

NEWS

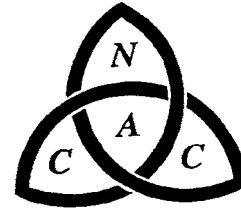
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BRIEFS

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Introductory Note

This edition of *News Briefs* was to have gone out several days ago. But then came news of the tragic events on the coasts around the Indian Ocean, and suddenly much of what was sitting in the file for this issue seemed rather secondary. However, those items are still important, so, while you continue to pray for the thousands affected by the tsunami, we hope you will also find what follows worthy of your interest.

In the New Year

The 2005 General Council will be receiving a draft of a new UCC Statement of Faith. If approved, this will then go out to the wider church for reaction. The NACC is extremely nervous about what may (or may not) appear in that draft statement, and informed feedback from congregations will be critical. Thus it would be good if each session would plan to review at least the key sections of the church's foundational statement of doctrine, the "Articles of Faith". The Articles are part of the Basis of Union, and can be found at the front of the UCC Manual. They are also at the NACC website (above). **Ted Wigglesworth's Suit** against his dismissal from UCC ordered ministry continues to move forward slowly. The lawyers are now scheduled to meet in February for a two-day Examination for Discovery. (In an Examination the lawyers have the opportunity to question the two parties, who are under oath. A court recorder produces a formal transcript that can be cited during the Supreme Court hearing.) There will obviously be legal costs to all this, and if you wish help Ted in his struggle for just treatment from the church, you can make a contribution to the NACC's Legal Defence Fund. Cheques should be made out to "The NACC Legal Defence Fund" and sent to the NACC Treasurer, Cameron Smith, 3 Sunshine Gardens, Sussex NB E4E 2E3. Tax receipts will be issued.

The "Marriage" Debate in Parliament is also likely to occur early in the coming year. We grow weary of having to speak yet again on homosexual matters, but it seems clear that the government is determined to legalize same sex marriage, despite apparent public reluctance. (A large November 19-22 poll by Ipsos-Reid found 27% adamantly against SS marriage, 32% for civil unions *only*, and 39% in favour.) The Prime Minister has promised a semi-free vote in Parliament, so local MPs - of whatever party - would obviously be interested in hearing your views. Please make sure they know them.

Setting up an NACC National Office will be a major topic of discussion at the 2005 AGM, to be held in Lewisporte, Newfoundland, June 9-10, prior to the NF Renewal Fellowship Spring Rally. Setting up such an office will be a challenge, but, if it succeeds, the NACC will be able to assume a higher profile - including in the regions, since part of the plan is to provide field workers to consult with and assist local congregations and ministers.

What Exactly Does the NACC Do?

A fair question, and one that occasionally is asked even by people in our own member congregations.

Well, several months ago your Chairman and Immediate Past Chairman were able to spend an hour with Peter Short, the UCC's Moderator, and he stated, with some emphasis, that he personally appreciated the role played by the NACC as a theologically conservative voice in the church. Being such a voice is, of course, one of our key purposes - to make sure that, when the UCC veers towards dangerous theology and moral teaching, the NACC is there to speak words of caution and/or dissent. This, of course, is as much for the sake of the UCC as anything, since we believe the disastrous slide in church membership is largely due to the UCC's dilution of its founding faith. Sadly, the church reports that, by the end of 2003, total UCC membership had dropped to 603,341, the lowest since 1926! That's down 460,692 from the 1965 total! Hence our concerns about the proposed new statement of faith.

In addition, of course, the NACC seeks to help individual congregations hold on to their vital faith roots and to maintain the rights of autonomy guaranteed by the Basis of Union. So, the overall goal? - to maintain at least a "faithful remnant" in the UCC.

What does this all add up to, practically speaking? Well, for instance the NACC provides a pastoral relations service to help orthodox clergy and congregations get in touch with each other. It has helped fund the training of facilitators for Natural Church Development, a direction-setting and revitalization program for congregations. It administers a Legal Defence Fund, to support orthodox congregations and clergy who find they have been unfairly treated by church courts. (See Ted Wigglesworth, above.) It provides considerable information and advice through its website. It maintains active links with renewal groups in other denominations, sharing experiences, insights, and advice. It has challenged (and on occasion successfully blocked) several troubling changes initiated by church authorities. And, perhaps most usefully, it has been able to offer advice and support to congregations and individuals that have phoned or written in with all sorts of problems.

Rear Bumper Sayings

"God is dead!" (Nietzche) - "Nietzche is dead!" (God) A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing Lord, help me be the person my dog thinks I am Honk if you love peace and quiet Men who change diapers change the world Jesus saves; Buddha recycles Never give the devil a ride - he'll always want to drive.

(Selected from a compilation by Richard A. Kauffman in *Christianity Today*.)

Stepping into 2005

New beginnings are often exciting. They can also be unsettling, even scary. Each month Joan and I visit a local nursing home to lead a mini-service (more of a hymn-sing really). This month, as in every January so far, we'll be hearing some words quoted by George VI in his Christmas broadcast in 1941, at perhaps the blackest time in WW2:

"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light, that I may go safely into the unknown.'
And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness,

and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to thee better than light, and safer than a known way.' "
(Minnie Louis Haskins, 1875-1957)

Good advice then. Good advice now.

God bless -- Geoff