

## **Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches August 2009 Assembly Highlights and Update**

At the August 2009 Assembly of Convention, which is the annual general meeting of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC), several of our members attended part or all of the gathering of representatives from our 500 churches. This year the Convention was held at Acadia University.

### ***Our Representatives this year:***

From First Baptist Halifax were our ministers, Rev. John Boyd and Rev. Renee Clark; and Lara Hazelton, Marlene Dexter, David Dexter, and Debbie Boyd, all voting delegates. In addition, Lara's daughter Emma attended and participated in some of the many programs offered to adults and children during the three days of Convention. Both Lara and Renee also participated in programs in addition to the business sessions.

### ***What happens at Convention:***

Convention is an opportunity to reconnect with old friends, to learn more about the work Baptists do together in the region and around the world, to update and refresh our skills for teaching God's Word, and to deepen our understanding of the Christian faith. We also have the opportunity to help shape the future of our denomination in this region, both informally and at the formal business sessions.

### ***What Current Issue is of most concern to us?***

Baptists are a varied group with widely differing views on many matters. Essentially, we are independent churches who come together in local Association and in Convention to support one another, to encourage one another, and to do work together that we could not easily do alone. Our Convention attempts to balance our "independence" with our "interdependence". The key area of tension in this regard has historically been policy and doctrine. Historically, Convention has been careful not to require adherence to policy or doctrine. Recently, Convention has adopted policy which must be adhered to, and has taken steps to assert more authority over the ministry particularly. This is of on-going concern to our Deacons, and we have been voiciferous in our objection to this trend in Convention to interfere, in our opinion, with the autonomy of the local church.

### ***Some Highlights at this year's Convention:***

#### **1. Amendments to the Regulations Concerning Ministry:**

Much of the work on this document was designed to bring better organization and ease of use to already adopted policies and regulations. Two areas of concern were raised by First Baptist delegates: 1) requiring candidates for Church and Association Licenses to Minister, as well as those appearing before the Board of Ministerial Standards and Education, to express "substantial agreement" with the 1905-06 Basis of Union Doctrine and Polity document. (In the past, the scriptures were upheld as *the* authoritative standard for faith and practice, and all human doctrinal statements were clearly subordinate.) 2) the section on **The Role of the Local Church** in ordination only mentioned the granting of Licenses of Minister, leaving out the additional

roles of identifying/nurturing potential ministers and conferring ordination itself. (In Baptist polity only the local Church can ordain, not Associations or Conventions, though congregations are expected to receive the advice of a Council prior to such an act.) An amendment to add these roles to the appropriate paragraph was defeated, even though both roles were alluded to elsewhere in the document.

2. Name change of ABU to Crandall University:

Atlantic Baptist University continues to grow and expand. Part of the strategy going forward is to become more accessible to potential students. After much study and deliberation, the Board of Directors determined that the word “Baptist” was restricting inquiries to attend the university. Hence, the name change to Crandall University in recognition of an outstanding Atlantic Baptist leader, Joseph Crandall. Following much debate, this motion was carried.

3. Atlantic Society for Biblical Equality:

This is a group of concerned clergy and laity endeavoring to promote gender equality within our Baptist Churches based on scriptural teachings. It is a positive undertaking and the group is working to raise funds to support the development of a web-site and general awareness. For more information on this society, contact Lara Hazelton through our church office.

***Status of CABC Incorporation:***

At this year’s Convention a Notice of Motion was given that a revised (3<sup>rd</sup> draft) Incorporating document would be voted on at next year’s Assembly. The Incorporation Working Group of CABC is at work considering all submissions, including those from our Association and others as a result of the last consultation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft. We should see the final draft this fall, well in advance of a vote. We will have an opportunity to study it, and make inquiries. The published schedule for adopting the new document does not allow for further changes prior to a vote except as may be made at Assembly by amendment. Our last submission to this process was in the spring of 2009. You can find it on our website at [www.forministry.com](http://www.forministry.com) and click on “News” and follow the links.