm and celebrate Baptist participation in, and witness to the whole, visible, catholic and evangelical church of Jesus Christ;
3. To strengthen the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces and to encourage it to strive for the above;
4. To provide a forum for the discussion of doctrinal and ethical questions and social problems and policies in that spirit of tolerance and mutual respect which issues from Christian love.

In pursuit of these aims the ABF publishes the *Bulletin*, and meets semiannually for worship, fellowship, and study of an issue of contemporary interest. Everyone is welcome to attend.

THE BULLETIN

A P U B L I C A T I O N O F

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

S U M M E R 2 0 0 5



Tancook Island Baptist Church

CELEBRATING ITS 150TH ANNIVERSARY

July 15th-17th



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In This Issue

RODGER FORSMAN, EDITOR

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was founded more than thirty years ago in part to provide a forum for the discussion of issues which impinge on our understanding of the church and the nature of the Christian life. From time to time we pursue this educational aim by availing ourselves of the services of people who by virtue of training and experience are able to stretch our minds and challenge us to think through such matters.

In this issue we offer a review of two lectures presented by the Reverend Dr. Timothy Ashley to the recent ABF Assembly at Chester United Baptist Church. A well-known Biblical scholar Dr. Ashley and his wife the Reverend Maxine Ashley taught at Acadia Divinity College for more than twenty years. They currently serve First Baptist Church in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Dr. Ashley brought his professional scholarly skills and his pastoral experience to bear on the issue of how we should think about the Church. He rejected the currently popular assumption that the Church should think of itself primarily in sociological terms, asserting instead that the Church should understand itself through theological concepts. He then went on to show us how to do this, working out an account of the Church in terms of the doctrine of the *Trinity*, and the related notions of *Mission*, *Servanthood* and *Incarnation*. A theological account of the Church, however, is only as good as the degree to which it illuminates and guides practice. In his second lecture, therefore, Dr. Ashley sketched some of the ways in which this approach to thinking about the Church is having important consequences in the life of his congregation. The brief review presented here cannot do justice to the scope and detail of the lectures; at most they can whet our readers' appetites for engaging in similar enquiries themselves.

Dr. Ashley's lectures are a fine complement to "The Church in Context", two lectures given by the Reverend Neal MacPherson at the ABF Assembly at Port Williams in 2004. The ABF Executive is pursuing ways of making contributions such as these available to

a wider audience because of their quality, their practicality, and their manifest authenticity earned from solid research supported by experience in ministry.

In the last issue of the Bulletin we noted the passing of two of our very good friends and long time stalwart supporters of the ABF: Dr. Dorothy Lovesey and her husband, Dr. Morris Lovesey. The Reverend Roger Prentice, Chaplain of Acadia University contributes a tribute to them.

A new contributor, the Reverend Renée Clark, writes about her work as minister to the Tancook Island Baptist Church. Ms Renée Clark was ordained to the Christian Ministry on 14 May, 2005 in the church she serves. The ordination sermon was preached by both Tim and Maxine Ashley before a packed congregation. Serious, yet celebratory, the event included congratulations and best wishes from near and far, and was followed by a marvellous reception at the Community Center, to which all were invited. Hospitality, we are told, is a theological virtue: a doctrine well illustrated on Tancook Island last May!

In her brief essay Renée evokes visual imagery available to almost every reader. The description of Island life is not a mere panorama that displays everything at the same level of significance, but is rather more like an x-ray that shows up some of its inner workings. There is dependence on the rhythms of daily life as shaped by the physical and economic environment, interdependence as a basic necessity, acceptance built on participation, and community as lived fact. To this she ties ministry as a lived fact, not merely a role played.

Some education, some appreciation of departed friends, some celebration with a church which has helped to ratify a call to the Christian ministry: that's what is here this time. I trust it will be useful, evocative of good memories, and a motive for encouraging those who dedicate themselves to the service of Christ's Church.

"The Church: Theological Foundation & Practical Expression"

*Two lectures by the Reverend Dr Timothy Ashley, delivered
at the Spring Assembly of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship,
at Chester United Baptist Church, Chester, NS., May, 2005*

BY RODGER FORSMAN



Editor's Note: After teaching at Acadia Divinity College for twenty-one years, in 2003 Dr Timothy Ashley and the Reverend Maxine Ashley moved to La Crosse, Wisconsin, where he is the minister at First Baptist Church of La Crosse, WI. Maxine is Staff Associate Minister of Christian Education, American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, and also Chaplain of Onalaska Care Centre, Onalaska, WI. In addition, Dr. Ashley was recently appointed as Staff Associate Minister for Theological Education of the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin. Part of his responsibility is as Administrator of the Milwaukee Centre of Central Baptist Theological Seminary, headquartered in Kansas City, Kansas. He will also teach Old Testament at the Centre.

Although Dr. Ashley does not state them explicitly, two questions underlie his lectures. First, How shall we think about the Church? Second, What shape might a Christian congregation take as a consequence of answering the first question? The first lecture is essentially a response to the first question, and the second, to the second. Ashley's point of departure for his response to these questions is found in his key statement: "It is my view that the Church should define itself theologically and situate itself sociologically, not *vice-versa*."

We can grasp what this means as follows. Every congregation

is inescapably situated in a specific social, economic and political context. This being the case, it has often been thought that a congregation's basic self-understanding should be expressed in terms that reflect its context. For example, when we try to state the defining characteristics of a Christian congregation or formulate its statement of mission, we should do so in language drawn from the social sciences. Popular as this position currently is, Ashley rejects it in favour of the thesis that a Christian congregation's basic self-understanding must be expressed in theological, not sociological terms.

Having made the distinction he proceeds to show us how to think about the Church theologically. He introduces four categories as necessary to a complete account of the defining characteristics of a Christian congregation: it will be modelled on a correct understanding of the *Trinity*, of *Mission*, of *Servanthood*, and of *Incarnation*.

The doctrine of the Trinity expresses the distinctive Christian idea of God. It has often been assumed that the point of the doctrine of the Trinity is to describe the inner life of the Godhead. This, argues Ashley, is a mistake; what the doctrine actually describes is "the experience of the earliest Christians that God was one who took definitive action on behalf of the world in sending God the Son to earth to identify, to become one, with human beings." This is most famously expressed in Jn 3:16: "God loved the world in this way: God gave his only Son." This way of construing trinitarianism has two implications. First, it means that God is for us, i.e., working for our good, our salvation; God is not against us, imposing guilt and judgment. God is love. Second, God has to be thought of in terms of certain relations among persons, specifically those embodying active concern for the well being of others.

The next two categories, Mission and Servanthood are treated together. *Mission* is connected with the idea that God is at work in the world. The idea of *servanthood* is connected with the idea that what God is doing is being done on our behalf, for our benefit. If God is thought of as sketched above, then the mission of the Church, and the language in which it expresses its message, must express love of the world. Furthermore the mission of the Church, i.e. what the Church is to do just because it is the Church, must be focused outside itself. As Ashley puts it figuratively, the Church's

work is "out there", not primarily "in here". Just as trinitarianism implies that God's activity does not end in God but reaches out to the world, so it is implied that the Church's mission is essentially outside of the Church. Referring to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), Ashley suggests that:

the command is to go out, not drag in.... We have been permitted by our Bible translations to mistake the mission of the Church for getting people busily involved in church activities, boards and committees, rather than getting them *out the door*, into the *world*.

Dr. Ashley connects the concepts of *mission* and *servanthood* by means of an exegesis of the four "Servant Songs" in Isaiah (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). The second of these passages identifies the Servant as the People of God, and indicates that suffering is part of the Servant's mission. The People of God must of course minister to themselves through teaching, discipling and pastoral care (i.e., what is called "the upbuilding of the saints" in Eph. 4:12) but the purpose of it all is for ministry "out there in the world."

What does the People of God do "out there in the world"? This question is answered in Ashley's discussion of Incarnation. The doctrine of Incarnation is essentially about God's saving action in the world, as most clearly disclosed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Churches which conceive of themselves and their mission in terms of *incarnation* will act in imitation of God's actions. They will, as Ashley puts it:

involve themselves in the betterment of real people's actual lives and endeavour to work not only to transform individuals' religious commitment to the Lordship of Christ, but also will work on the implications of that Lordship within the culture (or the society).

To do this is to do the work of God, or at least that part of it which is within our capability. To incarnate God's love in such action requires walking with people, suffering with them, perhaps for a long time, without demanding that they subscribe to a creed or join our congregation. The demand, in fact, is the other way around: it

is a demand that the Church be engaged with those who struggle with life in the world, that the Church love and serve them.

Thinking of the People of God in terms of *incarnation* is well attested in other Old Testament literature, notably in Hosea and Jeremiah. But “the classic example of incarnational ministry” is Jesus. Dr. Ashley illustrates this point in a discussion of the exegetically difficult story of the man born blind (Jn 9). The disciples asked who was responsible for the man’s blindness: was it his parents, or he himself? Jesus rejects the assumption behind the question, namely, that for every evil we can find someone to blame, as though doing that is the end of the story, and the end of our responsibility. Nor, Ashley argues, did God arrange for the man to be born blind in order to achieve glory in restoring his sight. The real point is that God’s grace is not limited by evil however caused, and if the Church conceives of itself in terms of *incarnation* it will be the agent by which this takes place. “Our job is to give folks access to God’s healing love and liberating grace through what we do and who we are. That’s incarnational Church.”

To come to the second question underlying Dr. Ashley’s lectures: What shape might a Christian congregation take as a consequence of thinking about itself in terms of *trinity*, *mission*, *servanthood*, and *incarnation*? The short answer to this question lies in what is in effect Ashley’s definition of ‘Church’:

The Church is the People that imitates Who they see God is and what they see God do in the Bible and the world, and that tests its theology in its own context of worship and work.

Now definitions are general, but practical life deals with particulars. Hence a congregation cannot live out this definition in the real world without taking account of the actual context within which it sets itself to incarnate the grace of God. To speak of the application of the theology to practice, and testing the theological analysis by experience, requires reference to specific circumstances. This implies that there can be no general answer to the second question. For this reason Dr. Ashley focuses on the congregation which he and the Reverend Maxine Ashley currently serve, First Baptist Church of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

After painting a broad picture of the social and cultural context in which First Baptist Church of La Crosse finds itself, and briefly summarizing a part of its more recent history, Ashley describes the present outcomes of the congregation’s ongoing theological reflection about itself in its context. Five values have been identified: Community, Soul Freedom, Worship, Spiritual Journey and Inclusiveness. The thread that links these is the conviction that to be the People of God a congregation must be people who freely associate themselves for corporate and individual worship and who support one another in a common spiritual journey which in principle is open to all.

The process of discovery is continuing, but out of it has dawned the awareness that the church’s organizational structure might be impeding, rather than facilitating mission, getting “out there” to embody the grace of God in the world. Structures need to grow out of values, and be designed to enable passion for mission, not to control an institution. A corollary of this point is a fact that presses on most small to middle-sized congregations: “Churches must pay for themselves while being faithful to their values and mission “out there.”” Solutions being explored in this congregation with an attendance that averages around 60 at Sunday worship include sharing of facilities with other groups, qualifying for government grants for specific purposes, and partnerships, perhaps temporary, with other organizations for particular projects.

“Stay tuned”, says Dr. Ashley!

What shall we make of the entire discussion? First, it strikes this reviewer that Ashley is entirely correct in his starting point for thinking about the Church. The category of Divine Action is crucial to thinking about the Church if we are to make sense of the ritual and language typical of the Church down through the centuries. Yet the methodology of the sciences does not allow the notion of Divine Action to have any descriptive or explanatory role. The consequence is that if we try to think of the Church in purely social science terms we have in fact abandoned the very concept by which the Church has historically signified the basis on which it rests. Hence insisting that we think about the Church in theological terms is precisely the right thing to do.

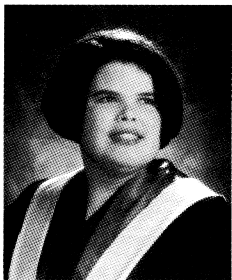
Second, Ashley understands the word ‘theology’ as essentially a verb; when he speaks of “theology,” we should think “theologizing,”

or “doing theology.” Theology in this sense is the activity of testing our thought about the faith to which the Gospel bears witness against our collective experience of God’s grace. The aim of such theologizing is, as Ashley would say, to help us get “out there”, doing God’s work in the world. Worth noting, too, is that after he has described Church in terms of *Trinity, Mission, Servanthood, and Incarnation*, he refrains from asking, “Given this description, what will the Church look like?” This is interesting: it shows that he is not advocating a cookie cutter strategy, assuming that if we get the definitions right all congregations will turn out looking the same. To do this would simply be to deny the fact that a congregation’s *context* is a crucial fact about it.

All in all, this was a very good pair of lectures, well deserving of amplification and a wider readership. Developing a self-analysis along the lines Dr. Ashley sketches would enrich any congregation.

“No man is an island ...”

A VIEW OF MINISTRY ON THE TANCOOKS
BY THE REVEREND RENÉE CLARK



Editor's Note: The Rev'd Renée Clark is the pastor on the Tancook Islands on Nova Scotia's South Shore. Born and brought up in Cape Breton, she holds a Bachelor of Arts from Cape Breton University and a Master of Divinity from Acadia Divinity College. She shares her life with the people of the Islands, and her parsonage with her dog Paisley and several cats.

It is four thirty in the morning, and we are pulling away from the wharf. Some of the twenty or so boats that normally lie at the Big Tancook wharf have already gone. In the east, the indigo sky is giving way to salmon pink and it is shaping up to be a fine day. Though the lobster season in this part of Nova Scotia spans

a six-month period between late November and late May, there are only a few short weeks on either end that are both safe and (hopefully!) profitable.

There is no time to waste as we steam the half-hour or so out to the furthest string of traps. The engine idles as a buoy line is gaffed and placed in the hauler, and the trap comes surging to the surface and is brought aboard. If we are lucky, there will be a lobster or two inside, and they will be big enough to keep. Crabs, starfish, urchins, and other accidental tourists are tossed back. Bait is changed and the trap is pushed over the side for its return descent to the bottom. And so begins the rhythm of the day: we will haul some 250 of these traps before mid-afternoon.

Since my arrival here, I have experienced the lobster fishery firsthand courtesy of several couples from the Island. My interest stems from the knowledge that fishing is part of the fibre of the Island, and consequently it holds the same significance within our congregation. I have learned that Bible studies, deacons' meetings, and other routines of church life must accommodate it, for the sake of the keeping of body as well as soul.

The Tancook Islands are a unique ministry setting in many ways. This is my first full time pastorate, and my time here has significantly broadened my understanding of the nature and goals of ministry. The seventeenth century poet John Donne wrote: “No man is an island, entire of itself”, and I have found this to be especially true here. Keenly aware that we are an hour's ferry ride away from any kind of supplies or services, Islanders—by necessity as much as by choice—have highly interdependent relationships. We know our neighbours, sometimes too well, and the joys and sorrows of life's passages are shared Island-wide.

In a conventional setting, one's congregation consists of those people who attend church or who are affiliated with people who do. On an island of some 150 residents with a congregation that varies seasonally between twelve and thirty, I have realized that I have in effect two congregations. My goal has become to minister not only with the ones who attend church, but also with the ones who do not but who are to varying degrees open to the ministry our church's presence makes possible. The sense of community overrides the distinction between those who are church-ed and those who aren't.

The sheer complexity of living in this kind of isolation lends itself to some wonderful, albeit unique, ministry opportunities. For example, the lack of medical services on the Islands means that medical emergencies must first be handled by a team of volunteers who have taken a weeklong provincial Medical First Responder course. Seeing both a need and an opportunity, it wasn't long before I became one of them. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would one day be learning to use a cardiac defibrillation machine and drive a retired ambulance! But that is what being part of the community is all about.

Everyone pitches in and works together when something needs to be done. The reception following my ordination service was a prime example of this. The time of year meant that a significant number of people would be involved in lobstering. Undaunted, the remainder, mostly unaffiliated with the church, pulled together and hosted a reception for over a hundred guests.

Those who know me know that baking is one of my passions, and has been for as long as I can remember. When I think of ministry, I think of Jesus' statement to His disciples in Matthew 13:33: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and mixed in three measures of flour until it was all leavened". If we place the leavening in a corner of a bowl of ingredients, and expect it to work, we'll be sorely disappointed. Rather, in order for it to work as it was meant to, it needs to be mixed thoroughly with the other ingredients. So it is with us. Being present and visible in the community lends authenticity and credibility to our witness. We are called not only to come into the Kingdom of God, but also to go forth from it.

Island resident Francine Fortin-Levy has written Tancook Baptist Church, 150th Anniversary 1855–2005 as a fund-raiser for the church. The book will be available for a minimum donation of \$25 including mailing costs. Charitable contribution receipts will be issued for contributions above that amount. All proceeds go to the church. Contact the Rev'd Renée E. Clark, Tancook Island Baptist Church, P.O. Box 40, 570 Big Tancook Island Rd., Big Tancook Island, NS B0J 3G0.

ABF Mourns Founding Members

BY ROGER PRENTICE

DEAN OF THE CHAPEL, ACADIA UNIVERSITY

Within a year the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship lost two outstanding members. Dr. Dorothy May (Surmon) Lovesey passed away on Friday, 19 March, 2004. Her husband, Dr. Morris Lovesey, died 9 January, 2005. Both Morris and Dorothy Lovesey were distinguished scholars at Acadia University and members of the Wolfville United Baptist Church. They brought to the ABF dedication, long service, and many insights into church life.

Morris Roland Bazentin Lovesey was born in Watford, UK, on 8 October 1916, some time after his father was killed in France during the Second Battle of the Somme, in World War I. "Bazentin," the name of the town closest to where his father fell, was included in Morris' name, a custom in those days under such circumstances.

Educated at Watford Grammar School, Morris was captain of the school rugby team and also played cricket. He earned a BSc (Honours) degree from the University of Birmingham. After graduation he began a career as a mining engineer in the gold mines of Johannesburg, South Africa. It was at a Baptist church in this city that he met Dorothy.

When war broke out in 1939 Morris enlisted in the 61st Tunnelling Company (Mines Engineers Brigade) of the South African Engineering Corps and served in the Levant (Lebanon) from 1941–1943.

Feeling a call to the ministry, Morris returned to Johannesburg. He and Dorothy were married and they moved to England. He received the MA from Oxford University and the Bachelor of Divinity (Honours) and the Master of Theology degrees from the University of London. In 1950 Morris was called to the Kirby Muxloe Free Church, Leicestershire, where he served for six years. He was Wing Chaplain, Air Training Cadets, from 1954–56. In 1956 he was invited by the then President of Acadia, Dr Watson Kirkconnell, to teach biblical studies. Although the Lovesseys had not intended to remain in Wolfville, their teaching careers were entirely devoted

to Acadia. Morris was Associate Professor and Professor of Biblical Literature in the University (1956–68), and Professor of Biblical Studies, Acadia Divinity College and Acadia University (1968–1982), holding the distinguished Payzant Chair in that subject.

Morris was a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, the Canadian Theological Society, the Humanities Association of Canada, and the Canadian Society of Patristic Studies. He was also President (1981) and Secretary (1989–1993) of the Wolfville Branch, Canadian Bible Society. A founding member of the Wolfville Area Inter-Church Council, he served as Treasurer (1970–1972), and later President (1972–1974 and 1982–1984). He was a member of the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, of which he was Vice-President (1968–1970), President (1970–1972, Secretary (1972–1974, 1976–1978, 1986–1988) and Treasurer (1982–1984). He was the author of “The Pastoral Epistles” (1956), “The Return from Exile” (1956), and “Called to Serve: A Mini-biography of Clarence Basil Lumsden 1895–1970” (1996). He also served as Editor of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship Bulletin from 1985–1992.

Dr. Dorothy May (Surmon) Lovesey was born in Johannesburg in 1919. She had a double career, both in nursing and in teaching English Literature. Trained in the Johannesburg Hospital, she earned diplomas as a Registered Nurse and Registered Midwife, as well as a diploma in Public Health. She served the municipalities of Johannesburg, London, and Oxford as school nurse and health visitor. She recalled bicycling through the streets of London during World War II air raids while serving as a volunteer at the East Ham Mission and calling on families.

Dorothy was also an academic. She earned the BA degree at the University of London, and the MA at Acadia. In 1971 she received the PhD at the University of London for a thesis entitled “A Critical Study of the Works of Aldous Huxley in an Attempt to Trace the Development of his Thought on the Nature of Reality.” She served as Assistant Professor of English at Acadia. Her biography of Silas Tertius Rand, “To Be a Pilgrim,” has received critical acclaim.

Like Morris, Dorothy also had a keen interest in promoting ecumenism. She was active in the Wolfville Area Inter-Church Council, was secretary of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, was the founding Secretary of the Friends of the ABF, and of the annual

Rushton Luncheon. Both were also strong supporters of the Acadia University Chaplaincy.

Together, Morris and Dorothy made a powerful team. Bringing up a family of three children, Roland, Rosalind, and Oliver, they made time for many special interests and projects. They worked together as kindred spirits, but each with individual opinions and goals. They helped each other which made their unity in spirit obvious to all. They were most hospitable folk and many ideas were discussed with visitors at their dining table over a meal.

The Loveseys are missed greatly by those who attend the University Chapel, and the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. Every Sunday evening they would sit together near the front of the Manning Memorial Chapel marking each moment carefully. Loyal participants in the ABF, one could trust that they would speak up in every discussion and lend a helping hand with our projects.

Their former home on Westwood Avenue is now owned by Acadia University. For many who pass that way it stands as a reminder of two people who were influential in the University and Divinity College, the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, and many other causes. We have witnessed the passing of an era.

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