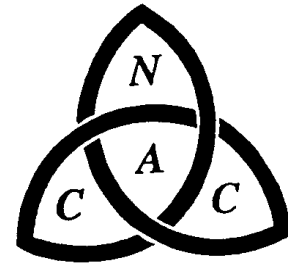


# NEWS BRIEFS



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## Distribution

This is our second "electronic" circulation of *News Briefs*, and once again it is going out by e-mail to the NACC congregations for which I have online contact people. It is also being posted at <http://www.unitedrenewal.org/index2.html>, our NACC website. This last means that the content is decidedly public, and you can therefore feel free to pass this material along to anyone who is interested, whether or not they are sympathetic to our concerns. The main target audience, though, continues to be people in our own pews.

God bless --

Geoff

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## Fishing in the Dark?

We've heard from several people that *NBs'* coverage of General Council was pretty disheartening. As they see it, the renewal movement seems to have bitten off more than it can chew, and the forces of the "new theology" in the church have won the day. After all, they say, ten years of effort have produced little apparent success, so isn't it time to cut our losses and move on? Such feelings are understandable, but Scripture has quite a bit to say about how to act when things are looking hopeless. Here's just one example:

When [Jesus] had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the net for a catch." Simon answered, "Master,

we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break."  
(Luke 5:4-6 NIV)

Our "night", like Peter's, may seem to be a long, hard and unproductive one, . . . **But** (1) Jesus calls us to be faithful, not "successful", (2) we know His harvest will surely come, and (3) when the catch does come in, it'll be His catch, not ours!

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## Ted Wigglesworth!

We have been holding this edition of *NBs* so that we could pass along the latest news on Ted.

You may remember that, while waiting for his main suit to be heard in the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench, Ted decided to apply for an injunction, asking that the United Church's actions against him be set aside until the full case is eventually heard. That hearing is probably still two years away, and it is now three years since Ted was summarily removed from his charge (and now the order of ministry). In all, that's five years out of the pulpit.

After considerable delay at the request of the United Church, the injunction application has just been argued before a judge in Alberta. The lawyers concluded their presentations earlier this week, and the judge has retired to ponder the pros and cons of the case. Her ruling is probably at least six weeks away.

This has been a long and wearing process for Ted, who, among other things, has had to hear a lot of unpleasant things said about himself, including at this latest hearing. However, he says he is determined to stick it out to the end. For him this is not primarily a personal issue - "I could have walked away a long time ago". Quite apart from the rights and wrongs of how he has been treated, what sustains him is his resolve to force the Church to follow

its own procedural requirements and the rules of natural justice when disciplining its ministers. Clearly, how this all plays out will have profound implications for ministers and pastoral charges all across the United Church.

The NACC supports Ted in his stand, and we have from early on been able to provide him with financial support through the Legal Defence Fund. A very large number of donations, some small, some large, have now contributed over \$100,000 toward Ted's mountain of legal fees. However, the Fund is presently sadly depleted, and this is another plea for your continued, concerned support. If you or your congregation can help (no amount is too small, and all are tax deductible) please send what you can to:

Jack Scott, NACC Financial Officer  
792 Headley Dr.  
London ON N6H 3V8.

Cheques should be made out to "NACC Legal Defence Fund".

Would you also please be sure to ask God to bring this sad matter to a fair and just conclusion.

Thank you and God bless you.

## General Council and Same Sex Unions

For some reason, a number of people seem to be persuaded the NACC is interested in nothing but homosexual issues, so it is unfortunate that decisions at the recent meeting of General Council force us back again into that particular arena. Still, GC's decision to "Affirm Lesbian and Gay partnerships, actively work for their civil recognition, and recognize them in Church Documentation and

Services of Blessing” has serious implications for every congregation and minister, and we feel the NACC has a helpful role to play here.

First some background. When GC adopted the above resolution, the NACC, through a commissioner, asked how the UCC would react if a minister felt unable to perform such ceremonies for reasons of faith or conscience. A ruling has now come from the General Secretary of GC, saying that, while a minister will indeed be allowed to decline, he/she will still be expected to assist the applicants “by arranging for another United Church minister to perform this function.” That ruling may offer some relief, but it leaves unanswered a related question: Where would the substitute minister perform the ceremony? In the church of the reluctant minister?

To assist congregations to make their positions clear on this point, the NACC has therefore drafted a resolution to help a local Session, Church Board, or Council to clarify what the congregation expects from its minister or will countenance on its premises. It reads:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, in its determination to maintain the sanctity of the family and the inviolability of marriage as a pledge and relationship between a man and a woman, the Session/ Church Board/Council of XXXX United Church does not and will not permit its minister or any other member of the staff of XXXX United Church to arrange for, play a role in, officiate at, or take any part in any service of wedding, blessing, covenant, affirmation, or other recognition of any kind, including documentation, of a union between persons of the same gender, nor does it nor will it permit its premises to be used for such purpose or for any recognition thereof, nor will it condone such participation or use.

Several NACC charges now have something like that in place.

As the first few words of the resolution suggest, there is an accompanying preamble, but this is fairly lengthy and we have omitted it here for reasons of space. However, we have legal advice that the preamble’s introductory “whereases” will provide a critical protective reference if the resolution is ever challenged in the courts. The full text is being forwarded directly to Secretaries of our Sessions, Church Boards, or Councils for consideration. The full text is also at our website, <http://www.unitedrenewal.org/index2.html>, and it can also be requested from *NBs*.

Finally, it is important to point out that the Basis of Union (5.8.4) makes it clear that it is a Session, Church Board, or Council which has to undertake an action like this on behalf of a congregation. (Even a properly constituted congregational meeting does not of itself satisfy the Manual requirements, although such a meeting could certainly ask the responsible body to take such action or could provide endorsement after the fact.)

## General Council and the Fishery

Despite the volume of business it had to handle, General Council also found time to speak about last summer's well publicized difficulties in the East Coast Native Fishery. The NACC's regional association in the Maritimes (MACC) feels the most publicized of Council's actions was ill-judged interference in a charged and complex situation. The NACC concurs, and at MACC's request it has agreed to so advise the church at large. The letter below and the accompanying Statement from St. Andrew's UC, Tabusintac (an NACC/MACC member) are intended address what has is a major ongoing concern in the East Coast Fishery.

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2000-12-05

Rev. Virginia K. Coleman  
Secretary,  
Executive of General Council,  
300 – 3250 Bloor Street West,  
Etobicoke ON  
M8X 2Y4

Dear Ms. Coleman:

The 37<sup>th</sup> General Council adopted two resolutions which addressed last summer's conflict in the East Coast fishery. These resolutions touched directly on matters of immediate and grave concern to one of our NACC congregations, St. Andrews, Tabusintac, part of a three-point charge that includes Burnt Church. The NACC has been asked to pass along the charge's concerns to the Executive of General Council and, since the dispute captured national attention, to the various Conferences and Presbyteries of the United Church. The concerns are expressed in the "Statement of Support" from St. Andrews UC (below).

One of the two resolutions was presented and adopted by the GC on August 17, the other on August 18. There is a marked difference in the language used by the two resolutions, with the second being much more measured in its tone. Significantly, the second also explicitly recognized that non-Natives have a major stake in the fishery. Unfortunately, media coverage at General Council focused on the first resolution, leading many local non-Native fishermen to feel a significant measure of rejection by the United Church. Although there have been local attempts to right the misunderstanding, we are not aware that to date any officer of the General Council has attempted to deal with the non-Native fishing community's deep feelings of hurt and betrayal. As a first step in rectifying this oversight, the NACC urges the Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the General Council, to make public its regret for the impression left by the GC 37 resolution in question.

Finally, we have been informed that the winter season is a time of severely reduced activity in the affected fishery, thus providing a window for measured dialogue between the two fishing communities and an important opportunity for healing. Once the weather improves, however, we can expect last year's confrontations to recommence since the situation appears to be stalemated. Given that the actions of the General Council may have exacerbated matters to some degree, the NACC urges the General Council Executive to exert its good offices to head off what promises to become an ugly and divisive national issue once again in the coming year.

Yours in Christ,

Geoff Wilkins,  
Secretary-Treasurer

Encl.

Cc All Conference Offices and Presbyteries

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STATEMENT OF SUPPORT (OCT. 15, 2000)

In this Statement of Support, we, as Session Members of St. Andrews United Church, a Maritime and National Alliance of Covenanting Congregations member, wish to respond to our United Church General Council's reaction to a very volatile situation in our Maritime Fishing Industry.

Instead of a well thought out Biblical response to the Fishery Issues at Burnt church, N.B., that would be instructive rather than reactive, the General Council chose to issue a "quick fix" resolution that the Press promptly communicated August 17<sup>th</sup>/00.

The United Church's own communications network has still not issued anything official, as far as we know. The 'Record of Proceedings' for the 37<sup>th</sup> General Council meeting will not appear until some time in the New Year 2001.

Our Non Aboriginal Fishermen interpreted what they heard and read as a stand against them. The local churches in the fishing communities were not able to interpret, explain or support the Resolution, as the press release was a complete surprise to them. No consultation with local churches was carried out before the resolution and press release.

After obtaining drafts of the resolutions passed (there were two of them!) St. Andrew's United Church Session members were not comfortable with the intent.

Our 'Statement of Support' in St. Andrew's United Church is given in order to reassure our Non Aboriginal Fishermen that we stand with them and the stance they have taken in the dispute. We understand that! For us, it seems fair to all parties involved to facilitate good management of the fishery, and in the long term, to serve to strengthen the fabric of our Nation (Canada).

The 'Statement' received strong support from our St. Andrew's members and adherents, and has been passed to our local fishermen for their information and future reference.

The 'Statement of Support' is as follows:

IT IS THE WISH OF ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH, TABUSINTAC, NB. TO SUPPORT THE FISHERMEN OF THE MARITIMES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN "EQUAL RIGHTS, EQUAL RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ONE LAW FOR ALL" IN THE CANADIAN FISHERY.

## Finally:

**The NACC's new** Financial Officer is Jack Scott, and he is now handling all our banking, etc. Would Treasurers and others please note that donations to the Operating Fund, Legal Defence Fund, etc., should now go directly to him at,  
792 Headley Dr  
London ON N6H 3V8  
Phone: (519) 472-2303  
Email: [jasscott@home.com](mailto:jasscott@home.com)

**Extra copies of** the 2001 Prayer Calendar went out to our congregations last week. These are intended for outreach – e.g. as gifts to people in non-NACC congregations. If you have suggestions for local use, make them known in your own church.

**The NACC's 2001** Annual Meeting is planned for London, ON, April 20, 21. The associated rally evenings will feature highly regarded speakers Mike and Harriet McManus of "Marriage Savers".

**National chairman Bob Blackburn** represented us in the planning of November's very successful "Christ Our Hope" conference at Wellington Square UC, Burlington. Drawing 335 participants, this was a cooperative ecumenical venture of renewal groups in the Presbyterian, Anglican, and United Churches. The hope is that it will become an annual event. Bob reports he has several excellent tapes of conference speakers: two of Dale Lang, the well known Anglican pastor and priest from Taber, AB, and one of Gary

Walsh, author and President of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. To borrow the tapes, write Bob at 5300 Drenkelly Ct, Mississauga, ON L5M 2H4.

**When a minister moves**, finding the right replacement can be challenging. For some years the NACC has offered a Pastoral Relations Service, helping NACC congregations and theologically orthodox ministers to find out about each other. More recently, a number of non-NACC charges have also asked to be included in the service, and these are now included if prepared to endorse the sort of theology to which the NACC subscribes (e.g. the 20 Articles of Faith of the Basis of Union). Four times a year, ministers and charges receive lists of the possibilities. (Ministers wishing to participate in confidence can do so.) For more information, contact the NACC Sec. -Treas. at the *News Briefs* address, etc. (see p. 1).

## A CHRISTMAS REMINDER:

**CHRIST CAME HERE!**

**CHRIST IS HERE!**

**CHRIST WILL ALWAYS BE  
HERE!**

**WHAT A CHRISTMAS PRESENT!**

