

The Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION FOR BAPTIST FREEDOMS



Spring 2025



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.

CABF DIRECTORS

President: Marline Knowles, Bedford, NS (2025)
Past President: Lee Nicholas-Pattillo, Halifax, NS (2025)
Vice President: Hugh Kirkegaard, Bedford, NS (2025)
Treasurer: David Allen, Mahone Bay, NS (2026)
Secretary: Mandi Hecht, Saskatoon, SK (2026)

THE BULLETIN COMMITTEE

Editor: Scott N. Kindred-Barnes, Wolfville, NS

Inquiries may be directed to the Editor:
7 Cape View Drive, Wolfville, Nova Scotia B4P 1M3
ministerwolfvillebaptist@gmail.com



COVER: The next generation learns about Baptist history at the grave site of the Rev. Harris Harding (1761–1854).

SET IN BASKERVILLE TYPES & PRINTED FOR THE
ASSOCIATION IN KENTVILLE, NOVA SCOTIA,
BY GASPEREAU PRESS LIMITED

Returning to Our Roots?

BY SCOTT KINDRED-BARNES

¶ In 1880, the Rev. Ingraham E. Bill reports of a meeting of the Baptist Ministers' Institute (BMI) as early as 1870 in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. The Baptist Ministers' Institute was essentially a Forum for learned pastors to discuss the latest theological questions and to share the positions of some of the latest thinkers. The BMI continued well into the 20th century. In fact, some of our CABF members can recall it happening just prior to the Convention assembly. These meetings were not just 'ivory tower,' discourses. Rather, the meetings were practical discussions carried out within the context of prayer and fellowship.

If a broad tent is no longer possible for the Canadian Baptist family, then all concerned Baptists need to ask why. I don't know the answers to such questions, but I want to challenge all who are part of this cross-Canada family to at least consider returning to our roots, by coming together for prayer, fellowship and informed discussion of the latest theological issues of our day?

Given the state of our world, and the uncertainty between Canada and the United States, it was thought that this edition should be hopeful and inspiring. Thus, we congratulate the Rev. Jenny Eisener in anticipation of the tenth anniversary of her ordination. Jenny's ordination, on October 25, 2015, marked the first for the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms. You will also find two sermons by the Rev. John Perkin, of First Baptist Church, Ottawa. They were selected for their biblical prowess and for the way in which they address the moods of our times. I hope you enjoy this edition.

The Rev. Dr. Scott Kindred-Barnes is the Senior Minister of Wolfville Baptist Church in Nova Scotia. Before moving back to Wolfville in 2018, Scott served as the Minister of First Baptist Church, Ottawa for seven years.

Ordiversary

BY THE REV. JENNY EISENER

¶ This coming October I will celebrate my 10 year “ordiversary.” It was October 25, 2015 that First Baptist Church Halifax, with the support of the ordination council of the Canadian Association for Baptist Freedoms, laid hands on me and blessed my calling into ministry. These words, spoken by David Morse, Chair of Deacons at FCBH at the time at the service of ordination say, “Today is a day of great significance: for FBCH: the first ordination call in this church since January 3, 1996 (Rev. Geri Downey) for CABF: the first ordination for the Association, for Jenny: the culmination of years of hard work and realization of a dream of God’s calling in her life.”

Ten years feels like a long time ago when I knelt on the chancel steps surrounded by colleagues, friends and family. So much has changed in those ten years, some of those colleagues have passed away, family has changed and grown, and the church that called me is no longer the one I serve. The calling I said “yes” to then has continued to grow within me, to be faithful to serving the work of the church, especially with young families and youth.

I currently serve in a United Church of Canada congregation in Fall River, NS as “ordained supply,” holding onto my Baptist credentials. The clergy covenant in my service of ordination states, “We promise to support our ordained fellowship in times of joy and trial, success or failure, and to promote the unity of the Ministry in any way open to us.” I continue to honour this commitment. The CABF has grown and changed in many ways over these ten years as well. We have supported the ordinations of more clergy, including Baptists from overseas. This is indeed a time of “joy” for the CABF, and I’m honoured to be a part of it.

The Rev. Jenny Eisener is originally from Southwestern Ontario. She came to Nova Scotia in 2014 and is happy to call Nova Scotia her home. Jenny

is married to Charlie and has a step-son and daughter. As a family, they love going for walks with their dog and spending time at the family cottage. Jenny serves on the CABB Council as the chair of the website committee.

Prophet Margin

a sermon preached by REV. JOHN C. PERKIN
at First Baptist Church Ottawa on Prophets 3
Sunday November 10, 2024

based on 1 Kings 17:8–16 and Mark 12:38–44

¶ *The American election is over and Donald Trump is the president elect. Some Evangelical leaders in the United States are declaring this the beginning of the third great awakening of religious revival in the United States, and others are saying it is the fulfillment of prophecy. But to declare Trump the fulfillment of prophetic expectations is not only to misunderstand and misinterpret the prophets, it is to abuse them. As I noted in my weekly epistle this past week, at heart, the work of the prophet was to bring a word of hope to the people of God, which was offered sometimes clearly and sometimes through challenging words of condemnation and judgement. They rendered a critique of society and its leadership, they highlighted injustice, they shone a light on abusive power and called for justice for all people, especially the marginal—the widows, orphans and foreigners, those who lived in Israel as refugees, seasonal workers, slaves. Their work was to call out injustice and inequality, and to offer a vision of a different world where the gap between the marginal and those who held power and wealth was reduced.*

The American election was Tuesday, and on Wednesday, the day after, in the immediate aftermath of the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States, the stock markets reported significant gains. The new President has already expressed his desire to consolidate more power to himself, and to remove civil servants who are not loyal to him and his beliefs. The election of

this man who campaigned on the basis of being the candidate who would halt inflation, bring prices down, make life affordable, has already boosted the fortunes of the ten richest men in the world. Elon Musk's net worth rose by twenty-six billion dollars, and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos saw his fortunes increase by over seven billion dollars, about the same amount as the rise in Trump's own fortunes. I have trouble comprehending the concept of a billion dollars, or a billion of anything. A million I can imagine. I could pause, for instance, for two seconds, and two million seconds is about three weeks. A billion seconds, to highlight the difference, is over sixty years, my lifetime. Collectively, the ten richest people in the United States gained sixty-four billion dollars this past week, the single biggest increase in worth in the last generation. And nothing has improved for those at the other end of the spectrum. In fact, those who have fled violence, persecution and poverty in their own nations to take refuge in America, and who contribute to the economy in low paying jobs of child care, personal support work, agriculture and meat processing facilities, are now threatened with deportation. Racist ideologies have already been emboldened, and there has been a significant increase in racist attacks on social media in the last few days.

These are the kinds of circumstances that gave rise to the prophets in ancient Israel, not to exalt the leaders but to call them to account, to call them to change, to call them even to judgement. There is a long history of prophecy that spoke out against injustice, inequality and the abuse of power in ancient Israel; it moves from Elijah to his disciple Elisha, and on to those whose words and messages were recorded in books of the Bible bearing their names: Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the lesser prophets including Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah and Zechariah. Their words were to a leadership that turned away from the will of God, who sought to feather their own nests at the expense of others, rejecting outsiders, leaving their people vulnerable, and often mired in poverty.

Elijah stands as one of the great early prophets, calling out the king for his watering down religion and his abuse of others; he stands prominently in the imagination of the Hebrew people, shaping the vision of later prophets who envisioned a kinder and more gentle nation, filled with a peace that denoted not simply the ab-

sence of war, but of prosperity for all, equality and dignity for all, a land, as Springsteen sings in his own vision of the prophetic teachings of Jesus, of hope and dreams. At the very beginning of his call to the prophetic task, during a famine in the reign of King Ahab, Elijah hears the word of God which calls him to “go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there, for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.” True prophecy can only take place through awareness of the suffering in the world; true proclamation of justice can only be offered in the face of the knowledge of injustice. So, God sends Elijah to know the experience of those suffering from drought, famine, and corrupt leadership.

In the same way, Jesus proclaims an eschatological banquet in the face of those who struggle to eat on a daily basis; he proclaims a kingdom of justice and love in the face of abuse and oppression. One day in Jerusalem, he highlights a poor widow, fulfilling her religious duty with an offering to the temple treasury; he is perhaps sitting in the temple area with the disciples, and they are watching the crowds coming and going, and here Jesus highlights the act of devotion of a poor widow who has just given the offering of two small copper coins—in the Greek, two lepta—the smallest of all the coins in use in this region, like the pennies that used to fill our pockets and drawers and jam jars at home. She is commended by Jesus for her great and generous gift. We might even end up with the visual image of an old woman, bent by age and infirmity, depositing her two coins in the offering box because it is all she can spare. And this idealized generosity is often the subject of sermons on giving, encouraging people to give what they can, or to give without counting the cost, or to give despite thinking they cannot afford it. To give until it hurts.

The reality is that Jesus highlights the widow as one “has given all she has.” What he really meant is that she had already given to the temple, without intending to, everything she owns, because of the corrupt and broken system which had seized her property after the death of her husband and left her destitute. Jesus does not really praise the woman for her generosity, he laments the tragedy of injustice: she has been defrauded, and that is how the system works. In this, Jesus stands in the line of the Hebrew prophets and their work, and in this he was aware of how the system worked.

Back to Elijah the prophet, who was learning something of the way the system worked in Zarephath as he sat with the widow, who even in her poverty was willing to share what she had with this itinerant prophet. Her minute portion of flour and oil would make only enough bread for one last day before surrendering to hunger and death. But in the miracle of God's grace, the flour and oil was replenished daily.

We are called as a church to be a prophetic witness to the world, but that also means knowing the reality of the world, being present with those in need, and opening ourselves to the grace of God to provide as we wait our opportunity to proclaim the good news of justice, grace, a coming kingdom that gathers us all in.

And like Elijah, like Jesus, we may have times when we feel in exile, we take refuge, when we are on the very edge of society. The church is no longer the cornerstone of society, but as we stand now at its edge we have a greater freedom to step away from what Pierre Berton scathingly labelled "the comfortable pew", to be with those who need the good news we offer, to call out the injustices and abuses in the halls of power. From this position at the edge of society, the church has a greater freedom to speak out. And speak out it must, on social issues, standing for the poor, for what is right, for peace. We need a prophetic vision of salvation as God sees it, one not concerned with the salvation of my soul, but of my world, which is also God's world.

The Church must blend social relevance and biblical truth, together with a looking out to the lost and the marginal, the hurt and the broken, the ugly and the evil, and it must dare to speak to that reality. To know the reality of injustice, to stand with people who are on the very margins of our society, to be present, to advocate for change, to speak as an advocate and to seek changes that benefit all, sometimes from the very edges where we have no power—this is our prophet margin. And this is to walk in the way of Jesus, to make real the Kingdom of God, and to offer hope to all the world, one life, one step, one system at a time.

The Rev. John Perkin is the Minister of First Baptist Church, Ottawa.

Blinded by the Light

a sermon preached by REV. JOHN C. PERKIN
at First Baptist Church Ottawa on Prophets 4
Sunday November 17, 2024

based on Mark 13:1–84

¶ *It is November, and the days get shorter; from windows of the church, it looks almost dark before the afternoon is even over; and the darkness of the days seems to mirror the darkness of the world.* Lord Edward Grey, the British Foreign Minister in 1914 at the start of what would come to be known as the First World War, wrote in his diary in August of that year that the “*lamps are going out all over Europe, and I don’t think we will see them lit again in our lifetime.*” The image of darkness suggests discouraging times, despair, and even impending doom.

Our lectionary texts today speak to times of darkness and despair. Apocalyptic in nature, at a surface level they speak of a coming judgement, a day of doom and gloom, an imminent end of the world. In the popular understanding, they suggest a coming apocalypse. But that was not their purpose. The apocalyptic texts of scripture are a particular form of rhetoric not concerned with what is coming, but with what is. The symbols and metaphors of dramatic apocalyptic language are intended to connect the readers to their own times of crisis, when evil seems to reign, when power is abused and people are marginalized. In other words, they speak to the state of the human condition in every age.

Although in recent memory, we have borne witness to many things including a global pandemic, there is a deepened sense of darkness in the world now. The war that Russia wages on Ukraine continues; we are witness, as though by internet livestream, to the destruction of a people in Gaza; the ongoing civil war in Sudan has often been overlooked amid higher-profile conflicts raging around our world, and in the last sixteen months it has been the cause of over 60,000 deaths and the forced displacement of fourteen million people; civil rights are suspended in Burma, gang violence

tears Haiti apart, the lot of women in Afghanistan gets worse; all of this is now the backdrop to rising tensions in the United States as the President-elect pushes his agenda of eroding the gains made by twentieth-century liberalism, with retrogressive policies that threaten the rights of migrants, minorities and women, and even the principles of democratic governance. Racism is starting to rear its ugly and dangerous head once more, truth and facts have become irrelevant to political agendas, there is a polarization of positions, and we are living in a time that CBC journalist Carol Off describes in her recent book as “an age of rage” that renders rational conversation impossible. The rising appeal of demagogues suggests that most of the world’s populations could be living under authoritarian rule before this decade comes to an end. To these times the apocalyptic texts speak clearly.

The apocalyptic texts of the Old Testament prophets, of the Gospels, of Paul’s letters and of course the book of Revelation, are an encouragement to “guard the truth,” as the apostle Paul writes. Heir to the prophetic tradition, they are a reminder to resist evil, to stand for love and justice, to live as God’s people. But the apocalyptic texts are rarely understood or used that way. In fact, the reading of apocalyptic texts has become deeply embedded in American fundamentalist culture, where they have been co-opted and misused by elements of the religious and political right. Part of the rhetorical imagery of the texts is the dualistic tension between good and evil, and the far right has grasped this dualist element and used it to demonize their enemies. Apocalyptic texts have been used to support slavery and racism, to deny equality to women, and more recently to push back against liberal education, liberal politics, and liberal approaches to social reform.

I am troubled by the events and attitudes currently bubbling under the surface in the United States. I have been troubled by the rise of the abuse of apocalyptic texts in recent years to divide society into dual realms of right and wrong, good and evil, divine and satanic, and the way that understanding has been made manifest in a politics of power, exclusion, increased racism and sexism, and linked to a theology of the prosperity gospel that cares little for the poor, the marginal, the outsider, the foreigner. I am increasingly troubled by the recent “secularized” use of apocalyptic rhetoric

to dehumanize and demonize those who hold a different vision of the United States than that shared by the right wing of Evangelical Republicanism. I have always held firmly to the notion that a final battle of Armageddon was a literary device, but I now start to recognize there is greater power in these texts to speak to our current times than one might have supposed.

In our gospel reading this morning, the apocalyptic discourse of Jesus—the longest single section of discourse in Mark’s gospel—Jesus speaks to four disciples in what is essentially a farewell address that he uses to commission them in their ministry. It is worth noting that in this final discourse the four disciples present are the first four who were called, and who have been constant in their discipleship. Having withdrawn from the crowds with James and John, Andrew and Peter, two sets of brothers—perhaps a reminder to the church reading this gospel that the community of Christ’s followers are siblings one to another—Jesus responds to a seemingly innocent remark about the magnificence of the temple by speaking of its imminent destruction. He uses this as an opportunity to remind his disciples that they will face challenges—abusive powers and peoples—but also to note that those challenges, like the buildings they have erected, will not last.

Although Jesus seems to be predicting the future, in words that many prophecy believers have seized on to declare the imminent end of the world, Jesus is actually describing the world in which he lives and in which the disciples will proclaim the gospel. What he describes is contemporary to his times, although also true of every age. He describes the rise of false messiahs, those who make vast promises of deliverance without being able to deliver; wars and rumours of wars; and upheavals in nature. The wars and rumours of wars could more accurately be translated stories of war, or hearing about war, which would be true in an age before technologies and news media. He refers also to nation rising against nation (in the Greek *ethnos*, denoting a nation that is not so much a political realm as an ethnic group) and poetically adds kingdom against kingdom. This stands in contrast to the nonviolent realm of peace and service, belonging and justice, announced by Jesus—the Kingdom of God. The collision of empires continues through human history.

The apocalyptic words of Jesus, like those of Daniel, and the literally dozens of apocalyptic Jewish writings that are not part of our scriptures, all speak in metaphor and symbol of a coming end and an emergent age of glory. Their real goal, however, was not to prepare people for this imagined end of the world; their true purpose was to call people to resilience, to faith, to resistance to the powers that would destroy them and the human spirit. Jesus' words to the disciples are not coded words about a coming end, but a call to persevere, to be light in darkness, to be love in the face of evil, to uphold justice and equity in oppressive times, to be community in a time of alienation, to be redemptive agents of hope in a dark and cruel world. To be true followers of Jesus, in other words.

This was the call of Martin Luther King as he began his leadership of the civil rights movement, grounded in scripture and faith. Addressing over five thousand people in Montgomery, Alabama on the eve of the bus boycott, King spoke in apocalyptic terms: *"And you know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing amid the piercing chill of an alpine November. There comes a time."* In the darkness of a November world, there comes a time when we make a stand, and respond to the world.

This takes courage, which is singularly lacking in our western world. Russian novelist and mystic Alexander Solzhenitsyn, exiled from his homeland and addressing Harvard University in 1978, called on the west to the courage of faith, of truth, of conviction, saying *"A decline in courage may be the most striking feature that an outside observer notices in the West today. The Western world has lost its civic courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, in each government, in each political party, and, of course, in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling and intellectual elites, causing an impression of a loss of courage by the entire society. There remain many courageous individuals, but they have no determining influence on public life."*

In faith, in worship, in hearing the word, we are called to courage. As church, as people of faith, we may no longer have a deter-

mining influence on public life, but we are called to courage and action nonetheless. The words of Jesus, the words of apocalypse, are a call to stand firm, to shine a light of love into the encroaching darkness of our times. Light, of course, is a significant image in Christian theology, Christian faith, Christian life. It represents the hope we hold, the promise Christ gives, the presence of God. It represents love and justice and dignity for all people, it represents another step forward on the journey to the Kingdom which is God's.

Even if we cannot bring peace to the Middle East, or stability to Haiti, even if we cannot restore freedom to Ukraine or stability to Sudan, we can still work to make a difference by not giving in to the darkness. Even if we feel overwhelmed by the world, we are called not to give up on it. Christ calls us to refuse to be complicit in a culture that moves us away from God and God's purposes. We remain firm in our resolve to all that is just and holy, all that is kind and compassionate, all that includes the outsider and cares for the marginal. In the face of a world that rejects and demonizes others, we will welcome them in: the foreigner, outsider, the gay, the poor, the broken, the refugee. We will comfort the fearful, advocate for the excluded, and dare to make a difference. In a world of power and wealth, of rugged individualism and self-security, we will serve and share, we will connect and risk. We will be light in a dark world. We will bring the light of God to shine until truth is known, justice is done, all are included, and love prevails.

This was the way of the early church, and should be the way of the contemporary church. In the second century, Celsus, a Roman philosopher and outspoken opponent of Christianity, wrote of the appeal of this faith. Largely urban, it appealed to former slaves, merchants, artisans and servants—the lower orders that Celsus described as “wool workers and shoe makers,” suggesting that the absurdity of the faith was its willingness to embrace all. He further noted that Christians were converted not through intellectual exercise and public debate, but through quiet witness in their homes and places of work. This is where we can continue to share the good news that we believe and in which we live.

Singer Bruce Springsteen opened his Ottawa show last week, just after the election of Donald Trump, with a subtle message;

his first song, *Lonesome Day*, (from his post 9/11 album), speaks of the transience of the age: “*Hell’s brewing, dark sun’s on the rise, This storm will blow through by and by.*” And his second song was “*No Surrender*”. This too will pass, is the word of the prophetic and apocalyptic message of our reading from Daniel, and is the message also of Jesus; and in the meantime, we resist evil and do not surrender to the powers that be, the darkness of our age, through our quiet witness to the love of God in our homes and places of work and interaction. We offer light, the light of God’s love, so much light that we might be, in Springsteen’s words, *Blinded by the Light*. That is, we will find exuberance and joy in the life of faith, the hope it gives us, the hope that shapes the world; though we live in the world we share the divine light that burns so brightly we may be blinded by the light, seeing only goodness and love.

We can only hope that if the horrors and destruction at the heart of the book of Revelation are finding fulfilment in our age, so also will there be fulfilment of its conclusion: “*See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.*” This, too, will pass, and the church will continue on, as hope in times of despair, light in times of darkness.

May it be so, by the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Rev. John Perkin is the Minister of First Baptist Church, Ottawa.

CABF's 2025 Cross Canada Conference

October 26–29, Vancouver, BC

Love Draws Near: Cultivating Kinship with a Global Climate of Division & Disorientation

This year, the lectionary is based on the gospel of Luke, a gospel that articulates God's compassion and care for those on the fringes of power—women, the poor, the stranger, religious and ethnic minorities. In an age of rising hostility towards the “other” and disregard for the poor, how important it is to remember the way Christ drew near to all people!

As we, friends and members of the CABF, draw near to each other, may we reorient ourselves to Divine Love, strengthening our love and commitment to soul liberty, to one another, to all God's children, and to God's good earth.

REGISTRATION OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE
ON THE CABF WEBSITE.



CABF MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please use this form to become a member or renew your membership

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

Annual Membership Fee: \$20

Additional Donation (optional): _____

Total amount enclosed: _____

*Tax receipts will be issued for any donations of \$10.00 or more.
Please make cheques payable to the Canadian Association for
Baptist Freedoms or CABF and mail with this form to:*

Joyce Allen
P.O. Box 217, 308 Main Street, Mahone Bay, NS, B0J 2E0