

NEWS

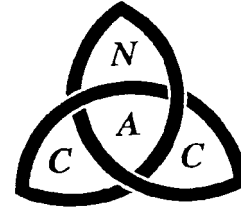
Volume 5, Issue 3

489 E. Osborne Road
North Vancouver BC
V7N 1M4

BRIEFS

November, 2002

Phone: (604) 987-9876
Fax: (604) 987-9835
Email: Geoff_Wilkins@telus.net



Editor: Geoff Wilkins

AN UPBEAT ISSUE!

The last four weeks have been good ones:

Remit 7 Decisively Defeated! -- In 2000, the United Church's highest court, General Council, approved a major reorganization of the church's structure. Because the proposed change affected the UCC's "polity" (government), it had to be submitted to the wider church for approval. Convinced the proposal was ill conceived and extremely damaging - particularly to congregations - the NACC asked its congregations to vote against it and have their representatives speak against it in their various presbyteries. The count is now in, and across Canada congregations rejected the proposal 777 to 574, and presbyteries rejected it 58 to 18! Warmest congratulations and thanks to all of you who did your part in defeating this dangerous proposal.

"Christ Is Our Life": Renewal Event Doubles Attendance! -- Sponsored by renewal movements in mainline churches (including the NACC's Ontario chapters), this year's conference in Burlington, Ontario, was more than double the size of the 2000 gathering. On November 2, over 650 adults, 100 youth, and 40 children, came together for worship, addresses, and a choice of 14 workshops. Many, many United Church people were in attendance.

In addressing a crowd battle-worn with the spiritual challenge of upholding the historic Christian faith in their denominations, the two keynote speakers both took a "big picture" approach.

"Somewhere each of you promised to be faithful, but you failed," began Dr. Tony Campolo. "But don't let it throw you - God is faithful to *you!*" American sociologist and author Campolo challenged us to preach the Cross, surrender to the Holy Spirit, make the Bible part of who we are, and love the world into the Kingdom. "The Church will not be renewed unless we start to preach the cross and what Christ did for us there." Campolo said it's not enough just to leave church renewal to the "dynamite" of God. "Have you opened yourself up to the Holy Spirit?" he asked. "Surrender and let him invade you - let him love you - and no congregation will ever scare you again."

He warned us that most people are not as impressed with "power" displays as they are with "love" displays. He claimed the Church is shrinking

today because the laity is not loving people into the Church. "Go out in the power of the Spirit and love them. Bring them in one by one!"

In the afternoon, Dr. George Sumner, principal of Wycliffe College, an evangelical seminary within the Anglican Church, put church renewal and reformation into its historical framework. Presenting vignettes of the struggles through the centuries, he reminded us that our primary job is not to change our denominations but to love and minister for the sake of the Body of Christ, the larger Church. "Do all that is in your power to keep fire in the fireplace," he said. Challenging us to look past the present conflicts, Sumner spoke for a massive transformation of the world through a patient spirituality, one that seeks the health of the universal Church. He said perhaps our most effective work will be to pray to Jesus: "Revive your church!"

Participant evaluations indicated a very high level of satisfaction, planning is already underway for the fourth of these Renewal Conferences, to be held Nov 1, 2003. Plan to be there! -- Gail Reid (with files from Jack Scott)

"Confessing the Faith"! -- What a tremendous blessing it was to attend this conference in Indianapolis! Sponsored by the Association for Church Renewal (of which the NACC is an active member), the Conference served to reassure us that God has indeed not given up on the mainline churches. I know of at least one "Elijah" from another denomination who left feeling he was not so alone and that God wanted him to continue in ministry.

For myself, two main truths surfaced. The first did not come from the general sense of unity in Christ - that affirmation I had expected, even though we came from a dozen different North American denominations. But rather it was found in the common thread of evil that speakers identified as infiltrating and eroding the spiritual vitality of our various churches. Sadly we may have grown used to hearing the deity of Christ challenged, the authority of Scripture diminished, and traditional sexual proprieties subverted, but what I realize much more profoundly now is that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). Our true battle is not with our denominational "head offices." It is a spiritual battle to be fought on our knees against a common enemy - Satan.

The second truth also appears in scripture: ". . . we also rejoice in our sufferings," writes the apostle Paul, "because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Romans 5:3-5). The speakers we heard and the people with whom we sat had been fired and tested like pottery in the Master's hand. Maligned and oftentimes misunderstood in their own churches, I saw something of Jesus Christ in their perseverance. They spoke with authority. They prayed with conviction.

Where there is character there is hope. We must keep our spiritual ears attentive so that we will not miss what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

-- David Fisher