

ECBC QUARTERLY

FALL 2023 | ISSUE 1



The Jesus Place

Our 5-Year Anniversary

The Past, Present, and Future
of Electric City Baptist Church



Electric City Baptist Church

ECBC: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

By Anthony Stafford

Electric City Baptist Church started with a need for the gospel to be proclaimed and for those who were hungry and thirsty in Schenectady to be given Jesus. Each step we have taken in the five-year history of ECBC has been one of faith. We like to say, "One step at a time with our eyes on Jesus." This statement has been at the forefront of our mission since day one. From our first Sunday when 75 people showed up to the second Sunday when 11 people showed up, to today, God has blessed us with a new building and a group of dedicated Jesus people. As we move forward, "Eyes on Jesus" is the battle cry—to worship Him as King (the theme) and preach Christ crucified (the mission).

We started with eight committed people and eight bucks in the rent-free community room in Steinmetz Homes Apartments, where we saw the first souls saved and many wonderful outdoor baptisms (see page 6). Then we had to become flexible, so we met at the community room in Lincoln Heights for a few weeks until we landed in our Congress Street home, a dilapidated old church building with so much potential for God's church to grow in. Our time there was some of our most faith-stretching as a church. Many more were saved and baptized, and we grew to fill the building every Sunday, until people wanting to worship Jesus had to sit outside some days.

We prayed again about how to

proceed. No words can express how God answered those prayers. He saw fit to give us our own building here on Hamburg Street. God is good! We have since ordained elders and deacons, and the Lord has built His church. All the while, we have again seen souls come to know Jesus and be baptized.

***"The Jesus Place" has
been built by God
using His people as
they walk by faith.***

Today, on its five-year anniversary, ECBC stands as the church of the living God, and it is the pillar and ground of truth. We stand in awe of what God can do. He will continue to do great things through us as we walk in obedience.

We strive to see Christians stand for righteousness in a culture that fervently opposes it. We believe in the public reading of God's Word, and we walk in accordance with the words of Jesus: "My house shall be a house of prayer." We also believe that men of God should be servants of Jesus and lead their homes with courage and strength, and that the power of the gospel allows us to take these steps. We stand as beacons of light for those seeking purpose and redemption. Our nickname "Eclectic" City Baptist Church stands as a reflection of our original vision that the gospel

is for all people from all places. As we learn and growing as a church family, we fall more in love with Jesus our King and the mission He has given to us. We maintain that the world will know we are disciples of Jesus because of our love one for another.

People often ask, "Where are we going?" In a world that offers no life, and only destruction at its end, we at ECBC stand on a strong book and follow a strong Savior. The future of our church will be just that: a love for God's Word and a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. These are not empty words. God has a great adventure and journey ready for us in the coming years.

A healthy church that loves Jesus and stands on His Word will at some point need to split. The future will call to people to surrender to the Lord's calling to go start another church that will preach and teach God's Word and see many more souls saved and baptized. I challenge our church family and Christians everywhere to claim the theme of the great hymn "All I Have Is Christ" that says "Jesus is my life." There is no better life.



JESUS SINGS

By Nathan Roberts

The apostle Peter tells us in **2 Peter 3:18** to “grow in . . . the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Our knowledge can grow in several ways. I would label the various types of knowledge as academic, personal, and intimate. Each type of knowledge has a greater depth.

First, we can grow academically and add to the list of facts we know about Jesus.

Second, we can expand our personal understanding of Jesus. Separate from academic facts, we may see things about Him as we read the Bible that we can relate to. The Bible is filled with personal details of Jesus’s life. We may see His temptation in the desert or the betrayal by Judas and understand exactly how these experiences may have felt.

Finally, we can grow in intimate knowledge. We can know more about Jesus because of our personal experiences with Him. This is what it means to have a relationship with Him.

I came across one interesting aspect of Jesus that grew my knowledge in all three directions. In the book of Hebrews, it says Jesus sings.

“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”

These verses from **Hebrews 2:11–12** quote Psalm 22:22, where Jesus declares that He will sing praise to God with His brothers in the middle

of the church. **Romans 15:9–10** also quotes the Psalms. It says,

“For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.”

Jesus wants us to have the knowledge that He is an unashamed worshipper who praises God by singing in the middle of the church with His brethren and encouraging them to rejoice.

Perhaps you can understand and possess the knowledge of what this joy feels like yourself.

Even more wonderful is the knowledge that you sing God’s praises along with Jesus, and of what it’s like to be encouraged by Jesus to rejoice!

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‘In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.’—Jesus



Members of the worship team sing during a Sunday service in August. **From left:** Nathan Roberts, Derek Ingleston, Elizabeth Roberts, Seth Criss, Hannah Roberts, Emily Ditton, and Kaitlyn Ditton. Photo credit: Brenda Ingleston. Cover photo: Bud Maurer. Map marker icon by Mavadee at www.flaticon.com.



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ON VULNERABILITY

By Will Spencer

Let's stop using the word "vulnerability" in relation to men. Forever.

Here's why.

The root of the word is from the Latin *vulnus*, or wound.

Men are not valued for our wound-
edness. Nor are we valued for our
ability to be wounded. Any claim oth-
erwise is driven by a sociopolitical,
cultural, and, yes, religious environ-
ment that aims to keep men weak.

First, about that weakness.

A man in a vulnerable state is a man
in a confessional state. He's always
prepared to share his innermost
thoughts and feelings, sensitive
beliefs, and life history, among other
things. Sounds good, right?

It's not, because it hides a trick. A
good man would agree to share

these things out of a desire to be
understood. Men seek respect. The
pitch for vulnerability is appealing
because we think if we share the
deep motivations for our words and
actions, we'll be understood. When
I understand a man better, I often
end up respecting him more.

VIRTUE OVER VICE

But this almost never happens with
those who demand vulnerability
from men. Instead, our vulnerability
is used against us. We give from a
desire to be understood and ap-
preciated, and we do end up better
understood. Then that understand-
ing is used to manipulate us.

Maybe this isn't the person's origi-
nal intention. But the temptation is
always there for bad actors—men or
women—to take advantage of a man
who's in an open, confessional state.

Vulnerability as a virtue is better
seen as a constellation of other
subvirtues, each of which are good
in themselves and less susceptible
to manipulation. I prefer the follow-
ing terms, which embody traits men
have always been valued for:

Insight
Courage
Wisdom
Generosity
Perspective
Authenticity
Self-knowledge

And one more: emotional accessibil-
ity. That last term might be unfamil-
iar. Let's unpack it.

EMOTIONAL ACCESSIBILITY

Being vulnerable means the ability
to be wounded. By contrast, being
emotionally accessible means being

in a state to access our emotions. Access can be turned on or off. But a vulnerability just sits there, waiting.

So instead of vulnerable sharing, we can use manly courage to express our authentic self-knowledge. We can offer insight into ourselves from a place of generosity. Or we can give someone our perspectives on joy, pain, and frustration from our emotional accessibility.

And when we feel like the person we're talking to isn't honoring our expression as a gift, we can revoke that emotional accessibility as easily as we gave it.

Feel the difference?

Vulnerability risks putting the other person in control of us. Emotional accessibility puts us in control of ourselves.

That's why I don't use the word "vulnerable" anymore. I stop mid-sentence if I catch myself using it.

Some people don't want men in a position of self-ownership. They want men to confess. Because then the one hearing the confession can forgive, or not. That's power.

Well, tough. Emotions are our "energy in motion." Either we're in control of that vital source of energy or someone else is.

SCRIPTURE AND MEN'S EMOTIONS

As we investigate Scripture, we see this attitude toward men's emotional self-control reflected throughout God's Word. Here are a few examples that you may recognize but never thought of in this way:

Proverbs 29:11—A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

Proverbs 25:28—He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.

2 Timothy 1:7—For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of

power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

James 1:20—For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

But Will, you might say, I know verses that contradict those! Such as. . .

Psalm 6:6—I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

Genesis 45:2—And [Joseph] wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

John 11:35—Jesus wept.

I was hoping you'd say those (you're so clever . . . and handsome!) because they aren't contradictions at all.

THE NARROW GATE

In fact, between these two sets of verses we see the essence of emotional accessibility.

David is crying out to God for deliverance from his enemies. Joseph is witnessing God's providence in being reunited with his brothers. And Jesus is showing love for His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, while demonstrating His profound compassion for the human experience of death.

What we admire about David, Joseph, and Jesus as men is not that they walked around weeping. They knew the appropriate time and place to show sincere emotion. They knew when to share their inner selves and, most importantly, *with whom*: friends, brothers, and especially God.

Because in the very next chapters, they've gotten back to work. David is calling for the destruction of his enemies in Psalm 7. Joseph has sent a caravan for his father Jacob in Genesis 46. And Jesus is triumphantly going up to Jerusalem to redeem humanity in John 12.

This is how men's emotions are woven into the lives and words

of Solomon, Paul, James, David, Joseph, and Jesus—some of the greatest men of the Bible! It's not their vulnerability we see. Rather, we witness *emotional accessibility* paired with their legendary courage, wisdom, generosity, and more.

In other words, the qualities that made them heroes.

My brothers in Christ, we now get to choose: Will we be "vulnerable" because some book or Oprah guest told us to?

Or will we access our emotions and offer them as a gift to those we love, including the God who gave them to us?

I pray our hearts shout the answer.



Will Spencer is the founder of the Renaissance of Men (renofmen.com/links). He will speak at the Man Up Conference in October.

MAN UP CONFERENCE

October 6–8, 2023

Guest Speakers

Will Spencer
Anthony Stafford
Dr. Joe Bova
Benny Stiltner

Electric City Baptist Church
2350 Hamburg Street
Schenectady, NY 12303

For more information, contact:
the.jesusplace@outlook.com.



BAPTISMS



By Sam Hazleton

THE JAIL MINISTRY

The Capital Region's county jails represent a crucial spiritual battleground for a generation, housing a diverse group of men and women awaiting trial and sentencing for various crimes, ranging from minor misdemeanors to serious felonies. The time spent in custody varies, and many will eventually be sent to prison, some for a short duration and others for a lifetime. The slow-moving justice system furnishes inmates with a break from regular life, allowing them to reflect on their past and future.

This is where we come in. Operating under an unofficial partnership with local law enforcement, they bring inmates to us, and we bring them to the Lord. We maintain a regular jail presence through weekly preaching, Bible distribution, one-on-one visits, discipleship training, and letter writing, connecting inmates with the gospel's transforming power and, eventually, local church communities.

Many inmates, having hit rock bottom, are receptive to the gospel's message of hope. They don't need to be convinced that they're sinners in need of a Savior. They just need to know how to find Him. Over the years, we've met thousands of inmates and watched hundreds make first-time professions of faith in Jesus. In a single year, we graduated 35 men in four runs of our Bible Boot Camp in Rensselaer County Jail (RCJ), where in 12 weeks they read the entire Bible, attended weekly classes on Christian faith foundations, and passed weekly exams. In short, we've discovered a productive fishing hole in the midst of a desert of modern spiritual apathy.

Society may have given up on some of these people, but we believe the Lord is just beginning with them. Armed with the gospel and a firm belief in God's transformative power, we preach boldly, sharing personal testimonies of God's metamorphosis in our own lives. We reject the philosophy of managing symptoms, in favor of the Bible's mandate to demolish strongholds. Our volunteers themselves grow from being ordinary churchgoers to passionate, confident "super saints."

Despite the ministry's share of heartaches and disappointments, it is also full of victories and mountaintop moments seldom experienced elsewhere. The jail represents a

Many inmates, having hit rock bottom, are receptive to the gospel's message of hope.

crucial battleground between God and Satan, with not only the precious souls of people at stake but also the control of the narrative: Is the gospel really the power of God to save everyone who believes, or are there people and situations that the gospel is powerless to change? Our team has accepted the challenge to demonstrate the truth of God's Word.

Don Watts of Hope Prison Ministry got our team started in the Saratoga County Jail over two decades ago when he brought Charles Barone (aka "Mr. B"), an ex-inmate who spent 27 years in state prison for bank robbery, to Temple Baptist Church. Pastor Duke Hergatt, Mr. B, David Filieau, and others ran three

Sunday night chapel services in the jail for years.

In 2014, following Mr. B's death, I joined the team and had the privilege of learning evangelistic ministry under Pastor Duke. I then recruited several friends, including Mike Gile, Tim Doremus, and Bruce Matula onto the team, which allowed us to expand our sphere of ministry.

In 2017, Mike Gile and I connected with John Cole, who headed a group of volunteers leading weekly Bible studies at RCJ. Within a couple of years we were leading that ministry, as well, and expanded it to include an intensive discipleship program. Recently, we've added Anthony Stafford, Derrick Ingleston, Scott

Hulseapple, Cody Vanderwerker, and Mikey Pelton from ECBC to our team, and we are filling five separate evening slots every week in the two jails with our group of 12 volunteers. An additional opportunity to expand further into the Schenectady County Jail has

been presented recently through Brian Merriam of the Gideons and ECBC's Cesar Singleton.

We aim to expand our ministry by connecting local church volunteers with county jails throughout the Capital Region, and by integrating transformed inmates into church families. Our vision includes establishing regular Bible studies and discipleship training programs in all of the region's county jails, conducting regular visitations to believing inmates in state prisons, and creating monastery-style transitional housing for the occupational and spiritual development for promising candidates upon their release.

Sam Hazleton is an elder at ECBC.

The gospel is found in the Word of God.

God provides the way to reconcile
your relationship with Him.

1

RECOGNIZE YOUR CONDITION

Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23

2

RELIGION AND GOOD WORKS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 2:5

3

JESUS PROVIDES THE WAY

John 14:6, Romans 5:8

4

BELIEVE AND RECEIVE JESUS

John 3:16, Romans 10:13, John 1:12

THE GOSPEL

Electric City Baptist Church

2350 Hamburg Street, Schenectady, NY 12303

electriccitybaptist.com

thejesusplace@outlook.com

