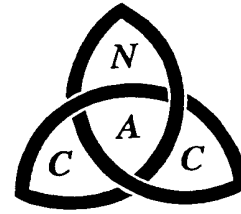


NEWS BRIEFS

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Summer's Here, . . . Perhaps

It's a brave person who makes predictions about the weather these days, but you've just got to believe there are some warm sunny times coming. So, in that spirit, and pretty much ignoring the signs of the times, this issue of *News Briefs* is going to be as upbeat as possible. For instance,

The 2008 AGM

Held in Debert, Nova Scotia, the NACC's 16th Annual Meeting brought together delegates, table officers, and guests from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. A great deal of business was done in the two days, but perhaps of most general interest were

- While former National Chairman Ted Wigglesworth's lawyer has had to withdraw because of a very serious health matter, another senior Alberta lawyer (a Queen's Counsel) is poised to accept Ted's wrongful dismissal case against the United Church. Hopefully, we are now close to trial.
- With the growing number of churches leaving mainline denominations in North America, the AGM asked *News Briefs* to emphasize that the NACC remains dedicated to continuing in its role as a voice for traditional and orthodox theology within the UCC. Our bulwark remains the "Articles of Faith" in the *Basis of Union*.
- In maintaining that role, there is huge encouragement in knowing that our approximately 75 congregations represent just the visible tip of an orthodox iceberg within the denomination. At the AGM we were again reminded of a very large Ipsos-Reid phone survey (2003), which found over 50% of UCC respondents sharing such key NACC beliefs as: that Jesus' nature is both human and divine; that forgiveness of sin is through him; that God is real and not superstition; that the Bible is the Word of God.
- The force of this "tip of the iceberg" imagery was reinforced when our Chairman and his wife were asked to finish their tour of the Maritime's NACC congregations with a meeting with the Session of a *non*-NACC Charge. Their concern? - "A Song of Faith", the UCC's new, and deeply flawed, statement of faith. Regarding its errors, the NACC and Session appeared to be in complete agreement.

- With many small rural congregations, the NACC is much concerned with their difficulties. To provide the AGM with some sense of the nature and scope of these difficulties, one Charge was asked to walk the meeting through what it has had to deal with in the last 5+ years in the face of being saddled with (one might say harassed by) an unsympathetic and unhelpful Presbytery. For many delegates it was a real eye opener. (“And where’s the sunshine in that?” you ask. Answer: After *five years* they’re still stubbornly hanging in there. Their quiet, understated report was touching and impressive.)

Fifteen Minutes of Fame, . . . Or Whatever

It would be churlish to deny a little time in the sun to Gretta Vosper, the United church’s latest attention getting (seeking?) minister. Her recent book *With or Without God* certainly caught the media’s attention for a short while. Perhaps her moment has now passed, but it’s possible she still merits a final split second of attention, because in her we have another illustration of where the UCC is headed. Slightly in the van of what UCC officialdom will as yet frankly admit, she gives the game away with statements like, “Why do we need a ‘revolutionary’ voice [Jesus] from two millennia ago? We have fabulous ideas of our own.” (Shades of Genesis 2!)

“So,” you say again, “where’s the joy in all that?” Well, through Vosper, God has just reminded us, again, where we’re being led (cf. Bill Phipps, “A Song of Faith”, “The Authority and Interpretation of Scripture”, etc.) He reassures the NACC that it is not over-stating the problem. Thank you, Father.

Snappers:

- In recommending *Whispers that Delight: Building a Listening-Centred Prayer Life*, Allen Churchill, a very familiar name in the renewal movement, has this to say: “I have read many books on prayer throughout my lifetime. I have not read a better one than this.” The author is Andrew Hawkins, and the book is available in bookstores, from Amazon, and from www.listeningprayer.net.
- Our friend Parker T. Williamson has written a remarkable new book whose message will resonate for many in mainline denominations. *Broken Covenant: Signs of a Shattered Communion* explains how many ecclesiastical structures (e.g. the UCC’s) can make it almost impossible to use historical theological standards to rescue dying denominations. Available in bookstores or from Reformation Press, 1-800-368-0110.
- A bit of a financial outlay, but highly recommended for at least church libraries: *The Christians* (Ted Byfield, ed.) - \$225 for the first six volumes (\$49 single) from 1-888-234-4478 or www.thechristians.ca/order.

Fluff:

Great truths from little children: You can’t baptize a cat. -- When your Mum is mad at your Dad, don’t let her brush your hair. -- Never ask your 3-year old brother to hold a tomato. -- The best place to be when you’re sad is Grandpa or Grandma’s lap.

Great truths from later in life: Raising teenagers is like nailing jelly to a tree. -- Families are like fudge: mainly sweet, but with a few nuts. -- And finally, Wrinkles don’t hurt a bit.

HAVE A BLESSED SUMMER