

# THE BULLETIN

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

## *Atlantic Baptist Fellowship*

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## *Vin Rushton Memorial Luncheon & Lecture*

KEITH CHURCHILL, ANNA ROBBINS,  
AND DAVE OGILVIE

Atlantic Baptist  
Fellowship



within  
Convention

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DR. KEITH CHURCHILL  
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PAUL BURDEN  
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MAILING ADDRESS  
231 King Street, Box 2393, Windsor, NS, B4P 1V1  
EMAIL: [jgwhite@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:jgwhite@ns.sympatico.ca)

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## *In This Issue*

JEFFREY WHITE, EDITOR PRO TEMPORE

The written word has been of great importance to Christians through two millenia, to Baptist Christians over four centuries, and to the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship for three and a half decades. How else can I say that text has always been vital to the faith? The Bible, now in its many translations, and the multitude of books and publications dealing with faith are at the core of our education and thus our discipleship as Christians. This *Bulletin* is but one small piece of contemporary discipleship for some of us.

In this interim edition (with my apologies for publishing it quite late) is presented several articles that touch the themes of learning, reading, studying, and the like. Our President reflects upon our Fellowship after a visit to a Baptist fellowship of some similarity to the ABF. John Boyd offers a personal report of a sabbatical at Oxford University he enjoyed. Ed Colquhoun gives us an overview of a congregational study tool that has been found useful at First Baptist Church Amherst.

As the ABF Executive seeks a new Editor for the *Bulletin* we realize the importance of this little periodical. It is, likely, the greatest asset and tool we have. More people receive this than ever attend an assembly or luncheon, or ever post comments on our little-used website. Having participated in the ABF for a couple decades now, I am very interested in how the organization serves everyone out there who could use our help. Our *Bulletin*, like our assemblies, must offer practical help alongside the intelligent, scholarly thinking that has been a strength through the years. One of the stated aims of the ABF is *to provide a forum for the discussion of doctrinal and ethical questions and social problems and policies*. The value of such a forum – at an ABF assembly, in the *Bulletin*, or on the website – is positive change in our living with God and with each other in these days. The aims of this periodical, as with the whole Fellowship, should point to greater freedom and strength for the people of our churches and our whole world.

So, please pray with the Executive and communicate with us about our *Bulletin* and our present quest for an Editor. We need you; you need us.

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# *A Word from the President*

DAVID OGILVIE



Jeff White knows I've put off writing this piece far too long. My apologies, Jeff. And my apologies to you who have been watching your mailboxes, waiting patiently for the next issue of *The Bulletin*. Since Rodger Forsman's deserved yet long-delayed retirement last fall, we've been without a *Bulletin* Editor and, as we're discovering, it is difficult to publish a periodical without one. First, let me express our deep gratitude to Rodger for the tireless effort he put

into the task of editing *The Bulletin* these past years, and for the high standard he set and maintained. We are all the richer for his invaluable contribution. Thank you, Rodger! And second, I wish to thank Jeff White for helping to get this issue to print. Thanks Jeff! Your Executive continues to seek someone to take on the critical role of editor for *The Bulletin*, and if you have suggestions as to who might be both willing and well-suited to the task, please let me know.

*May you live in interesting times* is a phrase of questionable origin, often attributed (probably erroneously) to the ancient Chinese. Some say it is a blessing, and some say it is a curse. These are "interesting times" for the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, and some days I feel the times are more a blessing, and some days more a curse. From a purely popular standpoint, the times in which we live seem to be a curse to the ABF. Our attendance at events is declining, the subscription list to *The Bulletin* is shrinking, and our members are aging. While I'd love to tell you that this disturbing trend has been reversed in my brief tenure as your President, I'd be lying if I did. The times present our organization with some peculiar challenges, compelling us as an Executive to ask questions about our future viability. We find ourselves living in interesting times.

However, the times in which we live may also be seen as a blessing. The Church is reeling, desperately searching for fresh and authentic

ways to live out its calling from its increasingly marginalized place in society. Within the chaos of our crumbling institutions, and in the face of much fear-driven posturing for power, the Spirit is blowing vibrant and creative winds of change. These *are* interesting times, and the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is privileged to bring its own unique voice to the table. Perhaps as never before, someone needs to witness to and live the freedom that has always been implicit in the Baptist way, to affirm and celebrate Baptist participation in the broader ecumenical conversation, and to provide opportunities for Baptists and others to explore and discuss important questions of faith, doctrine, ethics, justice, politics, etc. in an open and thoughtful spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. We who give leadership to the ABF believe these aims that first brought us together more than thirty years ago continue to be relevant and worthy of our time and attention.

Jeff White and I recently had the privilege of representing you at the Convocation of the Alliance of Baptists held in Washington D.C. In bringing greetings on your behalf, I outlined a brief sketch of ABF history, pointing out that we have effectively lost every ‘battle’ we’ve fought. However, I noted that we still come together, instinctively knowing that we need each other, believing our voice should be heard, and trusting that God’s power is made perfect in our weakness.

We invite and encourage those of you who feel likewise to continue to join us in prayer and action. Come to our gatherings when you can. Support the organization financially as you are able. Encourage members of your congregations to read *The Bulletin*, to visit our website, and to join the conversation. We need each other, and we welcome fresh voices to join the chorus.

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ABF FALL ASSEMBLY – SEPTEMBER 28 & 29  
*First Baptist Church Halifax*

In conjunction with First Baptist’s 180th anniversary celebrations, the ABF is co-sponsoring a conference with Anna Carter Florence, Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship, Columbia Theological Seminary.

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# *Sabbatical Musings*

JOHN BOYD

*Editor's Note: This is an article written by Rev. John Boyd of First Baptist Church Halifax on his 3 month sabbatical in England in 2006. A version of it appeared in the Fall edition of First Baptist Voices and in The Star, a newsletter of Regent's Park College, Oxford.*

A few days after Easter, Debbie and I flew to England where we lived in Oxford for three months while I experienced my first sabbatical in thirty-two years of ordained ministry.

The experience was rich and rewarding. The heart of it was being part of the clergy sabbatical program at Regent's Park College, a Permanent Private Hall of Oxford University.

Regent's opened its doors to Debbie and me with the warmest possible welcome. We could participate in all aspects of College life – lectures, communal meals, worship, social activities and even the exciting events around “Eight's Week” when the rowing championships took place!

Two of the faculty members offered me tutorials – Dr. Fiddes himself, and Professor John H.Y. Briggs, Senior Research Fellow in Church History and Director of the Centre for Baptist History and Heritage. Tutorials are part of the Oxford system of education. In a one-to-one meeting you discuss an area of planned research and the tutor suggests a reading program. A couple weeks later you meet again for an hour to discuss the results of your reading. Students enrolled at Regent's would ordinarily meet weekly with their various tutors, each time presenting a paper on their research. Thankfully, those on clergy sabbatical are not expected to produce on that level!

My area of research was Baptist history and identity with a particular emphasis on the Baptist belief in freedom of conscience. The Regent's library was a treasure trove of resources and I spent many happy hours there. My reading included books on 17th and 19th century Baptist life in England, two volumes by Dr. Fiddes, one on Baptist identity and one on Baptist theology, as well as numerous

smaller works on Baptist beliefs from an ecumenical perspective. This reading confirmed for me that Baptists are in many ways a paradox – on the one hand, we can be eloquent in putting forth the necessity for freedom in matters of faith and practice when we feel threatened by other religions or governments, and, on the other hand, we can be almost vicious in stamping out any dissent to the “party line” among our fellow Baptists!

I did not expect to have as much access to the faculty of Regent’s as quickly became available. As a member of the “Senior Common Room” I was in daily contact with most of them and this led to new friendships that I will long cherish. Dr. Paul Sheppy, an expert in funeral liturgies (and the Baptist minister in nearby Reading), shared several afternoon walking jaunts around Oxford with me, during which we would discuss his many books on prayer, life in British Baptist churches, and which of the Oxford Colleges “laid the best table” for their communal meals! Dr. Rob Ellis, who spoke at an ABF Luncheon a few years ago, and his wife, Sue, were very hospitable – even loaning us a microwave oven and a mirror for our sparse rooms on Stanley Road! Rob, Tutor in Pastoral Theology, is deeply involved in preparing young men and women for the ministry, and his friendship and insights were much appreciated.

The College places great importance on relating Christian faith to all of life. The Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture, led by Rev. Dr. Nicholas Wood, provides distinguished lecture series each term, as well as conferences and publications addressing the arts and sciences and their relationship to the Christian and other religious traditions. Significant collaborative ventures have been made with the Oxford Centres for Islamic and Hindu Studies. While we were in Oxford the Centre offered a weekly series on *Faith in the Media* which featured speakers from BBC Radio, various newspapers as well as from publications for Britain’s multi-faith population.

Regent’s has both a “Junior Common Room” for undergraduates and a “Middle Common Room” for those doing graduate studies. I was soon informed that clergy on sabbatical were automatically members of the latter, which meant that I was welcome to join them for coffee and conversation when they took well-earned rests from their studies. Debbie and I were always included in their social activities and we were delighted to meet these future stars of the academic world! Several of the graduate students were also

residents in the house on Stanley Road where we lived so we had the opportunity to get to know them even better.

A highlight of College life is the weekly “Formal Hall” when the 150 or so students plus faculty and visitors share together in a three course meal (“starter,” “main,” and “pudding”). The students dress in more formal clothing and both students and faculty wear academic gowns. Members of the Senior Common Room and their guests sit at “High Table” and everyone enjoys a wonderful evening of food and fellowship. Debbie and I were pleasantly surprised one evening when we were introduced to a guest lecturer for a Samuel Beckett seminar who was from St. Mary’s University in Halifax! On any given Friday evening you could be sitting beside a guest lecturer, a visiting British Baptist leader, or an internationally known writer.

The city of Oxford has a lively cultural life and we took in as much as we possibly could. We saw amateur and professional plays, choral concerts, musical theatre and movies throughout our time in this marvellous setting, often having to choose between three or more excellent options several times a week.

We also discovered the wonderful efficiency of British Rail which could take us to London in fifty-five minutes for “only” 17 pounds each. There we could go to the theatre, visit the plethora of historic sites and museums, take a sail on the Thames or a ride on the famous London Eye. A very special London experience was Evensong in historic St. Paul’s Cathedral where we had seats in the Choir stalls! We also joined in the activities of Acadia’s Manning Memorial Chapel Choir who were on tour in early May, following them as they sang concerts in Cathedrals in Bath and Salisbury as well as a service in Holy Innocents Anglican Church in London.

Finding a place for Sunday worship proved a bit difficult at first (so many choices). The New Road Baptist Church in Oxford was welcoming and we enjoyed several services with this historic congregation. The best sermons we heard, however, were by lay persons in local Anglican Churches – the Honourable Tony Benn at the University Church of St. Mary, and Terry Waite at the Chapel of Magdalen College. Other services we enjoyed were at Oxford’s Christ Church Cathedral, where an outstanding choir sings throughout the College term, and at the famous Canterbury Cathedral.

A clergy sabbatical is all about renewal – renewal of mind, spirit, body and relationships. I cannot think of a setting that offers more opportunity for this kind of renewal than Oxford with its intellectual, spiritual and cultural riches. All of that along with the chance to walk the same streets and meadows of “Inspector Morse” and you have a recipe for a lifetime of memories.

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*Members of the  
ABF Executive:  
Jeff White  
Dave Ogilvie  
John Churchill  
Paul Burden  
John Boyd  
Lee Nicholas-Pattillo  
Andy Crowell*

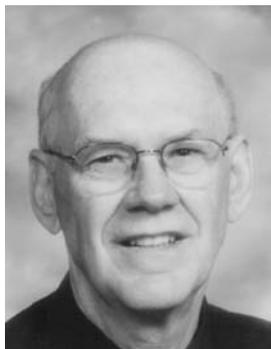


*Vin Rushton  
Memorial  
Luncheon  
and Lecture,  
Manning  
Memorial  
Chapel,  
June 2.*

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# *Saving Jesus: Living the Questions*

ED COLQUHOUN



*Editor's Note: Ed Colquhoun is a long-time participant in the ABF and has served us in many roles, such as President. Theologically educated at Acadia, his career has included many roles in public education: teacher, counsellor, principal, human resources co-ordinator, regional director for school construction and renovation et al. A member of First Baptist Amherst, he shares with us from a recent educational experience in the church.*

Is there an adult study program out there for congregations that have moved beyond literal understandings of the Bible, a program that might help Christians engage with present-day issues? For years Amherst First Baptist Church wrestled with this problem. Congregational members like Jim Stanley and John Tonks often prepared studies in their areas of expertise to solve the problem. When these local resources were no longer available, what then? This year, our congregation discovered an answer to the above questions. Describing itself as “a revolutionary exploration of Jesus Christ for the third millennium,” the study has the title *Saving Jesus*, as in rescuing the credibility of Jesus from the excesses of the Christian right wing.

Once one gets over the hyperbole of the title and promotional material, which obviously comes out of the culture wars taking place to our south, the actual material turns out to be fascinating. Relying heavily on interviews with contemporary religious thinkers like Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Bishop John Spong, and many others, one is immersed in the world of what has been called Progressive Christianity, for want of a more humble name. The aim of the program is to “stir the pot,” to experience some of

the ferment in contemporary thinking about Jesus, not to provide definitive answers to fundamental questions; hence the name of the sponsoring organization – Living the Questions.

There are twelve sessions, all with a DVD that lasts about 20 minutes. The format includes group discussions after each “chapter” of which there are two to four each session. A shared meal or snack is part of the program. The suggested maximum number is ten participants. The study suggest that three leaders are required, a facilitator to prepare and present the material, a volunteer observer to make sure that everyone is included and comfortable, and a host or hostess responsible for hospitality. A short introductory overview is provided to help people decide whether or not the program is for them.

In our case, we went with two leaders and from 15 to 25 participants weekly. Two or three people found the material not to their liking, one stating that he didn’t think that the Faith had to be that complicated. The majority opinion is that this is an exciting, stimulating and worthwhile study. It is definitely not for those who take the Bible literally, nor for those who feel that Jesus means only personal salvation rather than justice for all.

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Friends are sympathetic to the aims of the ABF,  
and support its work by an annual subscription fee of \$10.

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Please enroll me as a  
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## *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 Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches 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.