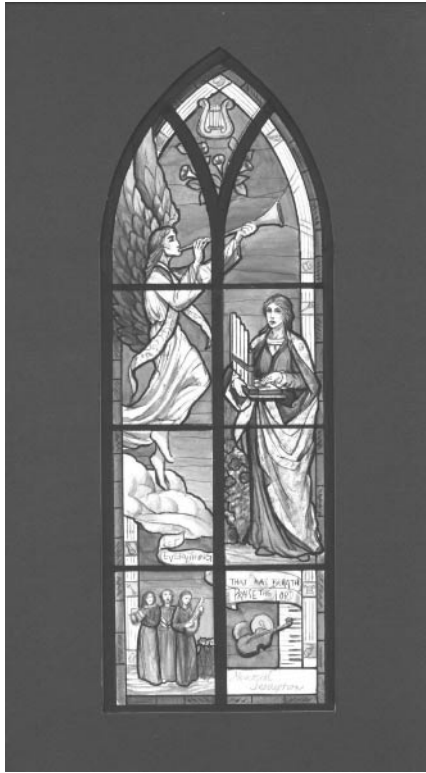


THE BULLETIN

A P U B L I C A T I O N O F

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship

S P R I N G 2 0 0 5



The “Musicians’ Window”

CHESTER BAPTIST CHURCH
LOCATION OF THE SPRING ASSEMBLY OF
THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
13 & 14 MAY 2005



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SUBMISSIONS
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In This Issue

RODGER FORSMAN, EDITOR

Since its founding more than thirty years ago the Atlantic Baptist Fellowship has thought of itself as a consultative body providing a safe and welcoming environment where Baptists can share concerns and points of view with out fear of being marginalized. The value of such an environment is perhaps greatest when issues arise which impinge on the way we think about the church and the nature of the Christian life.

Historically Baptists begin their thinking about the church with the conviction that believers, guided by the Holy Spirit, are moved to unite in a congregation. Local congregations are autonomous, not being subject in matters of Christian faith and practice to the authority of any secular or religious body. Understanding of the nature of the life in Christ, and unity of purpose and action in the fellowship, are to be secured not by coercion from external bodies or from a dominant clique within a congregation, but by discernment of the will of the Holy Spirit. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is sought by intelligent study of the Scriptures, by prayer, and by informed discussion of issues in which all members of the body have a voice. For in some way all have been touched by the Spirit, and like many lights from different angles the experiences of all are to be respected as contributions to the discernment of the whole.

This way of thinking about the church implies certain convictions about the signs of the Spirit's presence in congregational life. For example, decisions reached through procedures whose chief characteristics are participation and partnership are more apt to embody the will of the Spirit than decisions arrived at when one group enforces its will against another. The latter, because it creates winners and losers, inevitably spawns rancour, discord, decline of interest and even withdrawal of support—responses which would seem to be signs of the absence rather than the presence of the Spirit. Again, when controversial issues arise the presence of the Spirit is more apt to be indicated by the willingness of leadership to seek insight *from* members of the body as a whole, rather than in the

presumption that it is unilaterally empowered to make decisions for the whole on matters of faith and practice. The former encourages cooperation, collective enquiry, growth of mutual respect, and fosters increasing understanding of the Christian life in the face of ever-new challenges to the same. The latter, by contrast, devalues the experience of some members of the body, and thereby creates resentment and fosters partisanship—hardly signs of the presence of the Spirit.

A very perceptive and challenging essay by the Reverend David Ogilvie of Port Williams Baptist Church addresses the current issue of same-gender marriage as it affects Baptist church life. He argues that the historical Baptist conception of the church is an indispensable guideline as local congregations, and the wider fellowship, think their way through the theological, political and ethical issues that arise with a changing definition of ‘marriage’.

Ed Colquhoun, a regular contributor, continues to keep us all up-to-date with current scholarship. His review of a book which deals with fundamentalism in the three major western religious traditions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, points to a geopolitical issue which is an on-going challenge to the peace and security of all, but also a challenge to the self-understanding of the traditions within which this phenomenon occurs.

We also have a report of a happy event in Chester Baptist Church: the imminent installation of a stained-glass window honouring church musicians! Whitman Giffin, Minister of Music at Chester, describes the initiation and funding of the project, and some details of the construction of the window. He also, in effect, invites us all to view it when we meet in Chester for our Spring Assembly in May—an invitation which this editor heartily enjoins on all who can make it!

Soul Liberty Denied?

BY DAVID OGILVIE



Editor's Note: The Reverend David Ogilvie became the minister to Port Williams United Baptist Church on 1 August 2003. He and his family came to Nova Scotia from Regina, Saskatchewan, where Dave served as Senior Pastor in First Baptist Church. The Ogilvie family includes Dave's wife, Cynthia, and their three daughters, Julie, Kristy, and Erin. Dave is a graduate of the Baptist Leadership Training School, the University of Lethbridge (B.A.), McMaster Divinity College (M.Div.) and

the University of Prince Edward Island (B.Ed.). He has served Baptist congregations in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and P.E.I. He has also been an active member in the Gathering of Baptists within the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec.

On a Monday night late last November, I thrilled to the news that Tommy Douglas—a Baptist preacher!—had been voted “The Greatest Canadian,” and for a few precious hours I felt deeply proud to be both Canadian and Baptist. However, my pride evaporated the next morning when an email arrived from Council of the CABC containing a document entitled “Provisional Statement”, which threatens an unprecedented and heavy-handed action of Council against credentialed ministers such as myself. This document intimates that any CABC minister participating in the blessing of a same-sex marriage will be punished by revocation of the license to marry, and suspension of credentials. The threat to clergy is clear. Within this action, however, there is perhaps an even greater threat to our Baptist polity, and as a result, to our life and future together.

I was raised in seven different Canadian Baptist churches, by parents who valued being Baptist. I was educated in Baptist schools, and I have served Baptist congregations in three different regions in Canada. However, being Baptist is not something I take for

granted. I consider myself to be a Baptist because I consciously choose to affirm those things that have traditionally been precious to Baptists, including belief in the Lordship of Christ, the sufficiency of Scripture, the autonomy of the local church, and the priesthood of all believers. Undergirding these “Baptist distinctives” is the foundational Baptist affirmation of *soul liberty*, the conviction that each individual is both competent and responsible under God to make her or his own moral, spiritual, and religious decisions. I have long suspected that Canadian Baptists are losing touch with this fundamental principle, and the “Provisional Statement” has only confirmed my worst fears.

Our Baptist forebears believed passionately that if Jesus is Lord then nothing and no one should ever stand between the individual believer and Christ. Because governments and politicians are prone to use their power inappropriately—to coerce and manipulate citizens for their own ends—the state must be kept separate from the church. In the same way, leaders of denominations, associations of churches, and even one’s own congregation are capable of using power inappropriately to coerce and manipulate believers for their own purposes. They too must never be allowed to usurp the place of Christ in one’s relationship to God. Hence in Baptist faith and practice, each individual believer is understood to require no priestly mediation by another person or office, and no congregation is bound to serve another. All are free and responsible to choose and order their own personal or corporate life, to follow the leading of God’s Spirit as they understand it.

Those early Baptists were not advocating a life of unbridled self-indulgence. They recognized that we need each other. Individual Christians need the support and accountability of a congregation, and individual churches need the support and accountability of wider circles of community. However, soul liberty dictates that when we associate with one another we do so freely, supporting one another and holding each other accountable only to those things we ask to be held accountable to. Acting otherwise, for example by coercing or manipulating each other for potentially selfish ends, not only violates God’s call upon us to love one another, but is also idolatrous, for it allows the exercise of power to usurp the place—the lordship—of Christ.

The issue of same-sex marriage is incredibly complex and, as

evidenced in the current debate in the House of Commons, is open to a wide array of responses. In addition to the moral, legal, and social aspects, for people of Christian faith the issue stirs questions of how we interpret scripture, what we understand marriage to be, the appropriateness or inappropriateness of homosexual relationships, and what it means in this regard “to act justly, to love mercifully, and to walk humbly with our God,” (Mic. 6:8) as well as with our neighbours. Not surprisingly, the spectrum of interpretation on this subject is at least as wide in the Church as it is in the population generally. We do not all agree, and when we disagree, we often do so passionately. Fair enough.

On any topic, but especially on the most complex, Baptists have encouraged passionate debate, and have generally tolerated a wide range of thinking. Open discussion and loving acceptance of each other in our differences enable us to be led by the Spirit to learn and to grow. Think of how we’ve matured over time in our understanding on issues such as slavery, divorce, and the place of women in ministry. We don’t yet have consensus on these topics, but neither are we where we used to be. Growth in our understanding often came from listening to those who embodied the issues and who were willing to speak out courageously in the face of our ignorance, and sometimes, our scorn. Many of us can also name wise, caring pastors who bravely challenged the majority to see differently, who opened our minds to fresh understanding and our hearts to loving acceptance of others. As we all continue to learn and grow in relation to gay and lesbian persons, are we certain we want to force the clergy to adopt one particular stance that sounds reasonable to Council now? And in our fear and anger, do we really want to threaten our pastors, as we’ve never done before, with the potential loss of their livelihood? Instead, in light of past experience, and in keeping with soul liberty, should we not encourage and free them to lead us out of the courage of their convictions born of study, ministry, and prayer?

We also need to ask: If the Assembly approves the “Provisional Statement” of Council, how will this document further impact our lives? Will we be consistent and reject the credentials of anyone declaring their position on other subjects to be contrary to that of Council? I understand, for example, that while we have a defined position on the role of women in ministry, churches that cannot

accept this position are not disciplined, nor do dissenting pastors have their credentials removed, or even reviewed. Will they now? Will future ordination candidates be accepted or rejected solely on the basis of the position they take on specific social issues? Will those who are currently credentialed be asked to sign a document affirming Convention's "position" on a wide range of social/moral issues such as abortion, gambling, capital punishment, euthanasia, war, etc.? Will their credentials be suspended or revoked if they cannot or will not do so? As a credentialed minister in the CABC, I feel I need to know that the Council has considered these implications, and how it intends to proceed. Given the unprecedented and polity-denying nature of this action, I don't believe this is an unreasonable expectation.

In his important book, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Smyth & Helwys, 1993), Walter Shurden speaks about the fragile nature of the freedom that is basic to our Baptist identity, and he calls us to be vigilant in defense of that freedom. He writes, "The historical Baptist identity has been chiseled primarily from freedom rather than control, voluntarism rather than coercion, individualism rather than a 'pack mentality,' personal religion rather than proxy religion, and diversity rather than uniformity." (p.59) "Baptist freedoms are fragile; they are too readily relinquished from within and too easily pirated from without." (p.56) And he warns, "This emphasis on freedom will sound threatening to those who are more comfortable with control than with choice and who are more at home with uniformity than with diversity." (p.57)

The "Provisional Statement" fosters control and coercion from the top down. It moves to restrict personal choice and impose uniformity. Whatever the motives behind this document I am concerned that we not allow them to prompt us to sell our birthright, to relinquish the very freedom that defines us as a people and sustains us in our relationship to God in Christ. And I am concerned that we not give into a "pack mentality" and so allow our freedom to be pirated from without. My greatest concern, however, is that we may be unnecessarily wounding many fine people including gay and lesbian church members who will feel alienated by this threatening and punitive action directed at their pastors, and indirectly at them. Pastors will be forced to choose between the denomination and their parishioners, or worse, between their careers and their

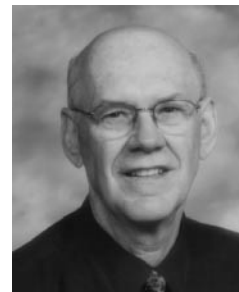
convictions; and congregations on both sides of this issue will feel out of step with, and therefore unwelcome among, the majority.

I thank members of Council for their leadership, but on this issue I ask them to reconsider, because I do not believe this fearful, threatening response is at all appropriate in the context of our Baptist culture, polity, and sense of family. And I find it profoundly contrary to the open, compassionate, affirming, freeing response to real people so often modeled by Jesus—that demanding way to which we are called by him. Remembering that Jesus is Lord, may we seek to live together in freedom, love, and grace.

Book Review

Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism*
(Ballantine Books, 2001, 424 pages)

REVIEWED BY ED COLQUHOON



Editor's Note: Ed Colquhoun has held many roles in public education - English teacher, counsellor, principal, human resources co-ordinator, regional director for school construction and renovation et al. A member of First Baptist Church, Amherst, he retains a theological bent acquired at Acadia Divinity College. Ed works part-time assessing students with learning problems.

The sickening toll of terrorist bombings and the frightening intrigues of Islamist radicals challenge us daily to take seriously the strange and threatening world view of fundamentalism. This book by Karen Armstrong, which barely predates "September 11th" and which has a new preface taking that catastrophe into account, attempts to put into context the fundamentalist movements of Islam as well as those of Christianity and Judaism. The developments within each of these faiths are followed in sequence from 1492 with

a general review of European and Middle Eastern Judaism, a focus upon Islam in Egypt and Iran, and Christian fundamentalism in the United States of America. Armstrong traces the three ultra-conservative strands of these faiths to their confluence in present-day Israel where a surprising alliance of American fundamentalists and ultra-orthodox Jews opposes the radical Islamists.

Because her scope is so large, Armstrong must of necessity review significant developments in a perfunctory manner. The 400-year period of 1492 to 1900 takes her 163 pages, whereas the 20th century alone consumes the rest of the book. Armstrong also must somehow fill in the gaps of understanding which her mainly Christian audience have regarding Islam and Judaism. While we might not need as thorough a treatment to understand the meaning of “creation science” to a Christian fundamentalist, the meaning of the *veil* to an Islamist radical or of *West Bank settlements* to the ultra-orthodox Zionist would not be apparent to many of her readers. The Reformation is dealt with in three pages and Baptists mainly make their appearance as right-wing American preachers, giving this reader the urge to point to one like Jimmy Carter and his efforts as a Baptist peacemaker.

Karen Armstrong gives a clear-eyed overview of religious fundamentalism in its various aspects. Armstrong comes from deep roots in the Christian tradition. She is at present teaching in a school that trains rabbis, and in 1999 received the Muslim Public Affairs Council Media Award. Her background gives her insight into the historical roots of contemporary issues with which fundamentalism contends. She does not minimize the destructive and hostile aspects of the “modern” world that fuel fundamentalist thinking. In fact, the book is a sympathetic portrayal of the rise of these movements. Where Armstrong and the rest of us standing outside of fundamentalism part company with fundamentalists is with their utter lack of compassion for fellow human beings who do not share their world view. That this lack of compassion, which leads at times to apocalyptic nightmares of slaughter, is at odds with the great spiritual exemplars of the three religions seems to us blindingly obvious.

“Just take that step out in faith!”

BY WHITMAN J. GIFFIN



Editor's Note: Whit Giffin served as Church Musician at Chester United Baptist Church from 1959 until 1967. From 1968 until 1976 Whit served at West End Baptist Church, and at Bridgewater United Church until 1982. He then returned “home” to Chester as Minister of Music. Whit and his wife JoAnne reside in Chester,

have three children, Susanne (Paul) Frauzel, Sean, and Sara (Kendall) Dorey, and two grandchildren Victoria Frauzel and Nicholas Dorey. Whit is a former member of the Nova Scotia Choral Federation and remains an active member of the Royal Canadian College of Organists.

Chester United Baptist Church is looking forward to greeting many of you at the Spring Assembly to be held in our Church in May.

As resident Minister of Music of the Church, I passed a significant milestone in my life last year marking forty-five consecutive years as a church organist with more than thirty of those years in Chester. To celebrate the occasion, I hosted a Celebration Concert featuring soloists and instrumentalists from churches I have served as well as the Senior Choir of this Church. The proceeds from a free-will offering on that occasion were set aside as seed money for a stained-glass Musicians' Window.

As a church musician I have often noticed that those who volunteer their time and efforts to provide the musical element of our corporate worship services in churches of all denominations are often forgotten. Musicians are very aware that churches have many commitments, such as Chester's very significant project of expanding our Christian Education facility. Any other projects have to be viewed with the total picture in mind. Nevertheless with a lot of prayer and taking a huge step of faith, I immediately launched

out into the unknown aware that a proposal to install a stained-glass window might be met with some very practical objections. I might say that I had many conversations with God during my walks on the rails-to-trails during the past summer!

Contacts were made with several stained-glass window firms. The most acceptable quotation came from Sattler's Stained Glass Windows located in Pleasantville on the LaHave River not far from Bridgewater. Based on my suggestion of themes from Psalm 150 their artist, Sue Obata, did all the conceptual drawings, the full-scale patterns and the special painting on the glass before it was fired in the kiln. Sattler's also took care to ensure that the new window will complement the existing windows.

Financing was not a difficulty. Memorial donations, the fund-raising concert, sale of CD's of the concert, and personal contributions generated in excess of \$10,000. This was accomplished without interfering with our Expansion Project and regular commitments.

The window is now ready for installation and will be dedicated on Easter Sunday. We are calling it the Musicians Window because the dedication panel reads:

*To honour and perpetuate the memory of all past, present
and future Church Musicians who have served their
Lord and this congregation from its origin in 1761.*

Embodied in the window in scroll are the words: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

Sometimes we are fearful to take on additional projects that seem a bit too ambitious because of the feared impact on our church and congregation. However, if it is to the glory of God, and with God's help, it WILL happen. Just take that step out in faith!

Atlantic Baptist Fellowship 2005 Spring Assembly

CHESTER UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH

FRIDAY, 13 MAY 2005

- 4:00 PM Facilitated informal discussion with the
Rev. Dr. Timothy Ashley & the Rev. Maxine Ashley
- 6:30 PM Registration
- 7:00 PM Welcome & introduction of guest speakers
- 7:15 PM Dr. Timothy Ashley: *Theology and Practice—Part I*
- 8:15 PM Communion service, with reception following

SATURDAY, 14 MAY 2005

- 8:30 AM Gathering and conversation
- 9:00 AM Worship led by Rev Maxine Ashley
- 9:30 AM Dr Timothy Ashley: *Theology and Practice—Part II*
- 10:30 AM Break
- 10:45 AM Questions & discussion
- 11:00 AM Atlantic Baptist Fellowship business meeting
- 12:00 PM Lunch
- 1:00 PM Ferry leaves Chester—Ordination Service for Renee
Clark, pastor of Big and Little Tancook Island Baptist
Churches. Guest Preachers: Rev. Maxine Ashley, Rev.
Timothy Ashley

Our guest leaders are the Rev. Dr. Timothy Ashley and the Rev. Maxine Ashley. In May 2003, after twenty-one years of faithful and creative service at Acadia Divinity College in the cause of top quality theological education, Dr Timothy Ashley and the Reverend Maxine Ashley moved to La Crosse, Wisconsin, where he is the minister at First Baptist Church of La Crosse. Maxine is Staff Associate Minister of Christian Education, American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin, and also Chaplain of Onalaska Care Centre, Onalaska, Wisconsin.

*Vincent Rushton Memorial
Lecture & Luncheon
2005*

DATE Saturday, 16 April 2005
TIME 12:00 Noon
PLACE Wheelock Hall, Acadia University, Wolfville, NS
SPEAKER The Rev. Dr. Cam Watts
TOPIC *Elijah's Coattails: The Temptation to Retire from Baptist Life*
COST \$10.00

Keith Churchill, Friends' secretary, writes: "Some of you know Cam. He is a graduate of Acadia Divinity College (Master of Divinity, 1980) and the Toronto School of Theology (Doctor of Ministry, 1992). He has served churches in four locations since his graduation, all in Ontario: Kingston, Claremont, Toronto and currently, Aylmer. Cam is a member of the board of Violence Against Women Services in Elgin County. He is also the moderator of the Gathering of Baptists (the organization in the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec that is analogous to the ABF). This summer he will be the Bible Study leader at the Peace Camp of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. You will find the luncheon an excellent opportunity to hear some challenging insights into our Baptist life and to enjoy gathering together as a community of Friends of ABF. Be sure to mark the lecture and the luncheon as a priority on your calendar."

*What is the
Atlantic Baptist Fellowship?*

The Atlantic Baptist Fellowship was formed about thirty years ago by a group of Baptist lay people and ministers who conceived it as a way of pursuing certain converging interests. First, they wanted to witness to historical Baptist principles. They also wanted to be involved with non-Baptist communions in joint worship, social action and ecumenical discussions of the nature of the Church. Finally, they wished to create a safe and welcoming environment where Baptists can share concerns and points of view with out fear of being marginalized. The ABF is not an executive body, carrying out programs, and advocating positions. It is a consultative body with the following aims:

1. To witness to the freedom implicit in the voluntary principle in religion which is the essence of the traditional Baptist position;
2. To affirm and celebrate Baptist participation in, and witness to the whole, visible, catholic and evangelical church of Jesus Christ;
3. To strengthen the United Baptist Convention of the Atlantic Provinces and to encourage it to strive for the above;
4. To provide a forum for the discussion of doctrinal and ethical questions and social problems and policies in that spirit of tolerance and mutual respect which issues from Christian love.

In pursuit of these aims the ABF publishes the *Bulletin*, and meets semiannually for worship, fellowship, and study of an issue of contemporary interest. Everyone is welcome to attend.

A Farewell to Three Friends

Sadly, we sometimes have to say goodbye to friends who have long been stalwart supporters of the ABF. Dr Dorothy Lovesey passed away some months ago, followed more recently by her husband, Dr. Morris Lovesey. Both were involved in the organization from its beginnings and were always vigorous advocates of its aims. Morris was Editor of the Bulletin for many years.

Only a few weeks ago Dr Gerry Harrop died. He too was a faithful supporter of the ABF, known for his ready wit and keen interest in politics. These folk are sorely missed, and we will remember them more fully in a future edition of the Bulletin. – *The Editor*

FRIENDS OF THE ATLANTIC BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

Friends are sympathetic to the aims of the ABF,
and support its work by an annual subscription fee of \$10.

To: KEITH CHURCHILL,
115, 2255 5TH AVE. WEST
VANCOUVER, BC V6K 4K1

Please enroll me as a
FRIEND of the ABF

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

DATE _____

TEL _____

SUBSCRIPTION _____