

**Distinctives of Church Case Studies
&
Study Questions for
A Church and XP for Urban Life:
Bethany Baptist Church and Nicholas Smith,
a 20 Year Transition**

By Dr. David R. Fletcher

Distinctive—Expect to get “inside the heads” of the principals

The case study will allow you to “think the thoughts” of the principals, the main players in each case. You may or may not agree with their theology or decisions, but you will see the situation from their perspective and life-history. Seek to discover their “sitz im leben,” the sociological understanding of their “place in life.” This requires understanding the context of a ministry, so expect plenty of background data. Endeavor to “think their thoughts” and by analogy apply lessons to your ministry situation.

Distinctive—Expect plenty of data

Case studies are often twenty pages, single-spaced. You will be given as much background information as is practical to understand the case. It is essential to grasp as much as possible of the history and polity of the local church. *There is a key to reading case studies: the folks at Harvard suggest a “first skim” of the case, looking for pertinent information. Then, go back for a detailed reading of the material.* Sift the data of the case and sort out what you perceive to be relevant data points. Expect plenty of block quotes. These quotes allow the principals in each case study to share their “own story.” Data will come from websites, information published by the church, books and magazine articles by the principals and others, newspaper stories, and personal interviews.

Distinctive—Expect to discover principles

“Principals” are the main players in the case and you should draw the “principles,” the “main ideas” of the case that transcend church polity, geography and culture. Generally, the case will present a problem or turning point in ministry, but not the “correct answer” or the “solution.” Read the case to formulate your conclusions and be able to defend your conclusions with the case data. Why did the “main players” make the decisions that

they did? What is the larger picture of what is going on, the “meta-narrative?” What “main ideas” can you analogously apply to your ministry or life?

Study Questions for “A Church and XP for Urban Life”

1. Identify the principals, the “main players.” If helpful, make a chart of what each person brings to the ministry of Bethany Baptist. Examine the spiritual gifts of each principal and their role in the ministry.
2. Consider the church polity of Bethany Baptist Church and the Abundant Harvest Ministry. In light of the ministries of the church, examine the consistency and role of the church’s “branding” and vision statement.
3. Consider the basis and implications of the “statements” that are being made by Bishop Evans through the appointment of Rev. Smith. How does this appointment reflect the spiritual DNA of the church? Evaluate the principles of such a spiritual DNA, principles that transcend church polity, geography and culture. Consider the implications of a twenty year transition plan.

A Church and XP for Urban Life: Bethany Baptist Church and Nicholas Smith, A 20 Year Transition

By Dr. David R. Fletcher

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

In the year 1990, when Nicholas Smith was 8 years old, Bethany Baptist Church of Lindenwold, New Jersey had 29 active members. In the year 2003, Bethany Baptist had 16,500 members, Nicholas was 23 years old and he was Bethany's Executive Pastor. You are awake now! That got your attention, didn't it?

The usual notion of big news is the unusual. Journalists are taught to look for "man bites dog" stories—the events that raise eyebrows and make us think, "Wow!"

News of the ordinary also makes the cut in media outlets, of course, but it's not what sizzles, and it's not apt to get onto front pages or prime-time broadcasts.

For every spectacular event, there are many others—just as terrible or just as wonderful—that barely register on the media Richter scale because they're happening all the time. What's earthshaking in people's lives is often barely visible to the hype-hungry media eye.¹

Every case study is "unusual" in that God uniquely works through local churches. God uses gifted people to reach communities in entirely different ways. Yet, the story of Bethany Baptist and Nicholas Smith stands out. A vibrant ministry of Bethany reaches the urban world with dynamic programs—and people are responding. Yet, why did Bishop Evans choose such a young XP? The reason may be in the spiritual DNA of the church.

Introduction to Bethany

In order to understand Nicholas Smith and his ministry as an Executive Pastor, one needs to gain perspective on Bethany Baptist Church.

¹ "The Limits of 'Man Bites Dog' Stories," by Norman Solomon, Common Dreams Newscenter, December 9, 2004 www.commondreams.org/views04/1209-23.htm.

Executive Pastor Nicholas Smith summarizes the ministry by saying, “It’s high on evangelism. That’s a main priority. We have a heavy focus on worship. The worship services are out of the ordinary. They are high on creative arts, such as dance, drama and poetry. We function on excellence, nothing is half-baked.”²

The Faith Life Editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer wrote an extensive article about Bethany. The article was published in that newspaper and reprinted by the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. The Institute claims itself to be an “Impartial News and Analysis of Faith-Based Social Services” and is a part of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York.” The article provides introductory information about Bethany:

The traffic is known to back up as much as a half-mile these days on little Gibbsboro Road. Day and night, people flock to the gleaming white complex on a sandy corner of Lindenwold called Abundant Harvest Plaza.

The folks aren’t going shopping, and the 32-acre plaza isn’t the mall. It’s church.

Abundant Harvest is home to Bethany Baptist Church, a boom congregation whose red-hot growth over the last three years has made it a phenomenon in the Philadelphia region.

Bethany claims a membership of 16,500 people—nearly the population of Lindenwold itself—and it says its rolls are growing by nearly 4,000 a year.³

Bethany has also gained attention as one of the two African-American mega-churches in Camden County. One of the faculty of Rutgers University has written a thirty-nine page case study of the two churches. Dr. Sharon Gramby-Sobukwe, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Administration, writes:

African-American mega-churches in Camden County, New Jersey are compared to distinguish how, why and which churches assist impoverished communities in the City of Camden, the second poorest city in the United States. Living Faith Christian Center in Cherry Hill, New Jersey and Bethany Baptist Church in Lindenwold, New Jersey, the two African-American mega-churches in Camden County, provide insight into the practices of both independent/non-denominational and denominational churches, respectively. They are both suburban churches chosen from a metropolitan area where the impoverishment of urban life in Camden, New Jersey contrasts the affluence in surrounding

² “Interview with Nicholas Smith,” David R. Fletcher, July 20, 2005.

³ “Lindenwold’s ‘church that never sleeps’; Dynamic preacher fuels fervor in congregation of red-hot growth,” Jim Remsen, Philadelphia Inquirer, June 8, 2003, reprinted online in The Roundtable on Religion & Social Welfare Policy by The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York,” www.religionandsocialpolicy.org/news/article.cfm?id=654.

townships like Cherry Hill. This environment, characterized by racial, class and political diversity, reflects the various realities of African-American political life.⁴

Dr. Gramby-Sobukwe has demographic data from 2002. When compared to the data from the Remsen's article of 2003, the church growth is clearly seen:

Bethany Baptist Church has roughly 14,000 members, increased from nine hundred in just twelve years. Approximately ninety-five to ninety-seven percent of the congregation appears to be African American. Members live, not only in the immediate community, but also in nearby Burlington, Atlantic and Cumberland counties, in towns of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, such as Allentown, Phoenixville, West Chester and Dover and Newark, Delaware, as well as in cities in the region, including Philadelphia, Camden, Trenton, and even Baltimore and Newark, New Jersey ... Bethany's congregation is dominantly youthful, approximately equal in the proportion of males and females, even in leadership positions. The congregation is composed of roughly fifteen percent youth between the ages thirteen and eighteen years, approximately eighty percent adults between the ages of twenty to sixty years and thus, less than five percent adults older than sixty years ... Their annual operating budget is approximately \$5 million, ninety-nine percent of which is funded by tithes, offerings and donations.⁶

Bethany has received media and academic attention, which makes it easy to document its growth and demographic data.

The prelate of the Bethany Baptist Church is 53 year old Bishop David G. Evans. The Bishop says: "The Lord revealed to me six years ago that we are in a 25-year season of growth," he said. "It might calm down to normal then, but I don't know what normal is. Normal is this: Growing."⁵ Though Bethany was founded in 1967, "My ministry started in 1990 with 29 active members."⁶ From the 2003 article, Remsen also notes "Abundant Harvest Plaza, a \$13 million worship center that opened three years ago. It features a 3,000-seat arena sanctuary with a waterfall that empties into a baptismal pool on display behind the 80-foot-wide pulpit."⁷

The church says about itself that there are "over 33 acres, of which 20 houses the worship center. The worship center has 70,000 square feet of space. The sanctuary has an

⁴ "Who Cares for the Urban Poor? Changing Race, Class and Religious Dynamics in The Role of The African-American Church in Civil Society," Sharon Gramby-Sobukwe, Department of Political Science, Graduate Department of Public Policy and Administration, Rutgers University, Camden-Campus, http://wrand.rutgers.edu/document%5Cfellow%5C35_1.pdf pages 2-3.

⁵ "Lindenwold's 'church that never sleeps.'"

⁶ "Lindenwold's 'church that never sleeps.'"

⁷ "Lindenwold's 'church that never sleeps.'"

overflow section that can seat an additional 800. Two giant video screens are used to broadcast the worship services. The church has a formal banquet hall, a full service kitchen, 13 meeting rooms, 13 administrative offices, a nurse's station and a bookstore."⁸

Bishop Evans sees a 25 year period of growth. In this light, "After a tour of the premises, Evans said the plaza is only a way station. An agent is already scouting around for more land a few minutes' drive away. "We're going to build another church on 75 acres, with a 9,500-seat auditorium," he said. "[Abundant Harvest] would be kept as our youth church. If we keep growing at this rate, in five years we'll have 30,000 members, so we'll need it."⁹

In describing the two churches of her case study, Dr. Gramby-Sobukwe gives an historical perspective on the worship style of Bethany:

Each church provides Charismatic and Evangelical worship and outreach, determinedly distinct from the traditional practices of the characteristic "Black Church." Both Bethany and Living Faith conduct worship services that are highly emotional and spirit filled. However, both emphasize a literate understanding and development of faith. Both emphasize teaching ministries and target rites and practices to particular segments of the congregation. Sunday School is provided based on age, special worship services are provided for young children, and Bible Study sessions are organized in local areas, close to members' various residences and scheduled to accommodate the schedules of working families.¹⁰

Remsen continues with his description of the church:

Bethany calls itself "the church that never sleeps" and offers its flock a seven-day, seven-night array of classes and support groups that teach fundamentalist beliefs, promote financial discipline and tithing, and demand "Christian excellence."

"David is in the vanguard of church ministry," said the Rev. Herb Lusk of Greater Exodus Baptist Church in Philadelphia, who licensed Evans as a minister.

Lusk attributed Bethany's success to "an eclectic mix" of elements. He cited the church's strict Bible preaching and powerful choirs, both of which are Baptist hallmarks, and two more-controversial stances: Evans' elevating of women into ministry, and his avowal of speaking in tongues and other Pentecostal expressions.¹¹

⁸ "About The Plaza," Bethany Baptist Church, Abundant Harvest Plaza
<http://abundantharvest.com/abouttheplaza/>.

⁹ "Lindenwold's 'church that never sleeps.'"

¹⁰ "Who Cares for the Urban Poor?" page 17.

¹¹ "Lindenwold's 'church that never sleeps.'"

Defying many labels, the church has many dimensions. Bishop David Evans commented in an interview to Dr. Gramby-Sobukwe and, “has been known to exclaim from his pulpit, “We’re just church. Don’t let what’s in the name fool you—we’re Baptist, but we’re also Pentecostal *and* Apostolic.”¹² Let us now turn our attention to Bishop Evans and understand the Pastor of the church.

Bishop Evans

There is a wide variety of source material about Bishop Evans. The Philadelphia Inquirer writes:

Megachurches are usually built on the dynamism of a lone, charismatic pastor. The king of the mountain at Bethany is the Rev. David G. Evans—a strong-willed, entrepreneurial preacher versed not only in Scripture but in high-tech worship, marketing, education and finances.

Religion scholars have noted that many of today’s megachurch pastors are trained in law, finance and other fields and go on to apply those disciplines to their ministries. Evans, a West Philadelphia native who majored in economics and education at Lincoln University, is no exception.

In his sermons, and in his classes for new members, Evans stresses financial responsibility as “part of God’s will for your life.” Bethany also has set up an employment agency and hosts a weekly home-ownership training program in conjunction with a local lender.

Evans is a spellbinding preacher who gives long teaching sermons at Bethany's two Sunday services.¹³

Streaming Faith calls itself the world’s largest faith-based video portal, with more than 20 24-hour video networks, 10 24-hour radio stations, and over 350 live events every month.¹⁴ The internet portal says that Bishop Evans “is passionate about serving Christ and leading others to Him. An anointed and gifted teacher, preacher, and leader, Bishop Evans is known for his down-to-earth and realistic approach to proclaiming God's Holy Word.”¹⁵

¹² “Who Cares for the Urban Poor?” page 20.

¹³ “Lindenwold’s ‘church that never sleeps.’”

¹⁴ “About Us,” Streaming Faith,
www.streamingfaith.com/sf_presentation/tab__uiGcHDo159M=/keywords__About+Us/tz__dtthOmgvus=/default.aspx.

¹⁵ “Streaming Faith Broadcaster Details,” Streaming Faith,
www.streamingfaith.com/sf_presentation/tab__1MBkb19TPjw=/keywords__Broadcaster+Detail/tz__dtthOmgvus=/tid__hIvR40rg0Ss=/default.aspx.

Cornerstone television says: “Bishop Evans is the Presiding Officer of the Abundant Harvest Fellowship of Churches, an international full gospel fellowship with churches in the United States, Africa, and India. AHFC’s fundamental mission is to evangelize the lost, edify the believer, equip the saints for ministry and grow the local church. Bishop Evans is the CEO of David G. Evan’s Ministries which produces the Dominion T.V. Broadcast (cable & satellite); Dominion Radio Ministries and “On Point”, a live call-in radio talk show (nationwide, via satellite).”¹⁶

The church also gives information about Bishop Evans: “A Dean’s list student and multi-sport athlete, Bishop Evans graduated from Lincoln University in 1973, where he majored in Economics and Education. His experience includes serving as a Vice President for a commercial lending corporation and as the owner/operator of a commercial cleaning company.”¹⁷ His business background is paralleled in many other pastors of mega-churches:

Third, these professional church leaders integrate and utilize their education and skills among middle class congregants to advance a dual message of individual success and service. Educated in business schools and management programs, the clergy of the mega-church has promoted a theology of empowerment and financial prosperity for the individual. At the same time, they have reinvigorated the church in its traditional commitment to serving the black community by providing soup kitchens, drug and youth programs and community development to build black institutions.¹⁸

In a personal touch, the Bishop’s e-mail address is given on the church’s web site. While one doubts that he would personally respond to every e-mail, it does demonstrate a desire to be approachable. The church describes its Bishop and the extent of his ministry:

Membership has grown from 75 to over 21,000 presently. Bishop Evans was called to the office of Bishopric in March of 1996 as the Presiding Officer of the Abundant Harvest Fellowship of Churches an international full gospel fellowship with over 100 churches in the United States, Africa, and India. Our fundamental mission is to evangelize the lost, edify the believer, equip the saints for ministry and grow the local church.

Recognizing the magnitude of needs throughout the southern New Jersey region, the vision has extended to the creation of a non-profit community development corporation Generations, Inc. Under Bishop Evans’ leadership, as chairman of the Board of Directors, Generations, Inc. addresses the life-span needs of southern

¹⁶ “On the Next Focus 4,” October 14, 2004, Cornerstone TeleVision (sic), <http://wkbs.org/focus4/viewcontent.cgi?focus4?guests?73>.

¹⁷ “Bishop Evans,” Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/bishoppevans/>.

¹⁸ “Who Cares for the Urban Poor?” pages 10-11.

New Jersey residents through economic development and a broad range of human services. Bishop Evans is a HUD Youth Build Partner for South Jersey, Fannie Mae Advisory Board Member, Chairman of the National Home Owner Initiative and the originator of Harvest Transitional Homes for Women. In addition, he initiated the South Jersey Foster Care Provider Program. Projects in progress include Harvest Senior Housing (2006), Harvest Recreation Center (2005) and Harvest Medical Center (2005).¹⁹

In an interview with Executive Pastor Nicholas Smith, the Abundant Harvest concept was explained:

In 1996, seven churches came to Pastor Evans to have him help build their churches. As it developed, he was consecrated as a bishop over the seven churches. Later it grew to fifty churches—thirty in the United States, twelve in India and twenty in Africa.

Bishop Evans “pastors the pastors.” He recognizes that they need help and fathering. There are quarterly meetings where they all come, talking and growing together. He teaches how to build and run a church—where he had to learn the hard way.

The Abundant Harvest Fellowship is a fellowship—a coming alongside of other churches. It does provide some financial help if needed. The Elisha ministry will send people to help, such as with ushers for 3-6 months.²⁰

The growth of the ministry is stunning and the extent is so large as to be daunting to easily describe. The “Bishop doesn’t take his own interpretation,” Hairston said later. “He teaches the Word as it is. A lot of churches are scared to offend and won’t preach on it. He’s like a big brother who tells you what is best for you.”²¹

One can read the doctrinal statement of the church in Appendix I.

It always does well to let the principals speak for themselves. Bishop Evans writes in a question and answer section on the church website:

1. What is the Fellowship Stance on Spiritual Gifts?

We believe in the entire ministry of the Holy Ghost including the gifts of the Spirit in their varieties, administrations and operations. We believe the gifts are not only relevant but essential for productive biblical ministry.

¹⁹ “Bishop Evans,” Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/bishopdevans/>

²⁰ “Interview with Nicholas Smith.”

²¹ “Lindenwold’s ‘church that never sleeps.’”

In an interview with Executive Pastor Nicholas Smith, he expanded on the role of spiritual gifts. “Bethany is Pentecostal in style but Baptist in history. Our Pentecostal style of worship is alive and vibrant. It is high energy, loud and moving a lot. We have tongues and healing miracles. We do not see that everybody has to have the gift of tongues or healing. They are gifts of the spirit and if you don’t have it, that’s OK. But, we are big time on healing.”²²

2. How about Women in Ministry?

In keeping with our stance on gifts, we believe that women are called and used mightily of God. We support them with training, education, licensing and ordination.²³

The church’s position on women in ministry is evidenced in staffing and leadership positions. Dr. Gramby-Sobukwe has found data from the church that 63% of ministers at the church are women, and women are the Chairperson of the Trustee Board and Superintendent of Sunday School.²⁴

3. Abortion, Homosexuality, Lesbianism, etc?

Abortion, homosexuality, lesbianism is sin and that is the stance we take. Any lifestyle contrary to the fundamental interpretation of the Word is sinful and in need of ministry help.

4. Tithing?

We believe tithing is a biblical mandate for every born again, yielded believer. Plainly taught, in both the Old and New Testaments.

5. Is this a Holiness or Pentecostal Movement?

Our position according to the word of God is that all churches should be “Holiness” and “Pentecostal” if they are biblical in their objectives and embrace a fundamental understanding of the Bible.²⁵

The “Abundant Harvest Hour” is broadcast on four radio stations each week, as well as via “On Point.” The “Dominion” is broadcast on four television channels, one on Black Entertainment Television, two on local Trinity Broadcasting Network channels, and one on the Church Channel.²⁶

²² “Interview with Nicholas Smith.”

²³ “Questions,” Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/aboutus/questions.php>.

²⁴ “Who Cares for the Urban Poor?” page 20.

²⁵ “Questions,” Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/aboutus/questions.php>.

²⁶ “Broadcast Services,” Bethany Baptist Church, http://abundantharvest.com/broadcasts_services/.

Urban Emphasis

Bethany has a goal of penetrating the community. As Dr. Gramby-Sobukwe writes about the African-American church at large, so it true of Bathany:

Historically, the church was the core institution in the African-American community. Functioning not only as centers of worship and inspiration, churches consistently provided the critical organizational basis for pursuing hopes and aspirations, assuaging fears and failures, refining social habits and self perceptions and representing the community's politics and goals. The church has, as a result, been required to reflect social change while also remaining unchanged in established principles and norms of behavior. Thus, the church in the African-American community has been both advocate of the changes necessary to justly accommodate African-Americans in the broader society, as well as representative of traditional morality.²⁷

She continues:

Therefore, Bethany's ministries prioritize studying and teaching the Bible to develop a literate and hermeneutic understanding across the congregation as well as training congregants, practically, to use their spiritual understanding to fulfill their responsibility to evangelize, especially to meet the needs of African-Americans. Technology, including audiocassettes and videotapes, radio and cable television broadcasts as well as the Internet and computers programs, is used liberally to advance these aims.²⁸

Let us explore some of those ministries to gain a feel for the church:

The Breath of Life counseling ministry endeavors to serve "as a holistic ministry which provides healing, restoration, enrichment and spiritual growth."²⁹ The counseling center provides wide-ranging services for individual, family, pre-marital and crisis counseling. They also lead seminars and train members of the congregation. More than half of the nine people on the counseling staff have professional degrees in psychology.

The Harvest Employment Service seeks to "to help empower the church and communities to gain the skill sets, and education to be successful in the business world." They desire to be a "safety net" for people who lack adequate skills to enter the job market. There is a desire to partner with employers for a "win-win" agreement with potential employees. The faith-based organization provides search and recruitment services, along with skill-

²⁷ "Who Cares for the Urban Poor?" page 6.

²⁸ "Who Cares About the Urban Poor?" p. 20.

²⁹ "Counseling: Breath of Life," Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/counseling/>.

set training and career counseling. Harvest Employment Service is operated by Generations, Inc., a Community Development Corporation.³⁰

The ministry of “His Image” sponsors monthly training workshops on “image management, wardrobe management, social and business etiquette skills. Our goal is to enable individuals to feel more confident and secure about how to demonstrate the appropriate behavior and communication skills in every aspect of life.”³¹

His Image Ministries will conduct workshops from a Godly perspective on the following topics, including, but not limited to: Self-Esteem/Confidence, Image Management, Wardrobe Management, Business Etiquette, Social Etiquette, Networking, Mentorship, Minding Your Manners, Office/Corporate Politics, Supervisory Skills, Dynamic Selling Skills, Presentation Skills, Conflict Resolution, Resume Writing/Interviewing Skills, Customer Service Skills, Dining Etiquette.

Who Can Benefit From Our Ministry?

Many individuals are uncertain about what is expected of them at social, political and/or business events. His Image Ministries facilitates workshops for children, high school students, college students, employees, employers, non-profit organizations, churches, schools, colleges, entrepreneurs and companies. We also provide one-on-one consultations for your convenience.³²

Unusual for most churches, Bethany has a catering ministry, “Abundant Harvest Catering.” The church has an Executive Chef, a graduate of the French Culinary Institute of New York with twenty years experience.

Our talented and creative banquet staff will exceed your expectations whether you are having a wedding celebration, dinner celebration in honor of your baby’s dedication, or birthday party, anniversary, or ministry event.

Our expert cooks, wait staff, hostesses, servers, maitre d’ and experienced chefs take care of all your service needs. Our aim is to provide you with an affair that runs smoothly by taking all the hassle and stress out of your special event. We will set up your entire venue, including: arrange decorations, food stations, set and dress tables, assist your guests in any way possible, and—best of all—clean up the venue.

Our Dining Facility – Harvest Hall. The Harvest Hall is a beautifully appointed banquet facility. The Harvest Hall features crystal chandelier, elegantly appointed

³⁰ “Harvest Employment Service,” Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/employment/>.

³¹ “His Image Ministries,” Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/ministries/hisimage.php>.

³² “His Image Ministries,” Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/ministries/hisimage.php>.

window treatments, separate restrooms and accommodates parties up to 400 persons.³³

The church is undertaking major building projects to extend its ministries. In 2003, the church obtained preliminary borough approval to build a \$12 million senior citizen center with 92 units and planned for 2004:

To break ground on a \$7 million community youth center outfitted with a pool, gym and indoor track, and a \$1 million child-care center.

Bethany's social-service arm, Generations Inc., runs a women's shelter in Camden and is setting up a second shelter in Lindenwold. Generations has a \$100,000 contract with New Jersey to train foster families and place foster children. It also provides job training at a Camden construction site under a \$400,000 federal Housing and Urban Development contract.³⁴

Bethany garners superlative media coverage, as illustrated by a press release from the New Jersey, Secretary of State:

New Jersey Secretary of State Regena L. Thomas today announced the New Jersey Office of Faith Based Initiatives, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Center for Faith Based and Community Initiatives and Bethany Baptist Church - Abundant Harvest Plaza, will host a free 2-day grant writing training workshop for faith based and community based organizations and houses of worship. The training workshop will be held on March 31st and April 1st from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Bethany Baptist Church - Abundant Harvest Plaza, 1115 Gibbsboro Road, Lindenwold, New Jersey. "New Jersey has no stronger partner than our communities of faith," said Secretary Thomas. "This free 2-day workshop serves not only to provide faith based and community based organizations with training in grant writing, it serves to help strengthen service through partnership."³⁵

The members of the church are involved in disseminating information about church ministries in the news media. Concerning youth raising \$1700 for a home for abused women and children, the member was able to position a self-written press release in no less than seven websites.

We are asking for news coverage for I'm Free Ministries. We will receive a donation from a Walk-A-Thon sponsored by Bethany's Teen Service Ministry on

³³ "Abundant Harvest Catering," Bethany Baptist Church, <http://abundantharvest.com/catering/>.

³⁴ "Lindenwold's 'church that never sleeps.'"

³⁵ "New Jersey Office of Faith Based Initiatives Joins with HUD to Offer a Free 2-Day Grant Writing Training Workshop for Faith Based and Community Based Organizations and Houses of Worship," Press Release March 11, 2004, New Jersey, Department of State, Office of the Secretary, www.nj.gov/state/secretary/press_releases/03112004pr.html.

this Sunday, the early part of the 11am Worship Service. The teens raised \$1700 and will be presenting a check to us. This coverage is asked for on behalf of supporting efforts for our transitional houses for women and their children who have experienced abuse.³⁶

These are but a sample of the many ministries of Bethany Baptist Church and Abundant Harvest Ministries.

Nicholas Smith

The church gives an introduction to Reverend Nicholas Smith, the Executive Pastor of Bethany Baptist Church:

Reverend Nicholas A. Smith is the Executive Assistant Pastor of Bethany Baptist Church, Lindenwold, New Jersey, where he assists pastor/teacher Bishop David G. Evans.

Saved at the age of nine, Pastor Smith knew that he was called to ministry. Throughout his adolescence, God prepared Him by sending him to minister, teach and preach in prisons and churches.

Under the dynamic teaching and mentoring of Bishop Evans, Pastor Smith was licensed to preach in November 2001 at the age of 19 and ordained reverend in October 2004. His fervent desire for biblical wisdom and his realistic approach to teaching and preaching God's Word, allows him to appeal to groups of all ages.

In December of 2003, Reverend Smith became the Executive Pastor of Bethany Baptist Church. Along with assisting Bishop Evans, his responsibilities include overseeing the ministry aspect of the church. Which includes Evangelism, Business, Family, Youth, Hope, Volunteer, Outreach and Education departments. He also serves as the Director of the Young Adult Ministry and as Director of Youth for the Abundant Harvest Fellowship of Churches.

It is Pastor Smith's desire to preach a life-giving word for souls to be saved and to teach a life-altering word to build up the Christian community to fulfill their God-given purpose.³⁷

The website also lists his favorite scripture from Jeremiah 1:

³⁶ Press release coverage from Channel 6, Liz Horsey, August 3, 2002, PRWeb Press Release Newswire: Press Release coverage from Channel 6, <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2002/8/prweb43327.htm> :archived on, <http://religion.pr-archive.com/en/pr42826.htm> and in Free Article Library <http://freearticlelibrary.com/free-articles/articles/56/page37.html> and in Press World <http://religion.press-world.com/v/42493/press-release-coverage-from-channel-6.html> and in the Russian edition of Press World <http://prworld.com.ru/201x42543.html> and in Press Base http://religion.press-base.com/en/ds/138533/Press_release_coverage_from_Channel_6.html and in Sales Success Magazine <http://salessuccessmagazine.com/articles/56/Press-Release-Coverage-From-Channel-6.html>.

³⁷ "Biography of Nicholas Smith," Bethany Baptist Church.

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

At his current age of 23, the Scripture is fitting.

Nicholas sees himself as a young and empowered Catalyst.³⁸ He agrees with the XPastor terminology, that a Catalyst helps envision, start and empower new ministries. The Catalyst challenges people to volunteer for and to improve ministry and lights fires to get people involved in ministry. The Catalyst networks ministries together to enhance effectiveness, seeks out opportunities for members to share the gospel and creates strategic plans for the church.

Most Senior Pastors want their XPs to be a strong catalyst. This is because most Senior Pastors desire to cast vision and have the XP implement the vision, which includes challenging and reinvigorating ministries.

Catalysts like challenge and find ministry exciting. They dare others to change and can be heard to say “I can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.” If they had a motto as a group it would be, “Rules? What are they?” Nicholas says that he likes to “go into something and see the way it is. Then I see it greater than what it is right now. I like to bring people together. I’m good at going in, measuring it and pulling together.”

Rev. Smith reworked the organizational chart (see Appendix II and III for the before and after versions). “It was scattered before but now it is pulled together. Generations Inc. is for social ministries, but it was under the church. Generations Inc. needed to be under the CDC (Community Development Corporation). So we changed it and put a person over that group to manage it. We formed a separate 501c(3) with a separate structure, but still linked to Bethany.” He goes on to say:

“The more a church grows the more structure it needs so that it can run efficiently. We are continuing to grow so big that we needed more individuals to help manage the church. So we created a new *organizational chart*. The problem with the old organizational structure was that everything was scattered and there was no XP to successfully handle it all. The ministry still ran efficiently but it was becoming too big for the Sr. Pastor to do himself. I came in place and eventually it became too large for me to handle. In order for me to operate better I had to reorganize, restructure and hire individuals to oversee departments as I oversee them.”

In this system we don’t micro manage even though the org chart looks like it, we work under an *entrepreneurial system*. An *entrepreneur system* of ministry is a

³⁸ The following is based on an interview with Nicholas Smith, cited above.

group of people that run their department like an entrepreneur and doesn't micro manage their directors. Entrepreneurs can work without needing someone to watch over them but they can work with the same passion on their own. We don't hire people who need constant attention to perform successfully on the job, but we hire people who are multi-tasked and independent workers.

The *second phase* of our organizational shift was an *executive management team* which consists of *myself*, a *Church Administrator*, a *Worship Pastor*, *Conference* and *Events manager* and our *Media* person. I oversee the ministry side of the church (I also over see the spiritual development; I set up programs to help the spiritual life of the church), our Administrator oversees the business side and our worship pastor oversees the worship aspect of the church. We found out that the 5 of us are the main people in the church that ministries have to go through to get things done. We work together to assist our pastor in operating the church. We are direct reports to Bishop and all ministry reports to me and business to our administrator and all worship to our worship pastor. I am the liaison between the Sr. Pastor and this group setting up meetings and etc.³⁹

Catalysts can often be challenging to work with and for. They tend to make changes that cause consternation in some people. "Yes, I ruffled some feathers with the new organizational chart ... some people were used to working on their own but now they have a person to be accountable to."

Nicholas saw that due to the extent of the ministry that Bishop Evans could not hold people accountable for their ministry. A change was needed to "let people be free to work. I'm not a tyrant, nor a micro-manager." He also established "Ministry Manuals" for deacons, preachers and missionaries so that they know what is expected.

"A good way of managing is to gather people together and talk about issues. In the next month, going to meet with all the fifteen existing managers and show them the new org chart. They will see the new reporting relationships, and go from there. The ministry is getting so big that Bishop Evans can't oversee all the ministry heads himself."

One of the major projects for Nicholas was "branding" the church. "In 2004, we had Mark Dreistadt with Infinity Concepts help us "brand" the church. We found that the phrase "transforming lives one at a time," summarized our ministries." He provided the following brand information about Bethany:

Bethany Baptist Church Ministry Brand

Brand personality: What people say?

Anointed ♦ Caring ♦ Innovative ♦ Dynamic
Comprehensive ♦ Well-organized

³⁹ "My XP Info: Personal Reflections by Nicholas Smith," November 2005.

Brand Attributes: Benefits of the Organization

A dynamic, worship experience ♦ Word-based ministry

A discipleship lifestyle ♦ Global leadership

A high standard of excellence

One Big Thing

Bethany Baptist Church exists to transform lives one at a time

Bethany Baptist Church Ministry Identity

Core Values (who we are)

Bethany Baptist Church is a biblically-based, Christ-centered, evangelical ministry with a heart for the people and a commitment to excellence.

Core Assignment (why we exist)

Bethany Baptist Church exists to transform lives one at a time

Core Commitment (what we do)

Bethany Baptist Church fulfills its God-given assignment through:

1. Teaching—We offer biblically based teaching that grounds people in the knowledge and understanding of the Word of God.
2. Preaching—We preach God's Word to plant powerful seeds in people's hearts that can renew and transform their lives.
3. Deliverance—We offer ministry and counseling services that will lead people to deliverance from mental, emotional, and spiritual oppression.
4. Healing—We provide ministry opportunities that will heal people of physical, mental, and emotional issues.
5. Worship—We offer people to enter into the presence of God through a worship experience that incorporates the whole person—spiritual, mental, and emotional issues.
6. Discipleship—We provide discipleship training so that people may learn from others and continues to grow in Christ through one-on-one meetings and group settings.
7. Evangelism/Outreach—We provide people with opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to win souls to the Kingdom of God, in addition to providing opportunities for people to touch our community through diverse outreach programs.
8. Fellowship—We offers opportunities for fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ so that believers may unite with another through activities and events that bring rest, relaxation, and restoration.
9. Leadership training—We give people the opportunity to develop their skills as leaders so that they can fully utilize their time and talents in service to God.
10. Volunteer service—We offer people the opportunity to volunteer their time and talents through outreaches and activities that will increase and strengthen the body of Christ.

Core Constituency
Primary Demographic
Tri-state (100 mile radius) ♦ Unsaved
Broken people ♦ Unchurched

Secondary Demographic
Saved ♦ Broken people

Nicolas commented that “It became our new brand and we put it on and in everything.” This branding was highly important: “we even spent time so that the receptionist fully understood it. Everything in the ministry has to focus on living out the branded vision.”

“The long term plan is that I will take over when Bishop Evans retires and that will be in fifteen to twenty years.” Rev. Smith came to the church when he was nine years old with his mother. He accepted Christ and has stayed. Along the way he served in the New Members class, youth ministry and junior deacons—serving and participating in the leadership of the ministries. “I accepted God’s call on my life and got licensed in 2001 and ordained in 2004.” He is twenty-three years old now and still has some college to finish. “I am learning how to pastor the church. We have about eighty full and part time workers.” He notes:

Transitional plan—I began to preach more so people could get used to me. Currently Bishop is releasing a lot of ministry responsibility to me. In about 15 to 20 years I will take over the church so he is preparing me now by exposing me to more of the operations of the church and overseeing the leadership.⁴⁰

As to staff response to him assuming the Executive Pastor position, Nicholas says, “Some adjusted well, some got used to it and some are getting used to it. It’s mostly an age thing. They were my leader and now I am their leader.” He further says:

Originally when I got into position individuals called my Pastor to voice there opinion about how they thought I was a bad choice. He took a lot of flack for it but he knew what he was doing and stood up for me. A lot of people still saw me as Nick their play son or little brother. So it took some adjustment and Bishop telling people who I was and the role I played, he did this in a staff meeting. They weren’t disrespectful about it, they just doubted me a lot because of my youth and they were there longer. They didn’t realize that I knew a lot and 95% of the time talked to my pastor first before I instituted anything. He emphasized my place that when he is gone I am in charge. Once he said something everything seemed to fall into place.⁴¹

⁴⁰ “My XP Info.”

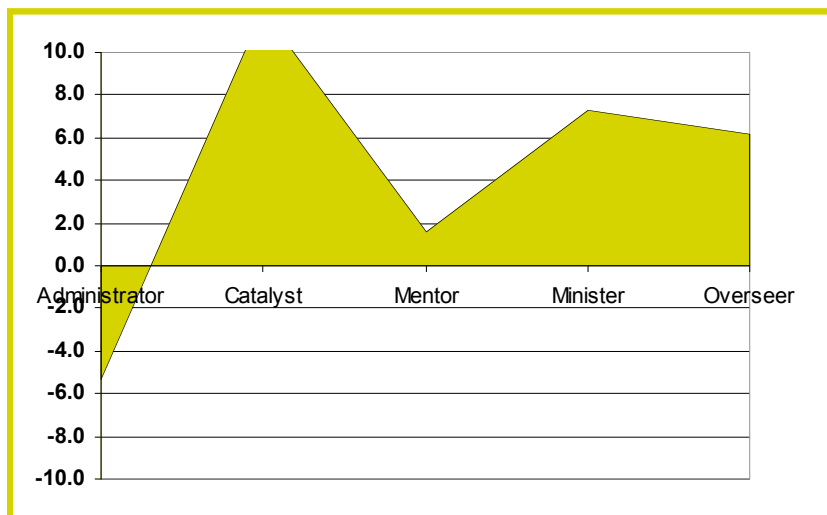
⁴¹ “My XP Info.”

Nicholas also sees that he is a strong Overseer. Using the XPastor definition of Overseer, the Administrator and Overseer Functions are two halves of the same pie. Administrator ensures that the engine is running at full capacity while the Overseer ensures that the car is moving the right direction. Nicholas scores quite low as an Administrator, perhaps because the church has a gifted administrator in Phillip Turner. Mr. Turner frees the Administrator responsibility from Nicholas, so that Nicholas can focus on other issues. Lower Administrator scores are typical in churches over 4000 in worship.

The Overseer attends meetings of the governing board, perhaps as a member. A key aspect of the Overseer is to implement the policies of the governing board. The Overseer monitors every ministry for the Sr. Pastor and governing board and often guards and gives advice on the schedule of the Sr. Pastor. The Overseer oversees all church ministries, managing ministry by delegated responsibility. A key aspect is that the Overseer implements the vision of the Sr. Pastor and fills the position as the "second in command" to the Sr. Pastor. Common questions and comments that the Overseer asks are: Does it fit where we are going? Let me get the right person to help you. The Overseer looks at the horizon. Being a positive tough-minded leader, the Overseer is positive yet looks for problems in the organization.

As twenty-three years old, Nicholas Smith has enormous responsibilities. God has given him strong gifts, which he is using in ministry. While some may see a fifteen to twenty year transition as dauntingly long, it may be the right amount of time to season and refine a gifted young minister.

The XP-Indicator for Nicholas Smith



Appendix I—Doctrinal Statement

A. OF THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction: that it has God as its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error, for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinions should be tried.

B. OF THE TRUE GOD

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is Jehovah. The Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct by harmonious office in the great work of redemption.

C. OF THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that a man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint, but by choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

D. OF THE WAY OF SALVATION

We believe that the Salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections. He is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

E. OF JUSTIFICATION

We believe that the Great gospel which Christ secures to such as believe in him is Justification; that Justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, by solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

F. OF THE FREENESS OF SALVATION

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

G. OF GRACE IN REGENERATION

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected, in a manner above our comprehension, by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life.

H. OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

I. OF GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being indefinitely free, wise holy and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promote humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God and active imitation of his free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

J. OF SANCTIFICATION

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means, especially the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness and prayer.

K. OF A GOSPEL CHURCH

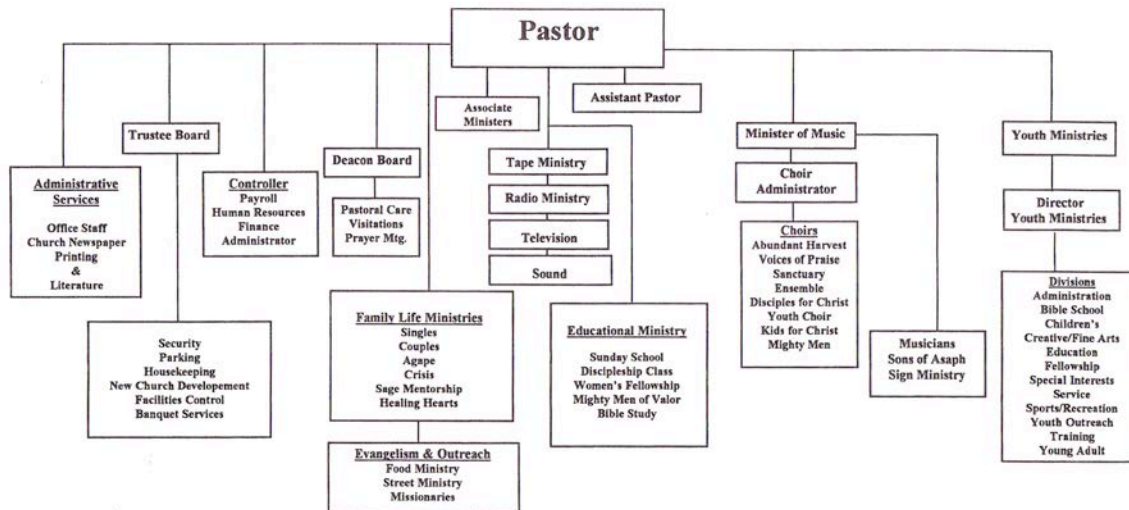
We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word; that its only Scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

L. OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

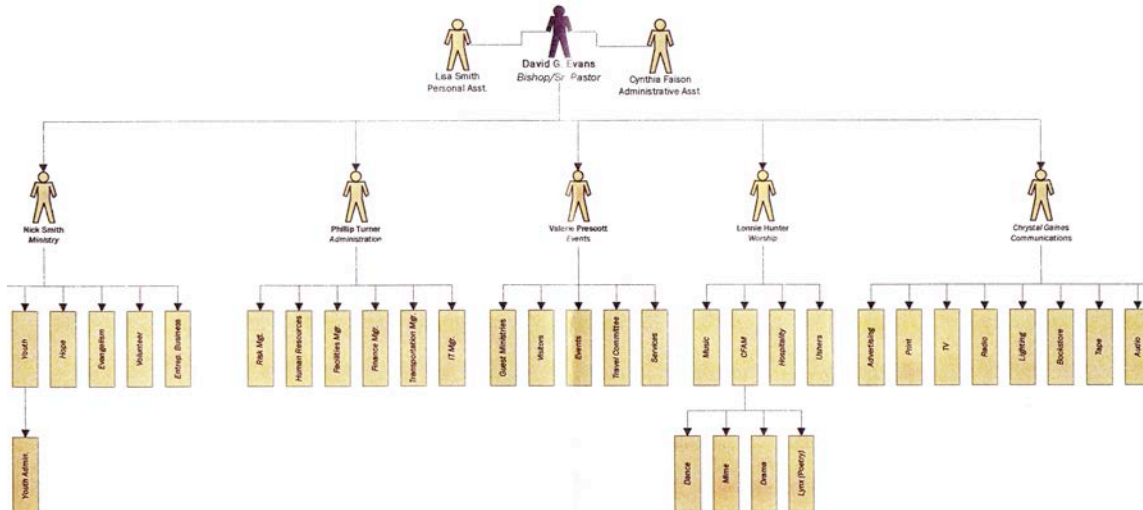
We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion of water of a believer, into the name of the Father, and Son and Holy Ghost; to show forth, in solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord's Supper; in which the members of

the church, by the sacred use of bread and wine are to commemorate together the dying love Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.
To God be the Glory⁴²

Appendix II—“Before” Organizational Chart



Appendix III—“After” Organizational Chart



⁴² “About Us, What We Believe: Our Declaration of Faith,” <http://abundantharvest.com/aboutus/>