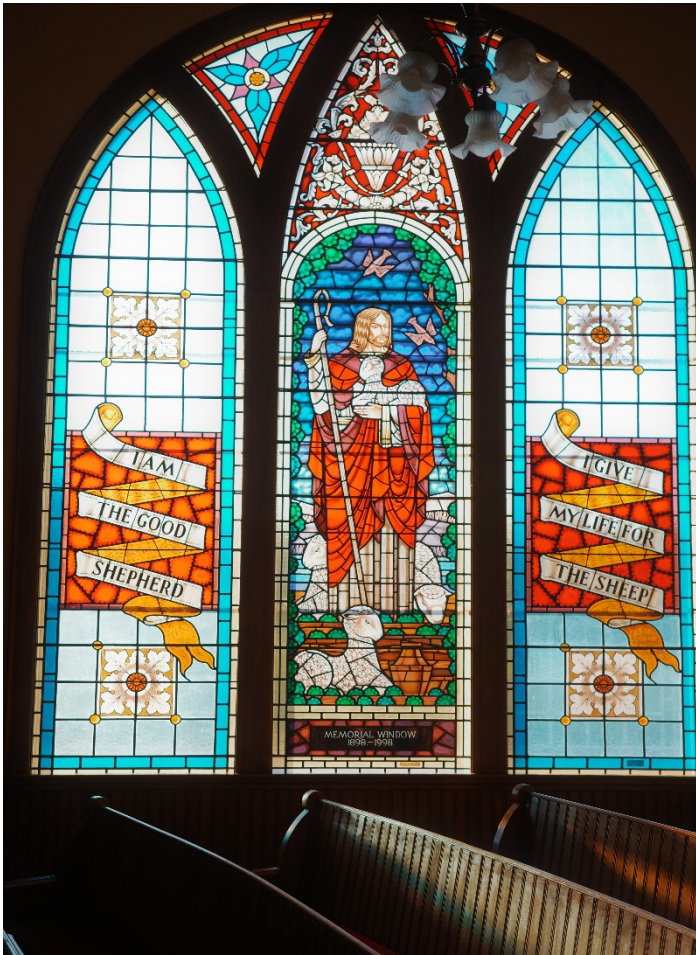


The Bulletin

A Publication of the
Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms



Winter 2026



The Bulletin is published three times a year by the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms, formerly the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship. It is meant to be an informative magazine about Baptist concerns and news of the Church in the world.

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COVER: Stained glass window at the Pereaux Baptist Church was conceived of by Dr. Millard Cherry, a strong supporter of the ABF. It was installed for the 100-year anniversary of the church building.

Editorial

MARK PARENT

As interim editor of *The Bulletin*, I want to thank Scott for his five years of service as editor. In past editions, Scott has used a thematic approach. This present edition is more varied.

We begin with an article by CABF president, Hugh Kierkegaard looking to the future as CABF grows and expands across Canada. This is followed by a Report of the 2025 Cross Canada Conference with links to the various presentation given at that meeting.

CABF Secretary Mandi Hecht writes an intriguing article using the voice of Phoebe, communicating with her friend the Apostle Paul, about reaching out as pilgrim people living in tents. This is followed by an article by an article by Earle Illsley in which he describes how refugee sponsorship has had the added benefit of expanding his understanding of inter-faith issues. Scott Kindred-Barnes's article on the history of Baptist views on religious freedom sets the stage for further articles on this important theme. Finally, Ed Colquhoun has provided another interesting book review on the book *Church of the Wild*. The last page of this edition of *The Bulletin* features a survey which I encourage you to fill out and mail to me or to fill out electronically on the CABF website.

For the next edition of *The Bulletin*, I am soliciting more articles on the theme of religious freedom. In his book on the Church in Canada, historian John Moir claims that Canadian Baptists have been unrelenting in the past in their support for religious freedom. Is this still true today? Are there limits to religious freedom? How does religious freedom interface with political freedom? What does the future of religious freedom look like in Canada? Articles should be 500 to 750 words in length.

On Making History

HUGH KIERKEGAARD

"We have all tumbled over the lip into the cauldron of history"

J.M. Coetzee, Life and Times of Michael K.

I am writing these words in the midst of a consequential week in history as we have witnessed a significant speech from our Prime Minister on the current realpolitik of the world, the escalation of tensions about the takeover of Greenland and the subsequent climbdown by an American president, and all the other geopolitical intrigues at meetings of the World Economic Forum. It feels like we have a front row seat to the unfolding of history in our time.

In a similar and hopefully not as unsettling a way we are watching our Canadian Association for Baptist Freedom network grow and make history. Among the commitments we have championed from our inception as the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship in 1969 are the importance of being part of a wider ecumenical movement in the church and the significant contribution and role of women in ministry in the life of Baptist churches. We have added to these principles in recent years supporting churches which choose to be welcoming and affirming and to seek justice and peace in a world dangerously short of both these days. All of these choices which we have made together resonate with the Baptist distinctives at the heart of our enterprise.

And so as we welcome new members and churches to our network in recent months we are re-inventing our organization to respond to this growth and the challenges of becoming a truly Canadian-wide body. Changes to our bylaws and policies have seen gaps addressed and the ability of the Council to make decisions and have broader representation strengthened.

We are also trying to streamline our committee structure to reflect our new reality as a truly "Canadian" association, with more broad-based engagement from our members and churches. We are seeking ways to support pastors and chaplains in our existing network as well as working with partners which

share our values, like the Canadian Council of Churches and the Alliance of Baptists. We are also seeking to build “Global Connections” with others of like mind with whom we can partner in the future creating opportunities for connection, ministry and even theological formation for lay and clergy alike.

As we grow into this emerging reality in the coming months and years we hope to build on the strengths of the many visionaries and volunteers who have shaped the CABF to this point. We are so fortunate that others share a similar vision and choose to join us on the journey as a progressive Canadian network of Baptist churches seeking to be faithful to the way of Jesus in the 21st Century. May God continue to guide us as we make history together.

Among his many different roles, Hugh is the President of the CABF and serves as the Regional Chaplain – Atlantic Region, Correctional Service of Canada/ Government of Canada

CABF CROSS-CANADA CONFERENCE 2025

“Love Draws Near”

Cultivating Kinship within a Global Climate of Division and Disorientation

In the midst of a lectionary year based on the gospel of Luke, we, the friends and members of CABF sought to draw together and reorient ourselves to Divine Love. We strengthened our love and commitment to one another, and we rejoiced in the blessings of good food, good teaching and those good and groovy Vancouver vibes!

Forty-five CABF clergy and lay leaders gathered together at Grandview Church, and we enjoyed three inspiring worship/teaching/sharing sessions together.

--Rev. Lee Kosa shared a message on “More Gardening and Less Scapegoating.” You can read the transcript and listen to the MP3 (<https://www.cabf.ca/home/updates>).

--Leah Potts Kostamo (www.arocha.org) shared a message on “Jesus the Outdoorsman: Keeping Kinship with Creation.” You can read the transcript (<https://www.cabf.ca/home/updates>).

--Beth Carlson-Malena shared a message on “Mary & Elizabeth: Prophetic Vulnerability in Queer & Female Kinship.” You can read the transcript and listen to the MP3 - (<https://www.cabf.ca/home/updates>)

Other highlights included:

--Devotional inspiration from Rev. Joy Banks (www.joybanks.ca), an evening of Jazz with Rev. Dr. Mark Glanville (www.markglanville.org) and visits to Co:here Housing Community, a mixed-income apartment building, and The Listening Post (www.rivendellretreat.org/listening-post).

--Ordination and Ministry Certificates presented to a host of CABF Ministers who have joined the CABF over the past 3 years.

--Global Baptist Updates from Rev. Luke Dowding from the UK (www.onebodyonefaith.org.uk) and dreaming about the possibility of Canadian Theological Formation for ministers and lay leaders through a relationship with our Baptist friends in Manchester, UK (www.lutherking.ac.uk).

--Fantastic care and catering from Jen McAllister (www.scatteredgraces.com).

Once again, it was a joy and blessing to be among kindred spirits and have the opportunity for growing our relationships and getting to know our broad-minded Baptist family that serves churches from coast to coast. We lived out commitments of our CABF Covenant as we worshipped God together and strived to create times and places of refuge, renewal, health and wholeness.

Next year, we’re hoping to gather for the 4th Annual CABF Cross-Canada-Conference in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where two of our member churches serve and minister: FBC Saskatoon and Emmanuel Church.

The date will be announced early in 2026, and we are tentatively planning for the latter half of October 2026.

Peace be with you!

Rev. Anne Baxter Smith, Rev. Monica McKinlay, Rev. Ryan Sato

Reclaiming the Tent

BY AMANDA (MANDI) HECHT

(This piece is written in the voice of Phoebe of Cenchreae mentioned in Romans 16:1. In my sanctified imagination, Phoebe has visited the church today, and is writing to her old friend and colleague, the apostle Paul).

Dear Paul:

Long ago, you and I collaborated on the important task of writing and delivering your letter (known today as “Romans”) to the city of Rome. Today I am writing to you again about tents. Yes, tents.

You, my good friend, were a tentmaker. I know that this was partly an accident of history, your *day job* so that were not reliant on churches for support. But now I wonder if there was more to this than simply extra cash flow. I wonder if being a tentmaker was also part of the way that you understood God and your job as a labourer on God’s behalf.

One of the things that you did was extend the tent. You made it wider. You moved the edges. And because of that, someone like me (who was gentile through and through) was included into the family of God.

Today, I think there is a crisis of housing in Christian communities. No one who loves Jesus should have a problem finding a church home. But I can tell you that many buildings dedicated to the worship of Jesus Christ echo, even when the people are gathered. And at the same time, there are a growing number of people finding themselves spiritually “houseless.” Some people who love Jesus find themselves unwelcome in Christian communities.

Disagreements among people who follow Jesus are nothing new to you and to I, my old friend. Since the day Jesus bid more than one person: “follow me,” there have been differences among believers about how to best follow. This was much of the purpose of your letter writing career. But I fear that the Christians of today are so concerned with these smaller matters¹ that they are creating this problem of empty spaces dedicated to worship. And others go without the shelter of a community of faith with which they can work out their salvation.²

I am concerned that people are prioritizing buildings at the expense of building tents.

With all this space, with all this diversity, with Christians spread out all over the globe, it should not be at all hard to welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed each one of us.³

God’s people have long relied on tents. When they traveled in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, they carried a tent with them. When they settled down, the great King David announced that he would like to build a permanent home for God, but God refused him.⁴ It seems that God is quite content to be where God’s people are (wherever God’s people are), even if it means moving around.

And our very own Jesus is described as a tent, a tabernacle, among the people. Jesus moved into our own neighbourhoods.⁵ There is even a story about how, when Jesus was crucified, the curtain in the temple was torn in two.⁶ God’s Holy Spirit had left the permanent structure, the building. And now God is closer than ever to the people. We don’t have to go to God; God will always come to us and move alongside us.

¹ See Romans 14:1 and the following chapter.

² See Philippians 2:12-13.

³ See Romans 15:7.

⁴ See 2 Kings 7:6-7.

⁵ John 1:14.

⁶ Matthew 27:51.

Since God's people are now all over the world, there is no reason why they cannot stretch their tents as wide as they will go, why they cannot become shelter for one another. And even then, to stretch the tent wider. We have long known that our borders are nothing like God's borders. The lines we continually draw have to be redrawn many times over. The way I see it, it would be wonderful, Paul, if the people who have built buildings all over the world were willing (like you) to also build (and stretch) tents.

Yours in Christ,
Phoebe

Mandi is a settler and pastor in Saskatoon, SK. She earned a doctorate from Northern Seminary in New Testament Context concentrating on the power of story in scripture. She is married with three children ranging from university to high school (all of whom, to her delight, still live at home). She shares her house with some lovely cats and takes her coffee black.

The Christian Witness of Refugee Sponsorship: Building Relationships and Breaking down Barriers

EARLE ILLSLEY

Over the past 10 years our church has been involved as Christians in the sponsorship of refugee families. These families or individuals sponsored have happened to be of the Muslim faith, which has proven to be a powerful witness to those that often perceive the Church as insular or self-interested. When Christians sponsor refugees not as an evangelistic strategy, but as an expression of Christ's command to love, they embody a theological ethic that is both ancient and urgently needed. Jesus' question-shattering parable of the Good Samaritan asks: "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). In Christ's telling, the neighbor is not defined by shared belief, ethnicity, or religion, but by vulnerability. The more pressing question becomes, "where is my neighbour?"—and the answer is found wherever human

suffering is. We, as a group, were given choices of who to sponsor and the criteria we chose was the one most in need. We realize that this was somewhat an arbitrary choice but left it to those who had far greater experience in the area of refugee placement.

Refugee sponsorship declares that the Church understands this call. It communicates to the broader community that Christian love is not optional but an act of response to God's love to all. When Christians welcome Muslim families fleeing war, famine, or persecution, they signal an openness that contradicts the narrative that the Church cares only for its own. Sponsorship is making space for the one that God cares for. God has a special concern for those that are in need or oppressed. It is our response to make such a space. Such space-making is love in action.

This commitment aligns with the prophetic tradition. The prophet Amos reminds Israel of God's non-negotiable demands: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Justice, in this context, is not an abstract principle; it is restorative action on behalf of those whose lives have been disrupted. To welcome refugees—without precondition, hidden agenda, or proselytizing intent—is to honor God's concern for the oppressed. It is, as the prophet Micah echoes, to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8). It does not add any conditions. It is justice for anyone, kindness to anyone and humility in whatever we do.

Personally, the process of sponsorship has led me to a much better understanding of other cultures. We have spent many hours discussing our faiths, our similarities and differences and exploring how we both can co-operate with and support each other. We have visited each other's places of worship and have been welcomed as friends. The concern for each other and our call to care for each other is not only a Christian imperative - the Quran also calls for such a response to all human suffering. We have enjoyed sharing in mealtimes and shared projects of support for each other. What started out as an act of response to conflict has moved to a greater sense of understanding and

cares for each other in a mutual growing experience. Barriers so easily built up in our society have been broken down.

Earl Illsley is a lifelong member of the Kentville United Baptist Church. He and his wife, Karen have been active in refugee outreach for many years now.

Defining the Terms.

REV. DR. SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

The Background:

In early June 1995, the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, hosted historian Walter B. Shurden as a guest speaker. In the decades since, Shurden's ideas have had a significant influence on the ABF, and what is now known as the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms. As an 'exiled' Southern Baptist, Shurden's talks and writings on freedom did not come from an ivory tower. The year 1979, is generally marked as the year that fundamentalists took control of the Southern Baptist Convention, but Shurden had held on until June 1987 before divorcing the denomination of his youth. Shurden left the SBC largely because its fundamentalist leaders had stopped being Baptists in his view because they no longer understood or practiced the Baptist understanding of freedom.

While Shurden's ideas were well received by the ABF in the 1990s, his connections with Baptists in Canada go back decades earlier:

Actually, my wife, three children, and I lived one exceedingly happy year in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada where Ivan Morgan, Gerry Harrop, Russell Aldwinckle, Jim Perkins [sic], and few others broadened my Baptistness and challenged my southernness. If they had needed a church history professor at McMaster Divinity School, we probably would have stayed and become Canadians, people we came to love and admire. But Providence or the tug of home—probably economics—shuttled us back south. A twenty-nine-year-old with a wife and three children tends to go where the work is, though those of us

in the ministry downplay economics and call it the “will of God.” [From Walter B. Shurden, ‘Second Baptist Church, Greenville, Mississippi’ Cecil P. Staton Jr. editor. *Why I Am A Baptist: Reflections on Being Baptist in the 21st Century* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 1999), 154.]

Anyone who remembers the first four decades of the ABF, will recognize the names Perkin, Aldwinckle and Harrop, as each served as ABF guest speakers and all left a lasting impact on how the CABF now defines freedom.

The Results:

If I were teaching a course in Baptist history and theology these days I would make Shurden’s book, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* required reading. In chapter four on Religious Freedom, Shurden writes:

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM is the historic Baptist affirmation of freedom *OF* religion, freedom *FOR* religion, and freedom *FROM* religion, insisting that Caesar is not Christ and Christ is not Caesar. (p.45)

The difference between OF, FOR and FROM may not be obvious to all but they are important distinctions to make both historically and in our current situation. As I see it, ‘Freedom OF religion’ is what defines a genuine principled pluralism. Where people with various convictions have an equal place (at least in principle) at the table of the common good but where no one religious or non-religious confession or creed is favoured or enforced by the state. Freedom OF religion means all citizens are free to associate or disassociate with whatever faith or non-faith organizations they please, so long as they do not break the law. The early Baptists did not enjoy such freedom OF religion since the authorized religion in early 17th century England was the Church of England.

Freedom OF religion is related to Freedom FROM religion. Many of the English Puritans (those who wanted to further reform the Church of England beyond the Elizabethan Settlement), along with the English Separatist Christians (those puritans who grew impatient with the reforming movement in England and left the authorized Church of England altogether for reasons of conscience), sought freedom FROM religion.

Namely, they rejected the Thirty-Nine Articles and the use of the Prayer Book in worship and sought freedom to worship according to their religious convictions.

Lastly, for me Freedom FOR religion is grounded in the conviction that genuine faith is not the product of coercion, but in fact a voluntary enterprise. In Canada today none of us is likely to be reported to a churchwarden [or other church officer] for refusing to attend public worship because we are free to worship or not worship at an assembly of our choice. But to witness coercion one does not need to be taken before an ecclesiastical court and disciplined, as was once the case for many religious dissenters under European Christendom.

Recently, I witnessed someone on a Baptist council ask an ordination candidate if he believed in a 'literal hell.' What exactly was meant by 'literal' remains a mystery to me. However, what surprised me most was how some in the room scoffed when the candidate answered honestly: 'No, I'm an annihilationist.' This means the candidate rejected the teaching that those who are estranged from God must endure eternal torment as a punishment in the afterlife. The candidate was clear that he rejected a theology of hell on grounds that he found this teaching incompatible with both the love and justice of God. Freedom FOR religion, then, says this candidate deserves liberty to hold his position on hell, and/or other doctrines, and that the Baptist position FOR Freedom defends his right to do so, even if others in the same denomination do not share the same theological stance. Certainly, the Baptist position FOR Freedom does not coerce another to conform to something he/she does not really believe.

The Rev. Dr. Scott Kindred-Barnes is the Minister of Port Willaims United Baptist Church in Nova Scotia. Before commencing his ministry in Port Williams in mid-January 2026, Scott served as the Senior Minister of Wolfville Baptist Church in Nova Scotia from 2018-2025, and as the Minister of First Baptist Church, Ottawa from 2011-2018. Scott is writing a history of the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms.

Church of the Wild

Victoria Loorz, *Church of the Wild: How Nature Invites Us into the Sacred*. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2021.

REVIEWED BY ED COLQUHOUN

Loorz has written a seminal work, taking the reader into the world of a movement which is invisible to the average churches of Canada – the world of Wild Church. A cursory look at a website – wildchurchnetwork.com – profiles a dozen of these churches, most American from Hawaii to Massachusetts and three from British Columbia or Ontario. The book follows a personal journey as Loorz transitions from a relatively conservative pastor of independent Protestant churches to a feminist eco-mystic. Along the way, we meet several familiar friends, Brian MacLaren, Al Gore, poet Wendell Berry, Michael Dowd (he of post-doom spirituality whom we in the CABF met in Port Williams), to mention some. Loorz quotes other inspiring people from the Christian tradition to forward her agenda, e.g.

All has been consecrated.

The creatures in the forest know this,

the earth does, the seas do, the clouds know
as does the heart full of
love.

Strange a priest would rob us of this
knowledge

and then empower himself
with the ability

to make holy what
already was.

Catherine of Siena, “Consecrated”
14th century CE

Many of the stories and ideas in this book moved this reviewer. Who knew that Loorz’ son Marc became an inspiring leader of the green revolution in the USA as a very young man, burned

out as a student at UBC, and continues as a Wild Church participant in Ontario? Who can remain unmoved as she encounters and relates to animals and birds in the wild? She amplifies and confirms our experience as part of the natural web of life. Her review of the early church regression to patriarchy and imperial domination beginning with Constantine is familiar and convincing. One can imagine her stress as a pastor in the conservative parts of the USA.

But, but, the enjoyment of nature, the key to an encounter with the sacred in this book, feels at some remove from the major concerns of Jesus whose awareness of the plight of other human beings and our responsibilities to them was primary. Looz's description of herself and many others in the wild church movement as edge walkers, neither in nor out of their religious traditions is initially appealing to those of us who can relate; however, we believe that the central focus of one's faith is much more important than where we draw the boundaries. For most within the Church, the defining revelation of divinity is not trees and deer and stars, but a man named Yeshua.

Ed Colquhoun is a retired education who has served as editor The Bulletin and as president of the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship, the predecessor of the CBAF.

Survey

In light of the cross-Canada growth of the CABF, the publications committee are looking at the best and most effective means of communicating with CABF individuals and churches. To help in this process, we encourage you to complete the following survey and return it by mail to Mark Parent, or to go on the CBAF website and fill in the survey electronically. Thank you.

Bulletin Readership:

How often do you read The Bulletin?

_____ Every issue _____ Occasionally _____ Seldom

Bulletin format:

• I would prefer to receive The Bulletin electronically (mark one)

_____ Strongly agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____

• I would prefer to receive The Bulletin in print form (mark one)

_____ Strongly agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____

• I would still read The Bulletin if it was in electronic form only (mark one)

_____ Strongly agree _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____

Bulletin Content:(mark from 1-5 with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree)

_____ to share news about the CABF to Baptists in Canada

_____ to share news from CABF churches with each other

_____ to discuss political and social issues through a Baptist lens

_____ to encourage spiritual and theological discussion

_____ other _____

What would you change or improve about The Bulletin?