



Bethany Forward

Congregational Renewal Workbook

Facing Reality. Reimagining Ministry. Renewing Leadership.
Reality → Renewal → Sustainability

Nehemiah 2:17–18

“You see...” → “Come...” → “Let us rebuild...”

A working resource for the leadership summit and the months that follow.

Bethany Baptist Church of Harlem

Rev. Quinton Chad Foster, Senior Pastor
Dea. Stephen Robinson, Diaconate Chairperson

Rev. Dr. Lisa Jenkins Brown, CSP
Instructor & Facilitator • www.lisajenkinsbrown.com



START HERE

How to Use This Workbook

Use these pages to assess Bethany honestly, design clearer ways for people to belong and contribute, and plan shared leadership. Complete the short prompts marked In Session during the summit. Return to the longer assessments with ministry and leadership teams afterward. *In Word, click a response line or table cell and type. In the PDF, select a form field and enter your answer.*

Mark	Use
IN SESSION WORK	Capture a first observation or decision during the three 45-minute sessions.
INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION	Write from your own experience before comparing perspectives.
CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION	Bring the tool back to a ministry meeting and test assumptions with others.
LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK	Assign an owner, deadline, and evidence of progress.

The summit movement

REALITY	RENEWAL	SUSTAINABILITY
You see: name what is true.	Come: invite people into belonging and service.	Let us rebuild: share the work and renew the people carrying it.

Nehemiah 2:17–18 is an invitation to see clearly and act together. The language in this workbook is a thematic paraphrase, not a claim that Bethany’s circumstances are identical to Jerusalem’s walls.

What do you hope Bethany can name or decide by the end of the summit?

IN SESSION WORK

Session 1 Facing Reality

The task is to describe the church Bethany has now and discern what God calls it to become. Avoid blame, nostalgia, and defensiveness. A church can honor its legacy while responding faithfully to its present community.

1 Chronicles 12:32 points to understanding the times and knowing what to do. Romans 12:2 connects transformation with discernment.

We cannot lead the church we remember. We have to lead the church that exists now.

What has changed around Bethany?

What has changed inside Bethany?

Continue this conversation: compare your observations with current participation, ministry and neighborhood information before treating them as conclusions.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION THEN TEAM WORK

Congregational Reality Assessment

Rate each area using 1 = needs urgent attention, 2 = inconsistent, 3 = generally working, 4 = a clear strength. Record evidence, not just impressions. Blank evidence means the team needs to learn more.

Area	1-4	What evidence supports this rating?
Community awareness	___	
Member engagement	___	
Generational inclusion	___	
Leadership development	___	
Ministry relevance	___	
Communication	___	
Digital ministry	___	
Discipleship	___	
Community connection	___	

Two ratings we should investigate together

A score is a conversation starter, not a verdict. Ask who might experience this area differently.

CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION

Who Is Bethany Today

List the people Bethany serves and the people it may overlook. Distinguish what you know from what you are assuming. The aim is a more accurate picture of the congregation and its surrounding community.

Group	What do we know?	What do we need to learn?
Current members		
Nearby residents		
Members who commute		
Online participants		
First-time visitors		
Absent or underrepresented generations		
People Bethany hopes to reach		

Whose voice is missing from this assessment?

IN SESSION WORK THEN TEAM WORK

What Does Active Member Mean

These terms describe different forms of participation. Bethany should define them clearly before using attendance as a proxy for spiritual health or engagement.

Dimension	Question to ask
Attendance	How often is a person present for worship or gatherings?
Membership	What relationship and commitments define belonging to Bethany?
Engagement	Does the person have meaningful relationships and opportunities to contribute?
Discipleship	How is the person growing in faith and practice?
Service	Where can gifts be exercised with support?
Leadership	What responsibility and influence can the person carry?

Which dimensions do we measure well? Which do we overlook?

A person may engage online, serve outside Sunday worship, or need a season of care rather than an assignment.

IN SESSION WORK

Mission Tradition Method Habit

Classify the purpose of a practice before deciding whether to retain or change it. A treasured tradition can carry the mission; a familiar method can also outlive its usefulness. Romans 12:2 invites discernment, not change for its own sake.

Category	Working definition	Illustrative question
MISSION	What God calls the church to do.	What purpose must remain even if the form changes?
TRADITION	A meaningful inherited practice.	Whose faith and identity does it carry?
METHOD	A chosen way to accomplish the mission.	Could another method serve the same purpose better?
HABIT	A repeated practice maintained mainly through familiarity.	What would happen if we stopped or changed it?

Examples are prompts, not classifications of Bethany. Bethany’s leaders should examine actual practices together.

Name one practice whose purpose is unclear

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Audit Bethany Practices

Choose real practices from worship, education, outreach, meetings, communication, and member care. Classify each one, then name the purpose it serves and the evidence that it still serves that purpose.

Practice	Mission / tradition / method / habit	Purpose and evidence	Keep / adapt / retire / study

Where do leaders disagree, and what would help us discern?

CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION

What Is Sacred Adaptable or Familiar

A practice can have meaning without being unchangeable. Use this page to separate the purpose of a practice from its current form. Discuss the impact on people before proposing a change.

Question	Bethany example	Why does it belong here?
What is sacred?		
What is adaptable?		
What is merely familiar?		

What should we learn from those most affected before deciding?

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

What Must Never Change and What Can Change

Name convictions and ministry purposes worth protecting. Then identify practices that can evolve to express those convictions in this season.

Must never change	Can change	How change could serve the mission

Faithfulness does not require sameness.

One change worth testing, with whom and by when

IN SESSION WORK

The Bethany Reality Check

Write one candid response to each prompt. This is a starting point for a shared assessment, not a final verdict. The leadership team should later compare these observations with evidence and with voices absent from the room.

One reality Bethany must acknowledge

One strength Bethany must protect

One practice Bethany may need to reconsider

One group Bethany may not be reaching effectively

Transition to Session 2: What kind of church are we inviting people to become part of?

IN SESSION WORK

Session 2 Reimagining Engagement

Belonging grows through relationships, clear invitations, and real opportunities to contribute. This session asks whether Bethany helps people move from first contact to leadership. The goal is to develop people for ministry, not merely fill vacancies.

1 Corinthians 12:12–27 names one body with many members. Ephesians 4:15–16 describes growth as every part contributes.

CONNECT → BELONG → DISCOVER → SERVE → DEVELOP → LEAD

Where does a newcomer now find a clear next step?

Where might someone lose contact or lose confidence?

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Bethany Engagement Journey Map

Map what a person actually encounters at each stage. Identify one owner for follow-up rather than assuming the next step happens on its own.

Stage	Current experience	Gap or friction	Next improvement
CONNECT — First contact and welcome			
BELONG — Relationships and being known			
DISCOVER — Gifts, interests, and purpose			
SERVE — A meaningful opportunity			
DEVELOP — Feedback, learning, and mentoring			
LEAD — Responsibility and influence			

Which stage needs attention first, and why?

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION THEN TEAM WORK

Belonging Assessment

Use 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = usually, 4 = consistently. Consider the experience of a new person, a returning member, and someone whose generation or background is underrepresented.

Experience	1-4	What might improve it?
Someone learns and uses my name.	___	
I can build relationships beyond a single event.	___	
My questions and ideas receive a respectful response.	___	
I know whom to contact when I need care or information.	___	
I can see a meaningful place for my gifts.	___	
People notice when I am absent.	___	
I can belong before I accept a task.	___	
Newer people can influence the life of the church.	___	

Whose experience should we ask about directly?

CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION

Volunteer Experience Audit

A ministry invitation should be clear, supported, and realistic. Mark Working, Inconsistent, or Missing for each element. Then ask volunteers what the experience actually feels like.

Element	Working / inconsistent / missing	What should change?
Specific invitation		
Role purpose and expectations		
Onboarding		
Training		
Time commitment		
Support and feedback		
Appreciation		
Opportunity to develop		
Path to greater responsibility		

One immediate fix we can make for volunteers

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

What Do We Want for People

Serving should contribute to a person’s growth, relationships, and sense of purpose. The church needs volunteers, but ministry should also help people exercise gifts and mature in faith.

What serving can develop	What Bethany already does	One improvement
Spiritual growth		
Relationships		
Confidence		
Gifts		
Competence		
Purpose		
Leadership capacity		

What do we ask from people without adequately investing in them?

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Gifts Skills Passion Availability Inventory

This inventory is a conversation starter, not a spiritual gifts test. Name what you do well, what you care about, and the actual time you can offer in this season.

What am I gifted to do?

What am I skilled to do?

What do I care about?

What can I realistically commit to?

Share only what you are comfortable sharing. A realistic commitment is more useful than an enthusiastic one that cannot be sustained.

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Intergenerational Ministry Assessment

Assess younger and newer adults across the whole church, not only within a designated age ministry. Rate each lens 1 = limited access, 2 = uneven, 3 = meaningful, 4 = embedded.

Lens	Question	1-4	Evidence or gap
VOICE	Can ideas be heard and considered?	___	
VISIBILITY	Are contributions recognized across the congregation?	___	
VALUE	Are gifts taken seriously?	___	
RESPONSIBILITY	Can people carry real responsibility?	___	
RELATIONSHIP	Are there mutual relationships across generations?	___	

One decision-making space that could include a newer voice

IN SESSION WORK THEN TEAM WORK

Engagement Barrier Audit

Rate each barrier 0 = not evident, 1 = occasional, 2 = recurring, 3 = significant. Use observations and conversations with people affected. Higher totals show where to investigate and act first.

Area	Possible friction	0-3
ACCESS	I cannot tell how to take a first step.	___
ACCESS	Invitations rely on personal networks.	___
CULTURE	Established circles are hard to enter.	___
CULTURE	New ideas are dismissed too quickly.	___
TIME	Roles require more time than people expect.	___
TIME	Meetings crowd out meaningful service.	___
DEVELOPMENT	Training or mentoring is unclear.	___
DEVELOPMENT	People are asked to serve without growth.	___
LEADERSHIP	Responsibility stays with a small circle.	___
LEADERSHIP	Decision authority is unclear.	___

Add the two ratings in each area. A higher subtotal (0–6) signals a barrier to investigate with people affected.

Access ___ Culture ___ Time ___ Development ___ Leadership ___

One barrier to remove: _____

One practice to strengthen: _____

One opportunity to create: _____

IN SESSION WORK

The Empty Chair

Picture a real person or group Bethany hopes to welcome. Do not claim to know their motives. Use the questions to identify what Bethany can ask, observe, and change.

Who is missing?

Why might they be missing? What do we know, and what are we assuming?

What barrier may exist in their first experience?

What would have to change for them to experience Bethany as their church too?

Next step: invite conversation with people who can speak for themselves. Do not treat this page as a substitute for listening.

CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION

From Programs to Pathways

Place existing ministries along the engagement journey. An activity may serve several stages. Look for stages with many events but no reliable handoff to relationships, discovery, development, or leadership.

Stage	Existing program or practice	Who owns the handoff?
CONNECT		
BELONG		
DISCOVER		
SERVE		
DEVELOP		
LEAD		

One handoff we will redesign

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

My Engagement Commitment

Choose people and actions you can follow through on. Ask permission before assigning anyone a role, and offer support after the invitation.

One person I can invite into a conversation

One person I can encourage

One person I can mentor or learn alongside

One barrier I can help remove

Transition to Session 3: meaningful participation requires room to carry responsibility, with support and accountability.

IN SESSION WORK

Session 3 Sustaining the Church

Healthy ministry requires people, clear responsibility, and renewal. This session examines pastor dependency as a system, builds a leadership pipeline, and treats pastoral renewal as part of the congregation’s own development.

Ephesians 4:11–12 speaks of equipping the saints. Exodus 18:17–23 warns against carrying every burden alone. Mark 6:31 makes room for rest.

Shared ministry is developed through identifying, inviting, equipping, empowering, supporting, and releasing leaders.

If the pastor were unavailable for three months, what would stop?

This is an organizational question, not a judgment of the pastor or the congregation.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION THEN TEAM WORK

Pastor Dependency Diagnostic

Mark Never, Sometimes, Often, or Almost Always based on current practice. Compare responses respectfully. The purpose is to identify where systems and leadership capacity need development.

Statement	Never / sometimes / often / almost always
Important decisions wait for the pastor.	
Members bypass ministry leaders to contact the pastor.	
The pastor attends most ministry meetings.	
The pastor is expected to provide most pastoral care personally.	
Ministry leaders hesitate to act without pastoral approval.	
The pastor performs work trained lay leaders could carry.	
People are unsure who is responsible when the pastor is away.	

Where is dependence appropriate? Where is it avoidable?

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Ministry Dependency Map

For each function, mark who carries it now: Mostly Pastor, Pastor and Others, or Primarily Lay or Staff Leadership. Then discuss where it appropriately belongs and what support a transition would require.

Function	Current responsibility	Where should it belong?	Next step
Worship planning			
Pastoral care			
Hospital visitation			
New member assimilation			
Ministry coordination			
Christian education			

A responsibility we could share more wisely

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Ministry Dependency Map Continued

For each function, mark who carries it now: Mostly Pastor, Pastor and Others, or Primarily Lay or Staff Leadership. Then discuss where it appropriately belongs and what support a transition would require.

Function	Current responsibility	Where should it belong?	Next step
Community engagement			
Communications			
Conflict management			
Administrative decisions			
Leadership development			
Member follow-up			

A responsibility we could share more wisely

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Leadership Capacity Map

Name people with their knowledge and consent. Avoid labeling someone a potential leader without also planning an invitation, support, and a realistic first opportunity.

Category	People or roles	Strength to build on	Next conversation
Current leaders			
Emerging leaders			
Potential leaders			
Mentors			

Where are we relying on one person without a successor?

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Leadership Development Planner

Use this page for one actual person. The path is IDENTIFY → INVITE → EQUIP → EMPOWER → SUPPORT → RELEASE. Development requires trust and follow-through, not simply assigning a task.

Person: _____ Ministry or opportunity: _____

Stage	Decision for this person	Owner / date
Identify gifts and readiness		
Invite a conversation		
Equip through training		
Empower with real responsibility		
Support with feedback and mentoring		
Release to lead and reassess		

What authority, boundaries, and support should be clear?

CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION

Pastoral Sabbatical Myth and Reality

A sabbatical is an intentional period of pastoral renewal planned with the congregation. It should include coverage, communication, boundaries, and a healthy return. The details require Bethany’s own discernment.

Common assumption	More accurate conversation
“A sabbatical is a long vacation.”	Vacation and structured renewal leave serve different purposes.
“The pastor must be burned out.”	Renewal can be preventive, not only a response to crisis.
“The church cannot function without the pastor.”	That concern deserves a capacity and coverage plan.
“The congregation gets nothing.”	Leaders and members can develop during the absence.
“We cannot afford it.”	Assess costs, coverage, and funding options before deciding.

Which concern needs a factual answer before the church can plan?

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Pastoral Renewal Readiness Assessment

Mark Ready, Needs a Plan, or Unclear. Write the person or team responsible for closing each gap. This checklist is a planning tool, not a declaration that leave is already scheduled.

Area	Question	Ready / needs plan / unclear	Owner
Leadership	Who holds decision authority?		
Worship	Who leads preaching, ordinances, funerals, and emergencies?		
Pastoral care	Who coordinates care and visitation?		
Administration	Who makes routine and urgent decisions?		
Communication	How will the purpose and plan be explained?		
Boundaries	When, if ever, should the pastor be contacted?		
Reentry	How will pastor and congregation reconnect?		

The first readiness gap Bethany should address

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

The Church Gets a Sabbatical Too

Pastoral renewal can become a season of congregational growth. Select a few activities with a clear purpose and owner. Avoid filling the pastor’s absence with more activity than leaders can sustain.

Possible activity	Why it serves Bethany	Leader / timing
Leadership development		
Spiritual formation		
Congregational retreat		
Ministry assessment		
Intergenerational activity		
Community engagement		
Guest preaching or teaching		
Reentry and celebration		

What should Bethany learn about itself during such a season?

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Planning

The National Clergy Renewal Program is an optional resource that may support a jointly designed period of renewal for pastor and congregation. Christian Theological Seminary administers the program. The renewal strategy comes first; a grant application would serve that strategy.

Current published context	Bethany planning task
CTS says the next program cycle is expected to open in November 2026 with the 2027 RFP.	Review that RFP when posted before relying on any dates or conditions.
The program invites congregation and pastor to develop the renewal proposal together.	Discuss purpose, trust, coverage, congregational renewal, and return.
Earlier program materials have described awards of up to \$60,000.	Confirm current award limits, allocations, eligibility, and permitted costs in the new RFP.

Source checked 23 September 2026: Christian Theological Seminary, cts.edu/cpe/clergy-renewal/; Lilly Endowment, lillyendowment.org/for-grantseekers/renewal-programs/pastors/. Specific dates and requirements can change.

Who will monitor the RFP, and when will Bethany discuss it?

LEADERSHIP TEAM WORK

Bethany 12 Month Renewal Agenda

Choose no more than three priorities for the year ahead. Ground each in what the summit revealed, name an owner, and decide what evidence will show progress. Review this page at a scheduled leadership meeting.

Nehemiah 2:17–18 returns us to shared responsibility: “Let us rebuild” is the work of the people together.

If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority.

Priority	What must change?	First action	Owner	Deadline	Evidence of progress
1					
2					
3					

Date of first progress review and who will convene it

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

My Bethany Forward Commitment

Choose specific actions within your authority and capacity. Bring this page back to a ministry or leadership meeting and ask someone to help you stay accountable.

Isaiah 43:19 offers a closing refrain of hope. Nehemiah 2:17–18 remains the summit’s primary call to see, invite, and build together.

I will STOP

I will START

I will CONTINUE

I will HELP DEVELOP

I will personally take responsibility for

Bethany Forward begins with us—not with the people who were not in the room.