

We Value our Baptist Heritage



Core Value

We Value Our Baptist Heritage.

We value our Baptist heritage, which shapes how we live out our faith in an ever-changing society. We believe *all* are called and gifted and thus encouraged to participate in ministry and leadership in the church.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. (1 Peter 4:10)

Introduction

Dave likes to tell the youth, especially those who are graduating, “Always remember who you are, where you came from, and where you are going.” Dave reminds the youth and all of us that we have a heritage. For Lexington Avenue Baptist that heritage means many things. It means that 80 years ago “120 Baptist met in the Boyle County Court House, and voted to form a new congregation” (“Historical Overview”, *Seventy-fifth Anniversary & Sanctuary Re-dedication*, Glen Taul). Heritage for Lexington Avenue means that while affirming other Christian traditions we value our Baptist traditions like authority of the Bible, autonomy of the local church, priesthood of believers, and religious liberty. Part of that Baptist Heritage means that our congregation has been accepting of theological diversity. This diversity has led to some

controversies, such as a stand for women in ministry and leadership in the church, which separated us from other Baptist churches in Danville.

On a deeper level heritage means that, more than anything else, we are God's. Each member of the church is called by God and gifted for service. We are, in the words of Peter, a "chosen race," "royal priesthood," "holy nation," "God's own people." We do indeed have a rich heritage.

Bible Study

There is some debate about the authorship of 1 Peter, but many believe it to be written by the Apostle Peter with the help of Silvanus (5:12). Peter's letter is one of encouragement for the church during a time of persecution. Peter exhorts the church to remember how God had changed them. The way they carry themselves as a church should be in contrast to the way they lived before Christ and the way of the world around them. They are to remember where they came from, but also to remember what God has made them become. In a sense God has given them a new heritage or perhaps more accurately, God has brought them back to their true heritage. Some have suggested that 1 Peter 1:3-4:11 is a baptismal sermon. In that case these verses make up some basic and important words of instruction for new Christians and a reminder for all Christians.

1 Peter 2:9 (1 Peter 1:3-2:10)

This verse, chosen for our Heritage core value, is the culmination of a section of 1 Peter that the *Mercer Commentary on the Bible* calls "The Identity [We might say Heritage] of the People of God." Read this entire section to discover anew our heritage as Christians:

(1:3-12) *We are new born.* We are born anew through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and into an inheritance that is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven." We have salvation.

(1:13-21) *We are holy.* Once we were conformed to the desires of our ignorance. Now we are to be holy as God is holy. We are ransomed from a futile inheritance. God has given us a new inheritance—a new heritage. God is our Father—our parent.

(1:22-25) *We love each other.* According to our identity and heritage we have "genuine mutual love" and we "love one another deeply from the heart."

(2:1-3) *We are growing.* We rid ourselves of malice, guile, insincerity, envy, and slander and like newborn babies we long for spiritual milk so that we might grow in our salvation.

(2:4-8) *We are a spiritual house built on Christ the cornerstone.* Others have been disobedient and rejected Christ as the cornerstone. We are living stones who have chosen to build on the precious cornerstone of Christ as the foundation of our faith. We are a holy priesthood.

(2:9-10) *We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.*

What a heritage we have as a church. All of these powerful images continually call us to become more of what God wants us to be as a church. We are born anew, but we are not fully mature. We live in our culture 24-7 and the consumerism, competitiveness, individualism, and selfishness of our culture affect us in ways we can hardly recognize. We have not fully realized our potential as God's people. So we continue to learn and grow in our mutual love for each other and for God.

1 Peter 4:10 (1 Peter 4:7-11)

Given our identity and heritage, how are we to behave as a church? “Above all,” Peter says, being the church means maintaining, “constant love for one another.” Because they faced persecution and in light of their belief that Christ would soon return, according to Michaels, unity and cohesion were essential, and the source of this unity was found in worship and ministry. By serving God and others with the grace gifts God has given us, we live out our heritage. This includes every member of the body. Michaels writes, “There are no fixed offices, no clergy-laity distinctions, no leaders or followers. All believers have a responsibility to love, show hospitality, and minister to each other” (J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Mercer Commentary on the Bible*, 1302).

LABC Core Values

All. The word all is in bold in our core values for a reason. For LABC this word is packed with meaning. The familiar Bible verse, John 3:16, says, “for God so loved the world, he sent his only son.” God has extended to all people an invitation—an invitation to follow Jesus, to become a part of a Christian community, and to receive eternal life. All of Jesus' followers are called and gifted for ministry (1 Peter 4:10). Every Christian has different spiritual gifts, like for example teaching, mercy, service, exhortation, leadership, and others. These gifts are to be used serving others inside and outside the church. The church is not run by the pastor, staff, deacons, Sunday School teachers, or committee chairpersons. Christ is the head of the church and all of the members of the church together make up Christ's body. Every member is a minister and has a role in the church. The body of Christ requires every part of the body in order to function properly.

Women. All includes women. As a church we have chosen not to exclude women from leadership roles. Thus women serve as deacons, lead committees, preach, lead in worship, and may serve on the ministerial staff.

Part of our heritage is that our church decided to ordain women as deacons and as vocational ministers. This stance on the role of women in ministry led to a move on the part of some churches in the local Baptist association to have us removed. The vote fell just short of the required 60% to exclude our church, but the church decided for the sake of peace in the Association to withdraw.

Diversity. While we have been a predominantly white congregation, we hope to be a welcome place for people of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. The church has been open to theological diversity among its members. Members of Lexington Avenue generally have not been interested in enforcing a narrow doctrinal conformity. As a church we appreciate and respect other Christian denominations. Many of our members come from churches other than Baptist and these traditions have enriched our own.

Baptist. While affirming other traditions we also recognize and value our Baptist roots, including Baptist traditions like authority of the Bible, autonomy of the local church, priesthood of believers, and religious liberty.

Conclusion

When you think of Lexington Avenue Baptist Church, what do you think of? Perhaps some of the above items come to mind when you think of our identity and heritage. Likely you will think of additional characteristics, stories, and memories that make us who we are.

References

Seventy-fifth Anniversary booklet.

Mercer Commentary on the Bible, “1 Peter”. Watson E. Mills and Richard F. Wilson, Editors (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995).

Harper's Bible Commentary, “1 Peter”. James L. Mays, Editor (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).

The Broadman Bible Commentary, Volume 12. Clifton J. Allen, Editor (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972).



Daily Devotionals: Baptist Heritage



Monday: *Christian Heritage—The Passing on of One's Faith and Beliefs to Those Who Are to Follow*, by George White

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:3-12

Boy, doesn't Lexington Ave. Baptist Church have something to look back on and to follow? What wisdom and fore sight in the Lord our church founders had in 1927 when the formation of our church was established. What a great House of Worship and records of achievement have been passed on to us! With God's help, we shall continue to be the faithful servants that will carry on this heritage.

I was first involved in our church at the tender age of two in the Cradle Roll Dept. (now the nursery). As the years passed, my family continued to be faithful in attendance for Sunday School, morning worship, B.Y.P.U. (later training union or B.T.U.) We had sword drills and were expected to know the books of the Bible and to quickly find a given verse. This was followed by evening worship service. Wednesday night was prayer meeting when we got both barrels from our preacher.

During the week my mother would have my two sisters and me on her bed in the evenings for Bible stories and scripture verses. As you can see, all of these many activities gave me a solid foundation with the Lord, and my church.

As I Peter 4:10 states: God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings.

The revelation of God comes only from the heart. Whatever we may think, whatever we may do, we are still God's children. He is waiting for us, and it takes only a few words of faith to acknowledge Him. He is in each one of us, if we will only seek Him. The first step is surrender: "I am nothing, I know nothing, only that God loves me (us)"! He alone can bring courage to the weak, strength to the weary and hope to those lost in despair. May God bless each of you in His special way.

Tuesday: *The Legacy of Austin Roberts*, by Evelyn Crooke

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 1:13-2:3

When I was asked to write about the legacy of Austin Roberts, the first thing I did was go to the dictionary for the definition of "legacy". Among other things, I found the word to mean "gift". So, what is the gift that Dr. Roberts left to his family, friends, and church?

All who knew Dr. Roberts will remember his gift of laughter. He was a happy person and one couldn't be around him long without that happiness rubbing off on you. He brought joy to the office, to the pulpit, and to the community.

A second gift I remember was Dr. Roberts' ability to bring together all churches in Danville. In fact, he was known as Danville's pastor. Members of other denominations loved and respected him. At one point in his ministry, several pastors from other congregations resigned to go to other churches and a friend of mine was bemoaning the fact. This friend's child remarked, "But Mother, we still have Dr. Roberts!"

Thirdly, Dr. Roberts loved music. He could sing, play the piano, and even learned to play our new pipe organ. On one particular Sunday, all the staff was absent but that didn't faze Dr. Roberts. He led the singing while playing the organ; rose from the organ bench to make the announcements; ran back to the organ to play the offertory and accompany the choir's anthem; preached the sermon; gave the invitation and again went to the organ to play the closing hymn.

Austin Roberts will long be remembered at Lexington Avenue for his Southern drawl but even more for the strong Christian foundation he laid for pastors who were to come after him.

Wednesday: *Baptist and Religious Liberty*, George W. Truett

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-10

...Years ago, at a notable dinner in London, that world-famed statesman, John Bright, asked an American statesman, himself a Baptist, the noble Dr. J. L. M. Curry, "What distinct contribution has your America made to the science of government?" To that question Dr. Curry replied: "The doctrine for religious liberty." After a moment's reflection, Mr. Bright made the worthy reply: "It was a tremendous contribution."

Indeed, the supreme contribution of the new world to the old is the contribution of religious liberty. This is the chiefest contribution that America has thus far made to civilization. And historic justice compels me to say that it was pre-eminently a Baptist contribution. The impartial historian, whether in the past, present or future, will ever agree with our American historian, Mr. Bancroft, when he says: "Freedom of conscience, unlimited freedom of mind, was first from the trophy of Baptists." And such historians will concur with the noble John Locke who said: "The Baptists were the first propounders of absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty." Ringing testimonies like these might be multiplied indefinitely.

Baptists have one consistent record concerning liberty throughout all their long and eventful history. They have never been a party to oppression of conscience. They have forever been the unwavering champions of liberty, both religious and civil. Their contention now is, and has been, and please God, must ever be, that it's the natural and fundamental and infeasible right of every human being to worship God or not, according to the dictates of conscience...

(George W. Truett, address on the steps of the U.S. Capital, 1920 in H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990).

Thursday: *Every Christian has a Spiritual Gift—Even Me*, by Marian Gibson

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 4:10

A couple of years ago, I participated in a *Companions in Christ* group. We were doing a group activity on spiritual gifts. I said to the group, "I don't think I have a spiritual gift," because I really didn't think I had one. On index cards we wrote down what we believed were our fellow group members spiritual gifts. Then we shared what we had written.

When they got to me, one by one, each of my companions in Christ said basically the same thing. One of the gifts listed in the book was Apostleship: "The gift of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to other cultures and foreign lands. This is the gift that moves us from the familiar into uncharted territory to share the good news." Every person in my group said I had the gift of apostleship or missions. One group member wrote, "You have revealed a strong interest in foreign missions. You obviously are eager to tell others who have not heard about your faith. God can use you right where you are in your everyday life. You are so eager to share this that I'm sure you do and far more than you realize."

So I guess I do have a spiritual gift and that is missions. After Tommy's sermon recently on the call of Jeremiah, I came to believe that God called me to foreign missions. I am not planning to move, but I do believe God has called me to go on trips to places like Haiti, Morocco, The Middle East, and Malaysia.

Friday: *Gladys Holstclaw and Women in Ministry*, by Keith Stillwell

Scripture Reading: Phillipians 4:1-2; Galatians 3:27-28

Gladys Holtsclaw was a charter member of our church and long time Sunday School teacher and faithful member up until her death in 2004. She shared with me this story. Jo Garnett, former minister of education and children, was to be ordained as a vocational minister at Lexington Avenue Baptist. The church's decision to ordain a woman for ministry caused some disagreement in our church and Baptist association. When Gladys Holtsclaw sat down in her pew at the ordination service of Jo Garnett, she was not in favor of women's ordination. When it came time for the laying on of hands, she felt God speaking to her. She said with some emotion, "God told me to get up and lay hands on Jo. I felt like it was the right thing to do and that I needed to be supportive. So, I did." Gladys Holtsclaw was a Christian who loved God and her church. She listened to both God and her church and left that service with a different perspective on women in ministry.