

The Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BAPTIST FREEDOMS



Spring 2024



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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From the Editor

BY SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

¶ In her helpful book, *Following On the Way: The Acts of the Apostles as A Guide to Spiritual Formation*, Karen E. Smith makes the important point about memory as it relates to both spiritual formation and Christian worship:

Highlighting the importance of memory in the process of spiritual formation is not to suggest that communion with the living Lord in any way depends on our memory alone. The gift of God's relationship with us—as Luke often points out in Acts—is God's gift to all who will receive it through the unhindered power of God as Holy Spirit. Yet, while we do not control the Spirit of God, it is evident that certain spiritual practices, such as hymn singing or repeating the Lord's Prayer, may still be an aid to remembering and meeting Christ, even when physically our memory is failing. For example, those who have visited friends and family members with dementia may have experienced the joy of saying the Lord's Prayer or singing hymns with those who could no longer carry on a conversation. In singing the hymns, it may be argued that they did not need to depend on the simple recall of memory to know the words of a hymn or song. If the words have been sung so many times before in the context of worship, and taken to heart, it is possible to move beyond the words to the immediacy of the experience and thus to commune with God and others through hymn singing. [Karen E. Smith, *Following on the Way: The Acts of the Apostles as A Guide to Spiritual Formation* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 1922), 19].

Worship is part of our spiritual formation because it shapes both our relationship with God and others. We tend to think of the word

“habit” as negative. It is certainly true that more than a few Christians throughout the centuries have been taught to avoid bad habits. So goes the old saying criticized by the new wave singer Adam Ant: “You don’t drink, smoke or chew. Or hang with guys or gals who do.” And all this even though Jesus hung out with tax collectors and sinners! My point is that the Christ we worship has the potential to be habit forming in the good sense of Christian virtues. Not as empty rituals that fail to move and shape the heart. But habit forming as participation with the divine, as in shaping our spiritual dispositions before God and others; the kind of exercise of faith, hope and love encouraged by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:13: “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” Worship shapes and forms us as believers, and empowers us to be the Church, and as Smith’s example above indicates, worship as good habit forming, has implications for both pastoral theology and mission. The Winter 2024 *Bulletin*, dealt with the theme of worship. The responses to that edition have been very positive indeed. Thus, the articles in this edition again look broadly at the theme of worship in our ever-changing context. It is hoped you will be blessed by reading this edition.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

We are excited for this year’s Rushton Lecture on 1 June. Our guest speakers, the Rev. Sarah Scott and the Rev. Joe Green, have asked to receive questions in advance of the lecture. Anyone wishing to submit a pastoral question or concern about MAiD is asked to send it in advance to erica@bridgewaterbaptist.com. Please note that following the Q&A session of the Rushton Lecture, there will be a *very* brief business meeting to vote on the acceptance of two churches into CABF membership—one in Alberta and one in Saskatchewan. All members are asked to be part of this vote.

Worship as Witness, Possibility, and Wonder

BY ANNE BAXTER SMITH

“Peter got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.” (Luke 24:12)

¶ Sometimes, it’s hard to worship. The broken bits and pieces of life, the clutter of sorrow and grief, the debris and destruction of violence erodes our felt sense of worship and makes us question our belonging. When the women came running back from the tomb and told the disciples Jesus had been liberated from death and was alive, the men told the women that their words of witness were garbage. That’s what it says in Greek. Garbage.

Sometimes, when your stomach is full of sadness and your heart feels like a stone, it’s just too hard to hope, even when someone tells you the tomb is open and the grave clothes are empty on the floor. Peter, however, ran towards hope. It was the *possibility* that Someone was waiting beyond the violence he had witnessed, beyond the shame of his betrayal, and beyond the horrible sadness in his stomach that made Peter run towards the tomb.

“Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering...” (Luke 24:12)

This moment of wondering provides a welcome pause in the storyline. Peter’s wondering would one day become deep knowing, but early on Easter morning, Peter was in this liminal space, walking away from an empty tomb, wondering. His wondering allowed time for the tiny green sprig of faith to grow amidst the stones and

sorrow of his heart. Peter gives us permission to not know, to linger awhile and wonder.

What would it be like to wonder about what might be waiting, beyond the sorrows we witness, beyond the sadnesses we carry in our hearts? Even if you can't run towards an open tomb yet, is there space inside to wonder? Worship is many things. Among them, worship is the women, running to proclaim and celebrate the risen Christ. Worship is a witness to what we know to be true.

Worship is Peter, running towards the empty tomb, and the beautiful possibility of resurrection. Worship is an exercise in hope. Worship is Peter, walking away, pondering in his heart all that he had seen and heard, wondering. Worship is a long, lingering space to wonder.

When we gather to worship the presence of this Risen Christ, some of us are ready to witness. Some of us are ready to hope. Some of us need time to wonder. And some of us think it sounds a lot like rubbish. Wherever you are, whoever you are, there is room in worship for you.

The Rev. Anne Baxter Smith has served The Church at Southpoint in Surrey, British Columbia as their pastor for almost 13 years. Trained as a spiritual director within both the Anglican and Ignatian traditions while in England, Anne's ministry has been shaped by the phrase, "God in all things, and all things in God."

Teaching the Gospel Story through the Liturgical Year

BY JOHN PERKIN

¶ The Hebrew philosopher Qoheleth declared "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ec-

clesiastes 3:1). In sacramental and mainline Protestant churches, matters of theology and the life of Jesus are addressed in their due season, through the liturgical year. Benedictine nun and scholar Joan Chittister has written on the liturgical year, noting that the purpose of the liturgical year is “to bring to life in us and around us, little by little, one layer of insight after another until we grow to full stature in the spiritual life.” [Joan Chittister, *The Liturgical Year* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), p. 21. A volume in the series, *The Ancient Practices* edited by Phyllis Tickle].

Up until the fourth century, the Christian cycle was largely a cycle of Sunday worship services, each one a little Easter with its celebration of the paschal mystery in the Eucharist. The *Didache*, also known as *The Teaching of the Apostles* and likely dating from only the second generation of Christianity, gives this instruction about Sunday worship: “But every Lord’s day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure.” In time, the observances of both Christmas and Easter stood apart from a regular Sunday, each with a forty-day period beforehand for fasting and preparation of candidates for baptism. By the fourth century, Christianity began to explore the ideas of time, past, present and future. Not content to simply memorialize the past, the church began to incorporate different seasonal observances into its worship in an attempt not only to recreate the past but also to bring it to the present experience of the believer and the community. In the bringing of the past story to life in the present, the church would also look to its promised future with God.

Over the centuries, the development of the church liturgical year has taken on greater significance in many church traditions; Christmas time (including Advent and Epiphany) and Easter time (including the six Sundays of Lent and the seven Sundays of Easter) highlight the central mysteries of the gospel, the incarnation, passion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The rest of the year, in the traditional liturgical calendar, is Ordinary Time, which follows the life and ministry of Jesus. In common usage, “ordinary” typically refers to something plain, common, or even lacking excitement or drama. In the church context, Ordinary Time is drawn from the

Latin term *ordinalis*, meaning something numbered. It refers to the ongoing nature of the season that progresses rhythmically through time, unlike the seasons of Lent and Advent which are marked by their termination points at high festivals.

The seasons of the Church Year thus reflect the life of Christ and the church's interaction with that story. It sets out what it means for believers to live as followers of Jesus, as churches and as individuals. It is in the liturgy of the Christian year, moving through its seasons of the life of Christ, that we meet not only the Jesus of history who lived two thousand years ago, but that we also come to understand the Christ of faith who is with us still in the church that embodies his spirit and message. Each year, as the cycle is repeated, we come to the liturgical cycle of the seasons and find them different, because we are different people and a different church too. Rather than a fruitless search for an elusive Messiah, we are open to the possibility of meeting Jesus again for the first time. Compare, for instance, Raymond Martin, *The Elusive Messiah: A Philosophical Overview of the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), and Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1994).

First Baptist Church Ottawa follows the pattern of the Christian year and the Revised Common Lectionary used by many mainline Protestant church denominations in North America; however, we have shaped the year with our own unique emphases. In our own liturgical year, we seek to highlight not just the story of incarnation, passion and resurrection, but also the teaching and ministry of Jesus and the challenges of the emerging church as we find it in Acts and the Epistles. Mostly following the Revised Common Lectionary readings (Old Testament, Psalm, Gospel and Epistle readings in a three-year cycle), we occasionally exercise Baptist autonomy and shift to alternate readings.

As with other denominations, for First Baptist Ottawa the church year begins anew on the First Sunday of Advent, leading us through the twelve-day season of Christmas and up to the Sunday of Epiphany. Rather than shifting to Ordinary Time after Epiphany, we have named the time leading to Lent as the season of Epiphany. The word "Epiphany" denotes something that is re-

vealed or made known, a sudden or striking realization, a manifestation of something in a very real way. In the Christian tradition, it is the understanding of the identity of Jesus, made real in the visit of the sages from the east, and in the baptism of Jesus. As a season, which varies in length depending on when Easter occurs and so when Lent begins, these Sundays are used to lay the foundations of Jesus' ministry as it is presented in the opening chapters of Matthew, Mark and Luke respectively, in the lectionary readings. It is a chance to focus, especially in the cold and dark winter months, on the light of God's love made real in Jesus Christ, who proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God.

In the season of Lent, we have taken to heart the wisdom of Joan Chittister regarding the liturgical year: it is "one of the teaching dimensions of the church," a lesson not only in faith but in life. [Chittister, *The Liturgical Year*, p. 43].

We do not have daily services in Holy Week, and as it is difficult to do justice to the entire passion of Jesus in a single Good Friday service, we have found it to be instructive and nurturing of our commitment to the way of the cross to give focus to the passion story through the six Sundays of Lent. For the last few years, we have begun Lent with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, allowing our liturgy and preaching to focus on the passion narrative that unfolds from there in the different narratives of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In different years we have focussed on the triumphal entry, the last supper, Jesus in the Garden, the arrest of Jesus, his hearing before the Council or Sanhedrin, Pilate's interaction with Jesus and the crowds, and ultimately the sentencing of Jesus to death by crucifixion at the decree of Pilate. The last two years we have coincided the text of the Last Supper with our first Sunday of the month communion, which has given both the gospel text and our observance of the Lord's Supper a unique significance.

In the season of Easter, the lectionary readings shift to Acts; we have made Acts and its stories of the emergence of the Church our focus, adding affirmations of faith about the church to our liturgy. These affirmations are drawn from the section on the church in the CBOQ Baptist Study Guide, *This we Believe*. [Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, *This We Believe: Resources for Faith* (2023

Edition). http://baptist.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/This-We-Believe_2023-UPDATE.pdf. This year, as we engage in strategic planning exercises and contemplate changes in the ministry of the church, the Easter texts, with their focus on community and proclamation, on mission and form, provided a good basis for our worship and preaching.

Following Easter, and the twin Sundays of Pentecost and Trinity, the traditional shift is once more to Ordinary Time, which continues through to Advent and a new church year. At First Baptist, this long period of Ordinary Time has been divided into three seasons, two with twentieth century origins in other denominations and one the creation of the pastor.

First, we observe the season of Kingdومتide, which continues from Trinity Sunday through the summer. Kingdومتide is a church season known in North America, particularly in United Methodist Churches and some Anglican churches, developed in the 1930s, although it has since all but disappeared. Typically, a church season of late autumn, it was intended to highlight the ministry of Jesus, who proclaimed in word and deed the coming of the Kingdom of God. This designation was used for a short time in the late twentieth century by British Baptists, as an opportunity to reflect more specifically what it means to be the church of Jesus, followers of his way of love and service. The lectionary texts for the summer months support this focus, as Sunday by Sunday the congregation hears stories of parables, controversies with religious authorities, healings and miracles from the synoptic gospels, occasionally supplemented by passages from the gospel of John. The focus, for us, is on ministry in the name of Jesus, after the model of Jesus.

In September, in the secular world, things return to routine, ordinary time perhaps. The church comes back together after summer absences, Sunday School begins again, and in Canada nature offers up its beauty and bounty. Following the mid-twentieth century tradition of the United Church of Canada (and the continuing tradition of the Uniting Church of Australia), First Baptist honours the Season of Creation from early September through to the middle of October. This is a time to reflect on the theme of the return to the routines of life and church that come after sum-

mer hiatus as we come back together as community; more significantly, we reflect on the earth as creation, and our stewardship of our world, a theme particularly important in these times of climate crisis. Our liturgy, one year, was supplemented by a lengthy series of Wednesday night Bible studies on the story of Creation in the opening chapter of Genesis. Creation is also re-creation, of ourselves as God's children and our earth as God's creation, under our stewardship.

The final season of the church year at First Baptist Ottawa is the Season of the Prophets. I developed this season years ago as an opportunity to dip more fully in to the prophetic message of the Old Testament, and to consider the ways that Jesus, in his ministry, stood in that prophetic tradition. At First Baptist Ottawa, the season of the Prophets lasts three to seven weeks; continuing to draw on the lectionary texts, it highlights issues of peace and justice, culminating in the final Sunday of the church year, the Reign of Christ. Formerly known as the Sunday of Christ the King, this Sunday is a relatively modern creation. Following the horrors and destruction of the First World War, in the wake of the Spanish flu pandemic and its many deaths, in the face of rising fascist nations in Europe and renewed attempts to colonize nations in Africa and Asia, in 1925 Pope Pius XI instituted the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe—or more simply, Christ the King or the Reign of Christ—as a Sunday to declare, in the midst of the uncertainty to life, that the word of God, the majesty of Christ, the salvation we know and the glory we honour, go on forever. An important Sunday in our modern world, and a fitting conclusion to both the season of Prophets and the whole church year, it declares the undying message of the Lordship of Christ. As we sing hymns of social justice, read the scathing indictments of the prophets and hear Jesus' words calling for justice in the world, we contemplate the prophetic background to Jesus' ministry and its meaning for our modern world. In this, we commit ourselves once more to upholding the way of Jesus not only for our lives but for our world.

And so the year comes to a close, and begins again in Advent: “Like a great waterwheel, the liturgical year goes on relentlessly irrigating our souls, softening the ground of our hearts, nourishing

the soil of our lives until the seed of the Word of God itself begins to grow in us, comes to fruit in us, ripens in us the spiritual journey of a lifetime.” [Chittister, *The Liturgical Year*, p. 209.]

The Rev. John Perkin serves as the Minister of First Baptist Church, Ottawa. Prior to moving to Ottawa in 2020, John served as Chaplain of Mount Allison University from 1993–2020.

A Liturgy For All Bodies

Kimmothy Cole, ed. *A Liturgy For All Bodies: New Words for A New World*. (Embodied Liturgy Collective, Cyclical Publishing, 2022).

REVIEWED BY JEFFERY WHITE

El Shama, the God who hears and listens to us, especially in our distress, Give us the internal honesty we need not to sanitize our prayers and the external fortitude to utter them aloud.

LETIAH FRASER

¶ Having felt rather out of touch with any recent resources for worship, I was glad to hear about this 2022 text of prayers, poetry, songs and essays. And filled with Canadian content too! Billing itself as a resource book for those who have “turned away from visions of God that maintain the status quo,” *A Liturgy For All Bodies* does speak language that includes many, so many. The “poor, queer, disabled, neurodivergent, Black |Indigenous| People of Colour” and others are heard in the prayers and songs and reflections of these two hundred pages. One Call to Worship begins:

*Loving Creator God, you have called us here to this place of worship:
We have arrived on foot, by car, by bus, by train, by bicycle;*

*We have arrived by walker, cane, or wheelchair;
Some of us have arrived by livestream.*

LE ANN CLAUSEN DE MONTES

As a composer of prayers and calls to worship and all such Sunday stuff, I have found this book quite useful and inspiring, helping open up my own writing of prayers and liturgies. The materials are all available digitally. After some introductory short essays, some of the major sections are as we might expect: Opening of Worship, Confession & Lament, Scriptures & Prayers, Communion Table. Interestingly, there are sections on Advent & Christmas, and Lent, but not for Easter. This is the nature of the book, I think: it is filled with pathos and it speaks for many who were not given a public voice in the past.

Of course, not every song or liturgy is easy to use. One Prayer of Lament and Praise here deeply expresses the life of a disabled person, and is at least as long as many of my sermons. Yet it can still inspire my own prayer leading.

*Nothing is wasted. Nothing is lost.
All that I went through, whatever the cost,
I can use on the road to the person I'm trying to be.
None of it came free but all of it is me.*

AMANDA UDIS-KESSLER

The Rev. Jeffery White in the Senior Minister of First Baptist Church, Amherst in Nova Scotia. Before moving to Amherst in 2022, Jeff served in churches in Parrsboro, Windsor, and Digby, Nova Scotia. Jeff's interests include involvement in three nature clubs, and a running club.

My Evolving Ecumenical Experience, Part Two

BY ROB HANKINSON

¶ My first Interfaith Prayer service was on March 21st, 1990, in Edmonton Alberta. For 28 years thereafter, every March 21st, either at Edmonton's City Hall or McEwan University, I joined others in praying for the elimination of racial discrimination. The common agreement was that the prayers would take the form of the pray-ers choosing and that each prayer would be short given that the service took place over the lunch hour.

In 1966, the United Nations declared March 21st as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD) to commemorate the March 21st, 1960, Sharpeville South Africa massacre. On that day in 1960 police fired on a crowd of some 20,000 people organized by the Pan-Africanist Congress in a countrywide demonstration for the abolition of South Africa's pass laws. 69 protestors were killed, more than 180 were wounded, 50 women and children were among the victims. Reports of this incident helped focus international criticism on South Africa's apartheid policy— I remember my Grade Six Civics teacher telling our class that "apartheid was a sin!" Following the dismantling of apartheid, President Nelson Mandela chose Sharpeville as the site at which he, on Dec. 10th, 1996, signed into law South Africa's new Constitution.

In 1989 Canada became one of the first nations to observe IDERD, and in 1990 the Edmonton Interfaith Network, formed in the 1980s, joined with Canadians for Interfaith Awareness and Harmony, and World Interfaith Education Association in inaugurating the Edmonton IDERD Interfaith Prayer Service.

Six years later this prayer service would become the signature event for the newly established Edmonton Interfaith Centre for

Education and Action (1996 to present). From the outset support for this multicultural, multifaith prayer service was overwhelming from both the City and McEwan University. The mayor brought his grandchildren and assisted their candle lighting. Also, during the 1990s McEwan University was exploring the creation of a multifaith Chapel and Chaplaincy, and their support for the prayer service highlighted their efforts to address the spiritual needs of their diverse community of scholars and teachers.

Who were the pray-ers? As we frequently said, “our pray-ers were from A to Z,” i.e., from Aboriginal to Zoroastrian, including others from Abrahamic faiths to Bahais to Jains to Sikhs to Taoists. Within a few years there was a new and positive development. At the conclusion of each prayer the attendees would respond in unison: “We affirm this prayer!” This liturgical addition continues, both symbolizing and advancing the growing interfaith community the world so needs.

What did we learn? First, that the scourge of racism remains a systemic and structural reality; that we are all susceptible to this virus; that as a praying people of faith we hold more in common than we know or occasionally acknowledge; that in terms of prayers for peace, justice, compassion, and the sustainability of creation, we are one; and finally, and always, we must pray and work for the elimination of racial discrimination.

The Rev. Robert Hankinson is a retired United Church Minister. Rob served as Secretary, Lac La Biche Ministerial, from 1973–1977 and as Chair of North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) from 2012–2016. He now resides in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, where he serves on the Wolfville Area Inter-Church Council as Secretary.

Responding to MAiD:

Spiritual Reflections, Experiences and Questions

2024 Vincent Rushton Memorial Lecture

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Guest Speakers: Rev. Sarah Scott and Rev. Joseph Green

Devotional Speaker: Rev. Dr. Aaron Kenny

All are welcome as we gather in-person and online
12-1 pm (Luncheon) 1-3 pm (Devotion and Lecture)

Bridgewater Baptist Church

564 Glen Allan Drive, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.

Registration (includes lunch at 12 pm) payable by e-Transfer or at the door \$25

Registration for Streaming Link (Devotion and Lecture 1:00 – 3:00 pm) \$10

E-transfer your registration fee to cabftreasurer@gmail.com or send a cheque to "David G. Allen, PO Box 217, Mahone Bay, BOJ 2E0"

Streaming information and the unlisted link will be emailed to those registered for streaming on the Friday prior to the Rushton Lecture.

If you are registering at the door, please let us know by emailing cabftreasurer@gmail.com so we can know how many to expect for lunch.

