

EXPLORING EVANGELICAL BAPTIST CHURCH

1. What is a Church?

2. What is a Baptist?

3. EBC Distinctions

4. History of the Word in Nonantum

5. Responsibilities

6. Opportunities

7. Q & A

1. What is the Church?

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” – Paul

“The church is the mirror that reflects the whole effulgence of the divine character. It is the grand scene in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed in the universe.” – Charles Bridges

- Following a Trail through Ephesians
 - Ephesians 1:10: God has planned to _____ all things in Jesus!
 - The Word
 - An Attempt to Explain
 - Choice Metaphors
 - _____ and _____
 - _____ and _____
 - _____ and _____
 - Ephesians 2:1-10
 - Ephesians 2:11ff - _____!
 - Ephesians 3:8-10
 - Ephesians 4:1ff
 - The remainder of Ephesians
 - The Famous “Armor” Passage

****So...**

1. The hardest thing for anyone to do is to relate rightly to his local church
2. Take these people seriously!

We need to draw ever nearer to the reality of Christian faith and witness in our time, however burdensome, however heavy with failure, limitation, and disappointment. The reason is simple. Our Lord Jesus Christ comes to us in the flesh. We can draw near to him only in his body, the church. Loyalty to him requires us to dwell within the ruins of the church. – R. R. Reno

2. What is a Baptist?

**A word on denominationalism

- Christianity, specifically Protestantism, has many sub-groups, called denominations. We can bemoan this, but it is an almost 500 year-old fact.
- All denominations agree on some things. And normally it is not one single belief that distinguishes one denomination from another. Rather it is a particular combination of beliefs that sets a denomination apart.
- Very few Protestants will hold to a particular belief just because their denomination demands it. Rather, it is Scripture that sets the standards and the various denominations take their form because they adhere to differing interpretations of the Scripture.
- So we wear our denomination labels loosely and our loyalty is never to our denomination but to Scripture. Of course, that doesn't mean that we're not thankful for those that have gone before us and seen the terrain well and drawn the lines clearly.

Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time – Winston Churchill

**The problem with Baptists

- Tendency toward private interpretations that can be as weird as the individuals that arrive at them!
- Tendency toward stridency/ hyper-individualism
- Tendency toward belittling tradition and minimizing authority
- Tendency toward an unteachable spirit

Baptist beliefs are often explained by using an acronym that spells the word "Baptist":

1. **B**iblical Authority
 - a. The Bible is the sole ultimate authority for matters of faith and practice, and not any person, or creed, or organization
 - b. Not every Baptist shares every biblical interpretation. But they will appeal primarily and mainly to the biblical text for their viewpoint

Warning Warning

- The Scriptures tell us to “Obey your leaders and submit to them...” (Hebrews 13:17)
- We are in danger of, in the midst of many interpretations, allowing the Bible to lose its feel of authority

2. **A**utonomy of Local Church (Self-Governing)

- a. In Revelation 2 & 3 Jesus is addressing Himself to seemingly independent churches
- b. There is no Baptist Mother Church! There are Baptist churches.
- c. Every church selects its own leadership, handles its own finances, disciplines its members, decides its worship form

Warning Warning

- We can close our ear to tradition, becoming so inventive in our church that we become anything but a church!
- We can take on a “our four and no more” mentality

3. **P**riesthood of the Believer (1 Peter 2:9)

- a. No one is born in a state of grace; no one is in Christ apart from an intelligent confession in Him: “Grace does not run in the blood”
- b. “Every saved person inherits the right to approach God for himself in prayer, without intervention of any other person, or ordinance, or church organization.” – Historic Baptist Distinctives
- c. Every saved person has access to God apart from a human mediator or confessor
- d. Every saved person is responsible to bear the truth of God to others
- e. The clergy/layman division is more practical than anything else

Warning Warning

- Again this understanding can be construed to imply that every believer is equally mature, an idea which is ultimately confusing to the spiritually immature

4. **T**wo Ordinances: Believer’s Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

- a. An ordinance is something ordered by Christ and obeyed into and during the life of the church
- b. These are symbols, and not strictly grace-conveyers
- c. These are practiced only after an intelligent confession of faith in Jesus. They are for believers only!

***Warning Warning ***

- “Symbol” can be heard as “unimportant.” Wrong!

5. Individual Soul Liberty or Soul Competency

- a. The God-given freedom and ability of persons to know and respond to God’s will. As a concomitant, the refusal of a religious group to coerce or manipulate a person toward a particular belief or conduct.
- b. The response of faith must be by the individual and not by a group of which the individual is a part (state, church, family)
- c. “The concept of the soul’s competency is more than a single doctrine; actually, it undergirds all the other doctrines of the faith” – Leon McBeth

*** Warning Warning ***

- This can quickly devolve into relativism: To say that a person is competent to understand and believe is not to say that every spiritual decision he makes is valid just because it is made individually. In other words, a person can be in religious error.
- This does not mean that persons must not be under any human religious authority. But it does mean that, if they are under a human religious authority, they have placed themselves under.

6. Separation of Church and State

- a. The state should not dictate its will into matters of religion and faith. Its functions are distinct from the church.
- b. This church is a body without formal organization, and therefore cannot enter into contractual relations on any basis with the State. For this reason, Baptists believe in Free Churches within a Free State.” – Historic Baptist Distinctives

*** Warning Warning ***

- Separation of church and state should retain its original impetus: the separation of the state from the church. Today the opposite idea is emphasized: the church should stay out of the state. That's true too; but the first is at least equally important.

7. **Two Offices: Pastor/Elder and Deacon**

- a. Why is it important to limit the essential church offices to two?

2. EBC Distinctions

A Word on Distinctions

These EBC distinctions are currently more of a “template” or “goal” rather than “definition” or “description.” But we are working toward making these to be defining marks of the church, not in order to take pride in ourselves but because they reflect priorities of our God.

“Distinctions” should not be construed to mean, ‘what makes our church better than others.’ Rather, they are priorities that we’re attempting to adopt, priorities that will inevitably separate us from others.

Moving ahead in corporate prayer

Prayer is variously conceived as a soother of frayed nerves, a technique to explore the inner self, and a great thing to talk about! But we are praying together in order to move ahead the mission of Christ. Because we are co-workers with God in the great redemptive task and because we in our clear moments feel our great, basic need for help in this task, our prayers tend to be petitions. But behind all these supplications and intercessions is a steady murmur of thanksgiving that must often crescendo to loud praise. Our Wednesday evening service is taken up largely with prayer. The men, partially in response to 1 Timothy 2, gather together once a month to lift up the needs in the church. We meet to pray before services on Sunday; the college and career group gathers regularly for special times of prayer and fasting; and two or three times during the year we call days of prayer. We’re not doing this just to be “religious,” but because prayer is the vehicle that drives the work forward.

Central Pulpit

Entering EBC, you will find the pulpit front and center. We want this to be an accurate symbol of the priority of the Word of God in this church. God has spoken, His words have been written down as He prescribed, and therefore, if we are to honor or follow Him, we must do so by listening to and obeying His Word. The regular attendees of EBC

come with Bible in hand, to hear the Word of God, the always-relevant Message from heaven to us!

This priority of hearing and obeying the Word of God requires a lot of work. It takes discipline to listen well, to let the voice of God rise above the din of culture. One must hone the skill of identifying the themes in a particular book of the Bible. And the preachers and teachers must work to present those themes with the clarity and urgency and –yes– relevance that the text demands. Then more work: restructuring our lives in response to what we’ve heard. Hearing, obeying; concentrating, changing – the unglamorous yet godly rhythm at EBC!

Elevated Worship

“Elevated worship” is something beyond “formal” or “casual.” What are we attempting to do as we gather together?

- We want to think on the invisible world, the true world that provides shape and substance to the visible. Therefore it is not our priority to match a certain sound or atmosphere that recalls the trends and “stuff” of the visible world.
- We are concerned that our Lord be pleased with what He hears and sees as we meet. To this end, we want to acclaim the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. “Acclaim” is just the right word, because it is loud. At least some of our praise to the Trinity should be loud: mouths open, voices raised.
- We wish to build one another up. The way to do this is through what the Scriptures call prophesying: communicating the truth of God into the hearts of believers. (“Prophesying” is not usually concerned with future truth, as it is commonly conceived.) This communication runs through the spoken word of the preacher, through the Scripture readings, and through singing to one another. If we understand 1 Chronicles 25 properly, this communication of the truth of God is also through instrumental music, even without words!
- Finally, we wish something else to happen as we gather, and we even dare to expect this to happen, although we’re not programming it to happen: “If all prophesy [in the ways above], and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.”

In line with all these goals, we prepare. Services don’t just happen. Teachers study for their lessons and sermons during the week. The worship leader thoughtfully plans out the service and tends to his own spiritual vitality. The musicians rehearse...often! Last but not least, the congregation at large enters the service after a full night’s rest, eager and prepared to participate. Nothing is so disheartening as a church service that is neutralized by tepid congregational singing.

Evangelism that respects place and process

“Making followers of all nations” is a command, and so it requires our thoughtful attention to carry out. We can’t expect evangelism just to happen with no regard for process. There is urgency: against the modern current, we believe that Jesus is the only Way, Truth, and Life; hence the command to make disciples overlaps with Jesus’ great Love command and is spurred by our dread of the judgment to come.

So what do we do? We can’t just throw some dollars at foreign missions and check the Great Command off our list. So we do two things: 1) Every EBC member is trained in how to lead a one-on-one or small group Bible study on Jesus Christ. 2) we are constantly reminding one another of the importance of place. God sets us in particular neighborhoods; there is a divine strategy behind our job placements; people have occasion to encounter the Christ as they come in contact with us. This bedrock belief in place would be arrogant and even ludicrous if it were not sanctioned by much of the New Testament!

Intentional Discipleship

We cannot assume that the populace basically understands the Scriptures, and therefore all we have to do is convince them to believe in Christ. We can no longer assume that people generally have the wisdom to make choices, to approach home and work properly, to do good, and to live well. They don’t. If Boston were ever a Christian city (whatever that means) or its citizens familiar with the Scriptures, that is not the case now.

So we take pains to inculcate new believers with elementary doctrines of the Bible. Individually and in small groups we ensure that people understand salvation in Christ. We lead people in discovering what God says about the Christian life (it’s hard), happiness (it’s possible), finances (they should be a clever mix of thrift and generosity), and many other worthwhile topics.

Our goal is not to shore up minds with theories but through truth and practical advice to train people in a way of living that is God-attentive, righteous, and steady. It’s all very personal and warm, but EBC people are on a track. Or maybe we should just call it the Way.

3. History of the Word in Nonantum

“Others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” – Jesus in John 4

“At the age of forty-two, [John] Eliot was ready for his first missionary experiment. ‘Master Eliot engaged in this great work of preaching unto the Indians upon a very pure and sincere account,’ wrote his friend and colleague Gookin. ‘I being his neighbor and intimate friend, at the time when he first attempted the enterprise he was pleased to communicate unto me his design, and the motives that induced him thereunto.’ These motives were simple and strong, as we might expect: the glory of God, compassion for the Indians, and a puritan’s duty to heed the Macedonian cry.

In 1646 he visited the nearest Indian village, Nonantum, on the Newton bank of the Charles, opposite Watertown. It was a beautiful October day before the trees had been stripped of their gorgeous foliage by the autumn rains. Waban, the local sagamore, bade Eliot welcome. He preached a sermon of an hour and a quarter in the Indian language which his audience declared that they understood.” – Samuel Eliot, Builders of the Bay Colony, 295

1. Eliot Church
2. North Congregational Church (see handout); bulletins
3. Evangelical Baptist Church
 - a. Organized June 22, 1954 (Cambridge)
 - b. Incorporated October 25, 1954
 - c. Pastor John Viall and Mrs. Virginia Viall
 - d. North Congregational Church “gives” property to EBC: 1967
 - e. Pastor John Viall dies: 1998
 - f. Pastor Geno Cascieri: 2000-2005
 - g. Pastor Colin Landry: December 2005
4. International Baptist Church
 - a. Date: January 7, 2001 Snowden Intl High School
 - b. Pastor Bill Edmondson and Deb Edmondson: May ‘99
 - c. Huntington Ave YMCA Norwood → Newbury Street
5. Merge: January 2006
6. From then on

4. Responsibilities: See Church Covenant

A. Watching – 1 Corinthians 5

- The Problem that Paul Addresses (1,2)
- The Passover (6-8)
 - Spring
 - Leaven
 - Lamb
 - Paul's application
- The Directives for the Specific Situation (3-5)
 - Apostolic authority
 - Delivering to Satan
 - Destruction of flesh
 - Spirit may be saved
- The General Directives (9-13)
 - Clarification
 - The dirty list
 - Judging one another

1. What is the trait of the church that Paul emphasizes? (Quality)
2. What does it matter if the church has this trait? (Priority)
3. What does it look like to have this trait? (Culture)
4. What are the difficulties to acquiring this trait (Obstacles)

B. Praying

- i. Corporate Praying in the NT
- ii. Venues for corporate prayer here
 1. Before Sunday Services
 2. Mid-week
 3. Men's Prayer Breakfast

C. Confessing – see Constitution

- i. Believing in Jesus Christ – what is your testimony?
- ii. Believing these particular doctrines

D. Working for the faith of the gospel

- i. Every member works
- ii. Every member witnesses

E. Giving

- i. Giving under the OT
- ii. Giving under the NT

F. Growing

5. Opportunities

To Learn

** A couple words on current state and class times

- A. Learning to Evangelize Class
- B. Financial Peace Class
- C. Biblical Relationships Class
- D. 12 week Bible Survey
- E. 20 Things Every Christian Should Know

6. To Serve

- A. Helping Young Families/ Elderly
- B. Work Days/ Canvassing
- C. Greeting (unofficially) visitors
- D. Nursery/ Childcare
- E. Choir
- F. Break Food
- G. Ushering