

Profile of Bethany Evangelical Free Church

General Description and History of Bethany:

Bethany Evangelical Free Church of Canby, Oregon, is located 20 miles south of Portland in the beautiful Willamette Valley. Canby is a small growing town with a strong sense of community. Read more about Canby at www.canbyareachamber.org.

Our congregation has an average attendance of approximately 250, with a well-designed, debt-free facility on one of the busiest streets in town. We celebrated our 100th anniversary in 2007, and yet this is a progressive and up-to-date church. Bethany originated with some Norwegian friends who banded together to form a small local church in Canby. Later they willingly gave up holding services in their native language in order to be more effective in reaching their community. To this day Bethany desires to have that same type of obedience to God's calling. The congregation is able to adapt to change and new ideas as long as they match up with God's Word and vision for this local ministry. We have planted three daughter congregations in the past twelve years and have been a key part of launching a faith-based community center serving the youth and homeless.

Ministry Direction and Philosophy of Bethany:

We recognize that Jesus Christ is Supreme. Our vision is summed up in the statement that, as individuals and together as a church, we are Unleashed by God, United in Spirit, and seeking Uncommon Friendships.

Unleashed by God...

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2). Through faith, God has unleashed us from bondage to sin and set us free to walk by His Spirit. As we experience that intimacy with Christ, we find freedom, purpose and meaning.

United in Spirit...

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12:4-5). Freedom in Christ allows us be united in Spirit as we serve each other in our unique areas of giftedness and so begin to function as God intended the body of Christ to function.

Seeking Uncommon Friendships...

"I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done" (Romans 15:18). Uncommon friendships grow as we develop a deep love for the people around us and our actions are motivated by a desire to see people set free from the bondage of sin. Rather than just gathering together to bless ourselves, we look for ways to serve those around us. We develop friendships and our schedules and budgets start to reflect God's priorities rather than our own.

Flowing from these foundational beliefs, a summary of Bethany's ministry direction is as follows:

- We value prayer both individually and corporately and believe this to be the foundation of all that we do.
- Our desire is to be students of God's Word who are willing to act on what we have studied. Training in God's Word allows for a deeper understanding of purpose and provides motivation to be the church.
- We value small group settings and the relationships that are developed from them. We regard small groups an effective means in training believers, as well as in building deeper relationships.
- Bethany has always emphasized the importance of the local ministry reaching outside the walls of the church. It is our desire that God will continue to use Bethany to reach the lost both locally and globally.

Strengths and Challenges of Bethany:

We have a large group of individuals that are committed to this local ministry. Over the years and even just recently, we have seen numerous individuals step out into positions of leadership that previously may have seemed overwhelming to them. God has clearly been working in the lives of those who seek Him.

A few examples of how God has used Bethany to further His Kingdom are as follows:

- Planting of three daughter churches in the past twelve years.
- Led the community effort in launching The Canby Center, a local faith-based non-profit reaching out to local youth and homeless. There are numerous Bethany members who are committed to the mission of the Center and are volunteering a significant amount of their time in the day-to-day operations.
- Recently, Bethany families have come together one night a week with several ministries going on at the same time with the intention of simplifying our lives. This one night provides opportunities for families and all ages to grow through God's Word, breaking bread, praying and worshipping our Lord.
- Bethany is currently working with several missionaries across the world. Over the years Bethany has been involved in mission trips to Russia, India, and Mexico. In the summer of 2010, Bethany is planning to send a team to Mexico which includes several families where dad, mom, and the kids are all participating as part of the team.

The past twelve to eighteen months have been a stretching time for Bethany. We have seen a significant transition of our staff, including the departure of our senior pastor. These have been challenging times, but God is good and we have complete confidence in His plan for Bethany.

Challenge and Direction of the Next Five to Ten Years:

God has led us to a vision with a primary focus in certain areas. Each area has originated in prayer and will be sustained through prayer. Our hope is that prayer, both individually and corporately, will be the foundation of Bethany.

The areas of focus are as follows:

1. Training in God's Word – We desire everyone at Bethany to be students of God's Word. The use of principles and techniques open up the Bible to us and make a difference for the cultivation of spiritual nourishment. God's Word is essential for growth, maturity, and spiritual effectiveness.
2. Small groups – Small groups are instrumental in discipling and may come in many forms: mentoring of young with old, accountability between sisters and brothers in Christ, several families coming together for a Bible study, etc. We are committed to small group ministries and believe it has a vital role in the health of the local ministry.
3. Investing in our future generation – We believe if Bethany is to make it another 100 years, then there must be a very deliberate and significant investment in our youth. Investing in the future generation also includes focusing on the family unit. God's purpose for the family unit is often undervalued in the world. We believe the church has a responsibility to be an example of how the family unit should look according to God's will, as well as be available to help those families who are unfamiliar with God's purpose.

In summary, we believe a primary focus in these areas will result in people being introduced to Jesus Christ and will ultimately result in more disciples.