

# NEWS

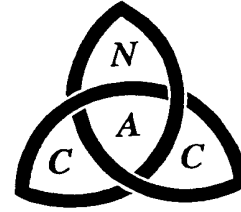
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# BRIEFS

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## Annual General Meeting

The sort of hospitality lavished on us in Newfoundland last year was again offered us late this last April, this time in Toronto (or, to be exact, Etobicoke) by the good folk of Alderwood United. There, your representatives met again to review the past year and to think about and plan for what God appears to be asking of the NACC in the coming year. This time, our delegates and table officers were from Newfoundland (1) New Brunswick (2), Ontario (6), Alberta (1), and BC (4). (Next year's AGM will be in BC.)

Perhaps the 2006 AGM's most noteworthy piece of business had to do with membership. As our name suggests, membership in the National Alliance has always been strictly limited to *congregations*, admitted on the basis of an affirmative vote from those in full membership. (The NACC is not in the business of dividing congregations, so the requirement is that the vote be in the order of 80%, and preferably, much higher.)

However, several Regions have for some time also admitted groups and individuals, and this AGM decided to introduce those same categories at the national level. This requires that we amend our By-Laws and then register the changes with the federal Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. But here you are getting early notice that NACC membership will soon be opened up to (a) groups of six or more from non-NACC congregations ("Associate Membership"), and (b) interested individuals from elsewhere in the United Church ("Personal Membership"). It isn't too early to spread the good word, so if you know of anyone who might be interested, please feel free to put them in touch with us. ([See the top of the page for contact info.](#))

## Meeting #2 with the Moderator

You may remember that last year our Chairman and his immediate predecessor met with the Moderator. Taking advantage of again being in Toronto (for the AGM), Geoff Wilkins took the opportunity to arrange a second meeting with Peter Short, on this occasion being accompanied by his wife Joan, an AGM delegate from BC. ("She was there to make sure I didn't say anything too foolish.")

Geoff raised two major issues with the Moderator. One was the proposed new statement of faith, which goes to General Council this coming August. He emphasized that, if adopted with anything like the theological content of the first draft (Faith Talk II), the church can expect yet another mass exodus, perhaps one approaching post-1988 proportions. In response, Peter Short said the revision would be going to GC Executive in the next week, and, while still "poetic" in form, it is probably a bit shorter, and now bears a new title - "A Song of Faith", rather than "Statement". He said nothing of the content.

The second issue was the way the church is making the daily life of congregations more and more difficult as the minutiae of their operation are increasingly directed by rules from above. To illustrate, Geoff offered a brief summary of the experience of three of our congregations (in one Pastoral Charge), which have now been without a regular minister for five years. The principal reason for this (not uncommon) situation is the denomination's inability to produce enough ministers. Creative local solutions, such as that found by the Charge in question, can be stymied by the UCC's new, restrictive regulations, sometimes, as in the case cited, imperiling their continued existence.

Peter Short replied that concerns about legal liability have prompted many of the newer regulations, but he also admitted that loss of local autonomy and flexibility is recognized to be a problem. He did not, however, expect any change of direction. In response, Geoff suggested that, at the very least, the coming General Council should consider providing room for Presbyteries to exercise local discretion if regulations are threatening the health and perhaps even existence of local churches and/or programs. [There seems to be a decided flavour of Pharisaism to the UCC's thinking here, although, come to think of it, beside us the Pharisees probably don't look that bad - at least at root, their main hope was not crass avoidance of legal liability and its inevitable costs, but a hope that the Messiah's coming might be speeded by everyone obeying the rules. Ed.]

## Clergy Care

The *Presbyterian Record* recently reported on a study conducted for Knox College, Toronto, regarding the well-being of ministers. The study drew on a pool of clergy in the United, Presbyterian, Baptist, Anglican, Pentecostal, and Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The results are thought-provoking.

For example,

- Although 83% saw themselves as in ministry because "I am called of God", 77% felt they acted more as CEOs than as pastors. (*What does this suggest about how we see their role? Are CEOs somehow what we're unconsciously looking for?*)
- 80% said they felt guilty if found taking time off during the week, even though most work at least a 50-hour week. (*What does this say about our expectations of them? Or about our pastoral interest in the stresses they face?*)
- 18% could not identify a single close friend in their churches, or in their immediate communities. (*What does this say about how we relate to them?*)

It might be good for many of us in the pews – and in congregational governance – to think about what we can do, collectively and individuals, about all this. As one small gesture, might it be time to consider a Minister Appreciation Sunday? Or a Thank-You Potluck? Or a Surprise Weekend Off?

## Snapper

Words that don't exist but should – AQUADEXTROUS (adj.): possessing the ability to turn the bathtub tap off with your toes; ELBONICS (n.): the actions of two people maneuvering for one armrest in a movie theatre; FRUST (n.): the small line of debris that refuses to be swept into the dustpan, backing a person across the room until he gives up and sweeps it under the rug; CARPETPETUATION (n.): the act, when vacuuming, of running over a string or piece of lint at least a dozen time, reaching over and picking it up, examining it, then putting it back down to give the vacuum one more chance.

- Collected at a hamburger joint in Squamish, BC