

Site visit Paper

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Site visit: Lighthouse Tabernacle Church of God

1230 Motor Pkwy

Central Islip, NY 11722

Introduction

Lighthouse Tabernacle Church of God is a multi-ethnic church in Central Islip. The lighthouse is a church that allows worshipping with them in different languages. It does not mean they have other churches to worship in a different place, but they constitute one church, they are Christians, and everyone has the same denomination, under the leadership of Pastor David Fox, who is the founding pastor of this church, and has three associate pastors that work for him in his church. When I spoke to Pastor David, he told me he has Spanish and Haitian members. They have some members in the church who do not speak English. Sometimes they made special services for people who do not speak English. He told me the board voted to create a special service for them, but they will stay a member of the church. I mentioned the services are great. I want to share how and what they are doing to manage the church. I would like to say they are not a Spanish church, nor a black church, it is an English church, but welcome all people to join them, but everyone is a member of Lighthouse Tabernacle Church of God. They are Christians.

The church is located in Central Islip, Suffolk County, in a small town where the agglomeration people are living. I did some research to see the demographic of Central Islip, I found the demographics are White: 52.61%, Black or African American: 25.10%, Other race: 15.21%, and Native American: 0.16%. I see can see the diversity and the possibility that the church has to grow in this area because it is a multi-ethnic area.

My visit to the church was essential for my understanding. It helps me analyze different cultural aspects of the worship service in a multi-ethnic church. To be honest I did not prepare a questionnaire list, I went to the church to speak to the leaders and pastors. I did the research-friendly, like a friendly conversation, because it was hard for me to come up with a questionnaire, and ask them questions, like an examination. I observed and took attention to everything I take to learn to do my research. I developed a friendly relationship with the time I went to church. However, my main focus was to learn their philosophy, leadership, their organizational structure, their faith, their integration, and exclusiveness, and made a description of everything I observed that can help me understand and share the vision of the growth of the church in a multi-ethnic area.

I used reflection, and sociable interviews, and I did the visits two times to complete my investigation. During my time at the church, I took some notes to come up with the conclusion of my research. I experienced during my first and last visit some good learning experiences because my church is so different in structure and liturgy. They are services, for adults, youth, and children, but the main worship service is made at the principal hall. I participated in the services during my visits. After the service, I enjoyed the fellowship moment because everyone came together to eat and share ideas and speak to each other. I will share a couple of ideas during the fellowship time with some members regarding my background and their background too.

The service started from 8 to 11:15 Am for Bible study. The service was made worship in English, but some people speak Spanish and French-creole but most of them understand and speak English. They have different ethnicity in the church I do not have a chance to identify them, but I feel there are different nations. However, it is a Christian organization, that welcomes all immigrants, they have a program to help people in need, like a pantry and social program to

help people. I saw Spanish people, White people, black Americans, Haitian, etc. They have a worship service every Sunday. Now let's consider different aspects of the church.

I enjoyed the time I spent with them because I can understand everything they did for each part of the service. After, they started the service with songs and Psalms. There was a moment of prayers, and the worship team came to worship with the church member. The pastor gave his sermon and call everyone for a special prayer regarding family problems, difficulties, health problems, etc., and made a call to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, etc. The pastor prayed for them, and the director of communication made some announcements. The praise team continues to sing until everyone leaves the place. After the service, I asked the pastor some questions regarding the church. He told me the church was a Christian church. He invited me to participate in the Bible Study next Wednesday evening. I decided to come, it was the second person I spoke to during the day.

Bible Study: Wednesday, 4 pm to 5 pm.

The Bible study was a beautiful moment I experienced with the members. The Bible study was focused on how to love God and neighbors, and what the law of God is. The main Bible text was Matthew 22:34- 37, the Greatest Commandment, "34- Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35- One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36- Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? 37- Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38- This is the first and greatest commandment. 39- And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself". The Bible study was wonderful because I learned to love God and my neighbors which means having compassion and charity, respect, and building a relationship.

The pastors of this service are Pastor David Fox the founding pastor of the church, the bishop of all pastors, and a long-time member of the New York Church of God State Council. He previously served as Senior Pastor for 40 years and continues to remain active in ministry. Pastor Darien Fox has been active in pastoral ministry since 2001. Before becoming the lead Pastor, he previously served as the church's Executive Pastor and Youth Pastor.

This service was the most beautiful because they have wonderful worship time, good music, and a great praise team. I realized they have White, Black, Spanish, Haitian, Indian, and different people I cannot see their nationalities and ethnicities. They have the most wonderful space to worship. I do not know exactly why, but I spoke to the pastor associate after the service, and he told me the pastor that was preaching is the bishop of the church, and the others were associate pastors. One of the associate pastors is a White man, he is the youth pastor of the church. The pastor John Robalino is Spanish, and the associate Pastor Pierre Elliassaint. A bishop is a white man.

The most essential and spiritual activity is the time of worship and the moment when the preacher presented the message of the good news of Jesus Christ. One of the most important parts of the service was the time of worship, where everyone sang together, and enjoy God's presence through their hymns and praises. But the message was significant for the spiritual life of each participant because the pastor presented several parallels on how to be able to have a friend and the benefits and negativities that they can encounter in a friendly relationship. After the message, only the pastor came down to give communion to the assembly because the table was already set down in front of the audience. There is no difference between them, but the only difference was the language because there are people who do not speak English. Everyone was

allowed to participate in the service, which is considered like the real church, but they made the service for everyone to feel welcome in every aspect of the church.

General information for the church

I would like to say all the information I'm going to share, I found in the conversations, observations, the documents, like the programming paper, a small book, each person I spoke to, and the notes I got from the pastors. In the beginning, the service was started on time. But the people who came to participate in the service came late. However, the leaders started the service on time, and then they finished on time. Some members or visitors came on time. But the majority of people were late. The atmosphere, the worship service, and the coordination of everything were very new for me. But it is simple but wonderful. The service did not have an atmosphere of gaiety, or movement. Everything was very solemn and very calm. I observed the message, the worship team, and the assembly, everything kept a protocol of conservative in the service. There is no gesture or movement outside or inside the sanctuary. Everything was very calm, only the singers made some movement. But I can notice that the member was satisfied and very happy, and I feel like it was a wonderful moment. In terms of beauty, I noted that the architecture of the interior or exterior was great, modest, and beautiful, and the area was very peaceful. I saw the sanctuary was very spacious and wide. The lights aren't too bright, but the room was bright and in a peaceful mood. No one was bothered by the way the lights shined. It is possible to see everyone and the people who came to the service.

They have an atmosphere that allowed everyone to feel close to God it is a high priority for them. Their Sunday service consists of modern worship music and encouraging the member with some word of God. During the services, they have a special corner for Kids and children. I tried to understand if the leaders and members were conservative, I found they are conservative,

according to my observation, and the way they conducted the services. Everyone entered quietly, in silence, and then found a place to seat without disturbing others. Everyone can speak when they read or sing, or if the pastor asked the church to respond to the message, they said amen. Everything was normal. There were no lighted candles or other images on the walls. Everything was simple but very impressive. The majority of people dressed casually and some wore dresses, or relaxing clothes. Some of them wore formal clothing, suits, and other women wore formal dresses. On the walls of the sanctuary either inside or outside, I found nothing like pictures or other things attached to the walls. There is a technical sound system, a videography system, and a screen for presentations. The church follows the protocol without bothering the visitors.

The bishop told me that the church is not a charismatic assembly, and I can see that. They are very modern, but they do not dance, and they do not make any gestures during the service. At times of prayer, sometimes the congregation comes down for prayers and sometimes kneels to pray. I can see that the leaders do not move in and out during the service. They only came to perform their part, after they returned to their place. Only the pastors, when they preached, they made a simple movement with their hands. They stayed in their place, behind the pulpit, not moving during the time of the message. Only at the end of the message, do the pastors come down to the pulpit to give, prayers or communications.

There was nothing like traditional, while the church has immigrants, Native, and Americans. There are different ethnicities, it was a heterogeneous assembly because I saw young people, adults, men and women, and some children in the room. But the youth pastor told me they have a special service for young people every second Sunday of the month. However, I did not experience the youth service at the time I visited the church. The platform had different age groups and they got young and adults on the platform. The structure of the service was

straightforward. Everything had an aspect or characteristic of peace, but only the message and worship were slightly different.

I saw how they did the worship structure, but the bishop gave me the program to see how they structured the liturgy worship.

The structure of the services

1- A prayer service

In these services, a group of singers leads the beginning. They sing Christian songs and modern songs, which are also Christian songs. Afterward, they read Psalms. Finally, they prayed on their knees for a while.

2- A moment of praise and thanksgiving

They sang songs of praise. Sometimes, they stand up and stay sit down to sing. But these moments still are solemn and very calm songs or worship songs. The assembly mostly participated with the praise team when they worship.

3- The moment of the message

The Pastors mount on the pulpit alone. They read the basic text they are going to preach, develop, and pray before they began their sermons.

4- Communion or Prayers

After the message, the pastors made a call for special prayer, or call the deacons to come forward to distribute the bread and wine in the assembly. The pastor gave the communion and asked them to stand up, to pray, and then asked the singers to sing quiet songs, and finally, prayed on the bread and prayed on the wine. After the distribution, the pastor asked to eat the bread, and after asked again to drink the wine.

5- The final prayer:

The pastors called the families, visitors, and those who want to give their lives to Jesus to come forward to offer a special prayer. People came for the prayers, and the pastors prayed for them and the church.

6- Time of announcements

Someone came to make the announcements, and after the announcement, they sang. During the song, the deacons collected the tithes and offerings and then made a final benediction. This is how the service is over.

Structure of the Board of the Church

When interviewing the youth pastor about the board of the church, he answered there is a board. The board of the church includes three pastors, and leaders of different responsibilities, and the chairman of the board is the bishop of the church. The elders, the president of the deacons, leaders of the technical systems, and praise team, et some members. Everyone I mentioned here is part of the board meeting of the church.

Becoming a member of the church

I had the information on how to become a member from the bishop, and he gave me a small book to read, in order how to become a member of the church, you must attend our Lighthouse 101 classes. This class teaches the foundations of our faith and the vision of our church. After 101, they offer 201, 301 & 401 classes as well as more new discipleship classes coming soon.

Concept of Baptisms in the church

They believe in water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. they believe that baptism symbolizes rebirth in the faith and that it shows that one is taking a step to follow Jesus Christ. Their Lighthouse 101 class is required for baptism.

Their belief

In the verbal inspiration of the Bible. In one God eternally exists in three persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That Jesus ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor. That all have sinned and that repentance is commanded of God for all. That the new birth is through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. In water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the baptism of the Holy Spirit, with speaking in tongues as the initial evidence. In divine healing and spiritual gifts. In the premillennial second coming of Jesus. In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous and eternal punishment for the wicked.

History of the church

I will share this information because, in my conversation with the bishop, he told me the church was planted in Central Islip on June 25, 1978, by Pastor David K. Fox and his wife, Linda. He began by renting an old church building at 56-Wheeler Road. A few years later property was purchased and a building was constructed at 1230 Motor Parkway. In 2005, they dedicated a new building on the same property. The continued expansion of our facilities has accompanied the growth of their congregation. In 2012, they started a ministry, and the Lord has since then blessed us with many new members. In addition, I participated to meet the spiritual, social, and physical requirements of the church. They have a ministry in a different part of the

world and reach out to many parts of their communities and their needs. They are part of the Church of God of Cleveland, Tennessee, a Pentecostal denomination with churches in over 160 countries.

Theology of leadership

They develop a theology of leadership, the time was not enough because a short period could not help me understand everything, but I realized that their theology was modern they have an example of modern leadership, not traditional. When I observed the leaders and how they welcome me, how the service was calm, and how they followed the same structure; I can see they followed a standard, a protocol, it seems like an honorable class of people in society, but it was not traditional because the praise team, people in the assembly was dressed very casually to participate in the service. It sounds like a modern way they used to welcome everyone at the church. The music and the songs were a mixture of slow gospel and worship that this generation sings in our modern time. The leaders, and pastors were unique in their protocol, and their structure. After that, there is a group of deacons and a staff musician, a staff of technology systems, and the praise teams of each service. I conclude to say that the church has an organized structure, and some diversity between modern structure, and old traditional worship service. They call everyone to join them in worship service.

Leadership style, vision casting

I went to the church to see how they managed their leadership structure; I understand their structure is an organizational protocol. When I saw the character of the service in one church and one faith in one God, I realized they are unique. They embrace one Christian culture to make people feel one in a multi-ethnic church. They followed the same protocol and the same style of service. Their vision casting synchronizes the members to stay connected and

participate in a connection with God, remaining faithful to God. The structure of their worship is to achieve their goals and help the growth of the church. The point is that everyone participated in the worship, the teams, and different staff that work to achieve their goals. I understand that their vision casting offered the opportunity to go forward and play their roles in the church as members, without being afraid of their ethnicity.

Development and training

I spoke to the pastors and members, they let me understand how important training and seminars are essential for the church. They have Bible study, family counseling seminary, and training for leaders and members every year. The social services like the food pantry and Other activities of the church. Friday night kids' programs: Fridays 7:15-9 PM. Youth group for teens: Fridays 7:30-10 PM. Adult Bible Study: Old Testament Survey: Fridays 7:30-9 pm, on Zoom. Women's Bible Study: Wednesdays 10 am-12 pm. Zoom Prayer Meeting: Thursdays at 7 pm. Young Adults Bible Study: Fridays at 7:30 pm.

This characteristic helps create a solid bond in the church to maintain the development of every aspect of the church. The polity of the church enumerates that way: Confess Christ as Lord and Savior, baptism, faith in the word of God, participation in the service regularly, tithe, and offering. There are many policies that the church requires to reach members and leaders of the church. I had the information when I spoke with the leaders, and pastors of the church. Regarding conflict resolution, I remember they told me some discipline to resolve conflict when anyone broke the laws of the church. They can give sanctions to any member, according to the level of the problem, and confer the decision to the board of the church.

I appreciated the visits I made to the church because I learned different aspects of urban ministry and the integration of immigrants as leaders, and members. I did see not any kind of

exclusion; I believe they help immigrants. They worship together and eat together, and find solutions for those who did not know English well to still have the opportunity to worship with them. I made my work with the support of the pastors, and members which gave me the possibility to do my research, and I used a friendly conversation, to analyze and study the structure, leadership style, vision, and objective of the church, and the culture of the church. The structure looks normal, but it is a great method to lead a worship service with different categories of ethnicities.

Finally, my remark regarding the service is sometimes too slow, they can add a little happiness to the spiritual worship service. The moment was too immobile, with no dance, movement, etc. But I believe it is to avoid chaos and disorder in the worship service. I did not condemn the way other churches are going their worship, but in reality, in some churches, there is too much dance, movement, too much noise in the sanctuary.

In my church where there is too much noise, it is hard to concentrate on the worship service. Everything must always avoid exaggeration in a holy worship service. Either, make too much noise or too much movement, speak too much in worship or stay too silent, or be too conservative, there is the only thing that counts for God, obedience. It is all information I collected during my visits to the church, regarding the research, conversation, and the description I found as background to describe the culture of the church in a sense of urban research.

Church Urban

They let me understand the church is not an urban suburban church, it defines urban as a church working in the city and suburban to help the mission is to create Jesus's love, inclusive societies or group that shy the city. They are a community with people from many spiritual and ethnic backgrounds. Their urban ministry consists to preach the God New and helping people in

need. Their church is urban because they have people of different ethnicity and the is founded in a suburban area.

Urban Social Analysis

The information I have about social analysis concerns generally socioeconomic differences like social class, rich and unfortunate. They created a nonprofit organization to help the poor and immigrants in their area and around the world. They open the doors for the poor, immigrants, any social class, and any ethnicity and cultural background. Like I said before I have in their neighborhood, white, Spanish, black, and Haitian living around them. They faced immigration problems like people who do not have legal papers and were angry for food. The church organized a pantry to help and help them apply for social benefits and immigration status.

Urban Theological Reflection and Formation

According to their theology of ministry what I learned from the bishop "Is to raise a spiritual generation, sons and daughters qualify to take over their purpose and how to develop their spiritual gifts in response to the call of God on their lives. And also, impacting the world and their communities where they are living". I analyzed everything regarding the church's theology I can see they have the mission of God in their area and the world. when I spoke to them, I realized the theology is concentrated to bring people to Christ and embrace the mandate of Christ to preach to all nations and any languages that living in the area and reach this new generation with a standard of disciplines or structures to peacefully enjoy the full gospel of Christ. Their call is to preach to the world and their text is Matthew 28:18-10, "18- Jesus approached and said to them, "All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19- Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the

Holy Spirit, 20- and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the world.”

The church is a strong supporter of world missions and has frequently sent our pastors and church members to numerous places across the globe. They continually support ministry work in places like Kenya, Argentina, Japan, Ecuador, Haiti, and many other nations. They feel a strong calling from God to continue to expand our world mission activity.

Urban theological implementation

If the Church must have its place in this urbanized society to fulfill its mission there, it cannot be without taking into account this new world that has been born before our eyes in a few decades and received from it as much as the early church received from the ancient city. So, the Pastor lets me know two possibilities open up. The first, of practical theology, could explore the pastoral attitudes experienced by the Church in an urban situation. The second, more fundamental, consists in questioning the relationship of Christian Revelation with contemporary urban civilization. He proposes here to open this second track to implement actions against the propagation of the gospel.

The perspective description of the multi-ethnic

My notes: Reflections regarding the questions of requirement, flyers, small books, conversation, and observation.

1- The first deacon of the church: He is the first person I spoke with, and introduce me to the youth pastor. I was welcome to come because it is a multi-ethnic church. Showed me how and where they do service. At the entrance they had the ushers, they are black and Asian for the whole church.

2- There is a black pastor, he is Haitian and an associate pastor. I participated, and he invited me to join the Bible study. The Bible was concentrated on Matthew 22:34- 37.

3- Youth pastor, he is the associate pastor: I met him and shake hands and ask him if I can speak to the pastor of the church. He told me the pastor that was preaching is the bishop of the church. I wait until after everything is done. Ask him about the youth service, and Sunday service.

5- Speak to some members during the fellowship.

6- Bishop: We get to know each other, I told him the purpose of my visit, and he was glad to give me some details. The most essential information I had, I received from Him.

- a) Board voted to come up with a translation very soon.
- b) Main focus: I discussed the philosophy, leadership, organizational structure, and ethnicities, and use my observation and make the description of everything.
- c) General information: Atmosphere, is a mixture of modern worship, music. conservative, and protocol. languages, and ethnicities, the bishop told them not to encourage charismatic assembly,
- d) The structure of the services: A prayer service, A moment of praise and thanksgiving, message, communion or Prayers, final prayer, announcements Structure of board of the Church, the youth pastor told me bout the board of the church. Include the three pastors, and elders, the first deacon, each representative of the department.
- e) Becoming member, belief, history, The information small book.

Ministry:

- f) Theology of leadership: Any leaders must follow the same structure.
- g) Philosophy: Ministry and mission, I learned from the bishop, the purpose, development, spiritual gifts, communities, and uniformity, different languages, culture, ethnicity.

- h) Development: training, seminars for the church, Bible study, family counseling seminary, training for leaders, and members every year, and other activities.