

10/18/26 We Give Thanks and Praise Your Glorious Name
Pastor Doug Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

How We Got Here

One of the things we see in the Bible, repeatedly, is the importance of telling the story of what God has done in the past – which helps us learn about God, and builds and strengthen our faith. For example, our Jewish brothers and sisters tell the Passover story, year after year. Knowing our story of faith is important. Today, we're going to tell some of our story. We tried to tell the breadth of our story when we celebrated our Bicentennial, two years ago. Today, we're focusing on the latest chapter.

Our church would not exist as it does, today, if not for a future altering opportunity and decision that was made in 1967. Alyce Lund, whose family owned the property next door – which is now The Candleberry Inn – also owned the land that went behind the old church building, all the way from Route 6A up to Route 137. At a special church business meeting on April 5, 1967, the Lunds sold the nine acres adjoining and behind the church to BBC for – are you ready for how much it cost? – the church bought the nine acres for \$10,000, and had to take out a mortgage for \$5,500 to help pay for it. Two years later, the church sold some of the land to the Brewster Ladies Library to help the library expand. Buying the Lund property enabled the church to do a building project 50 years ago – in the mid-1970s – and it also made our significant 2001 expansion possible. Without the Lund family selling that property to the church, nothing that has happened since would have been possible.

Our family moved into the parsonage next door in September of 1995, and began our ministry on October 1. By the time we moved into our expanded facilities, in October of 2001, the church had more than tripled in size in six years – from 150 or so people to more than 500 people. In six years, we went from two services to three services to four services – one on Saturday and three on Sunday morning. In 2001, I led worship and preached at more than 200 worship services! Twenty-five years ago, we only had four members who died, and we welcomed 101 new members. While much has changed since then – for example, we no longer offer cassette tapes of our worship services – some core things haven't. We did significant worship series that year on Spiritual Disciplines and the Fruit of the Spirit, spending 21 Sundays on these core habits and virtues.

Moving into our enlarged facility was the culmination of four and a half years of work for those of us on the Building Committee, the Capital Campaign Team, and for the church as a whole, as plans were finalized and carried out, and funds were raised. Thanks to God's provision and the generosity of the people of BBC, we only had to take a \$680,000 mortgage for a project that cost \$2,479,001. Amazingly, we paid that mortgage off in less than four years. Some members of the Building Committee have passed away, and others moved away, but a couple are still with us. Two individuals who were active in those years kindly shared some memories for us.

Video Testimony from Bob Linnell, 2001 Building Committee

Hello, my name is Bob Linnell, and I have been going to this church for 85 plus years, and I was baptized when I was 15 years old, which makes me the longest tenured member of Brewster Baptist Church. And though I've been on various committees throughout the years, my most accomplished feat was being on three different building committees – Chairman as – the most recent, of course, is the new Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. We were overflowing the original Sanctuary – half the people were watching on TV downstairs. And so, we took a leap of faith and started a building committee. But we were nervous, and we even talked at one point about just building a shell for the Fellowship Hall and the kitchen, and finishing it off later, so we could meet budget. But with the members, and with a lot of faith from God and such, we moved forward, and we decided to see if we can get it all done.

I had a committee that was very dedicated and very professional. I remember that we had Anna Harper and Bob McKenney, who did the screen designs up on the wall over the speakers. And there were so many people like that, that contributed in their own way, and it made our job – my job – much simpler. I just want to thank our congregation and our members and such, that were here at that time and such, that donated money and time and love and their prayers and such, to make this all happen.

I'm just so happy, and I pray that, moving forward in the future, we can expand, and do more, and grow as a Christian church, and hopefully, people will follow in our footsteps – because I'm probably not going to be around to see any future building projects, but I have a lot of faith in this church, and in our pastors, and the congregation.

And my faith in Jesus and God really, really affects me, and makes me proud to be a part of it.

Video Testimony from Roy Freeman, 2001 Finance Committee

Hi, I'm Roy Freeman. I've been coming to this church for my whole life – I'm a third generation Brewster Baptist, and been a member for 51 years. I also was on the Finance Committee with two other individuals who have passed away, so I'm the only one left. But we had three different scenarios of how we were going to fund this because it was a big step, and a big step in faith. One was we were going to build the whole church. The other scenario was we were going to build the church and throw up the framing and kind of not complete the Fellowship Hall. And the last one was, we also were going to do that, but not do the renovations in the old section. And Pastor Doug said, "Why don't we step out in faith and do it all, because it's not going to be any cheaper." And so we decided – we prayed about it, and decided that's what we'd recommend, and that's what we did. And little did we know that, within four years, we'd be burning the mortgage. And God was gracious with us.

Another story is, the building committee had it set up so that we'd meet, or they'd have an open house, that everybody could look at the plans and make suggestions. And I was a Sexton here, and I noticed that they didn't have a mop sink in the Fellowship Hall, which was – besides the bathrooms – the only tile floors that we would need a mop sink for. And they wanted to use the mop sink in the old section of the building. And I said, "Why don't you put a mop sink in, and put a door between where the storage closet was for the tables and the machinery rooms?" And everybody was like, "Wow, why didn't we think of that?" And one of the neat thing things was that the building committee – in particular, Bill Carter, who was up here all the time, was kind of – we didn't have a clerk of the works, but we also didn't have any building change orders, which would have made it more expensive because they allowed so many of us to give our input. God's been really good for this church.

Remembering the Saints

Most of the people who were a part of the generation that lived through those years of rapid growth and change are now part of the great cloud of witnesses we read

about in *Hebrews 12*. Among those who died in 2001 was BBC's former pastor, Dr. Glenn Abbott, who served the church from 1984 to 1994. If you were to read through the names of the men and women who joined our church in the late 1990s and into the early 2000s, for most of you, they would be just names of people you didn't have the pleasure to know. But for me, and for those of us who are still here, they conjure face after face of dear saints of the church, who worshiped, served, gave generously, and welcomed with friendly hospitality, wave after wave of new members. To me, the generation that was BBC, in those years, are the human heroes of the spiritual transformation that took place here. While we can't name all of them, if you were here in those years, I invite you to remember back, and think of the family members and friends God used to help build our church, in every sense. For those of you who didn't live through those years with us here, I invite you to think of dear people in your life, and from your journey, who helped build your faith. And for those of you who are too young to remember anything from 25 years ago, note the importance of knowing who came before you, and how their faith, love, service, and generosity prepared the way for you.

While we all shall pass away, and likewise, join that great cloud of witnesses, God's kingdom stands and grows forever, as an old hymn says. To provide us with a few minutes of reflection, Rob Hooper is going to play the hymn, "**The Day Thou Gavest, Lord, Has Ended**" on the bagpipes. I invite you, while he plays, to remember those you have known and loved, who have gone before us.

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

"Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: 'Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.'"

We Give Thanks and Praise Your Glorious Name

Twenty-five years ago, I said, “What a joy it is to be able to worship in our new building. While it is larger and different from the tiny old Sanctuary we’ve used and loved for years, we are here for the same purpose — to worship God, to lift up Jesus for all to see, to build up believers as fully devoted followers of Jesus, and to draw seekers to Jesus. We’re going to stick to the fundamentals that got us here because, though we’re in a larger and different venue, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Our reason for being is the same.”

Those words are as true, today, as they were twenty-five years ago. Today, we’re remembering how we got here, and honoring the people whose faith, generosity, and sacrifice made our expanded church facilities possible. The stories we’ve heard, and the faces we’ve seen, remind us that a church is much more than a building. It’s a community of people who, across generations, have responded to God’s call to worship, serve, give, and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Some of us are still here, most are not – but their faithfulness has helped shape the congregation we are today. As we remember them, we’re grateful for the sacrifices they made, the vision they embraced, and the opportunities they created, for generations who would follow. But above and beyond the people who served, gave, planned, and built, we give thanks to God, whose grace sustained them, and whose faithfulness has sustained us. That is why our Scripture, today, is so appropriate for this celebration.

In *1 Chronicles 29*, King David offers a prayer of praise and thanksgiving, as preparations are made for the building of the temple. David recognizes that greatness, power, glory, victory, and majesty belong to God. Everything in heaven and on earth belongs to the Lord. The people may give generously, work diligently, and plan faithfully, but everything they have, ultimately, comes from God. David concludes: **“And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.”** That’s our prayer today. **We celebrate the building, remember the people, and give glory to God.**

Remembering God's Work Among Us

2001 was a milestone year in many ways.

The artwork for our church logo was created by BBC member and artist, Foster Nystrom. It included the words, “The Adventure of a Lifetime Begins Here”, reflecting Jesus’ invitation, “Come, follow me.”

Our contemporary service began on Easter Sunday in 2000. By the fall of 2001, a young man named **Chris Morris** was playing the piano and leading our worship team. The 2001 Annual Report of the Music Committee stated, **“Chris Morris has become a mainstay of our music program at BBC, especially as the leader of our Praise and Worship Team.”**

Bill Morrow, our Treasurer and Financial Manager — a new position created in 2001 — noted that, when he accepted the Treasurer’s position in January of 1998, our General Funds Budget was \$219,200. Just four years later, it had increased 128% to \$499,285. 2001 was also the first year we received **more than one million dollars** in total giving.

Our average worship attendance, in 2001, was 477 people — an increase of 23% over the year 2000, when average attendance had increased 28% over 1999. We ended 2001 with 560 members — a gain of 20% over 2000.

In October of 2001, I preached at our Old Colony Association of American Baptist Churches in southeastern Massachusetts. My message was about The Growing Church, and I focused on the five Gs of a growing church:

- God’s Grace
- Growth in our personal faith
- Groups for smaller gatherings and deeper relationships
- Gifts — using our spiritual gifts in service
- Good Stewardship — giving generously

Those five Gs are still important, today. They remind us that a growing church is about more than attendance, budgets, or buildings. It is about growing in faith, developing relationships, serving others, and responding generously to God’s grace.

A Legacy Worth Carrying Forward

It's hard for me to believe that twenty-five years have passed since we moved into our expanded church facilities. When I recall the years of vision casting, planning, fundraising, and construction, from the late 1990s through the fall of 2001, I'm filled with gratitude for the members and friends of BBC whom God used to bring the project to life. The people at BBC, from 1995 through the turn of the century, were open to change, hospitable toward new people, willing to share and even give up leadership, and generous enough to make significant sacrifices for the expansion. Everyone who has come to BBC since then has benefited from their faithfulness.

The people who made the expansion possible were doing more than meeting the needs of their own generation. They were making room for people they had not yet met, preparing for ministries that had not yet begun, and investing in a future they could not fully see.

They could not have known all the ways God would use these facilities over the next twenty-five years. But they believed that the mission of the church was worth their commitment and sacrifice. That's a wonderful legacy. And it raises an important question for us today: **Are we willing to make the same kind of investment in the generations who will follow us?**

The people who came before us left us more than a building. They left us an example of faith, generosity, adaptability, and commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ. Our responsibility is to receive that legacy with gratitude, and carry it forward with faithfulness.

What Difference Has the Building Made?

Our expanded facilities have enabled us to serve our community, and the mid- to lower Cape, in ways that were not previously possible.

One way to see the difference is through all the groups that use our facility, including the entire town of Brewster voting here in elections.

Another example of change can be seen in the work of our Deacon Assistance Fund. In 2001, the fund provided 35 grants, totaling \$15,243. Through the first nine months of this year, it has provided \$72,000 in assistance. Behind those numbers are people and families facing difficult circumstances, neighbors needing help, and

opportunities for our congregation to put its faith into action. The figures tell us something about how our community's needs have changed, but they also remind us that our calling has not changed. We are called to love our neighbors, care for people in need, and demonstrate the compassion of Jesus Christ in practical ways.

But the building, itself, is not the ministry. The ministry happens when people pray, give, volunteer, welcome, listen, teach, encourage, and serve. That's the real measure of what we celebrate today – not simply what we built, but what God has enabled us to do through it.

Preparing for the Next Twenty-Five Years

Reading through the 2001 Annual Report, from many of the committees of that year, there are only a few – or even, just one person – who is still here at BBC. That observation reminded me of something else – most of us, who are here today, probably won't be here twenty-five years from now. That isn't meant to be a discouraging thought. Rather, it reminds us how important it is to live lives worthy of the calling we've received, and to be faithful in our time, so that BBC will remain a healthy, vital congregation for generations to come.

The question before us is not simply what God has done in our past, but how we will respond to God's faithfulness in the years ahead. Our BBC staff and Leadership Council have identified three major areas on which to concentrate: discipleship, leadership development, and upgrading and caring for our facilities and grounds so that ministry and mission can be carried out effectively over the long term. Let's briefly consider these priorities.

First, discipleship.

We're called to make disciples of Jesus Christ. We want to do that well, both by reaching more people with the good news of Jesus, and by helping those already among us grow in Christlikeness. Our goal is not simply to have more people attend church. It's to help people grow in their relationship with Jesus, and increasingly reflect his character in their everyday lives.

Second, leadership development.

There is always a need – in the church, and beyond – for leaders who lead as Jesus did, with good character, wisdom, courage, and humility. Developing those leaders requires us to encourage people to discover and use their gifts, provide opportunities to serve, and help prepare the next generation to accept responsibility for the church's mission. We also need to be willing to share leadership, and make room for new people to contribute their gifts and ideas.

Third, stewardship of our facilities and grounds.

We need to continue caring for our facilities and making thoughtful improvements, so they can support ministry and mission effectively, for years to come. Our building is a resource entrusted to us. We need to care for it wisely, not simply for its own sake, but because of the opportunities it provides to worship, serve, welcome people, and build relationships.

Running through all three priorities is the importance of community, connection, and belonging. The church can offer people a place where they are welcomed, known, encouraged, and loved. **These will be the subject of a four-week worship series beginning next Sunday.**

What will BBC look like twenty-five years from now? That will depend, in part, on the decisions we make today.

- Will we make disciples who know Jesus Christ, and are growing to become more like him?
- Will we develop leaders who are prepared to serve faithfully, and lead with wisdom, courage, and humility?
- Will we care wisely for the resources God has entrusted to us, so that future generations can continue the work of ministry and mission?
- Will we be a congregation where people find genuine community, meaningful relationships, and a place to belong?

We can't predict what the next twenty-five years will bring. The community will change, technology will change, and the needs of the people around us will change. But our calling remains: to make disciples of Jesus Christ, love our neighbors, develop

faithful leaders, share the good news of God's grace, and be faithful with what God has entrusted to us today. The next twenty-five years of BBC's story will be shaped, in part, by how faithfully we respond to God's calling in the years immediately ahead.

Our Gratitude and Our Hope

We've remembered the people who helped bring us to this day. We've given thanks for what God has accomplished through their faithfulness. And we've considered the opportunities and responsibilities that lie ahead. Now, I want to invite you to think about your own place in this continuing story. As you share lunch today, I hope you'll reflect on these two questions, and talk about them with those at your table:

- "I thank God for our church because..."
- "I hope our church will..."

Perhaps, you're thankful for someone who welcomed you, a ministry that helped you grow in faith, or an opportunity to serve. Perhaps, you hope BBC will reach more people, develop new leaders, strengthen its ministries, or find new ways to serve our community.

What we are grateful for reminds us of what we've received.

What we hope for reminds us of what we're called to help create.

These are not simply questions for our staff or Leadership Council. They are questions for all of us. Each of us has an opportunity to contribute to the health and vitality of BBC through prayer, service, encouragement, hospitality, mentoring, financial giving, and the faithful use of our gifts.

Twenty-five years ago, our congregation made a significant investment in the future. Today, we can do the same — not necessarily, or at least not yet, by undertaking another project of similar size and scope, but by investing in people, relationships, discipleship, leadership, and ministry.

In a few minutes, we'll share in a litany of rededicating ourselves and our church facility. It's an updated version of the litany we read twenty-five years ago.

May those who gather at BBC, twenty-five years from now, be able to look back on our generation with the same gratitude with which we remember those who came before us. May they see that we were faithful with what God entrusted to us, generous in our giving, courageous in our leadership, compassionate in our service, and committed

to passing the faith on to those who follow. And may we never forget where the credit ultimately belongs. As David prayed: **“And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.”**

Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for the visionaries, leaders, builders, donors, volunteers, and generations of faithful members who helped shape our church's history. We thank you for those who serve today, and those who will carry the mission of Christ into the future. Give us grateful hearts for what we have received, wisdom to use it faithfully, and courage to prepare the way for those who will follow. May we continue to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, develop leaders who serve with humility and compassion, care wisely for the resources entrusted to us, and be a community where people experience your love and grace. May all who come behind us find us faithful. And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name. Amen.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. *Psalms 150* calls everything that has breath to praise the Lord. What reasons do we have to praise God for what has happened in and through our congregation over the past 25 years? How can we make our gratitude and joy visible in our worship, relationships, and daily lives?
2. Looking back at the last 25 years of your life, where have you seen God's goodness and faithfulness in your life and/or in the life of our congregation? What experiences, people, ministries, or answered prayers come to mind?
3. A significant building project requires vision, generosity, hard work, prayer, sacrifice, and the gifts of many people. Who are some of the people whose faith, generosity, leadership, labor, or encouragement helped build your faith?
4. In *Ephesians 2:19-22*, Paul reminds us that we are members of God's household, built together into a dwelling place for God through the Spirit. How does this passage shape the way we understand the significance of our church building and the community of faith that gathers, grows, serves, and worships within it?
5. In what ways has our congregation been a place where people have encountered God, found belonging, experienced healing, grown in faith, or discovered opportunities to serve? What might God be inviting us to do so that our church continues to be a place of love and spiritual growth for generations to come?
6. If we were celebrating another anniversary, 25 years from now, what would you hope people would be able to say about our congregation's faithfulness, generosity, worship, and impact on the community in our time? What is one way you could help contribute to that future, beginning today?