

BULLETIN
of
The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship
October, 1982

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First Baptist Church

Amherst, N.S.

**WHERE THE
ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
WILL MEET**

October 22 - 23, 1982 (See pages 11 - 12)

Editorial Comment

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE BULLETIN: references to two conferences — a report on the Spring conference in Bridgewater, June 18-19, and an announcement of the coming Fall conference.

The Spring conference was very encouraging, full of moments of inspiration and challenge. No report can convey the inspiration of any conference, or do justice to what happened — and this report is no exception in that regard. However it is an honest attempt to share with those of our readers who could not be at the conference. We hope that you will find it helpful.

THE FALL CONFERENCE WILL BE IN AMHERST, OCTOBER 22-23. The emphasis is on evangelism, always a timely topic, but never more so in the life our convention than at the present time. Note carefully what is being presented, and if at all possible, plan to be present.

TWO SPECIAL ARTICLES call for careful attention. "Ecumenism in Canada" is a summary of the report given by the general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches at the triennial assembly last May. For those of us who are vitally interested in ecumenism, it is not a particularly pleasing document, but it "tells it as it is." It brings us face to face with problems that must be faced and with some insights that we should share. Read it with care!

"ARE WE ADRIFT FROM OUR DENOMINATIONAL MOORING?" is the question asked by Dr. Gerry Harrop in a thoughtful presentation of the implications of the Baptist emphasis on the autonomy of the local church — something that we have cherished as a "Baptist distinctive." The article points out how far we are departing from it some of our church and convention practices. To read the article, as we hope you will, is to ask the question: How can we get back to the true Baptist position?

The last-page devotional meditation is on the Advent theme. While this may seem to be out of season, this is as near as we can get to in our publication time table, and, in reality, we are not very far from it!

Greetings to all our readers! May God bless you in Church program, now getting in full swing, and throughout the months ahead!

The next issue of the ABF Bulletin will be in February, 1983.

I. Judson Levy
Editor

THE BULLETIN OF THE ABF is published by the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. Editor — Rev. I. Judson Levy, P.O. Box 823, Wolfville, N.S. B0P 1X0.

The Bulletin is mailed to interested churches and individuals. The names of any who wish to receive the Bulletin are to be sent to: Rev. Byron Corkum, P.O. Box 68, Lawrencetown, N.S., B0S 1M0.

While the Bulletin is mailed free of charge, donations to help pay the ever-increasing cost of publication and mailing are gratefully received, and should be mailed to the treasurer: Mrs. Evelyn Kenney, 37 Crescent St., Bridgewater, N.S., B4V 1L1.

(PLEASE NOTE — After January 1, 1983, all contributions are to be mailed to the new Treasurer: Mrs. Evelyn Smith, 13-A Marilyn Drive, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 3X8).



ABF Spring Conference Report

The Spring Conference of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was held in the Bridgewater Baptist Church on June 18-19, 1982. The theme of the Conference was "The View from the Pew — The Layman's Perspective." Presiding over the conference was the retiring president, the Rev. John Boyd (then of Mahone Bay, now of Amherst) and the Rev. Phil Griffin-Allwood as secretary. There were three sessions — Friday evening, Saturday morning and afternoon.

A major emphasis on worship is a vital part of each ABF Conference, and this gathering was no exception. At the close of the evening session of address and discussion, the group gathered in the main part of the church for a service of Holy Communion. This was conducted by the minister of the church, the Rev. Allen Griffin, assisted by some of the deacons of the church with the church organist, David Zwicker, leading in the music and Mrs. Clarice Wile as soloist. This was a well-prepared and reverently conducted service blending the spoken word and appropriate music in an uplifting worship experience. Our thanks to Mr. Griffin, Mr. Zwicker and those who were associated with them.

The Saturday morning devotional period, setting the tone for the sessions that followed, was under the leadership of Miss Patricia Gow of the Bridgewater church. Miss Gow presented a well-planned worship service including hymns, scripture and meditation together with meaningful group participation. The scripture passages, Exodus 19:1-6 and I Peter 2:9-10, gave a background for the very thoughtful and challenging meditation. (A brief summary follows.)

Miss Gow, in her opening remarks, stated that any belief that the church of other days was perfect in every way is a myth. The church, as much in our society, never was what "it used to be," or what we think it was. Change, said the speaker, is inevitable, even though change produces growing pains. God created a living world and life is synonymous with change. So let us not mourn the natural evolution of the living Body of Christ. Rather let us rejoice that the church of tomorrow will not even be what it is today.

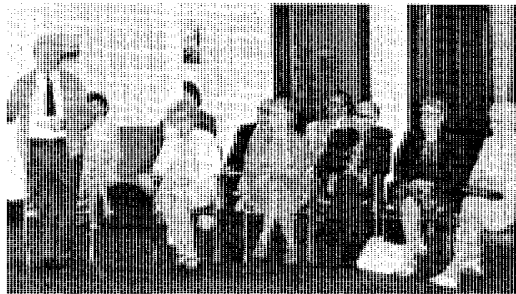
Through the use of thought-provoking concept, the Church was defined as "a people with a story." The story, however, remains only a story until the point when deep within us, we begin to realize that our story and the Gospel story are molded together. While our roots are grounded in the biblical story of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the biblical account does not end the story. Instead it invites us to participate in a continuing adventure which, if we allow it, can captivate us and

pull us along to places where we would not dream of entering imply on our own volition.

Miss Gow, with a keen understanding of the scriptural background, further defined the Church as "the laos" — the holy people of God. The Church is called to be a people with a difference, called to in the world but not of the world. The Church must tell the story, not only in words, but in doing our stories, so that others may glimpse what we have seen of the nature of our Creator God. We are actors in our own story and actors in His story. As a pilgrim people, we are actors in the power and purpose of the Gospel, so that the world may not just hear the Gospel, but that the world might also experience the Gospel. God did not only come to us in Jesus to tell of His love, but God died on the cross to show us the limitlessness of His grace. As the Church we are called to be a community of doers. We are called to the actors with God in His continuing story of the transformation of the world in the kingdom of our God.

The speaker concluded her meditation on this challenging note: While we cannot be faithful and wish to escape the past, we must not be tied to the past. God haunts us and beckons us to move forward in our own stories of faith. The scriptures proclaim the will of our God: "Behold, I am making all things new." The story which Christ came to tell us has become our story. The Word continues to live in us. May we allow our lives to be directed by the author of this story.

THEME PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION — The theme speaker for the conference was James Stanley, Senior Executive Officer of the Maritime Resource Management Service, who lives in Amherst where he is active in the work of the First Baptist Church in many activities and Chairman of the Board of Deacons. He, along with



others, has made an extensive survey of the operation and achievements of his own church, both in the past and facing the problems and opportunities of the present and future. This study gave him background from which he was able to draw valuable insights as to the operation of the Church on a wider scale.

Mr. Stanley discussed the conference theme, "A View from the Pew: The Layman's Perspective" from the viewpoint of the church as it now is, and a projection of what the church should and might be in the future. At the Friday evening session, he dealt with the former speaking on the subject: "Where we are now: an inward look." He pointed out that while the church may, to some degree at least, be regarded as a place of safety, a refuge from much of life's stress, its mission and message must not be held to this level. The speaker said that, in his opinion, the church too much, in its ministry, emphasizes the "come in" aspect, often overlooking the call to go out to witness and to serve at the centre of the world's life. Some penetrating questions were asked, such as: Why the decline in Sunday School attendance and activity? Where are the young people and the men? Why are they not more actively engaged in the Church's life and work? Why are we so hesitant to reach out? The challenge of the evening address may be summarized in this thought: We, as Christians, must be "risk-takers." Churches must be "go" structures, not just "come" structures.

SATURDAY MORNING Mr. Stanley addressed the assembly on the sub-

ject: "Where do we go from here?" — a challenge to the church look outward and to move forward. The speaker asked his hearers to think about what we have as equipment for the journey, and, in answer, suggested that we have, or should have, commitment and dynamism. In order for the church to reach persons, it must make the personal approach on three fronts: study, prayer and contemplation; through renewal campaigns; and in a systematic program of sharing, small groups with an opportunity for honest and frank interaction.

For the corporate renewal of the church, Mr. Stanley emphasized the need for the church to update many of its methods, and urged a study and application of the best methods used by business. Much that "works" in the so-called secular world can be used to advantage in the work of the church. In a word, the corporate renewal of the church can be aided by the use of the management process.

Discussion followed the address with the two speakers, James Stanley and Patricia Gow, under the chairmanship of the president, acting as a panel, receiving and dealing with questions from the floor. Miss Gow presented a brief, but thoughtful, paper on the layman's part in church activities, reacting against too much clergy domination. A large part of the paper dealt with the place of women in the church. The assembly could, and did, readily agree that while much of the work in most churches is done by the women of the congregation, too little official place is given to them, both on the clerical and lay levels, a fact only too evident in our own convention as seen by the scarcity of women on the major boards and committees of convention.

The ABF assembly is deeply indebted to Mr. Stanley and Miss Gow for their penetrating insights and challenges, opening up many avenues for careful thought, discussion and action.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING — The business year of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is from May 1 to April 30 of the next year. In consequence of this, the time of the Spring Conference is the occasion of the annual business meeting. The closing session of the Bridgewater conference was taken up with the business of the fellowship.

The treasurer's report for the year was given by the treasurer, Mrs. Evelyn Kenney. This report, as complete as it could be at that time, was included in the May issue of the ABF bulletin (page 7), and since there were few changes from what was given there, the full report will not be included here at this time. The account at the end of the year showed a plus balance which, in any group, is always good news. But, in view of the ever-increasing cost of operation, friends of the ABF, both churches and individuals, are urged to keep up this support, and, wherever possible, increase it. After discussion, the report was accepted, as was the proposed budget for 1982-83.

The president, Rev. John Boyd, as our representative on Atlantic Ecumenical Council, gave a report on the AEC Conference held at Memramcook, N.B., September 8-10, 1981. The AEC is considering the appointment of a permanent secretary if and when the financial situation makes this possible. In line with its ecumenical stance, and to show its support of the AEC, the ABF voted to sup-



port the AEC proposed Secretariat Pilot Project for a two-year period to the extent of \$100.00 per annum.

The report of the nominating committee was accepted (see list of officers for 1982-83 at the end of this report).

Mrs. Evelyn Kenney, for personal reasons, submitted her resignation as treasurer of the ABF. This registration was accepted with regret and with sincere appreciation to Mrs. Kenney for her work as treasurer. The matter of the appointment of a new treasurer was referred to the ABF Council. Mrs. Kenney agreed to continue her services as treasurer until the new treasurer is appointed and assumes the office. (It can now be reported that at a meeting of the council, August 3, Mrs. Evelyn Smith was appointed treasurer with the understanding that her duties will not begin until January 1, 1983, with Mrs. Kenney acting until that time. The ABF rejoices in such co-operation, and extends thanks to the "two Evelyns"!)

James Stanley, on behalf of the Amherst Baptist Church, invited the ABF to hold the Fall conference in that church. This invitation was accepted with thanks to Mr. Stanley and his church.

Before adjourning, the ABF expressed thanks to the Bridgewater church, the pastor, the organist, and others who assisted in any way, with special mention of the ladies for their gracious hospitality. Thanks was also extended to the conference speakers, Jim Stanley and Pat Gow, for their part in the program, and to the retiring president, Rev. John Boyd, for his leadership during the past year.

(PLEASE NOTE — After January 1, 1983, all contributions are to be mailed to: Mrs. Evelyn Smith, 13-A Marilyn Drive, Dartmouth, N.S. B2Y 3X8)

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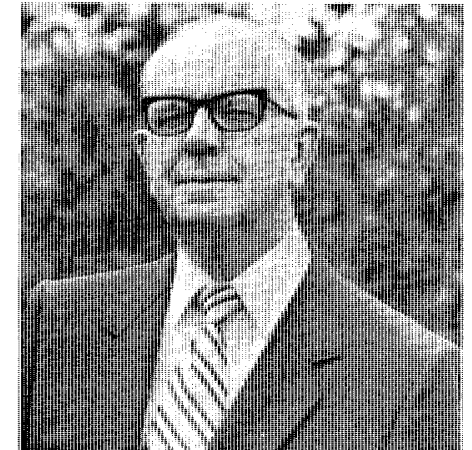
A Word From Our President

The year 1982 is perhaps the busiest one of my lifetime. I am an active member of twenty organizations and a chaplain or officer in sixteen of them. The crowning experience of the year was in Bridgewater on June 19 when I was elected president of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship.

A certain minister moved from one country pastorate to another. One evening he was inducted by the moderator of the Association. Thinking to play a joke on him, the moderator said that perhaps he should be given the title of Hog Caller. After the laughter had subsided, the minister responded, "Well, I thought I was coming to be the shepherd of the sheep, but, of course, you know the people better than I do."

It is a joy and privilege to shepherd ABF sheep and not call hogs. I have felt from the day it was founded that the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship is one of the prime units in our Atlantic United Baptist Convention.

An organization such as ours is like a pipe organ. If any pipe fails to play in its turn, the result is lack of harmony. But when every pipe responds at the touch of the organist the result is a symphony of sound to gladden the hearts of those who listen. Fellow members of the ABF, as the Master Organist touches our keys, may we respond with all our ability, and the result will be a symphony of service to gladden the heart of God.



REV. GORDON GOWER

Gordon Gower

Ecumenism in Canada

The following is an excerpt from the report of Donald Anderson, General Secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, given at the CCC Triennial Assembly held in Saskatoon last May:

It is important to remember what is given and how far we have come; it is important also to recognize that what is given must be expressed in our life together and that we have not been vigorous in pursuing that task. We rejoice in how far we have come; we must also remember how far we have yet to go. We are a people in pilgrimage with no good reason for dawdling. What is disappointing?

1) We have weakened and confused ecumenical engagement at the national level by the creation of another inter-church body rather than moving clearly towards a successor to the Canadian Council of Churches . . . At the present interim stage, a good number of senior church officials are asked to sit both on the Inter-Church Committee and the Executive and Board of the Canadian Council of Churches. Financial resources are divided and from the statements and enquiries which come to us it is clear that church people, even those who should be informed, and others, find it very difficult to know what is going on or where their efforts should be placed.

2) Even with the work that has been done over the last five years, we have not yet reached a consensus about the goals and purposes of a new national ecumenical association. Our inability to find an adequate name, the continuing conversation about the form and style of the committee and its agenda are all marks of this. It has even been suggested that the words church, ecumenical and council are inappropriate because of past associations. We have retreated to a stage of ecumenical conversation which 38 years of life in the council, the Vatican documents on ecumenism and many other statements and initiatives suggest we should have left many years ago and at times it seems as though, rather than building on many years of ecumenical encounter and experience, we are beginning the conversation all over again.

3) There is a very strong tendency to suppose that ecumenical encounter at the national level can be adequately dealt with by senior officials of the participating churches. The ecumenical task must be carried on in all levels and sections of church life in conversations with each other. The national ecumenical task can only properly be done when there is exchange and conversation between church leaders and members from all parts of the Christian community. That is what this assembly, however, inadequate, tries to do; to bring together people who are engaged in church life at the national level and in many other places. Only three of the participating member churches in the new Inter-Church Committee are in a position to appoint more than one member to the committee.

4) Can a national ecumenical grouping of church leaders, even at an intermediate stage and though some of its members are not members of the World Council, be considered a serious ecumenical venture and at the same time ignore the World Council of Churches.

I raise these four points not to suggest that we have failed. We have not failed. I raise them to suggest that we have a very long way to go and that both the

joy of what we have accomplished and the obvious difficulties in the way present a challenge that we must not shirk if we are to be faithful.

We often spoke in the six years of preparation and at the two church leaders' conferences in 1980 and 1981, of the goal and task of ecumenism and what is required to work towards it. Some of this is expressed in the working documents of the Inter-Church Committee but only tentatively.

The emphasis in the Inter-Church Committee, as I have sensed it, has not been on the divine imperative which summons us to reconciliation and to examine our institutional and structural life in the light of that imperative in order to work and grow together. The emphasis in the Inter-Church Committee has been an effort to become an agency or organ to facilitate co-operation between churches in the things they want to do; an agency in which there will be no risk or very little; a forum in which church leaders will participate and which might lead to co-operative programmes by some of the churches.

There is nothing wrong with co-operation; it may well be the place to begin and in some minds at least the effort to identify one major project for the Inter-Church Committee to undertake is intended to be that starting point.

Co-operation also has shortcomings. A purely co-operative agency tends to perpetuate the status quo, to undergird a fairly comfortable and friendly co-existence and the "denominational integrity" we hold so dear.

The challenge we face is to recognize the glory of what we are in Christ and the shame of how poorly we reflect it and to take a few humble but very intentional steps to bridge the gap. In whatever project the Inter-Church Committee chooses for co-operation, it must ask, "Does our protection of 'denominational integrity' come from a deep concern for the truth or is it merely defensive; the conforming to the world which our Lork rejected at every point in his life?" We must ask, "In what way does our co-operative life together and our reflection on it challenge our several ecclesiologies and the exclusive structures and bureaucracies in which we express those ecclesiologies?"

(This summary of Dr. Anderson's report is taken from The Presbyterian Record.)

The German poet Heinrich Heine stood with a friend before cathedral of Amiens in France.

"Tell me, Heinrich," said his friend, "why can't people build piles like this any more?"

Replied Heine: "My dear friend, in those days people had convictions. We moderns have opinions. And it takes more than opinions to build a Gothic cathedral."
—The Christian Century

Are we adrift from our congregational mooring?

Our Baptist "distinctives" all stem from a conviction in support of the voluntary principle in religion. We grew in opposition to "proxy" religion and theocratic states. This is true of such Baptist emphases as the priesthood of all believers, believers' baptism, the separation of church and state, that mysterious concept sometimes called "soul liberty" and the autonomy of the local church. Baptists have historically held a very definite and a very "high" doctrine of the church and a quite indistinct and "low" doctrine of the professional ministry.

The visibility of the church is evident in the local faith community, a body of believers covenanted together to proclaim the gospel and support one another in trying to live faithfully. It is the presence of the church that validates the sacraments, or ordinances, not the presence of "ordained" persons. Ordination is the setting aside of certain persons whose gifts and training, whose faith and character, demonstrate the validity of their sense of "call" to the ministry. They have been ordained by the local church. Participation of other churches is sought because such "ordained" persons seldom serve but one church. Ordained persons are "priests" simply because they are Christians. Sometimes, as leaders in worship, they function in a representative "priestly" capacity, but this is a practical matter, arising from the desire for "order"; it does not come from any peculiar access to God arising from ordination.

Groups of churches, gathered in associations and conventions, are not "superchurches." They are autonomous Baptist churches which have chosen to associate to further their evangelistic, missionary, educational and charitable endeavours. Admittedly there are elements of presbyterianism and connectionalism in some forms of British Baptist life, but congregational polity has been the norm in North America.

I find two instances in which we are drifting away from our congregational moorings. The "associational license" states that the person named can fulfill certain ministerial functions, but may not baptize persons or preside at the Lord's Table. Surely the validity of either sacrament is attested by the presence and consent of the church, not by the presence of "ordained" persons!

Our Atlantic convention decided in 1971 which church members could be received as convention delegates at the annual assembly. In churches which practise inclusive membership, only persons baptized as believers by immersion will receive credentials as delegates. This, surely, makes the convention a church. The assembly is composed of "delegates" or "messengers" or who may be its ministers.

Perhaps it can be argued that the times call for a movement toward connectional and presbyterian forms of polity. But if we take such steps, let us take them with our eyes open, knowing where we are going, and why. It is my conviction that in a world increasingly characterized by bigness — big government, big business, big unions, big schools and universities — there is a place, a needed place, for the ancient Baptist emphasis on the primacy of the faithful community in which we know one another by name and by face. This is the Church which ministers in the name of the Lord and in the power of the Spirit.

G. G. Harrop

Historical Sketch

First Baptist Church, Amherst, N.S.

The people of Amherst and area have known First Baptist Church for 170 years. The seeds of its beginning were planted by the New Light evangelist, Henry Aline, who came to the Amherst area in 1781 and 1782.

In 1809 some of the people who had heard Aline speak invited the Rev. Joseph Crandall, of Salisbury, N.B., to come to Amherst to assist them in the organization of a Baptist congregation. This was done at the home of Samual Freeman, a prominent name in Amherst ever since. It was at his home that the Baptists often met for their worship over the next decade.

The next important date for Amherst Baptists was 1819. It was in this year that the first church building was erected, on the same lot on which the present building stands. When the leaders of other small denominations of the town heard of the Baptist plans, they approached the Baptists about joining forces. Subsequently, the Baptist Society of Amherst in co-operation with other groups, erected a building which "... shall be open and free to any denomination of ministers, wishing to prevent none from approaching the throne of grace and mercy for forgiveness and salvation." Thus for a number of years the Baptist building was used by several denominations. Later, some of the others built their own churches.

The year 1819 was significant as well as the beginning of the ministry of Dr. Charles Tupper. He was the father of the Charles Tupper who became a "Father of Confederation", a cabinet minister, and Prime Minister of Canada.

It was in the Amherst church that the Maritime Baptist Convention met in May, 1875, and decided to join Baptists in the rest of Canada and establish overseas missions, in particular, in India.

The following were among the ministers of the church: Dr. A. A. Steele, Dr. J. H. MacDonald, Dr. C. W. Rose, Dr. F. L. Orchard, Dr. H. C. Olsen, Dr. T. B. McDormand, Dr. Harry Grimmer, Rev. Samuel Holmes, Dr. W. J. MacDonald, Dr. R. S. Dunn and Rev. Susan Laverty (in a shared ministry). The present minister, Rev. John Boyd began his ministry in August of this year.

From time to time over the years, outreach enthusiasms were high and a number of churches formed in this part of the county by the Amherst church. Some of them were of short duration, and the remaining ones — East Amherst and Amherst Point, though open for services in the summer months, are part of the "centre" church.

The membership now stands at 750, but as it is the only Baptist church in a town of 10,000 and an area constituency of another 15,000, the church has a major responsibility in witness to Christ through the church and in the community and county.

The ABF is honoured to be invited to meet with this historic church for the Fall Conference on October 22-23.

ABF FALL CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Place: First Baptist Church, Amherst, N.S.
Date: October 22-23, 1982
Theme: My View of Evangelism

PROGRAM

Friday, Oct. 22
7:00 p.m. Registration
7:30 p.m. Remarks
Address by Rev. Hedley Hopkins
"The Scope of Evangelism"
Discussion

9:00 p.m. Holy Communion, Rev. John Boyd and the Deacons of 1st Baptist
9:45 p.m. Fellowship Time

Saturday, Oct. 23

9:00 a.m. Devotional
9:30 a.m. Address by Rev. Hedley Hopkins
"The Task of Evangelism"
Question Period
10:30 a.m. Coffee Break
11:00-12:00 Discussion Groups
12:00 Noon Lunch at the church
1:15 p.m. Devotional
1:35 p.m. Business
2:30 p.m. Closing

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

Those persons who are attending the conference and need overnight accommodation will make their own arrangements. For their guidance, the following list of motels in the Amherst area are given:

BROWN'S GUEST HOME — 667-7119, 158 Victoria St. E.

Rates: One person \$15 per night, two persons \$18.

FISHER MOTEL — 667-3853, 17 Copp Avenue

Rates: One person \$28, two persons \$32. Each additional person \$5.

VICTORIAN MOTEL — 3 minutes from the First Baptist Church and downtown Amherst. 150 Victoria St. E.

Rates: One person \$28, two persons \$32. 667-7211

WANDLYN INN — Trans-Canada Highway at Victoria St. 667-3331

Rates: One person \$34.95.

PIED PIPER MOTEL — Upper Nappan 667-3891

Rates: One person \$26, two persons \$28, three persons \$32, four persons \$36.

THE CONFERENCE THEME AND SPEAKER

The theme of the conference is centered around **EVANGELISM** which, when understood in its full meaning, is, by common consent, at the very heart of the Church's task. While evangelism is in essence one thing, it is to be noted that there are a number of ways to "do evangelism." It is not to be understood only in terms of any one method, no matter how successful that may be in some churches. The ABF, being conscious of this, wishes to present a balanced view of evangelism; so the particular theme of this conference is "My View of Evangelism" which will be presented by

THE REV. HEDLEY HOPKINS

Mr. Hopkins is a native of Sydney, N.S., and a graduate of Acadia University with the degrees of B.Comm. and B.D. During his university days, he was very active in the Christian work and witness on the campus as experienced in the chapel program and worship. Mr. Hopkins, in association with the late Dr. Earl Merrick, did a pioneer mission work in East Wolfville and through the Melanson Mountain area. Following graduation from Acadia, he worked with the Canadian Baptist Overseas Mission Board, serving for a number of terms on the mission field in Bolivia. Since his return from Bolivia, he has been, and is, the pastor of Faith Baptist Church, Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia.

Mr. Hopkins, both from the standpoint of his wide and varied experience, as well as his personal knowledge and deep conviction, is well qualified to lead the discussion on evangelism which he will do in two addresses: "The Scope of Evangelism" and "The Task of Evangelism." There will be ample time for questions and discussions following each address.

New Church Leaders

The new moderator of the United Church of Canada is the Rte. Rev. Clarke MacDonald, a native of Nova Scotia, being the third Nova Scotian to head that large church since its formation in 1925.

The new moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada is the Rte. Rev. Dr. Wayne Smith from Ontario.

AND WITHIN OUR OWN FELLOWSHIP: The Rev. Dr. Bruce Neal, senior minister of the historic Walmer Road Baptist Church in Toronto, is the newly elected president of The Baptist Federation of Canada.

The Rev. James Webber, minister of the Woodstock, N.B. Baptist Church, is the president for 1982-83 of our United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces.

Miss May Barlett, member of the Brunswick Street Baptist Church in Fredericton, N.B., is the new president of the United Baptist Woman's Missionary Union of the Atlantic Provinces succeeding (as of January 1, 1983) the present president, Mrs. Evelyn Smith.

The ABF Bulletin extends greetings and good wishes to these leaders as they assume new and heavy responsibilities in the Church in these provinces and in all of Canada.

COMING EVENTS

THE FALL CONFERENCE OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP IN AMHERST, N.S., OCTOBER 22-23.

November 19-20, 1982 — Meeting of the Heads of the Denominations, Mount St. Vincent Retreat Centre, Halifax, N.S. Theme: "Eucharistic Hospitality."

Let us keep in our minds and in our prayers The Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, B.C., July 24-August 10, 1983.

September 6-8, 1983 — 17th Biennial Atlantic Ecumenical Conference, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S., sponsored by the Acadia Divinity College and the Wolfville Inter-Church Council.

Church News

Dr. J. B. Phillips, who received international fame as a pioneer translator of the New Testament into contemporary English, died on July 21. In addition to his translation of the New Testament, he also translated the Old Testament books of Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah under the title "The Four Prophets" and, in addition to his translations, authored a number of valuable books, many of which have been read by some of our readers.

New President for Canadian Council of Churches

Dr. Russel Legge, Moderator of the Church of Christ (Disciples) is the new president of the Canadian Council of Churches. Dr. Legge was elected at the concluding session of the Council's fifth Triennial Assembly held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, from May 2nd to 6th, 1982. A native of Nova Scotia, he has been a professor of Religion at the University of Waterloo, in Ontario since 1970.

The new president succeeds Mrs. Heather Johnston of Hamilton, Ontario, who has served for the past three years. Mrs. Johnston, a Presbyterian, had been the first lay woman to be president of the Council.

The Assembly was attended by one hundred and eighty-six persons including delegates from the twelve member churches of the Council, official representatives from other churches in Canada, other affiliated Christian organizations, and inter-church working groups. The Council met in Assembly at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. It concurred with the centennial year of the city.

The members of the Canadian Council of Churches are:

The Anglican Church of Canada; the Armenian Orthodox Church; the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec; the Coptic Church; the Greek Orthodox Church; the Church of Christ (Disciples); the Lutheran Church of America (Canada Section); the Presbyterian Church in Canada; the Reformed Church of America; the Society of Friends; the Salvation Army; the United Church of Canada.

—Canadian Ecumenical News

Forty-Five

Forty-five Canadian youths — between 18 and 30 years of age — will be acting as stewards for the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches which is meeting in Vancouver from July 25 to Aug. 10, 1983.

The WCC sub-unit on Youth aims to "encourage young people to explore and live out their faith . . . and struggle with justice issues locally and globally" through the theme, "Jesus Christ — the light of the world."

—The United Church Observer

Landmark Translation

A contemporary English translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, described as the first vernacular translation by Jews since the Septuagint of 23 centuries ago, has been issued by the Jews Publication Society of America. It represents a culmination of more than 25 years of work by a committee of Conservative, Orthodox and Reform scholars. The new work is a translation of the Masoretic, or original Hebrew, text. It is not a revision of an earlier rendering. According to the Jewish Publication Society, the last time a committee of scholars representing the Jewish community completed a translation of the Hebrew Bible was when the Torah was translated into the Greek Septuagint in Alexandria, Egypt.

—The Christian Century

The Bible on Cassette Tapes

Kenneth MacMillan points to the production of the complete Bible on cassette tapes as a major 1981 achievement of the Canadian Bible Society. Sets of 64 tapes, marked in regular print and in Braille, have been prepared in both the King James and Revised Standard Version. The reader is Alexander Scourby, whose professional reading has been acclaimed. These tapes are used by a wide variety of people, including the blind. (For further information inquire at your provincial Bible Society office.)

Ruth Banko, Executive Director of the John Milton Society in reporting to the Annual Meeting, reaffirmed our commitment to ministry in these words: "Let us enter the second year of our second decade trusting that our Society, as a caring ministry, may continue to bless and enrich the lives of visually handicapped Canadians.

—Insight

(Our readers are reminded of the many services available to those persons who are blind or have impaired eyesight. For information of free publications, write: The John Milton Society for the Blind in Canada, 40 St. Claire Ave. East, Toronto, Ontario — M4T 1M9 — Editor)

Covenanting in Britain

A first step toward a radical reshaping of English church life took place in May in Bristol when the Assembly of the United Reformed Church voted 68.8 per cent in favor of a Covenant with the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the very small Moravian Church. The Covenant is the product of an effort to break through the logjam that has blocked progress on church unity in England. Heretofore the only product of such strivings has been the creation of the United Reformed Church itself, the 1972 union of Presbyterian and Congregational churches. That merger set going a process which led to the present Covenant proposals, which stop short of recommending combination but would mean a commonly accepted membership and ministry.

—The Christian Century

Faith thrives on desperation. It is never so exhilarated as when nothing else is possible.

Walter Wink

"There are 3,000 verses in the Bible that speak about our responsibility to the poor." — So comments a recent writer and adds: "But people will not know about them if these messages are not looked at in the many Bible studies taking place across the land."

The Christian Century

An amazing thing about anybody being arrested for disturbing the peace is that he found any.

Anonymous

The nail-pierced Figure on Calvary haunts our race as a symbol of what is forever taking place generation after generation, and of which each one of us has a part in.

Henry Sloan Coffin

The Darkness—and the Light

(An Advent Meditation)

“The earth is degenerate in these days. There are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end. Bribery and corruption are common. Children no longer obey their parents”

These words sound familiar — do they not? Surely we all have heard such a thought expressed at one time or another. This could have been taken from yesterday’s newspaper, or from any number of current books and magazine articles. But not so! As a matter of fact, it is reported that these words, now preserved in a museum, were written hundreds of years before Christ. But, in spite of this, they sound familiar to us, as they probably would have sounded in any generation, for this is how some people always feel about the days in which they live.

A character in a modern novel is always looking back recalling, what she calls, “the good old days”. A friend rebukes her saying: “You’re like the little bird that flies backward. He doesn’t want to see where he is going, but where he’s been.” “Where we have been” and “where we are going” — these two thoughts always stand in contrast. To be interested in one seems to imply no interest in the other. But, does it need to be this way? If we know where we have been, we are more likely to know where we are going.

So we dare to look back. Even a casual knowledge of history reminds us of many dark periods through which the world has passed, but this is not all. There have been recurring periods of light. Darkness and light! This figure of speech is common in the Bible. The gospel writer puts it this way: “The light shines in the dark, and the darkness has never quenched it.” A similar thought occurs in the Old Testament: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in the land of darkness, on them the light shined.”

These words will be read in our churches during the Advent season which we soon shall be observing. Whatever may have been the intent of these Biblical writers, for us the words find their full meaning in the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. How better can we state the meaning of his coming than to say: “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light?”

It was a dark world into which Christ came, as is the world to which he still comes. But there also is light. We must have an awareness of both the dark and the light. To see only the light is to miss the meaning of Christ’s coming, or make it seem irrelevant, but, on the other hand, to see only the dark is to deny that he has come and continues to come. Extreme pessimism and extreme optimism, both alike, miss the meaning of Advent.

Our world outlook is dark. Make no mistake about that. We all dwell in the land of darkness, but in the darkness a light shines — the same light that appeared in the star that shone over Bethlehem in the long ago. Because of that star, the world can never again be in complete darkness. May we who dwell in darkness, having an awareness of that light, walk on in hope and faith toward a new and better day!