

The Bulletin

An Atlantic Baptist Fellowship Publication



Manning Memorial Chapel, Acadia University

Site of the *Vincent Rushton Lecture*

Saturday, June 4, 2011; 11:00 am

Spring, 2011

From your new Editor.....

I was there 40 years ago, when two motions were passed at the Annual Assembly of the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces. The bitter debate and rancor of that time has changed forever the relationship of many Baptists. The Assembly voted to withdraw its support and withdraw itself from the Canadian Council of Churches, in which Canadian Baptists had been prominent since its birth in 1944 (the first meetings of the CCC were held in Yorkminster Baptist Church, Toronto). The Assembly also voted to add a new restriction in the selection of Delegates to its meetings, or to serve on its Boards. From then on, only those who could give evidence of baptism by immersion could be recognized as delegates.

At the time, I was appalled by the negative comments made about other denominations, all of whom I considered my sisters and brothers in the faith. To cut ourselves off from anything remotely ecumenical seemed wrong; and to interfere in the freedom of a local church as it chooses its delegates seemed, to me, most improper and un-Baptistic.

I was also there, some months later, when a large group of Baptists came together in sadness but hope, to form the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. We believed that we could educate and inspire those within our Convention, and provide enthusiastic support and direction to amend the brokenness, and set a new course which would lead to a return to the CCC and remove the restrictions on local churches,

Forty years have now passed, and the Atlantic Baptist Convention is no closer to rejoining the CCC, and the new By-Laws of Incorporation passed in 2010 have added even more denominational control – not just in the polity, but even in the doctrine of local churches. Those churches who cannot in good conscience sign the new membership agreement must forfeit their historic membership in the Convention; and their pastors will lose their accreditation and benefits (after a 3 year ‘grace’ period).

The ABF is now at a crossroads. The road we have followed for 40 years has led us into paths of wonderful fellowship with and respect for each other. But it has not produced the hoped

for changes in Convention attitude and policy. I believe we have three options: first, simply to continue on that same path and remain a mutual fellowship group until the last of us is gone; second, to say that our work is done, and call it a day; or third, to step boldly into a new direction. Very aware of the Convention situation, the members of your Executive have worked diligently this past year, to provide leadership toward that third option – to take the ABF into the future with a new vision and confidence.

In this issue of *The Bulletin* you will find information about the Vincent Rushton Lecture at Acadia, featuring the General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, who will be glad to answer questions about the standing invitation to the ABF to join the CCC as a member in its own right. You will find information about a new draft of our Constitution, which will be presented for discussion and a vote at the Fall Annual Meeting of the ABF. And you will be made aware of the Executive's serious consideration of the possibility of the ABF itself incorporating as a first step toward becoming an organization which can legally offer accreditation and benefits for pastors who will be 'orphaned' due to the loss of Convention accreditation. Plus there is the very real dream of expansion both within our geographic area, and beyond; for we are increasingly aware that we are not alone - there are others like us in various parts of the country. The 'Atlantic' in our name may be too small!

Above all, we need your prayer and input and vision. Please plan on attending the Rushton Lecture and the Fall Meeting of the ABF. I have gladly accepted the position as your new Editor because I firmly believe that we are being prepared for an exciting new adventure.

The Lord is not yet finished with the ABF!



[Rev. Dr.] Dan Gibson,
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Vincent Rushton Lecture and Luncheon

FRIENDS OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP.....

It is a joy to announce the 2011 Vincent Rushton Lecture and Luncheon that will be held on Saturday, 4 June at the Manning Memorial Chapel. We will gather at the chapel for registration and fellowship at 11:00 a.m. and the Lecture will begin at 11:30 a.m. upstairs in the sanctuary. The Luncheon will follow at 12:30 p.m. in the Chapel Hall. The cost for the lunch is \$15.

The speaker this year will be the Rev'd Dr. Karen Hamilton, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches. Her lecture is entitled, 'Ecumenism in Canada and the Canadian Council of Churches,' with specific emphasis on the contribution which the Baptists have made to the Council over the years. Dr. Hamilton is an internationally known ecumenical representative who had been invited to a forum on global development that included the United Nations General Secretary.



There will also be a time for the recognition of the Rev'd Dr. Reginald Dunn, a Maritime Baptist minister with a wider Canadian ministry, and a former President of the Canadian Council of Churches from 1966 to 1969.

This June we will look at the Canadian ecumenical scene within the Baptist framework and what we might still continue to contribute. It is an important topic which should be of general concern if we are to be ministering to our communities in a 'secular age.' I personally invite you to this Lecture and Luncheon, one of the most popular events of the ABF year. To allow us to prepare properly, would you please register, as soon as possible, your intention to attend.

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Roger H. Prentice, Kim Sweet, Conveners

A Word from the President

It has been a long time coming, but I rejoice to greet the readers of *the Bulletin* for the first time as ABF President. For about half of my life, and half of the ABF's life, I have appreciated and valued this special fellowship. As much as lyric: “the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above” is claimed by many Christian gatherings, the ABF has been especially so for me. At a time in my life when new patterns of worship, new theological thoughts, and new approaches to the scriptures, and experience with other Christian denominations were all being opened up before me, I was also introduced to this fellowship of Baptist congregations and individuals who encouraged these new directions in my faith.

The need is great for individual Baptist Christians to find those with whom they are safe and free. In my few years of ministry I have been sometimes alarmed as I wondered how many people of our churches, including pastors, have left for other denominational homes. How many have moved on because they felt less and less at home, less and less welcome, less and less free to worship and think and lead and be a disciple *as a Baptist*?

And the need for more than “fellowship of kindred minds”



may now be and hand. When we meet in the fall, celebrating our 40th Anniversary, we shall seek to revise our ABF Constitution and foundational documents. You will receive details about this at our spring Luncheon. The need for our organization to be incorporated must be considered. The need for us to be organized to support clergy and congregations who are on the edge of belonging in the CABC is looming. How shall we need to be re-created? Let us discern this together.

Jeffrey White
Senior Pastor, Windsor United Baptist Church

(Editor's note: In the incorporation debates of the last few years, there has been much use of the phrase 'autonomy of the local church' and to a lesser extent, the word 'independence'. We have asked our resident theologian and historian, Dr. Bill Brackney, to give us the history of these terms.)

New Questions? Old Issues!

The principle of congregational autonomy is once again being underscored among Baptists. “Autonomy” is often being raised as an historic Baptist doctrine as well as a valued theological idea. Care needs to be taken in both respects. What is really sought after is the need and responsibility under Jesus Christ of a congregation of believers to decide upon matters of faith and practice without coercion from without. Early Baptists talked of this as congregational independency and completeness. They used terms like mutuality, delegated authority, empowerment, catholicity, and “walking together.”

First, the historical context. It may come as a surprise to know that the terminology of “autonomy” is relatively late in Baptist development. For over two centuries, the word “autonomy” is not to be found in Baptist discourse. It is not found in confessional statements, or treatises on polity, or in theological textbooks. This is for good reason. The term, while it is a composite term from Greek, entered our usage in the second half of the 19th century as the social sciences—sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, etc.—were coming on stream in universities. People wrote of autonomous villages and cities, and of an individual's autonomy. One of the keenest new thinkers of this era among Baptists was Edgar Young Mullins, a younger Southern Baptist pastor in Baltimore, Maryland, who took some classes at the new Johns Hopkins University where the social sciences had been introduced. Mullins liked the term and baptized it, so to speak, in his teaching on the doctrine of the church as he accepted a professorship and the presidency of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky in 1899. Later, Mullins introduced the term “autonomy of the local church” in his classic book, *Axioms of Religion* in 1908. His work spread widely in the Baptist family, in large part because he served as president of the Baptist World Alliance and traveled extensively just after World War I. We are indebted to Mullins for the introduction of

the term. Yet, it is worth noting that his ideas won very slow acceptance among other Baptist thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic: H. Wheeler Robinson at Regent's Park, A. H. Strong at Rochester, W. N. Clarke at Colgate, and George Horr at Newton did not accept it in their discussions of the church. No Canadian made use of the term until much later.

There are some important theological issues at stake here. Baptists believe that the church is a called and gathered expression of the Body of Christ. We speak of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and we believe Christ is the head of his people. It is one of the "crown rights of the Redeemer," to use an old phrase. To move Jesus Christ away from his headship of the church toward a body of associated believers who govern themselves as any voluntary association, would be a serious theological error. Our ecclesiology and Christology must blend together. Further, the reformed theological tradition, to which many Baptists belong to one degree or another, provides some caution from the doctrine of fallen humanity when it comes to making statements about self-will or self-governance. And that goes for all expressions of Baptist polity: the church, the association, the convention, and the alliances and fellowships. A third reason why Baptists might take care with terms like "autonomy" is the lack of clear biblical support for the term. Like a lot of words we toss about in popular theology, it is neither a biblical term nor one that expresses a biblical idea. The churches in the Book of Acts and in the epistles were evidently interdependent and recognized ties with each other and as part of an apostolic tradition.

Baptists of varying kinds have appealed to the "doctrine" of the autonomy of the local church whenever the authority of the local congregation seems threatened. Fundamentalist Baptists in the United States and Canada made use of the idea of autonomy to guard against the over-reach of "conventionism" in the 1920s and 1950s. Fundamentalist pastors in the American South especially like the idea because it gave them free rein (reign!) over their churches. More Liberal and progressive Baptists were drawn to the principle of cooperation and required a tension between autonomy and interdependence, if they accepted the idea at all. Some more liberal Baptists hearkened back to the old English General Baptists

who were more connectional in their polity and would never have thought of “autonomous” churches.

In our era, it is ironic that those espousing energetically the doctrine of the autonomy of the local church are the more “liberal” Baptists who dislike the encroachments of a convention into their congregational lives. The adversarial locus is the same: authority lodged beyond a congregation over a congregation is contrary to the Baptist way of doing things.

In the 1970s American (Northern US) Baptists, now called the American Baptist Churches in the USA, took up these issues



and landed upon a working solution. They concluded that the idea of autonomy had lodged itself in the psyche of most Baptists and that it had to be honoured. But, they also held tenaciously to the equally important idea of cooperation and associationalism. The result was a governance statement on autonomy and interdependence that has stood that part of our family in good stead now for almost half a century. It bears another look as Canadian Baptists revisit these important issues.

William H. Brackney

The Millard R. Cherry Distinguished Professor of
Christian Theology and Ethics, Acadia Divinity College;
Faculty of Theology, Acadia University

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*From The Churches....*

Welcome! to Arlington United Baptist Church, which started the new year by joining the ABF.

***40th Anniversary of Atlantic Baptist Fellowship  
Fall Rally and Annual Meeting  
September 30 & October 1, 2011  
First Baptist Church, Halifax  
Theme: Being Baptist in a Changing World***

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray, Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of the City of Washington, DC will give two addresses on Being Baptist in a Changing World. A former Executive Director of the DC Baptist Convention and a current member of the Board of the Alliance of Baptists, Dr. Haggray has experiences that include denominational and congregational life, as well as participation in a progressive Baptist movement. He will address our theme from two points of view:

1. *Being a Baptist Congregation in a Changing World*
2. *Being a Baptist Leader in a Changing World*



Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Haggray became the 18th senior pastor of the historic First Baptist Church in the City of Washington, DC in November, 2010. Haggray, who had been the executive director/minister of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention since 2001, became the first African-American senior pastor in the church's history, which dates to 1802.

Prior to taking his DCBC post, Haggray served as pastor of two other Washington congregations as well as churches in New Jersey and Connecticut. He is 46; a native of Savannah, Ga.; and a graduate of the University of Virginia, Yale University Divinity School and Wesley Theological Seminary. His wife, the Rev. Shelby Martin Haggray, is a native of Martinsville, Va., and currently serves as the associate dean for community life at Wesley Seminary. They and their three children (Micah, 10; Martin, 9; and Sophia, 5) reside in the District of Columbia.

## *Who We Are....*

The ABF is a fellowship of churches and individuals who have been in relationship now for 40 years. Originally its membership was composed exclusively of churches, but over the years, dozens of individuals who were not members of ABF churches asked to be included in the Fellowship, so the decision was made to have both churches and individual members, and all are equally able to hold office and vote. Individual members are called 'Friends of the ABF' and are asked for an annual contribution of \$10.00 to cover mailing and administrative costs. The churches are encouraged to include the ABF in their budget each year.

This is the list of the 20 churches which at one time or another either voted to join the ABF, or made contributions. Like most lists, it is easily out of date. Your assistance in helping keep this list current would be greatly appreciated.

Annapolis Royal Baptist Church  
Arlington United Baptist Church (just joined!)  
Arlington United Baptist Church  
Bayside Baptist Church (Halifax Co.)  
Bridgewater Baptist Church  
Chester Baptist Church  
First Baptist Amherst  
First Baptist Halifax  
First Baptist Truro  
First Cornwallis United Baptist Church  
Hantsport Baptist Church  
Lawrencetown Baptist Church  
Mahone Bay Baptist Church  
North-West Baptist Church, Lunenburg Co.  
Parrsboro Baptist Church  
Pereau Baptist Church  
Port Williams United Baptist Church  
Sydney Baptist Church  
West Lane Baptist Church, Moncton  
Wolfville Baptist Church

## *From The Churches....*

### *Port Williams United Baptist Church*

As we, the congregation at Port Williams United Baptist Church, journey through this reflective and quiet time of Lent, the life of our congregation is still as vibrant as always.

In preparation for this Lenten season, we began with a Lenten Workshop. It was led by the children and youth of our congregation who delivered a meaningful program reminding us of the meaning of Lent through scripture, prayer and song. We were then served a wonderful pancake breakfast!

“Book of Faith: 40 day Lenten Journey with the Lord’s Prayer” written by Henry F. French is providing a focus this Lent for our adults. Along with engaging in daily devotional readings, meditation and journaling, the congregation has been challenged to gather in small groups and share thoughts and feelings on their Lenten journey.

Our church recently began providing leadership for a monthly worship service at Blomidon Court, a nursing home facility in our area - a time filled with scripture, music, and fellowship. It’s proving to be a true blessing for both those participating from our congregation, who are able to share the Word of God in this way, and the residents, who, we trust, feel the warmth of God’s Spirit in our visit.

As Easter approaches, preparations continue for our cantata, “Morning Glory”, to be presented on Easter Sunday morning by our choir. This wonderful musical is composed by Bob Rushton (son of Vin and Jean), and directed by our Music Director, Dr. Christianne Rushton (Bob’s daughter). It promises to be a “glorious” morning as we proclaim the message that indeed...”Jesus Christ is Risen! Alleluia!”

*Submitted by Kim Sweet*



## ***Report on the ABF Fall Assembly September 24 & 25, 2010***

“Fruitful Partnerships” was the theme of the ABF Fall Assembly held last September in Port Williams, Nova Scotia. More than seventy people gathered to explore the topic of “partnership” as a way for Baptist people and churches to live together in community, to reconnect with old friends and to make new acquaintances, and to enjoy the wonderful hospitality of Port Williams United Baptist Church.

Baptists have always been a rather independent lot, advocating “soul liberty” for individuals, “autonomy” for local congregations, and “separation” between church and state. But as a point of balance with these freedoms, Baptists have also affirmed the “principle of association,” recognizing that Christ calls us to live and to serve in community. From the fertile ground of our historic convictions has grown an emerging model for Baptist association, one rooted in “partnership “ - a relationship between individuals, congregations, and even organizations that is characterized by mutual respect, cooperation, and responsibility. It is a model lived in practice by our sisters and brothers in the Alliance of Baptists in the United States and in the Fraternity of Cuban Baptist Churches.

We were joined in Port Williams by two international guests representing these two, sister Baptist groups: Francisco (Paco) Rodés González and Paula Clayton Dempsey. Paco has served in pastoral ministry for more than 30 years in Cuba. It was while he was the Minister of First Baptist Church Matanzas in the mid 1980’s that he helped to form the Fraternity of Cuban Baptist Churches – a group with many parallels to the ABF. In semi-retirement, he now serves in the Kairos Centre, an inner-city outreach and ministry of First Baptist Church in the city of Matanzas, and in a developing prison ministry of the Fraternity that is taking root in many parts of Cuba, thanks to Paco’s leadership. He and his wife, Lila, and one of their two daughters, Lissett, were also with us.



**Francisco (Paco) Rodés González  
and his daughter, Lissett**



**Paula Clayton Dempsey**

With more than 25 years in ministry, Paula Clayton Dempsey brings a variety of experiences to her position as “Minister for Partnership Relations” with the Alliance of Baptists in the US. Paula has served as church pastor, campus minister, and as Hospice Chaplain and coordinating director of the Advent Center for Spirituality. She helped raise two sons with her husband, Paul, in Mars Hill, N.C., and participated in five Alliance-sponsored trips to Cuba. Before returning to their home in North Carolina, Paula and Paul toured the South Shore and Cape Breton, visiting with some of our ABF churches and members.

Both Paco and Paula spoke to us about the model of partnership, and some of the ways in which this model is lived out within their organizations. We also reflected together on the contrast between this model and the one represented in the new General Operating Bylaw of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, one that seems to rely heavily on a need to establish authority and to enforce conformity. This provided opportunity for awareness to be raised around the issues churches need to be aware of as they make their decision in regard to membership in the new

CABC, Inc. Needless to say, our conversations were spirited and stimulating.

We wish to thank our guests for sharing their thoughts and themselves with us. Our time together strengthened our long-standing relationship with the Alliance of Baptists, and it invited us into a similar relationship with the Fraternity of Cuban Baptist Churches. It was also a great encouragement to us to be reminded that there are other Baptist groups “out there,” in various parts of the world, which are struggling with many of the same issues we face, and who, like us, are living out their Baptist convictions with integrity and grace.

And we would be remiss if we didn't thank all the organizers of, and contributors to, the Fall Assembly (you know who you are!) for such a memorable and meaningful weekend in the beautiful Annapolis Valley. We were reminded at every turn – in the sounds of lively conversation and laughter, in the sights of the fall colours beginning to paint the leaves and the baskets of apples on our tables, in the delicious food graciously served, in the surprisingly familiar stories of our guests, and in the warm fellowship we shared – that life in this community we call the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is rich in an abundance of “fruitful partnerships.” Thanks be to God!

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From The Churches....

First Baptist Church, Halifax....

March 20th, 2011 a Hymn Sing: An uplifting afternoon of favourite hymns. Our own men's choir (Men Without Jackets) Director of Music, Lynette Wahlstrom, Dalhousie Student Trombone Quartet, Patrick Salah, piano and organ and MC Olga Milosevich made for a delightful afternoon!

February 27th, 2011 our members voted not to join the newly incorporated Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches this coming August. We have belonged to the Convention since our beginnings in 1827. By any measure this was a historic decision by our membership and, for the most part, it was met with sadness and disappointment by our congregation. The vote was 75 in favour, 3 opposed and 4 abstentions.

Submitted by Lee Nicholas-Pattillo.

The Wolfville Baptist Church Chimes

The Wolfville Baptist chimes are going to ring again. Their message of peace and promise will once again sound across the town when the bells in the tower will play *Abide With Me* or *Unto The Hills*, or any of the many more beloved Christian hymns of faith.



Community outreach was what the members of the Social and Benevolent Society (S&B) of Wolfville Baptist had in mind in 1979, when they launched a financial campaign to procure memorial chimes. Within two months the required \$14,000. was raised, and in a special Memorial Book was carefully recorded, in beautiful penmanship, the names of all those who were remembered in this way by those who loved them.

For over 25 years the chimes rang out their tidings of good will. However, like all technologies, the mechanism for making it happen began to have problems, which escalated until the sounding of the bells was only possible when a skilled person was available to manage the system. Finally they went silent. Many have missed hearing the clear, musical message that people would sing in their hearts, as the music played.

The Chimes Memorial Fund, which held the gifts in honour of so many of the faithful of our community, was strong enough to enable a serious look at an upgrade or replacement, so, this winter the S&B once again studied the chimes situation. New technology is now available to replace obsolete mechanics. New eagerness is being felt. New chimes have been selected and are on order, with the notion that they will be installed and ready to ring on Mothers' Day.

There is much yet to be done; decisions have to be made about many things; hymns with an ecumenical flavour have to be selected. However, Wolfville Baptist tower will soon, again, be reminding the town of our proud, Christian heritage. The bells will be saying *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* and *Come Ye Faithful People Come* – and much more.

Submitted by Shirley Margeson-Skinner

(Editor's note: Full text of a proposed draft updated Constitution will be available at the Rushton Lecture in June, for discussion in September. The document below could be the first step toward incorporation.)

**(Draft) MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION
FOR A NON-PROFIT SOCIETY**

The name of the Society is

ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP.

On a volunteer and non-profit basis the objectives of the society are:

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 promote peace and understanding amongst people of all faiths;
4. To provide a forum for the discussion of doctrinal and ethical questions, and social issues and policies in that spirit of tolerance and mutual respect which issues from Christian love;
5. To bear witness to these objectives with and among Baptists in Atlantic Canada ,as well as nationally and internationally;
6. To provide accreditation for clergy and chaplains;
7. To associate and co-operate with other like-minded organizations, such as the Atlantic Ecumenical Council, The Canadian Council of Churches, The Gathering of Baptists, and the Alliance of Baptists;
8. To acquire by way of grant, gift, purchase, bequest, devise or otherwise, real and personal property and to use and apply such property to the realization of the objects of the Society;
9. To buy, own, hold, lease, mortgage, sell and convey such real and personal property as may be necessary or desirable in the carrying out of the objects of the Society.

Provided that:

The society shall not carry on any trade, industry, or business;

All funds shall be used solely for the purposes of the Society and the promotion of its objects;

If the society is terminated, wound up or dissolved and, after satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, there remains any property whatsoever, the same shall be paid to some other charitable organization in Canada having objects similar to those of the society.

The activities of the Society are to be carried on in Nova Scotia.

The Registered office of the Society is located at First Baptist Church, 1300 Oxford Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 3Y8.