

**CONVENTION OF ATLANTIC BAPTIST
CHURCHES**

**Racism Working Group
Final Report**

***Living Out the Vision—
Becoming the Beloved Community***

June, 2010

“Dear God, we earnestly seek to be a people committed to building your kingdom. We pray that you would heal our brokenness and empower us to work for healing and redemption. Give us the courage to put our faith into practice to take the steps necessary for authentic reconciliation” (2007 Joint Assembly Covenant)

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Letter of Transmittal

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June 15, 2010

Dr. Robert Knowles
President of Council
Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches
Saint John, New Brunswick

Dear Dr. Knowles:

On behalf of members of the CABRC Racism Working Group, I am honored and pleased to submit to you and the Council the Final Report of the Working Group.

After nearly ten years of working together as a team, we have grown together as one family. Along the way, we have gained valuable new insights into the life of our Convention. More importantly, we have come to appreciate more fully past and present impacts of racism in our Convention's history, mission and ministry.

This report is a record of the journey that we started 10 years ago – an intentional and bold initiative to focus attention on RACISM, and to propose meaningful solutions to address this dreadful sin. Ten years later, we still have much work to do.

“Living Out the Vision--Becoming the Beloved Community “ puts forward a vision of a Convention family that is inclusive, welcomes new people into the kingdom and celebrates diversity. This report also points the way forward and how we can accomplish our desire to be the beloved community.

We look forward to Council's support and this Assembly's commitment to seeing the vision through.

Respectfully submitted,



Ogueri Ohanaka
Chair, Racism Working Group

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Members of the Racism Working Group - 2001-2010

Convention Appointees:

Current Members

Dr. Peter Reid (2008-2010)
Executive Minister

Rev. John Boyd (2001-2010)
*Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church,
Halifax, NS*

Dr. Frank Guinta (2001- 2010)
Regional Minister, Region 4

Dr. Lois Mitchell (2001-2010)
*Director, Public Witness and Social
Concerns*

Rev. Dr. Lionel Moriah (2001-2010)
*Faculty, Acadia Divinity College
Wolfville, NS*

Rev. Elias Mutale (2001-2010)
Regional Minister (Region 7-African)

Rev. Ogueri Ohanaka, **Chair** (2001-2010)
*Senior Pastor, Shiloh Community
Church, Dartmouth, NS*

Rev. Sherrolyn Riley (2004-2010)
*Pastor, Mahone Bay Baptist Church
Mahone Bay, NS*

African United Baptist Association Appointees:

Mrs. Doreen Paris (2001-2010)
*Past President, AUBA Women's
Institute, New Glasgow, NS*

Lic. Brian Johnston (2001-2010)
Pastor, Zion Baptist Church, Truro, NS

Racism Working Group Appointee:

Nancy Cameron, **Scribe** (2001-2010)
Dartmouth, NS

Past Members of the RWG:

Rev. Dr. Harry Gardner (2001-07)
Executive Minister

Rev. Dr. Malcolm Beckett (2007-08)
Interim Executive Minister

Rev. Tracey Grosse (2001-04)
*Pastor, Cobequid Rd. Baptist Church,
Lower Sackville, NS*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year (2010) marks the end of the mandate term for the Racism Working Group. The baton will be passed on at OASIS in August. The 11 members of the Working Group brought to their task a diversity of professional and community perspectives as well as experience and expertise in dealing with racism.

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Racism is a very difficult issue. For some of our constituency, the effects of racism are deeply and personally felt on a daily basis, both in society and within the context of our Convention family. For many others, racism is an invisible and intangible concept and there is even skepticism concerning the reality of racism in Atlantic Canada. This report provides pertinent information about racism and notes several specific examples of racism within the historical record of our Convention.

The mandate, vision and activities of the Racism Working Group are outlined, as well as significant outcomes resulting from our work. A very brief review of the messages of Dr. Braxton – speaker at Assembly 2007 – is provided, as well as an acknowledgement of the controversy surrounding other remarks made by Dr. Braxton.

Regional Consultations were held across the regions of our Convention this spring (2010) and summary remarks are made on each of the consultations. These consultations highlight the need for more work in this area. There is work that has been started but not completed and there is much additional work to do. As we examined our own documentation – Resolutions passed by our Assembly on the topic of racism, as well as Council Policies – it became clear that the work is entirely consistent with our intention to be inclusive and to embrace diversity. What remains is for us to put our good intentions into concrete action.

The Racism Working Group proposes the development of a new Department under the direction of a full time director. We propose that this department be called *The Ethnic Ministries & Social Justice Department*. We feel that it is critical that the continuing work in the area of ethnic ministries be part of a clearly articulated social justice policy. However, in order that the focus on ethnic ministries is not lost, we further propose the formation of an Ethnic Ministries Working Group with a clear mandate.

RACISM WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Racism Working Group (RWG) was appointed by the Council of the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC) in 2001 to help our Convention address the issue of racism as it pertains to historical and current expressions of racism within our Convention and our broader ministry context in Atlantic Canada. The RWG was mandated to hold the Council and Assembly accountable to the challenge of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) to make the first decade of the 21st century one in which to address the sin of racism and promote racial justice. This challenge, extended by the BWA to Baptist Conventions and Unions around the world following a meeting in 1999 in Atlanta, Georgia, was accepted by the CABC at Assembly 2000, in Halifax, N.S.

The Baptist World Alliance challenge came from the “Atlanta Covenant”¹ which specifically calls Baptist organizations worldwide to:

- Examine ways in which their evangelism, Christian education and economic structures perpetuate racism, and work aggressively for change;
- A renewal of worship and cleansing from racial sin in Baptist churches and a commitment to holistic and interracial mission and evangelism;
- To work for the elimination of unfair trade and for a just world economy, the protection of the rights of aboriginal and tribal peoples and to study the affirmation of the relationship between gospel and culture;
- To repent in churches, especially in North America and Europe, where worship is largely still segregated;
- To commit to racial justice as an integral part of proclaiming Good News; to promote economic development as a way forward to racial justice; use multi-racial images and idioms in worship; and develop church educational programs that promote a Christian lifestyle that demonstrates justice and racial harmony; and
- To move towards a mission policy that empowers all Baptists to evangelize and disciple all people groups around the world.

¹ See http://www.bwanet.org/bwa.php?m=news&p=news_item&id=25.

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These are broad objectives with deep and far-reaching implications. The full eradication of racism is an ambitious goal and clearly not one that has been reached through a decade of effort by the Racism Working Group. Nonetheless, it is a journey which has begun with intentionality and commitment.

Words cannot express the impact that this process has had on the members of the Working Group. Many of us have been part of the process since the group's original formation in 2001 and we have experienced profound transformation in our own hearts and lives as a result of being part of this group. We have sat together – for many hours - around tables in various locations in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and have heard one another's stories. We have come to love and respect one another. We have learned to be patient with process.

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The experience however, has been a mixed blessing: on the one hand, we are deeply appreciative of the opportunity we have had to be part of this journey, but on the other hand, we recognize that transformation does not come about quickly or easily. We are very conscious of the fact that our own transformation has been slow and at times painful. This has tempered our frustration with the reality that many within the CABC family still do not fully understand the impact that racism has had, and continues to have, on our ministry and in mission. Although there is much work to be done, we are encouraged by clear evidence that the Holy Spirit is working.

UNDERSTANDING RACISM

Because many people are unaware of racism and its effects on individuals, social structures and society as a whole, our first task has been to help people understand racism. Racism is a term which has been used in many settings and circumstances. Much has been written about racism and it has been a common theme in popular culture. But what is racism and how does it affect us? At the most basic level we would suggest that:

1. Racism has both social and spiritual implications;
2. Racism affects individuals and their families and communities, often through the social structures which define daily life;
3. Socially and psychologically, racism can be devastating;
4. From a Christian perspective, racism is the sin that perceives persons to be inherently inferior to others, simply because of their race;
5. Racism devalues persons in terms of their dignity and contribution to society;
6. Racism is not simply prejudice but is prejudice combined with power;
7. Racism uses the power structures of society to provide privilege for some and disadvantage for others.

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From a Christian perspective, the consequences of racism are profound. Racism is fundamentally a spiritual problem because it denies our true identity as children of God. And, racism diminishes our effectiveness in mission and ministry.

Racism has become embedded in the structures of our society, including our denominational structures, and will be difficult to dismantle. However, we passionately believe that change is possible and essential. An appropriate response to racism and its effect on the fellowship and witness of the CABC must be developed in light of a clear biblical and theological understanding of what it means to be both human and Christian.

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We believe that a biblical Understanding of racism must be grounded in the following principles:

1. Our humanity derives its meaning from the foundations of our creation. In Genesis 1:26-28 we read:

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness..." God created humankind in His image; in the image of God He created them. God blessed them..."

2. Our humanness is further developed in terms of how we interact with each other. Paul says in Galatians 3:26-29:

You are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ... There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

3. Racism undermines spiritual community – God recognizes the value and worth of all humankind. In a document entitled *Facing Racism: A Vision of the Beloved Community* (produced in 1999 by the Presbyterian Church) this is explained:

God at creation, endowed humankind with qualities and characteristics that originate from His own divine being: imagination, intellectual capacity, spirit, emotions, a will with which to engage in acts of deliberation and decision-making, and a moral conscience with which to discern or distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil.²

Fundamentally, the problem is that we live in a broken and fragmented community in deep need of redemption and reconciliation.

If we are to successfully find a way to dismantle racism, we believe that we must build on the following principles:

² See <http://www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/facing-racism.pdf>.

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1. The sin and separation present throughout human history can only be resolved in relationships which are God-centered.
2. Quoting again from *Facing Racism*, we must seek a comprehensive diversity “where the content of one’s character is more important than skin color, where love, justice and peace emerge as the preeminent norms for all relationships; and where institutional power is humanized by moral values so that it serves the interest of justice.”

Our work has been based on the following common understandings:

1. A biblical hermeneutic that proclaims God’s intention for racial equality and racial justice.
2. Individual hearts and minds must be transformed by God’s vision of racial equality and racial justice.
3. Denominational structures must be transformed to enable racial equality and racial justice to be celebrated and lived out within the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches.

The broad objective of the Racism Working Group for the past ten years has been to seek to create an atmosphere in which our whole constituency can engage in healthy dialogue concerning how we can eradicate the sin of racism within our own structures and in other spheres where we have influence. While racism has been an issue for various ethnic and linguistic groups in Atlantic Canada, the Racism Working Group has focused on racism within the context of the African-Canadian community in Atlantic Canada, and more specifically, the relationship between the African United Baptist Association (AUBA) and the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC).

OUR HISTORICAL CONTEXT - EVIDENCE OF PAST RACISM

The CABC has made efforts to address racism in the past, passing resolutions at Assemblies in 1963, 1968 and 1991.³ These resolutions, while well-intentioned and still relevant today, have not resolved the issue. Racism persists in both church structures and in society. Many churches and individuals may not be conscious of racism in Atlantic Canada and may assume that if they don’t see it, it doesn’t exist. However, racism is a sad reality for many and its effects are felt deeply and painfully. As a result, there continues to be tension in the relationship between the African United Baptist Association (AUBA) and the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches (CABC).

³ See <http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/node/324>, <http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/node/330>, and <http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/documents/racism.pdf>.

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The Working Group determined early in the Mandate term that an in-depth honest review of the relationship between the Convention and the African Baptist Association was a crucial component in our work. This assessment was made based on the following common understandings:

1. The AUBA represented the only major ethnic or cultural group that has had a long history of active ministry contact with Convention.
2. It is also a historical fact that the AUBA exists today as a direct response to racism. For many years the relationship was characterized by mistrust and misunderstanding, which in turn impacted certain aspects of our ministry.
3. Until recently, the level of participation of AUBA churches and Pastors in Convention events and yearly Assembly sessions was minimal.
4. For a very long time, successive AUBA and CABC leadership could not bridge the gap in the relations. Ministry funding to AUBA churches seemed to be the extent of the contact.

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The following examples of racist blind spots and practices in our Churches and Convention have been selected to provide a sense of historical context and assist our understanding of racism as experienced by Black Baptists in Atlantic Canada:

- i) Rev. David George arrived in Nova Scotia in 1782; he was the first Black Baptist pastor in Canada. In 1773, David George was one of the founders of the Silver Bluff Baptist Church in South Carolina, the first black church in North America.⁴ He went on to plant Baptist churches in the US, Canada, and Sierra Leone and yet his legacy has rarely been recognized or celebrated among Atlantic Baptists and his name and work are little known compared to that of his non-Baptist contemporary Henry Alline,⁵ a New Light Congregationalist.⁶
- ii) The church David George founded in Birchtown, Shelburne County, was burnt to the ground by white soldiers who were incensed because George had baptized a white couple;⁷
- iii) The effect of segregation and marginalization in society was manifested in the church as well as in the community. The 1833 "Meetinghouse Covenant" of the Baptists in Digby and Clements included this note:

⁴Black Loyalists, <http://museum.gov.ns.ca/arch/sites/birch/loyalists.htm>

⁵ In the 1990s, our Convention's Social Action Commission published a brochure on David George seeking to draw attention to his contribution to the Baptist work remedy his anonymity. The Commission ranked him among other key Baptist leaders like Manning and Isaiah Wallace.

⁶ Leo Bertley (1977) *Canada and Its People of African Descent*. Bilongo Publishers. P.136.

⁷ Harry A. Renfree. (1988) *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada*. Mississauga: Canadian Baptist Federation. P33.

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That there shall be a place reserved for the colored people in the gallery on the north side of the house and at the west end and that no pew holder may sell his pew to colored people.⁸

- iv) Local Baptist and Convention support was lacking for Richard Preston, founder of the AUBA. He had to go to England for his further education, and ordination, and even to raise funds to erect a church building in Halifax;
- v) While the Black churches have been open to white pastors, black pastors have been predominantly directed to AUBA churches. Many white churches are still closed to black pastors today.

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Three factors - all directly tied to racism - can be identified as contributing to the rise of segregated worship in Atlantic Canada. First, black people in isolated communities like North and East Preston had little choice but to start their own churches. It is important to recognize that settling of black people far away from mainstream society, was a forced measure to keep them on the outskirts of society, far away from white settlements and their houses of worship. Professor James Walker describes the effect of separated black communities as leading to a separate identity and culture. In many ways, it is also a culture of inadequate resourcing by government and underdevelopment. Walker writes that the neglect shows up even in the lack of effort to study the issue of Black Loyalists.

Their concerns (Black Loyalists) and initiatives, and their responses to the racial discrimination and economic exploitation practiced by Loyalist society shaped the development of separate institutions and a distinct social identity. The black community, and particularly its founding fathers, deserves the attention of those who would understand the origin and growth of the Canadian Mosaic⁹.

This mosaic includes the church. The establishment of black churches in these communities was commendable, but not the segregation that put them in those isolated places. The black churches came to occupy a very prominent role in the spiritual, social, economic and political life of black communities.

Two other related scenarios can be identified. On the one hand, there were white churches with clear rules prohibiting full inclusion of black worshippers like the Digby Baptist church referred to above. On the other hand, in some instances the desire for autonomy was the driving force for the establishment of black churches. The example of Zion Baptist Church in Truro illustrates this point. Mrs. Donna Byard Sealey writes about this in her book *Coloured Zion*.

⁸ Phil G. A. Griffin-Allwood. *Reason to be: The African Baptist Association as a response to systemic racism* p.3.

⁹ James W. ST. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists*. Second Edition, University of Toronto Press, 1992. P.x

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The events leading to the establishment of ZION BAPTIST CHURCH, Truro, Nova Scotia, Canada on November 5, 1896 are well documented in the *Minute book and Membership Roll* presented to the church by Rev H.F Adams in January 1897.

Dear Brethren and sisters

We the colored members in fellowship with you, having come to believe that the number and needs of the colored population of Truro require (autonomy,) request that you will dismiss us to organize a Regular Baptist Church.¹⁰

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It is clear that prejudice and racial discrimination led to the formation of separate black churches in Nova Scotia throughout the first half of the 19th century. Several of these churches predate the formation of the Maritime Baptist Convention in 1846. In 1854, under the leadership of Rev Richard Preston, The African Baptist Association was formed as an entity distinct from the Maritime Baptist Convention.¹¹ The Association joined the Convention family in the 1880s and was renamed the *African United Baptist Association* following the 1905/6 Convention name change. The Association has had a distinct and distinguished history in Atlantic Canada (and especially in Nova Scotia). Canadian Baptist historian Harry Renfree wrote an interesting commentary on the African Baptist Association churches in which he says:

The work among blacks in the Maritimes was undertaken mostly by blacks, and their churches were established from within. Their continued growth in the face of extreme poverty, daunting obstacles and narrow prejudice doubtless resulted from their fine independence of spirit, convincing courage and deep dedication to the God who had led the exodus of an earlier people. No other minority group in North America has borne such fruit.¹²

Dr. Peter Paris, a native of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and now the Elmer G. Homrighausen Professor Emeritus of Christian Social Ethics and Liaison with the Princeton Theological Seminary, underscores the importance of the Black church. He writes:

The black churches in both Canada and the United States constituted a surrogate world for their people: a place where they could find solace for their troubled souls, refuge from the pain of racism and freedom to participate in all matters relative to their common life. Apart from the black churches it is doubtful

¹⁰ Donna Byard Sealey, *Coloured Zion*.

¹¹ See http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/documents/RWG_reason_to_be.pdf, a paper presented by Philip Griffin-Alwood at a workshop at Oasis in 2007 entitled *Reason to Be: The African Baptist Association as a Response to Systemic Racism*.

¹² Harry A. Renfree, *Heritage and Horizon: The Baptist Story in Canada* Canadian Baptist Federation. 1988

*that blacks could have survived the genocide implicit in the institution of slavery or the subsequent tyranny of second class citizenship.*¹³

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UNITY IN DIVERSITY: CELEBRATING OUR ONENESS IN CHRIST

The way to a healthy future requires that we do not gloss over these issues and the resulting lingering effects of past and present, witting and unwitting examples of racism. A great start was made at the 2007 historic Joint Assembly when past wrongs were acknowledged and a new Covenant Agreement was signed.

There was however, a significant loss of momentum after Assembly 2007 due to several factors. First, the controversy associated with the Assembly 2007 preacher took much of the wind out the sails of an eagerly anticipated event. The speaker, Dr. Brad Braxton, though second to none in his articulation of the problem of racism and its solutions, muddied the waters with some contentious theological positions on other issues and sadly this put a substantive dent in an otherwise outstanding Assembly. Thus, despite his wise and inspirational messages on the issue of racism, the Assembly did not reach its full potential in terms of unifying our constituency around the Covenant Agreement.

Dr Braxton gave three key addresses on the problem of racism. The first message focused on what he called “the bone deep problem of white privilege.” The problem of white privilege identifies how North American society designed a lifestyle which delivered the highest standards of living for Caucasians while other races - especially people of African descent - were relegated to a life of marginalization and deprivation. Having lived and benefited from the often assumed and even invisible privileges of their skin colour for years, many white folk today fail to see or appreciate either their privileged position or the racism which is still so acutely felt by blacks (and other minority groups) in Atlantic Canada. It is part of white privilege to hold this position while people of African descent continue to suffer the effects of centuries of physical oppression and social and economic marginalization and neglect.

The second message was a call to thoroughness and continuity. He cautioned that...

If we begin the big task of attempting to dismantle the impact of racism, we need to go all the way. If we stop short of a thorough job, we will be worse off afterwards than before we started.

¹³ Peter J. Paris, *The Moral Political and Religious Significance of the Black Churches in Nova Scotia*. 1989.

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Last but not least, Dr. Braxton lifted up Assembly bodies and spirits with a high powered message that “God is able!” “*The problem may be gigantic, but God is able,*” he thundered.

He can do the impossible. So when Abraham and Sarah found themselves as the only senior citizens in the maternity ward, they proclaimed that God is able. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were threatened with destruction in the fiery furnace, they proclaimed that God is able. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the whole world proclaimed that God is able. So let us begin creating the beloved community right here, right now where we have gathered in Wolfville.

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It was a marvelous Assembly with enduring images from the gathered worshippers - black and white – worshiping together and exchanging vows of commitment to a new life as black and white believers and the signing of a Covenant to seal the vows.

The work of living out those vows has already, however, had a few challenges. The change of leadership at the Convention office and internal challenges in the AUBA combined to create a loss of momentum.¹⁴ There also seems to be some misunderstanding in the broad constituency about the place of the AUBA in the Convention family and an assumption by some that in the post 2007 assembly era, there would be no need for the AUBA to exist. These factors have all impacted the priority of living out the covenant of Assembly 2007. The purpose of Assembly 2007 was to make a new beginning in creating “the beloved community.”

As we seek now to move towards the goal of the beloved community, we need to understand how the relationship between the African United Baptist Association and the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches continues to be hindered by racism.

There are a number of challenges which must be addressed and resolved if we are to deal effectively with the racism that hinders our ministry and mission here in Atlantic Canada. The first challenge is to acknowledge that the pain and lingering effects of overt and covert expressions of racism may never be fully understood by the churches and individuals within our Convention. The Racism Working Group believes, however, that until we acknowledge our active and passive complicity in the perpetuation of racism, our witness as a denomination within Atlantic Canada and the effectiveness of our local ministries will continue to be compromised.

¹⁴ Dr. Harry Gardner, an active member of the Racism Working Group since its inception, resigned his position as Executive Minister just after the 2007 Assembly to take up his responsibilities as the President of Acadia Divinity College (ADC). His seat was filled by Dr. Malcolm Beckett (interim Executive Minister) for a short time, and then by Dr. Peter Reid, the new Executive Minister. Dr. Reid quickly became a valued member of the group, but has had to do lots of catching up at a critical time in the Working Group’s mandate term.

THE VISION OF THE RACISM WORKING GROUP

Early on in our work together we articulated a vision of what we are aiming for, specifically in terms of our own Convention. This provided a template for the concrete actions that we initiated at Convention events (Council and staff meetings, Oasis), with Acadia Divinity College and Atlantic Baptist University (now Crandall University), with Regional Consultations, and at Association events.

1. To develop a mindset and model of redemption which will result in a profound transformation in church and society;
2. To embrace racial and cultural diversity as God-given assets of our CABC family;
3. To work persistently at becoming a community that is culturally and racially inclusive;
4. To lead our churches to confess the stain of racism in our history and current experience;
5. To envision and become a community of faith where ALL believers are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live whole and fulfilled lives.

MAJOR ACTIONS

While it is difficult to articulate all that the Working Group has done in the past decade, the following is a summary of our activities.

1. Provided time and space for Working Group members to reflect on their individual stories, journeys and feelings around racism. This has been ongoing but was our intentional preoccupation in our early years as we sought to get to know and trust one another.
2. Developed a brochure outlining the mandate and vision for dismantling racism within CABC.¹⁵
3. Conducted sensitivity training sessions for Council and senior staff and a Sensitivity Primer for Council in 2009.
4. Held consultative meetings with our two institutions (ADC & ABU) on the racism issue and provided update on the activities of the Racism Working Group.
5. Provided resources to Associations aimed at raising awareness and combating racism in the churches.

¹⁵ See http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/documents/racismwkgpbrochure09_sm.pdf.

6. Initiated and coordinated the historic 2007 Joint Assembly (bringing together for the very first time a combined fellowship of representatives from CABC, AUBA, ABY & ABW) dedicated to the theme of racism. This special assembly attracted the largest recorded attendance to date and included a Confessional Liturgy and the signing of a Covenantal Agreement called, *Unity in Diversity: Celebrating our Oneness in Christ*.¹⁶
7. Developed a Racism Working Group space on the CABC website.¹⁷
8. Held meetings with the Baptist Historical Committee regarding review of CABC & AUBA histories to better reflect the relationship and AUBA ministry presence in the formative years.
9. Met with the Regional Ministers to discuss their role and assistance in the planned regional consultative meetings by the RWG. Also, a copy of the DVD on racism –“Beneath the Skin-Baptists and Racism” was given to each Regional Minister in preparation of their January 2009 training sessions in Wolfville, NS.
10. Conducted Regional Consultations throughout the CABC to provide a forum where interested persons could interact with members of the Racism Working Group concerning a collective vision for future efforts in the area of racism sensitivity and an emphasis on meaningful inclusion within the CABC of various ethnic minorities.
11. Provided yearly progress reports and updates to the Council and presented these at CABC Assemblies and AUBA Annual Sessions.

SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES

Some of the following significant outcomes are a direct result of the activities of the Racism Working Group and others are outcomes that we believe are indirect evidence of our work. As a group we are convinced that despite the persistent challenges identified above, the CABC has turned a corner on this issue and the Holy Spirit is truly bringing about repentance and transformation.

1. The sensitivity Training Sessions conducted for our key CABC institutions and personnel enhanced understanding of issues leading to improved cultural competence on both sides of the divide.
2. We developed a document (in the form of a brochure) with a clear definition of racism and a clear theological statement for this ministry.
3. Continued support for the AUBA Regional Minister’s position whose second term began in the middle of the Racism Working Group mandate.

¹⁶ See <http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/documents/Unity%20in%20Diversity.pdf>.

¹⁷ See <http://www.baptist-atlantic.ca/departments/witness/racism-working-group>.

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4. A recognizable increase in participation of AUBA churches and members in CABC events.

Perhaps the most notable progress on this matter has been observed in the Atlantic Baptist Women. Since 2007, members of the ABW executive have worked hard to invite, include and utilize women of the AUBA in the work of ABW. Since then, some AUBA women have been keynote speakers, an AUBA woman has served as registrar for the annual gathering while others have presented workshops and still others ministered as soloists or in other capacities. The ABW also has its first AUBA member as recording secretary and she is now in her second term in this position. The ABW have become a shining example of creating the beloved community.

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5. First full faculty appointments/professorships at ADC and ABU of persons of African ancestry.
6. The election of two Convention Presidents of African ancestry in recent years.
7. The appointment of an Athletic Director of African ancestry at ABU in 2008.
8. The establishment of an Equity Bursary Award at ABU to assist students from AUBA Churches or other minority ethnic groups who desire to study at the university.
9. Increased enrollment of AUBA students in both the Divinity College and the Lay Pastors Training Program.
10. ADC honorary degrees and ABU special university Leadership awards in recognition of AUBA members who have made significant contributions to their churches and communities.
11. ADC has also recognized other church leaders of African ancestry for their dedication in training Christian leaders, mentoring of new leadership for foreign national churches and international diplomatic work with CBM in the area of Peace and Reconciliation.
12. Improved and visible representation of AUBA members on Council and various Convention Boards.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

An important initiative by the RWG with some positive outcomes was the recently concluded Regional Consultative meetings. Despite our intention to conduct a consultation in each of the seven Regions prior to submitting our final report, we were unable to schedule a consultation in Region 3 and the consultation in Region 1 was very poorly attended and thus will be re-scheduled for the fall (2010). We are grateful,

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however, to present a brief summary from the other five regional consultations where we had significant dialogue and received appreciable feedback.

The purpose of these consultations was three-fold:

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1. to provide churches in all CABC regions with an update on the work of the RWG;
2. to challenge our constituency with regard to the ongoing work of our Convention on the issue of racism in light of the Covenant Agreement; and
3. to share pertinent information and engage them in discussions on the Draft Mandate for a proposed Ethnic Ministries Department.

Region 1, held at Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Fredericton, NB

Two members of the RWG Team - Dr. Peter Reid and Rev. Ogueri Ohanaka - were tasked with facilitating this session. Regretfully, the RWG could not proceed with a formal consultation due to poor attendance. A combination of factors in the planning and publicizing of the sessions in the region impacted the outcome.

There was some concern expressed to us that the topic of racism itself is not popular in the Region, and even a suggestion that changing the name to something else might indeed motivate the constituency to show interest. Although this was an unexpected and disappointing outcome, there was agreement by the leadership present to invite the RWG back for a consultation meeting in the Fall. As a Working Group we appreciate this gesture and hopefully, there will be further opportunities for dialogue to understand the genuine feelings and difficulties being expressed by our constituency in this region. Clearly, there is much work yet to do to bridge this gap and the RWG or its successor agencies will be committed to carrying this out.

Region 2, held at the Wolfville Baptist Church, Wolfville, NS

Regional Minister Rev Ronald Baxter who organized the Region Two consultations reported as follows:

Revs. John Boyd and Elias Mutale had a most interesting and informative presentation which caught the attention of the sixty-five to seventy people who were in attendance at the Wolfville Baptist Church on Saturday afternoon, March 6th. The DVD's, the small group interactive sessions, the power point presentation, plus the personal messages from the presenters as well as their interaction with the participants led to a high grade on the evaluation that thirty-three participants submitted.

Let me quote the remarks that were submitted by participants on the evaluation form regarding this initial Racism Working Group presentation:

A real eye opener.

I felt challenged to revisit my 'invisible' biases.

Thank you for a challenging and inspiring session.

I had never heard 'white privilege' discussed.

Very thought provoking ... memories surfaced. Eye-opening.

Thank you - more need to be made aware.

Great! Honest! Need to be real. So glad to see 'Free Indeed' and hear real circumstances & feelings from Rev. Elias and Rev. John.

Excellent; however, some time meant for plenary was utilized by presenters.

I particularly enjoyed the video on racism, very poignant and a change from listening to speakers.

Very informative with a renewed awareness of the social problems that our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering and how we as leaders must be prepared to change our racial views and give up some of our white privilege for the good of all mankind

Eye opener.

Region 3 – yet to be held

Region 4, held at Stevens Road Church, Dartmouth, NS

The Halifax Region Consultation attracted over eighty-five people as it was incorporated into the Association's Spring Sessions. The presentations were led by Rev. Ogueri Ohanaka and Nancy Cameron. The sessions began with Concentric Circle exercises which involved all the participants pairing up partners to share their individual experiences with racism, their hopes and fears for the sessions and what the word, "racism" meant to them. The presentation on "White Privilege" seemed to generate the most feedback from those who attended the sessions.

There was considerable interest shown in the Draft Mandate for the proposed Ethnic Ministries Department. Following the formal presentations, several people came up to the front to share publicly their experiences, offer some comments or ask a question. It

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was such a moving experience as many of the speakers recounted events from their childhood days that left lasting positive influences in their lives; others talked about having to deal with the perceptions about racism in their own families. There was a question raised about how the African United Baptist Association is holding itself accountable to the Covenant Agreement signed at the 2007 Joint Assembly.

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Overall, this consultation was very encouraging and had a positive outcome. There was a lot of interest and interaction. We were well received and the atmosphere for the sessions was cordial and friendly. It was evident that the Association leadership was supportive of the work of the RWG and the Draft proposal we shared with them.

Region 5, held at the Shelburne Baptist Church, Shelburne, NS

The RWG Team for this consultation included three members of the RWG - Lionel Moriah, Dr. Frank Guinta and Rev. Sherrolyn Riley. Following the Shelburne meeting, Dr. Moriah sent in this positive report.

Two observations and experiences were most outstanding and positive because they were so very encouraging. The first was the unexpected but most vigorous participation of a group of young people who were present at the urging of Pastor Tim Johnson, as well as the friendly engagement of RWG members. The tenor of those discussions convince me that the greatest resource for advancing the RWG mission may be found in the "now generation". Consequently, we must devise some means of continual engagement and inclusion of them in these consultations; they are most likely to advance this significant agenda, successfully. Perhaps such arenas as CHALLENGE; OASIS; TIDAL IMPACT; POTENTIAL IMPACT; LOCAL YOUTH GROUPS (CABC/AUBA); all needed to be intentionally engaged with this Mission. Thereby, we may gain much creative strategies in advancing and ultimately fulfilling our mission.

The second positive encounter experienced, was the surprising presence of interested participants from other local denominations who came and displayed keen interest in the purpose of our gathering. Again such interest offers the possibility of intentional encouraging of Associations to consider outreach ministries of "bridge building" through use of RWG resources. An effort that may well lead to Community Healing and Transformation, a likely mandate of the Social Justice (Just Society) element of the newly proposed Ministry to which the "Baton" is being passed. Such are the initial thoughts and impressions gleaned from the Shelburne experience.

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It is important to note here that this encouraging report has come from a region where a few years ago, was not only dealing with racial confrontations between black and white youth, but also, had blacks and whites mobilized together to stop the municipality from locating a new landfill site on treasured black loyalist burial grounds. This is vivid evidence that change is still possible.

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Region 6, held at the CABC Office, Saint John, NB

A total of ten people attended this consultation, including both pastors and lay people. The sessions were conducted by Dr. Lois Mitchell and assisted by Rev. Ogueri Ohanaka. The atmosphere for this consultation was essentially cordial, and there was good interaction with the participants. We had to deal with a lot of questions around perception and relevance of racism in this area. While we were not able to complete the full presentation as planned, we came away with some positive feelings. We noted the following key observations and comments from the session:

I want to keep learning about racism in my personal life and among those I pastor.

There is still a lot of ignorance and lack of exposure to racism in this area.

It is going to require breaking down walls of suspicion and feelings of guilt.

I grew up in a mostly Caucasian, mostly protestant community. I didn't observe any racism. But as I reflect now, I'd acknowledge it was there.

There is still a lot of denial here in our area; we don't see it as a problem.

There is a difference between blatant acts of racism and how deeply it is embedded in our culture.

Often we are not aware of the racist statements that belie our real actions.

We need to practice uplifting each other; being a friend.

People harbour false expressions of different cultures, often unaware of origins, hence the need to educate ourselves about racism.

The real problem is when you don't know the problem exists.

Region 7 (African Association), held at Inglewood Baptist Church, Bridgetown, NS

Three members of the RWG were tasked to conduct this consultation - Revs. Ogueri Ohanaka, Elias Mutale and Doreen Paris. There were about 15 members of the AUBA

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Executive who attended the session. Due to the length of time allocated to the RWG for this session, we were only able to conduct an “abbreviated” version of the presentation. The reasons and process of the ongoing regional consultations were explained. Then we provided a brief update on the current work of the RWG. Next was formal presentation and dialogue on the Draft Ethnic Ministries Mandate. The AUBA leadership was reminded of the importance of continuing to demonstrate accountability to the Covenantal Agreement signed during the 2007 Joint Assembly by having a physical presence as well as participation on Convention Boards/Commissions and by attending events.

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We received comments regarding non-representation of minorities, specifically African Nova Scotia (AUBA) people in promotional materials published by Convention. The March 2010 promotional brochure /registration form for Oasis was cited. In our response, we noted the concern and encouraged the Association churches and pastors to forward photos or videos of events to Convention office. This way there is available archival material to be used if and when necessary.

Some discussions touched on the need to have included in the CABC annual church report questionnaire a statement dealing with “cultural competency.”

The following feedback/input was received from this consultation:

1. The RWG should continue its work and mandate.
2. Suggestion was made to use the term “cultural competency” to broaden the scope of the dialogue.
3. Our voices are not always heard, even post 2007 Joint Assembly.

Overall, the presentation was positively received, but due to time constraints there was not much time for discussions. It was suggested that the Core Executive of the AUBA should meet and provide some feedback in the form of a written response to the RWG prior to June 1, 2010. The AUBA response could include input into the Draft Mandate on Ethnic Ministries, and other aspects of the proposal as well as AUBA’s future relationship with CABC and non-AUBA Churches.

It was quite clear from all the regional consultations that a lot has been achieved, but much more needs to be done.

UNFINISHED/ONGOING ACTIVITIES

1. Training & Resource Development

- a. follow through with sensitivity training for Council & senior staff (Nov.'09); ADC & ABU (Fall '09), Senior Citizen's Homes;
- b. develop user friendly *Racism Training Resource Kit* for ministry leadership;
- c. provide ongoing encouragement to CABC Educational Institutions re Equity hiring and diversity issues.

2. Documentation

- a. work with AUBA & Baptist Historical Committee regarding re-writing of CABC history to better reflect the AUBA ministry presence as well as encouraging joint historical projects and dialogue for mutual benefit;
- b. collect all RWG materials since inception,
- c. ongoing development of our web page;
- d. update the RWG promotional brochure;
- e. send copies of historic 2007 Assembly Covenant Liturgy to the churches.

MOVING BEYOND 2010 –KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Passing the Baton and Getting our Covenant “Off the Wall”

Assembly 2007 was not the end of our dialogue on racism and Oasis 2010 is not the end of the work of eradicating racism and promoting racial justice. These are significant points in the journey but there is much work to do. In coming to the end of its mandate term, the Racism Working Group is very cognizant of the fact that the work we have been doing and any momentum that has developed around our original mandate of holding the CABC accountable to its commitment to the Atlanta Covenant will soon be lost unless a mechanism is put in place to ensure the continuation – and expansion - of the work that we have begun.

Apart from the motivation generated by the original call from the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) to Baptist Churches worldwide and our Convention's commitment to principles embodied in the Atlanta Covenant, something else has changed. The commitments outlined in the 2007 Joint Assembly Covenantal Agreement between the CABC and AUBA are ours. As the two Covenant Scrolls are publicly displayed in both CABC and AUBA main offices, they serve as memorable reminders that we cannot go back to where we were prior to 2001. This journey for racial justice, racial reconciliation and

inclusion can only be advanced if we stay on course—and the right course requires moving forward to concrete action.

Thus, we propose a passing of the baton to a new entity – ***The Ethnic Ministries & Social Justice Department***. This Department would involve a merging of the current work of the Director of Public Witness and Social Concerns with an added focus on ethnic ministries. It would necessitate an expansion of the job description of the Director and an increase from part-time to full-time status as well as the development of a Working Group to assist with the work of the ethnic ministries portion of the mandate.

We believe that the formation of an ***Ethnic Ministries & Social Justice Department*** is essential to the fulfillment of our vision of having the CABC live up to the Resolutions already passed by our Convention Assembly – in **1963, 1968, 1991** – and to the Covenant made between the CABC and the AUBA at our Joint Assembly in 2007. We are pleased that this Covenant is posted in the lobby of our CABC offices in Saint John, NB, but we believe that the ongoing task is to bring the words *off the wall* and into the hearts and actions of our constituency. This will require intentionality and courage on the part of our Convention Council and all of our affiliated Boards and Agencies. And, we believe that to accomplish this task will require the establishment of a new *Ministry Department* under the direction of a full-time Director. This department will tie in with the current mandate and funding of the ABMB or its succeeding department.

We believe that the fulfillment of a vision of full inclusion, partnership and participation of people from diverse cultural backgrounds is actually rooted in a broader social justice imperative. This imperative, while hinted at throughout the history and ministries of the CABC has perhaps not been clearly articulated and this, we believe, is an important first step in going forward. We cannot assume that our vision or understanding of “full inclusion, partnership and participation” is shared by all within our constituency.

Purpose of the Ethnic Ministries & Social Justice Department

The Ethnic Ministries & Social Justice Department (EMSJ) will assist Convention Council in developing “Churches Committed to Doing God’s Will on Earth” (defined in the *Council Policy Manual*, p. B-4). We draw attention, in particular, to the portion of the definition of churches committed to doing God’s will on earth which states that such churches will - *“Practice and promote justice, equality, peace, and righteousness in their communities and in the world”*.

The Ethnic Ministries & Social Justice Department will oversee the implementation of the 2007 Joint Assembly Covenant between the CABC and the AUBA and will, in so doing, also address the implementation of the Convention Resolutions on Racism of 1963, 1968 and 1991. The overall mandate of ***The EMSJ Department*** will be to address issues of social justice and to propose policies, programs and ministries that

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will lead to the full participation and partnership of all ethnic communities in the life of our Convention, its Agencies and Boards and our Churches.

The remainder of this proposal will now focus on the work of ***The Social Justice and Ethnic Ministries Department*** in terms of the new *Ethnic Ministries Working Group*.

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Structure of the *Ethnic Ministries Working Group*

A working group to be developed by the Director of ***Ethnic Ministries & Social Justice*** and appointed by Council according to the following principles:

1. the *Ethnic Ministries Working Group* should be comprised of at least 8 members and not more than 10 at any point in time;
2. members should be committed to the overall vision of eradicating racism and promoting racial and social justice across ethnic and linguistic barriers;
3. while it will not be possible to have a working group that has representation from ALL minority groups within Atlantic Canada, the working group should strive to reflect balance in terms of gender and ethnicity;
4. because in many respects the AUBA functions more like a Convention than an Association, the AUBA should be invited to appoint two representatives to the *Ethnic Ministries Working Group*;
5. The term for participation in the *Ethnic Ministries Working Group* should be flexible but in order to allow for new members, it will be helpful to craft membership in the working group around terms of three years with the option of multiple renewals;
6. Meetings should be held at least 3 times each year but should be flexible in terms of location, according to the travel requirements of all members. Much of the business of the working group may be done by email, conference calls, etc. but it will be important to meet in person at least twice annually;
7. The Executive Minister and Director of the EMSJ will be ex-officio members of the *Ethnic Ministries Working Group*.

Mandate of the *Ethnic Ministries Working Group*

1. Hold the CAB Council, Boards and Agencies accountable to the commitments already made in the 2007 Combined Assembly Covenant with the AUBA and via Assembly Resolutions adopted in 1963, 1968 and 1991 concerning racial justice;
2. Develop and propose appropriate and relevant resolutions around racism and related issues, including policy proposals on racial justice to be presented to Assembly through Council;

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3. Provide resources and education opportunities for all sectors of the CABC (Associations, Boards, Agencies, etc.), including also sensitivity training and theological reflection on racism and racial justice;
4. Participate in the development of a broader policy on social justice for our Convention;
5. Develop ministries and practices that will bring about the full inclusion, partnership and participation of people from the variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds present in the Atlantic Provinces, currently and future changes in social composition of our communities through immigration policies and practices;
6. Work closely with the Director of EMSJ Department and the Executive Minister;
7. Report yearly to Council and Convention Assembly on progress made toward racial justice and inclusion and on the challenges that remain.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Racism Working Group submits this, our final report, with deep gratitude for the privilege of having served our Convention for these past ten years in a task which we deeply feel has been of profound significance for each of us as individuals, and for the future of our ministry and mission together as the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. We pray that the work we have done, and the vision we have of the Beloved Community, will continue to spur us on to greater efforts to eradicate racism, both within the structures of our Convention and, God willing, to our communities throughout Atlantic Canada. To God be the glory!