

## **Incident Report**

Phone Conversation with Dr. Kevin Ezell, Spring 2016

Re: Dr. Bobby Gilstrap, Candidate for Employment for Lead Strategist of Plant Atlanta Network

I was charged by the Leadership Team of the Plant Atlanta Network to work with Reverend Joel Harrison, Lead Missionary with the Atlanta Metro Baptist Association to negotiate the employment of Dr. Bobby Gilstrap as Lead Strategist for Plant Atlanta Network. I received a phone call one morning from Dr. Kevin Ezell, President of the North American Mission Board cautioning me about Dr. Gilstrap. He stated that he had heard that we were in the process of calling him as our Lead Strategist and strongly encouraged us to not to pursue his employment.

I asked Dr. Ezell why he felt that way and he told me that when Dr. Gilstrap was the Executive Director of the Michigan Baptist Convention, that he had been very uncooperative with the North American Mission Board and ultimately the Michigan Baptist Convention had released him from employment.

I asked Dr. Ezell if he had knowledge of anything that Dr. Gilstrap had done that was illegal or immoral and he said, no, that he was just difficult to work with and we would be wise not to continue to pursue our conversations with him concerning employment. He stated that he wanted me to know that he had our best interest at heart and did not want us to be disappointed and to have a problem later.

I inquired as to if he knew of someone who could document firsthand what he was referring to as to his concerns about Dr. Gilstrap because what he was telling me did not match up with the references or with persons beyond Dr. Gilstrap's reference page that we had spoken with that had first hand working relationships with Dr. Gilstrap and the nature of his release from the Michigan Baptist Convention.

Dr. Ezell referred me to Dr. Tim Patterson, the current Executive Director of the Michigan Baptist Convention who had succeeded Dr. Gilstrap and provided me with Dr. Patterson's mobile number.

I called Dr. Patterson and inquired about his observations about Dr. Gilstrap and his experience of following him and his work in Michigan. He gave me a completely different perspective on Dr. Gilstrap than what I had received from Dr. Ezell. He stated that in regards to Dr. Gilstrap's abilities in the areas of church starting that he had not changed any of the process or strategies, that in his assessment they were excellent and that they were still using them.

I concluded from my conversation with Dr. Patterson that his report was in concert with the references of Dr. Gilstrap and others that we had spoken to that were either Michigan Baptist or had been Michigan Baptist or had worked among Michigan Baptist. I discovered later that Dr. Patterson actually had been the Chairman of the Search Committee of the NAMB Trustees that called Dr. Ezell as President.

This left me with the only conclusion that Dr. Ezell apparently had some personal disagreements with Dr. Gilstrap when it came to the negotiations of cooperative agreements between the Michigan Baptist and the North American Mission Board and since the Plant Atlanta Network was a network of metro Atlanta Baptist Associations, this was a non-issue for us because we were not going to be negotiating cooperative agreements because we were an autonomous body.

I reported my call from Dr. Ezell to Reverend Harrison and then to the Leadership Team of Plant Atlanta. Since the Team had no substantiating evidence to support Dr. Ezell's claims and concerns, we continued on with our process of employing Dr. Bobby Gilstrap.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Larry Cheek, Associational Missionary

Stone Mountain Baptist Association of Churches