

NEWS

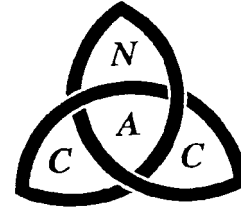
Volume 5, Issue 5

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BRIEFS

March, 2003

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TWO TEN TON TRUCKS

Our apologies to those who like the metric system, but this edition raises two monumental issues, and "Two 9072 Kg Trucks" just didn't cut it as a title.

Ted Wigglesworth vs. the United Church

Over the years, the details of Ted's situation may have become blurred for some people. For others it will be brand new. We expect to put out a fuller treatment shortly, but here for the moment is a brief description of what has happened.

In January, 1997, Alberta's Coronation Presbytery suddenly removed Ted from his pastorate. (At the time he was the NACC's national Chairman.) While taking that action the presbytery ignored a number of the UCC's procedural guidelines, including not providing Ted or his two congregations with an adequate explanation. (Many in the NACC now believe Ted's removal, and the UCC's subsequent stonewalling, stemmed from his having been NACC Chairman.)

For the next several years (during which time his standing as a UCC minister was removed), Ted and his lawyers laboriously argued his case through the courts of the UCC. Finally, having exhausted all possible avenues of appeal, he was faced with a choice - give up, or continue the struggle in the secular courts. At last year's NACC AGM in Breadalbane, PEI, Ted made the decision to carry on. Since then he has been occupied with finding and briefing a new lawyer.

In all this time, Ted's lawyers have had to be paid, of course, and broad and generous financial support of the NACC's Legal Defence Fund has done much to take care of that. (The UCC has its own in-house lawyers of course, but Ted, denied employment as a minister for over five years, has had to scramble just to support himself. For him, paying legal fees was out of the question.)

Many people in the UCC have difficulty crediting this sad story, but Ted is in fact just one of a series of "inconvenient" clergy who have been mishandled by the UCC. As he says, "Someone's got to see this through to the end, so the church realizes it has to stop doing this sort of thing to clergy it doesn't like." In many respects, this is a test case, and the UCC knows the implications are huge.

It is now time for Ted's new lawyer to start preparing the arguments he will present in Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench. This has to be paid for. If you feel able to make a contribution to the Legal Defence Fund, please do so as soon as possible. If you feel you need to wait for more information, that will come to you shortly. In either case, donations should be sent to the NACC Treasurer,

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

Please make out cheques to "NACC Legal Defence Fund", and no donation is too small . . . or too large! Tax receipts will be issued.

Marriage - Is It? Isn't It?

(1) Pressure to have same-sex unions recognized as "marriages" has led the House of Commons Justice Committee to undertake nationwide hearings. At issue is whether in Canada marriage will continue to mean what it has through the centuries and around the world: i.e. the union of one man and one woman.

The committee is scheduled to meet as follows: Vancouver (April 1), Edmonton (April 2), Moose Jaw (April 3), Steinbach (April 4), Halifax (April 7), Sussex, NB (April 8), Sudbury (April 9), Toronto (April 10-11), Rimouski (April 28), Montreal (April 30), Iqaluit (April 30). You are asked to pray for this process. Should you live close enough to attend, please do so, and, if you feel able, make your views known. (The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada has helpful reference materials available at its website, www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/social/initiatives.asp#marriage.)

Not surprisingly the UCC's presentation to the Committee frankly states that it opposes the proposition that marriage should remain an opposite-sex institution.

(2) If new definitions of marriage seem a bit removed from where you and your congregation are at present, you should know that, out of the blue, two NACC congregations have now found themselves forced to deal with the topic. The first has been asked to baptize the child of one lesbian couple; the second was approached about performing a "service of blessing" for another.

These are not matters *any of us* can ignore. Neither can we leave them to our ministers. The UCC's "constitution" (the *Basis of Union*) places the responsibility for worship, the sacraments, and the use of the church building squarely on Sessions (or their equivalents)(*Basis* 5.10.1). So, if they have not already done so, NACC Sessions should be thinking these matters through right now. After that they should be framing formal policy. While the baptism question is a new one to us, some time ago we offered wording sessions could consider re. services of blessing. If you'd like to have that, just get in touch with us or go to our website, www.unitedrenewal.org/nacc/nacc.stm. (Check under News/Archives.)

It's not over, till it's over. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, . . . Then the word of the LORD came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. (Jer 18:4-6)