

# Diocese of Coventry NCD Cycle Manual

For churches working on their  
NCD Survey results





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This manual is a resource for implementing NCD principles. These principles are based on the original concepts, ideas and research of Christian A. Schwarz and Christoph Schalk of the Institute for Natural Church Development International.

The manual was written by Ian Campbell, former Director of NCD Australia and NCD Canada. The process it contains is based on the NCD Cycle, conceived by Adam Johnstone, current Director of NCD Australia. This NCD Cycle has been published in *Natural Church Development: a Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* by Christian A. Schwarz (2006 edition).

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In the Diocese of Coventry we provide a team of Mentors to help churches work through the cycle – their role is outlined in Appendix 2. There is no charge by the Diocese for this service.

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Over time this manual will be upgraded to reflect new understandings. Please make sure that you have the most up-to-date version each time you work through the NCD Cycle process in your church or with a church.



## Introduction

### ... please start here!

This manual has been written to guide you and your church through the NCD Growth Cycle which lays out a process for identifying and addressing the health issues most needing attention in your church.



We have found that the Cycle is most fruitful when there is an experienced leader to accompany you on this journey. For this reason we will offer you a skilled Mentor who is familiar with the cycle and capable of helping you to develop action steps to address the areas you are seeking to improve.

Most churches find their NCD results very revealing. Whilst there is a temptation to take action immediately to 'fix' everything, this needs resisting. There is frequently much to celebrate in the results – signs of faithful and diligent ministry – alongside areas of potential growth. It is important to take time to reflect on the results and reach the correct “diagnosis” of the issues. This will ensure that any steps that are formulated will be targeted at those areas that are limiting your church’s capacity to grow.

At first glance this manual may seem lengthy and a little daunting. Some may crave a simpler outline of the process but bear in mind that half of the manual is made up of appendices. The content includes both theology and praxis and aims to increase the reader’s understanding of Natural Church Development principles and avoid simplistic solutions.

The process does not have to be followed to the letter as if it were a blueprint for success. Instead, we would encourage a prayerful and creative approach, where the emphasis is on understanding each Cycle phase and seeking to take action that addresses the challenges you are facing. It is engaging with the principles underlying the process that is paramount.

Don't forget, whatever your results now, achieving sustainable healthy growth is a long term process. This requires diligence in regularly identifying and addressing the health issues your church is facing and learning to put the NCD principles into action as you go.

There is nothing more satisfying than partnering with God to release new life and sustainable growth in your church. We pray that you will enjoy the journey toward greater fruitfulness and more abundant life, with all of its challenges and times of celebration.

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# **I. What is this manual?**

## ***1.1 Purpose***

This manual takes you through the NCD Cycle, a simple yet powerful tool developed by NCD International to help you use the annual NCD Survey results to maximize your church's potential for sustainable growth over the long term.

## ***1.2 In this manual you will find....***

- An overview of the NCD Cycle, including some biblical foundations.
- A clear outline of the six phases of the Cycle with practical steps.
- Appendices that provide additional information and practical helps.

## ***1.3 Outcome***

Working through this manual does not guarantee greater health. However, experience suggests that if you “diagnose” the issues effectively, and then use the Cycle process to work on them diligently, greater health will result, as reflected in your next Survey results.

The Cycle is not a course of action you do once and everything is fixed. It is a process of continuous improvement based on applying principles of healthy growth. As you repeat the Cycle, your capacity to contribute to long term sustainable healthy growth increases.

## ***1.4 How should you use this manual?***

Read the introductory sections until you have a good preparatory understanding, then work through each of the six phases as recommended. Each phase contains both an overview and a process. Additional information and practical steps, if needed, are in related appendices.

Work through each phase carefully because each phase depends on its predecessor, so you cannot afford to skip one. It may be uncomfortable the first time through the process because it is new and you are not told exactly what to do. However, the process becomes much more familiar as you repeat it. Take your time; avoid rushing.

As you begin the process, you will discover you are using various phases of the Cycle to one degree or another already as a natural part of church life. Its use is not restricted to working through the results of your annual NCD Survey. In fact the more the church leadership uses the cyclical approach intentionally in all areas of church life the better.



## **1.5 What do you need to get started?**

The only essential tools you need to get you started are:

- this manual
- the NCD Result Guides detailed analysis of the church's NCD Survey results
- the NCD Cycle diagram (see cover or page 15)

It is strongly recommended that you and members of your leadership team have a copy of *Colour Your World with Natural Church Development* by Christian A. Schwarz. This provides essential background on NCD. If you wish to explore the foundations of NCD further, two books are recommended:

- *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* by Christian A. Schwarz (2006 edition)
- *Paradigm Shift in the Church* by Christian A. Schwarz

## **1.6 Who should be part of working through the Cycle?**

### **1.6.1 Incumbent or Priest in Charge**

The incumbent or priest in charge must accept ultimate responsibility for taking the church through the NCD Cycle process and then repeating it over the long term. They may choose to delegate various responsibilities to others, but must ensure the process is followed consistently and diligently if sustainable healthy growth is to be achieved.

They must then engage various groups within the church to be a part of the process.

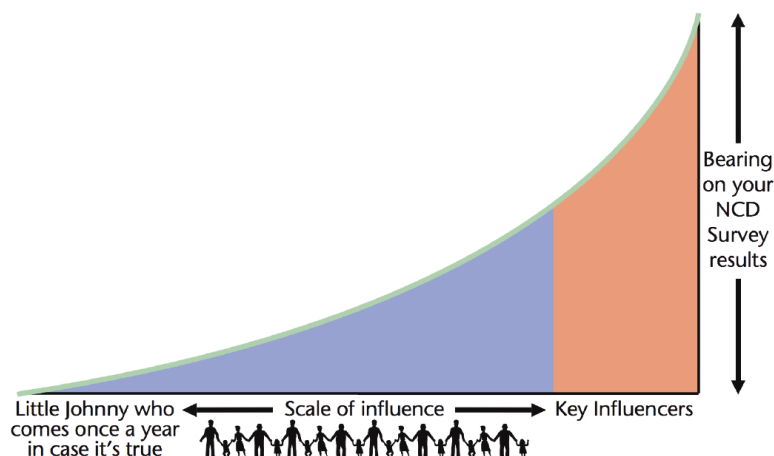
### **1.6.2 The “key influencers”**

Apart from the incumbent/priest in charge, those most important in achieving sustainable progress towards greater health are the “key influencers” – people who currently exercise the greatest influence over the activities and direction of the church. They may or may not be part of the elected leadership. It has been shown that of all the people in the church, they have the greatest impact on the NCD Survey results. One might put it this way:

- The church's *current* NCD results are a direct result of the influence, decisions, actions and preferences of the key influencers over recent years.
- The church's *future* NCD results will be a direct result of the influence, decisions, actions and preferences of the current key influencers.

The church's potential for healthy growth depends on identifying and engaging each of these people in the Cycle process such that they understand and own the health issues, and actively and positively contribute to addressing them.





Take time to consider who the key influencers are in the church.

- Whose opinion carries the most weight?
- Who is most widely respected, or feared?
- Who is considered a good spiritual example?
- Who knows most about how the church functions?
- Who is recognized as making significant contributions to church life?

### 1.6.3 PCC

The PCC has a central role in taking the church through the Cycle. They must understand the process, have a good grasp of the issues and be engaged in addressing them. As a team they must be prepared to engage actively with successive annual NCD Survey results and consistently repeat the Cycle process if there is to be any hope of addressing the issues emerging from those results. This is both an individual and collective responsibility.

The leadership is also responsible for including in the Cycle process all those inside and outside the church needed to help address the issues effectively, particularly any key influencers who are not amongst the elected leadership.

### 1.6.4 A support team?

You may feel it necessary to form a team specifically charged with keeping the church leadership working through the NCD Cycle and staying focused on the most critical health issues. For more information on this team, see Appendix I (p.48).

### 1.6.5 The congregation

Congregational members are part of the process at various times: offering feedback on results, “owning” the issues, and celebrating progress. Questions are often asked about how much the congregation should see of the Survey results and how such results should be presented. Recommendations are made where required in this manual.



### **1.6.6 Mentor**

Having a Mentor is beneficial, Church leaders often have difficulty at one of three points during the Cycle: analyzing the Survey results effectively; developing a useful plan; and staying focused on implementing the plan. Appendix 2 explains the Mentor's role in a bit more detail.

### **1.7 The danger of drift!**

The *status quo* in every church is very powerful. People are used to the way things work; and change is always uncomfortable, even if people agree there is a need for it. This can pose a very real danger: over time the Cycle process becomes "just another thing" the leadership is doing, and priority attention is no longer given to addressing the health issues arising out of the survey results. Consequently, the leadership shuts out the possibility of change, consciously or otherwise. If you sense this occurring, you need to explore the reasons why. Accept the possibility of this happening from the start and decide how the issues and the Cycle process become a regular and central part of the leadership's work.

Being aware of how your church actually gets things done (or not) is vital. Working through the Cycle process carefully and consistently will help you discern the strengths and weaknesses in the way your church operates and become more balanced in approach. Remind leaders regularly that successive NCD Survey results reveal the most critical issues impeding the long term sustainable health of the church. You can be working on a lot of things, but are you consistently working on the right ones?

### **1.8 How long does this process take?**

You should aim to work through the Cycle in one year and then repeat the NCD Survey before commencing the Cycle again. There are two good reasons for this timeframe.

- An annual Survey fits into the natural cycle of church life. It is common sense to do it at the same time each year to check on progress and determine priorities for the coming year. (At 3.7 is an indicator of how the year can be divided up.)
- If you leave repeating the Survey for much longer than that, it gets difficult to determine what decisions, actions or activities produced the changes (up or down!) in health. That, in turn, makes it difficult to reinforce initiatives stimulating greater health and putting a stop to those which aren't.

Even if you have lost momentum working through the Cycle, we recommend re-surveying at the twelve month mark anyway. The Survey measures the overall health of the church. The results will indicate the health consequences for the church of *all* decisions and activity over the previous 365 days. If the church leadership has identified



and removed barriers to growth, this will be evident in the results. If not, the consequences will also be apparent.

So how long does the NCD process take? In one sense it is an annual process – once through the Cycle; in another sense it is a continuous process that never ends. Even the healthiest churches using NCD know that every year there are areas requiring focus to keep growing in health and avoid slipping back. Experience suggests that the longer most churches stay in the NCD process and the healthier they become, the *more* diligent their leaders are in paying attention to the annual NCD Survey results.

## **1.9 Have you set realistic expectations?**

### **1.9.1 Of your understanding of NCD**

It takes time to understand the process and how to apply the NCD principles. Do not try to master the theory before beginning the Cycle. NCD is best learned “on the job” and not with your head in the books. Getting started on the Cycle and being consistent in working through the six phases on a regular basis is the best way to learn.

### **1.9.2 Of how quickly you will make progress**

Many churches achieve significant growth in health in the first few cycles. Consistent improvements are an investment in a healthy future. Some leaders get concerned that the return on that investment in terms of growth in numbers is not as fast as they would like. Quality does lead to quantity but you must not have unrealistic expectations that growth in numbers will follow immediately on the heels of church health improving. Your church’s health may need to improve substantially, and *stay* higher, before numbers increase.

Sometimes churches take several cycles working on preliminary issues to develop the confidence and the capacity to address the most significant issues impeding the long term healthy growth of the church. If you stay focused on working through successive cycles, consistently identifying and addressing barriers to growth, the health of the church will continue to rise and quantitative growth will occur “all by itself.”

### **1.9.3 Of God**

The healthy growth of your church involves a partnership with God, the One who gives the life and growth (see Section 2).

There is a question in the NCD Survey, “I firmly believe that God will work even more powerfully in our church in the coming years.” Is your current answer based on your view of who God is or where your church is at? Whatever your church’s current health, you must begin by believing that God is greater than the issues facing your church, that He really wants your church to grow, and that He really wants to partner with you in the process. Mark 9:24 might be a good prayer for your leadership to begin with.



## ***1.10 Reflection Checklist***

Here are some questions to reflect on and pray about as you begin the NCD Cycle this time around. You may wish to do this exercise with various elected leaders and key influencers. Write some answers and after reviewing them, file them for retrieval in a year's time when you come back to repeat the Cycle. You don't have to answer all the questions.

- How would you describe the life and health of your church right now? What has occurred in the past year that has influenced this assessment?
- What "fruit" are you seeing for your efforts and that of others? Describe it.
- Do you and your people have a heart for growing the church and a hope for "increasing fruitfulness" in future? What circumstances are giving cause for hope or otherwise?
- Do you find it easier to manage the church's programmes and activities or build teams and grow people?
- Do you define success more in terms of quantity (numbers and activity) or quality (greater health and growing spiritual maturity)?
- Do you see your church more as an holistic organism or as a spiritual organization?
- Are you able to take a long term view when it comes to addressing the health issues facing your church? How long are you willing to give this process?
- How are you personally going to remain focused on identifying and addressing the main health issues amidst all the other demands of church life?



## 2. Biblical Foundations for the NCD Cycle

### 2.1 Introduction

The biblical foundations are laid down in two ways. There are some central biblical themes that undergird the Cycle as a whole. Then there are specific biblical understandings underlying each of the six phases of the Cycle.

The purpose of laying down these foundations is not to “proof text” the NCD Cycle process but to show that at its core are biblical principles which, when implemented, not only encourage sustainable healthy growth but stimulate a greater understanding of the nature of God and the principles by which He works in His Church.

### 2.2. Some Overarching Biblical Themes

#### 2.2.1 Mark 4:26-29 – a partnership where God gives the growth

NCD stresses our partnership with God in growing a healthy church. This is well illustrated in Jesus’ *Parable of the Growing Seed*. Jesus offers a picture of God partnering with His people in growing the kingdom. He says:

*"This is what the kingdom of God is like. A farmer scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know why. **All by itself** the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."* (Mark 4:26-29)

Jesus points to kingdom growth as a cooperative effort:

- The farmer creates an environment which maximizes the potential for new life and growth by consistently removing the obstacles to healthy growth,
- but God alone brings that life and growth (which appears to the farmer to occur "all by itself").

We are to be like the farmer. We cannot give life and produce growth. We can, however, maximize the potential for growth by continually identifying the barriers to growth in church life and removing them in a timely fashion. This constantly maximises the potential for ‘all by itself’ growth. NCD calls this the Minimum Factor strategy.

At its heart, the NCD Cycle process is about contributing to the partnership in practical ways resulting in increasing fruitfulness. Leaders who tend to set their own plans and then pray for God to bless them may take several cycles to find a new balance in the partnership as they learn to become more sensitive and responsive to where God is at work.



### 2.2.2 John 10:10 – the abundant life

Jesus says, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” In other translations this last part reads, “...have it in abundance.” True life in Christ is not one just of surviving, but thriving. We are to expect and experience abundant life whatever our situation may be.

This is not easy for churches and leaders going through difficult times. The NCD Cycle process helps them grow in their capacity to recognize where God is bringing new life among them as barriers to growth are identified and removed, to respond to that new life and to enjoy it.

### 2.2.3 John 15 – fruitfulness on the Vine

An increasingly abundant life in Christ brings kingdom responsibilities. In John 15, Jesus calls on us all to consider seriously what fruitfulness means. He poses the following challenges:

- We are all called to lead *fruitful* lives (v15:16a).
- We are to bear *lasting fruit*, i.e. fruit bearing long term Kingdom results (v15:16b).
- We should aim for *more fruit* rather than less because it brings glory to God (v15:8).
- We need to know in very concrete terms if we are bearing fruit because *fruitlessness is not acceptable* (v15:2a, 6).
- God expects to work with us over time so we become *increasingly fruitful* (v15:2b). We should always be considering the next steps in growing to spiritual maturity.

None of these elements of fruitfulness are achieved without effort on our part. We have an ongoing, active part to play in the partnership. The NCD Cycle provides a framework for a church and its leaders not only to become fruitful, but *increasingly fruitful*. It should come as no surprise that an increasingly abundant life and an increasingly fruitful one go hand in hand.

### 2.2.4 Ephesians 4:11-13 – growing people grows the church

The church is an holistic organism not merely a spiritual organization. In essence it is the gathering of God’s people as the Body of Christ, enlivened, equipped and directed by the Holy Spirit. It is not fundamentally a building with a collection of programmes, activities and events. Many leaders accept this in theory but act differently. They confuse activity with outcomes, paying more attention to doing things than growing people.

As a leader, to grow your church you must grow your people. This is the import of Paul’s message in Ephesians 4:11-13, that the maturity of the body of Christ depends on leaders who “equip the people for works of service.” As all the parts of the body continue to grow to maturity, so the body grows as a whole.



The fatal presumption is that keeping people busy with programmes, activities and the “machinery of church life” automatically results in the spiritual growth of individuals and the church as a whole. Assume you are a leader with a congregation of 100 people but have no idea at the beginning of the year whether they are growing spiritually. One year later you have 110 people but still no idea if they are growing spiritually. Have you progressed? Is a rise in attendance your main measure of the church’s health and your success as a leader?

The NCD Survey results are a direct reflection of the current collective spiritual maturity of the church. A church with a long history and attendees with many years of faith may currently be quite immature in some areas, despite appearances.

One important way of thinking about the NCD Cycle process is that it progressively strengthens your people in areas where they are less spiritually mature, bringing about greater balance. The focus shifts from just determining whether an activity or event is “fruitful” to identifying and encouraging the work of God in people’s lives. This is the key to moving from being merely “fruitful” to becoming “increasingly fruitful.”

### **2.2.5 Romans 12:2-3 – a process of continuous transformation**

In Romans, Paul tells believers it is imperative they be *continuously transformed* by the renewing of their minds so they are able to test and approve God’s will and, by implication, put it into practice.

Transformation into Christ-likeness, and the abundant life and increasing fruitfulness which results, is not a one-off event for individual believers. Nor is it for churches. The NCD Cycle provides a continuous path of ongoing transformation based on a growing perception of where God is at work and acquiring the necessary discernment, skills and wisdom to respond accordingly. Each point of growth acts as a foundation for the next.

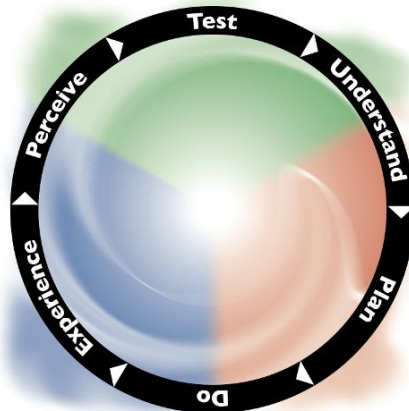
This is achieved, according to Paul, by regularly making a “sober judgment” or “honest assessment” of your current spiritual situation. This realistic, practical approach is part of what keeps equipping the church to discern the next steps needed to maintain its ongoing growth in spiritual maturity.

## **2.3 Biblical concepts underlying each phase of the Cycle**

At its heart, the NCD Cycle is about growing God’s people to greater maturity in Christ. For this to occur, the Cycle process must help a church to grow its partnership with God. It is vital, therefore, that each phase of the Cycle is biblically grounded: where Scripture informs our understanding of the practicalities of the process. Great care has been taken to ensure each of the six phases sits on strong biblical foundations. These are outlined in the next section (3.5.1). Full details appear in Appendix 3, which provides a large number of references for study, reflection and preaching.



## 3. The NCD Cycle Process



### 3.1 First impressions

Without reading further, spend a several minutes contemplating the NCD Cycle.

- Do you have some initial sense of what each phase might mean?
- Do you see a natural flow from one phase to the next? How do the phases depend on each other?
- Do you have a preference for one or more of the phases? Why?
- How might repeating the Cycle regularly help grow your church to greater health?

The Cycle does not introduce a radically new way of doing things. Every church leader is *already* using the Cycle phases to some degree: perceiving how church life is going; testing those perceptions; developing greater understanding; planning; taking action; and seeing the resultant impact on the experiences in the church. Progress comes with consistently doing each phase well as preparation for the next, and then repeating the Cycle. It takes a little practice to begin with but ultimately it is not difficult.

### 3.2 Cyclical versus linear thinking

Much of what we do in the Western world, and therefore the Western Church, is based on linear thinking. Everyone knows the standard approach to planning: (1) know where you are, (2) decide where you want to be, and then (3) put a plan in place to get there. It's always about getting from A to B. But is it?

The world that God created operates in cycles. It is the natural order of all growing things. We take the cycle of life for granted. Cycles are part of everyday church life. The "church year" is but one example. However, few church leaders systematically pursue growth in a cyclical way. Yet adopting a cyclical approach is the most effective way to approach continuous healthy growth, particularly if you want to partner effectively with God. Farmers and others whose lives are largely influenced by the forces of nature



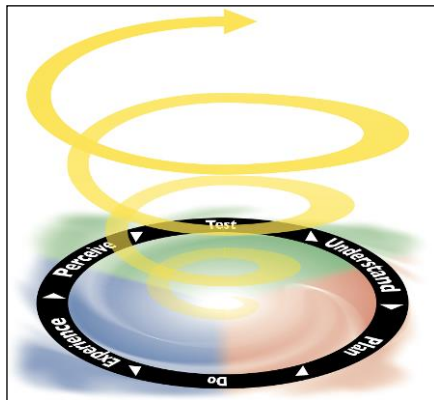


intuitively understand the cyclical approach to life whereas those from the city find it harder to grasp.

When we think cyclically, it is easier to grasp vital biblical concepts such as the call for continuous transformation (Romans 12:2) and “increasing fruitfulness” (John 15).

### 3.3 NCD Cycle as Spiral

The health of a church is never the same from year to year, whether it works consistently on addressing current health issues or not. All activity in church life contributes in some way to the long term healthy growth of the church, or not. It may come as a surprise, but there is no such thing as a “plateau” – right now seeds are being planted in your church which will deliver future fruitfulness or fruitlessness, growth or decline, health or sickness.



It is unwise to assume that decisions, actions and activity which produced growth in the past will do so in future, even if applied to what appear to be the same issues. In fact an entirely different approach might be required.

This reality is represented by the NCD Spiral, which is in effect a three dimensional view of the Cycle. The NCD Spiral represents the changing health of every church. While a church may “begin again” each year, it will always begin from a new place on the spiral, either more healthy (up the spiral) or less healthy

(down the spiral).

The spiral reflects the fact that every time a church undertakes the Cycle, each phase will differ from its counterpart in the previous Cycle because the church’s health has changed. If the church is increasing in health, perceptions of where God is at work will be sharper, the testing process more focused, understanding greater, planning tighter, actions more effective – all contributing to new experiences of God at work.

At its heart, the spiral is about progressively increasing the Kingdom fruitfulness of everyone in church life, especially leaders. Repeating the Cycle is practical and pragmatic: if you are acting in ways which are stimulating healthy growth you can identify them and continue doing them; if you are acting in ways which are causing decline you can find out what they are and stop doing them.



### **3.4 The 3 Colour Compass – the way to replace bias with balance**

The NCD Cycle is based on the *3 Colour Compass*, also known as the *Trinitarian Compass*. If you have not read about it in *Colour Your World with Natural Church Development* by Christian A. Schwarz (from page 45), you should make a point of doing so.

At its heart, it is about understanding how to partner with God who reveals himself to us as Creator, Jesus and Spirit. In the course of Church history, individual believers, churches and denominations have most often emerged with a degree of “spiritual bias,” emphasizing the importance of Creator or Jesus or Spirit over the others when it comes to church life. Christian Schwarz represents each “bias” with a colour – green, red and blue respectively.

These biases shape what people believe, how they live and, inevitably, the very processes of church life. As Christian Schwarz himself says, “It took some time before I realized that having all three colours in balance is the secret both to church development and personal growth” (CYW, p.47). In other words, a more balanced understanding of the nature of the Trinitarian God and how He works among us is foundational to sustainable healthy growth.

The NCD Cycle offers a very practical process for understanding our colour biases – as leaders and as churches – and shows how putting all the phases together and working through them consistently brings greater balance. This contributes to healthier outcomes in the church and helps us understand the nature of the Trinitarian God himself.

#### **3.4.1 Detecting and addressing your “colour bias”**

Detecting your colour bias gives you forewarning of where you, and others around you, may encounter difficulties with the Cycle process. A good way to do this is to complete the *NCD Colour Profile* in *Colour Your World* (pp.72-79) because its results have a strong affinity with the phases of the Cycle and therefore where you are likely to be strong or weak in the process.

It is recommended that all those responsible for working through the annual NCD Survey results complete this profile – church leaders, key influencers and members of the support team (if you establish one). Just being aware of each person’s bias is empowering. It allows you to build a balanced team and offers each person an environment where they can grow as you work together. Leaders and teams who are balanced in their approach will have greater success in the NCD process, apart from any spiritual growth occurring personally.

Achieving greater personal balance does take some work, but it can be done in the context of the team working together on going through the Cycle. Here are some suggestions.

Start with the phase(s) that reflects where you are strongest according to the *NCD Colour Profile*. Why are you strong in these areas and how do you display those strengths



in practical ways?

Then consider a phase where you are not as strong. Consider what this phase is all about in the context of partnering with God for your growth and that of the church. Identify the reasons why you struggle with it or prefer to avoid it. How would your life and ministry be more fruitful by growing in this area? Find others who are strong in this area and observe what they do that makes them effective. Find ways to blend your strengths as a team.

For example, you may be strong in the Plan-Do phases (an “action” bias) with Perceive-Test not as strong. You will benefit from learning to be more reflective, discerning and testing of what is happening in church life, particularly in response to your actions.

If you are a leader or key influencer in church life, your personal growth in the phases where you are weak will significantly enhance your capacity to contribute to addressing the church’s key health issues. The ultimate personal goal is “radical balance,” i.e. being strong in all areas.

### **3.4.2 Different ways of beginning to understand the 3 Colour Compass**

To get a basic overall feel for the 3 Colour Compass, this manual considers three different ways of approaching it at Appendix 4. These are referred to in each phase of the Cycle.

## **3.5 The Phases of the Cycle - Overview**

Before going into each Cycle phase in detail, the following offers an overall perspective. Think through the definitions for each phase as they relate to growing a healthier church.

- *Testing* – assessing objectively the spiritual health of God’s people to ensure you are perceiving accurately His work among them.
- *Understanding* – having a clear, dependable and growing knowledge of God and His will for your church community, a knowledge which compels you to act.
- *Planning* – developing a clear plan of action to implement your increased understanding of God’s will.
- *Doing* – implementing the plan for the purpose of achieving increasingly fruitful outcomes, and responding appropriately as those outcomes occur.
- *Experiencing* – increasingly sensing the presence of God among His people and giving thanks for the abundant life and fruitfulness He brings.
- *Perceiving* – developing a collective picture of how those in your church are experiencing God transforming their lives and the life of the church.



.....This then leads back to Testing.

The biblical foundations of these statements can be found at Appendix 3.

If you have done the NCD Colour Profile and discovered your “colour bias” you will realize that you relate more easily to some phases than others. Growing to become balanced in executing all six phases is a key part of the NCD process.

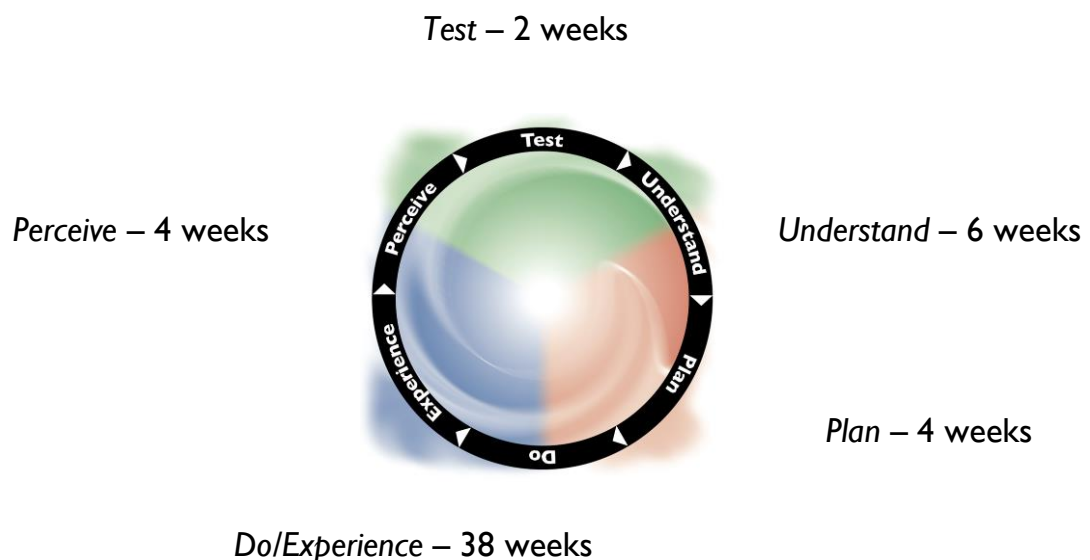
### **3.6 Where to begin on the Cycle?**

It makes sense for the church to begin with the Test phase because it has just completed the NCD Survey. With the NCD Result Guides detailed analysis, the church leadership now has a highly accurate objective assessment of the spiritual health of God’s people, as recorded by the people themselves.

Work on the Test phase begins in Section 4 (page 23).

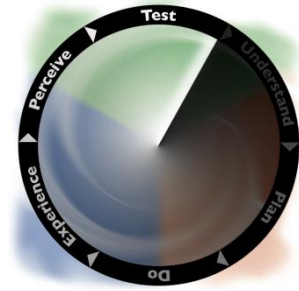
### **3.7 An indicative timeline for working through the Cycle**

In Section 1.8 it was recommended you repeat the Cycle annually. What is an *indicative* timeline for completing the phases in one year? While you don’t want to rush through any phase, you don’t want to get stuck either. Set approximate markers in the calendar for moving to the next phase ensuring that everyone is clear that whatever happens, the Survey will be repeated once the year is finished. It is the best measure of progress.





## 4. Testing Phase



### 4.1 Overview of Testing

#### 4.1.1 Purpose and Outcome

The purpose of this phase is to get an objective assessment of the church's spiritual health.

- It is about “drawing the line in the sand”: stopping to review church life in the past year, so you can see what has or hasn't contributed to healthy growth.
- It is about broad-based testing of what has been happening in church life rather than relying on the perceptions of only a few people.

At the end of this phase you should have:

- An up-to-date set of NCD Survey results, in the form of the NCD Result Guides detailed analysis report.
- An initial comparison of perceptions and results.

#### 4.1.2 Basic test question

- Are we seeing clearly what is happening in the life of the church?

It is common for churches not to stop to test, or to make assumptions based on the perceptions of a limited number of people. Sometimes the incumbent/priest in charge alone is left to make such assessments. The NCD Survey not only provides an accurate objective measure but does so in all the areas of church life essential for healthy growth.

#### 4.1.3 Biblical foundation

God tests our faith in different ways so we should test ourselves regularly. We are to prove the validity, perseverance and fruitfulness of our faith. We are to test what we understand to be the will of God for our lives. Testing ties in closely with perceiving and is a key to transformation. “Is what we are doing bearing fruit for the kingdom? If yes, let's do it better and be increasingly fruitful; if not, let's stop doing it.”

To explore the biblical foundations of this phase more fully see Appendix 3.

#### 4.1.4 A 3 Colour Perspective

To get an overall perspective on the Testing phase in the context of the overall *3 Colour Compass*, go to Appendix 4.

- The principal focus at this point in the Cycle is being effective in gathering *information* and beginning to *reflect* on it.



- The principal role of leaders in this phase is to obtain concrete information enabling them to *explain accurately* what is happening to the church's health.

#### **4.1.5 Warning: missing this phase or not doing it thoroughly**

A true understanding of the partnership with God (what He is doing and what the church has been doing), and its impact on bringing about healthy growth, cannot be achieved merely by a superficial review of the perceptions of some people. You need a regular objective measure as a starting point to give you a clear picture of what's really happening.

James, the great exhorter to "do the word," offers a simple yet powerful image that captures the importance of this Cycle phase: "Those who listen to the word but do not do what it says are like people who look at their faces in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, go away and immediately forget what they look like" (1:23-24).

To test effectively, you cannot afford *not* to stop and look carefully. Avoiding this phase on a regular basis, or skipping over it superficially, is a decision for incomplete understanding at best and total ignorance at worst. This has negative consequences for the church's health, which will become painfully apparent in future surveys.

#### **4.1.6 Who should be involved in this phase?**

The NCD Survey results should be considered first by the incumbent/priest in charge of the church with the Mentor as a matter of courtesy and respect.

They should then bring it to the leadership team (perhaps after working through the Understand phase where the use of the NCD Result Guides detailed analysis is explained). Once the leadership team has had an initial look at the results and has a good understanding of the NCD Cycle, it is essential to engage the key influencers in the discussion. It is not advisable to show the results to the congregation until you have worked through the Understand phase.

## **4.2 Action Steps**

There are three steps to this phase.

1. Process initial reactions to the results.
2. Review your perceptions of church life over the past year.
3. Schedule the next NCD Survey for one year's time.



#### **4.2.1 Process initial reactions to the results**

There is always an emotional response to seeing your church's results. It may be surprise, confusion, happiness, satisfaction or disappointment. If you are the church's leader, you not only have to process your own response but help others do so as well. Whether you are feeling positively or negatively about the results, the tendency can be to avoid this phase and rush onto planning, or even skip planning to go and "just do something." Don't!

The first task is to accept the reality of an emotional response. Whatever your initial response, ensure you and the church work through the next phases effectively to get a clear diagnosis of the issues and an effective plan of action to address those issues. As the apostle James might say, it is imperative the church stops long enough to have a good look at itself.

Personal Perceptions + Emotional Reactions  $\neq$  Accurate Diagnosis

Go to Appendix 5. It will assist you and others to work through your initial responses to the results.

#### **4.2.2 Review your perceptions of church life pre-Survey (optional)**

If this is your first time through the NCD Cycle, you may find it helpful to take a step back from the results and complete the Perceive phase. This can provide helpful context to the results. Appendix 6 offers some introductory exercises.

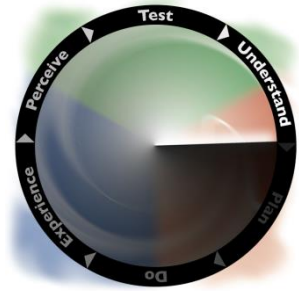
#### **4.2.3 Schedule the next NCD Survey for one year's time...now**

The Cycle does not finish until you return to test the health of the church and determine what progress has been made. Scheduling the date for repeating the NCD Survey at this point achieves two things:

- It helps you set a timeframe for working through the phases of this cycle. This helps offset the possibility of drift and loss of focus on addressing the key issues.
- It is the ultimate way for the leadership to express to God and the congregation the desire to be accountable for leading the church to address the issues. It says, "We really want to re-do the Survey in a year to find out if what we have been doing is making any difference."



## 5. Understanding Phase



### 5.1 Overview

#### 5.1.1 Purpose and Outcome

The purpose of this phase is to arrive at a clear and comprehensive understanding of the principal health issues facing the church, an understanding strong enough to compel action.

At the end of this phase you will have a clearer understanding of:

- *Health strengths*: where the church is contributing to healthy growth, and why.
- *Health weaknesses*: the main issues currently impeding healthy growth and their root causes. Working to remove these barriers will maximize the potential for healthy growth. (Priorities will be decided in the Planning phase.)
- *The partnership*: where and how God is at work in and through His people.

#### 5.1.2 Basic test question

- What are the facts?

This phase works through the information from the Perceive and Test phases to reach an objective understanding of the church's current state of health. If your conclusions are not strong enough to compel action to address barriers identified, more work is needed.

#### 5.1.3 Biblical foundation

*Understanding* in this context has two components, both of which relate to the partnership with God in growing His church.

- *A growing understanding of us*: we are to explore diligently the results until there is a clear understanding of our part in the church's strengths and weaknesses.
- *A growing understanding of God with us*: seeing where, how and why God is at work in the church, because true knowledge of God is demonstrated by obedient acknowledgement. This is the only path to increasing fruitfulness because it is God alone who gives the life and growth in the partnership.

To explore the biblical foundations of this phase more fully see Appendix 3.

#### 5.1.4 A 3 Colour Perspective

For an overall perspective of the Understanding phase in the context of the *3 Colour Compass*, see Appendix 4.





- The principal focus at this point in the Cycle is exploring the *information* gathered in preparation for *applying* what has been learned. It bridges the time of *reflection* with getting *proactive*, which will begin with the Planning phase.
- The leader's role is to ensure everyone knows that right understanding is the basis of fruitful action – understanding both the church and God's work in it. If right understanding is reached, leaders should feel compelled to act.

### **5.1.5 Warning: missing this phase or not doing it well**

Moving to the Planning phase too quickly runs significant risks. You may end up only partially addressing the issues, or not addressing them at all. Busyness is not next to godliness.

More importantly, you may miss entirely the foundation on which action must rest – a growing understanding of where, how and why God is at work in the church. It is not simply a matter of getting active and praying for God to bless what you decide. God is revealing himself in the process and discerning this is central to fruitful “understanding.”

You may come from a spiritual tradition that makes it difficult to draw such a clear intellectual divide between what God is doing in the church and what the people are doing. Or you may come from a spiritual tradition of demonstrating commitment by “getting active.” It may be your view that you do your part and pray for God to bless what you've decided or you do your part and just leave the rest up to the grace of God.

Return to the concept of partnership. Think about what it means practically for God to invite us to partner with Him in growing the kingdom through the local church. If the church is in step with God's will there should be an ongoing supply of fruitful outcomes, transformation and abundant life – the ultimate position for sustainable healthy growth.

If your church is not seeing such outcomes regularly, it indicates that the understanding of God and of self in that partnership needs concerted work. The greater the sensitivity to how and why God is at work, the better the partnership, and the better the outcomes.

### **5.1.6 Who should be involved in this phase?**

The incumbent/priest in charge should take overall responsibility for ensuring this phase is completed.

It is essential that both the elected leadership and key influencers are fully engaged to the point of understanding, acknowledging and “owning” the issues that need to be addressed. This should determine how or whether a support team (Appendix 1) and how the Mentor (see Appendix 2) is used. It is helpful to have a Mentor as part of the process.



It is not recommended that the NCD Result Guides be presented in their entirety to the whole congregation due to the high likelihood of misinterpretation, and confusion about what is really important. Once the NCD Result Guides have been worked through, present a summary which shows the church's health strengths to encourage people, as well as the key issues the leadership regards as needing attention. You may seek congregational input to clarify what the leadership is thinking and to generate ownership.

## **5.2 NCD Result Guides – the essential diagnostic tool**

### **5.2.1 What is the purpose of the NCD Result Guides?**

The NCD Result Guides are the principal tool for achieving the three major outcomes of this phase:

- *Health strengths*: where the church is contributing to healthy growth, and why.
- *Health weaknesses*: the main issues currently impeding healthy growth and their root causes.
- *The partnership*: where and how God is at work in the church.

### **5.2.2 The importance of using NCD Result Guides effectively**

Using the NCD Result Guides effectively is essential to the entire NCD Cycle process. It is the tool which helps you see your church's health objectively, and how and where that health is progressing. As such it confirms or contradicts the subjective perceptions of various individuals in the church. ("Fred says the problem is XYZ." "Well Fred is right" or "Fred is only partly correct, we can also see other issues.")

To ensure its contents are not misinterpreted nor used superficially takes some time and effort. Please read the introductory information about NCD Result Guides at Appendix 7.

### **5.2.3 The methodology for using NCD Result Guides**

Once you understand the basics about NCD Result Guides, there is a basic methodology to follow so that you can draw out the issues from the graphs effectively.

#### *1. Identify the major themes by looking at combinations of results*

The church is primarily an organism not an organization. This is reflected in your NCD Result Guides. The Quality Characteristics are connected with, and dependent on, one another as the eight essential "systems" of the body. The individual questions within those characteristics are also interconnected. By exploring the interconnections in the results – various combinations of questions – the church's unique strengths and weaknesses emerge.

A "theme" is a topic or area of interest that seems to be a connection point for the results for several questions. It may reflect a perceived strength or weakness.



The methodology suggests you start by reading the questions on a single Quality Characteristic graph. You explore connections between questions by asking *why* such results have occurred and *how* some results might be the cause or consequence of other results on that graph. It takes very little time to start identifying themes.

Having identified some themes, the next step is to look at the graphs of the other seven Quality Characteristics to see if they contain questions with results which connect to the themes identified so far. These connections may add insights to what you've already discovered, reveal new related themes, or raise further questions.

2. *Identify the reasons (root causes) why these themes have emerged*

Once you have several themes, the task is to explore the root causes of these combinations of results. It may be due to an activity, approach or attitude, the result of leadership decisions, or reflect an historical issue. It may be the consequence of the preferences of particular people about how the church goes about its work. It may be the result of particular theological beliefs or traditions.

It is important to understand that the Survey results have not occurred in a vacuum – they are the consequence of beliefs, attitudes, activity and events in the life of the church in recent times, perhaps even over a long period. Some of these have contributed to healthy growth; others have placed barriers on the path to healthy growth.

Understanding the root causes requires hard work, but is absolutely necessary. Perceptions must be tested. A clear understanding of the issues is an essential foundation for planning and action.

3. *Summarize your findings*

Once the root causes of the themes have been explored, the final step in the methodology is to sum up. The aim is to get elected leadership and key influencers “on the same page” regarding the issues, laying the foundation for the Planning phase.

Before looking at your church's results in detail, work through the example of the methodology at Appendix 8. Return to this example if you have any difficulty as you now get to work on your church's results.

## **5.3 Action Steps**

Turn to the NCD Result Guides for your church. There are three steps for working through this phase, each of which is explained in a sub-section below.

1. Diagnose the current key health strengths
2. Diagnose the current key health weaknesses
3. Understand where, how and why God is at work in the church



This is not a quick exercise and is outcomes driven. You need to give as much time as is necessary, perhaps over several meetings, to reach clarity of understanding of the issues.

### **Step 1 – Diagnose the current main health strengths using the NCD Result Guides**

Always begin using NCD Result Guides by looking at the strengths of the church, i.e. where the church is currently healthiest.

#### ***What is the value of knowing your strengths?***

NCD is not just about the “minimum factor” approach but the “maximum factor” approach as well, i.e. knowing your strengths and using them. Here are some ways of thinking about your strengths once you have identified them.

- The strengths reflect the areas of church life where there are the least number of barriers to partnering with God in growing His kingdom.
- The strengths are where the church currently makes the greatest contribution to “all by itself” growth.
- It would not be surprising to see greater evidence of God’s Spirit moving among His people in the areas where the church is strongest.
- It would not be surprising to see God’s principles for growing organisms at work to a greater extent in the areas where the church is strongest. (See Growth Forces in *Colour Your World* pp.89-103).
- It takes less energy to keep the healthier results up than it does to get the lower results healthier. Small amounts of regular effort to stimulate the strengths will keep these results up.
- The strengths can be used to help address the church’s weaknesses, once they have been identified.

Take your NCD Result Guides report and work through the following exercises at Appendix 9.

1. Identify the church’s main strengths by looking at combinations of results.
2. Identify the reasons (root causes) why the church is stronger in these areas.
3. Summarize your findings.



## **Step 2 – Diagnose the current main health weaknesses using the NCD Result Guides**

You now come to one of the most important parts of the NCD Cycle process: identifying the main barriers to growth and the root causes of those barriers.

*It can be said without any hint of hyperbole that the failure to identify the root causes of the church's chief areas of weakness annually, and to address them in a timely manner, jeopardizes the potential for long term sustainable healthy growth. In fact, such a failure will be the principal contributor to any decline in health.*

Take your NCD Result Guides report and work through the following exercises at Appendix 10.

1. Identify your main weaknesses by looking at combinations of results.
2. Identify the reasons (root causes) why the church is weaker in these areas.
3. Summarize your findings as specific barriers to growth.

Allow plenty of time to do this exercise. It takes time to get familiar with the questions and then begin to see connections between them in the context of what has been happening in church life. What is most important is the outcome: a clear set of barriers that have been discussed thoroughly, understood and agreed on.

## **Step 3 – The partnership: reflecting on where and how God is at work**

Now to the third and final step of this phase: reflecting on the partnership with God for the purpose of growing the church. Two things occurred as you worked through this phase.

- You thought about church life in order to explain its current health: the good and not so good; the fruitful and not so fruitful; the highs and the lows.
- You have received insights about your church as the local body of Christ.

In both instances you connected with the nature, purposes and activities of God in very practical ways. As He alone gives the church life and growth, it is vital to take time here to reflect solely on God himself and what this exercise reveals about His work in the church. Having a growing understanding of His will is imperative for achieving long term sustainable healthy growth.

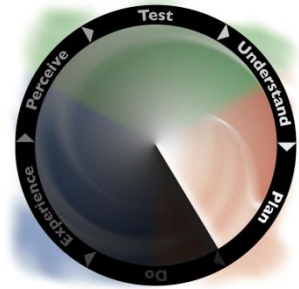
Do the exercises at Appendix 11 to bring this phase to an end. These questions will be revisited in the Perceive phase.



## 6. Planning Phase

### 6.1 Overview

#### 6.1.1 Purpose and Outcome



The purpose of this phase is to determine priorities and set clear strategies for action to address the most important health issues. This involves:

- Deciding what the most pressing health barriers are *now* and what will be done to remove them.
- Deciding on activities to underpin the current strengths of the church.
- Deciding what has to *stop* in church life in order to give the priority issues the required time, energy and resources.

At the end of this phase you will have a brief and simple plan for addressing what you have decided are the main health priorities.

#### 6.1.2 Basic test question

- What is most important now?

Many of the issues worked through in the Understand phase will be important. Some people will see some issues as more important than others. Not everything can be done, nor should it be. The first stage of planning is to set priorities, working hard to decide what is most important for the church's health *right now*. Some issues may be critical to the survival of the church. Resolving some issues now may cause others to diminish in importance.

#### 6.1.3 Biblical foundation

This phase takes its cue from the Old Testament where the concept is less about a physical plan (important though that is) and more about the *act of planning*. In effect, this is a decision by God's people to take action which brings their will into greater alignment with God's. The bottom line is that God's will always prevails, and our will only prevails if it aligns with God's.

Planning therefore requires careful *deliberation* and *diligence*, resulting in *decisiveness*, and the *determination* to execute faithfully the *decisions* reached. In keeping with the biblical understanding, it will involve *stopping* doing some things just as much as starting others because it has been determined that some things are either not God's will or not as aligned with God's will as other decisions or activities. It's all about what is *most fruitful* now.

It is a dynamic process, not a static one. A specific plan should be done each time you complete this phase. However, as the church removes barriers and is increasingly sensitive to where God is at work, the annual plan can be adjusted. (This process of



sharpening the plan can be seen as going through a series of mini-cycles within the main Cycle.)

For full details of the biblical foundations of this phase see Appendix 3.

### **6.1.4 A 3 Colour Perspective**

To get an overall perspective on the Plan phase in the context of the overall *3 Colour Compass*, go to Appendix 4.

- The principal focus at this point in the Cycle is being very clear on where and how the church will *apply* itself based on what is newly understood about the church and about God's will. Moving to proactive, yes, but doing so in a highly focused way, with clear decisions as to what is and is not to be done.
- The principal role of leaders in this phase is to ensure that everyone involved is *motivated* to contribute. This means being clear about why these particular issues are being addressed; what removal of the barriers is expected to achieve; and why everyone's personal contribution is so important.

### **6.1.5 Warning: missing this phase or not doing it well**

There are many risks to skipping over this phase or failing to do it thoroughly: not honing in on the most important issues to be addressed; trying to do too many things; not targeting energy and resources effectively; and not establishing accountabilities and responsibilities for getting things done and staying focused. Two quotes sum up the dangers:

- "Speed is only useful if you are going in the right direction."
- "If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time."

Perhaps more important than all these things, if true knowledge of God is demonstrated by obedient acknowledgement, then planning to address growth barriers is the first act of obedience because it reflects a declaration of the will to address the health issues identified.

### **6.1.6 Who should be involved in this phase?**

While it is up to the elected leaders to make the final decisions about the key priorities and how they are to be addressed, they must ensure that the key influencers are on board.

Your Mentor is there to help formulate a workable plan.

The incumbent/priest in charge must accept the responsibility of communicating the plan to the congregation.



## 6.2 Action Steps

There are six steps for working through this phase, each explained in a sub-section below.

1. Prioritize the list of barriers to increased church health. Choose a maximum of four.
2. Decide a course of action that will remove the barriers chosen.
3. Decide how to work on the strengths of the church.
4. Decide at least one thing the church will *stop* doing to free up time, people and resources to focus on what is more important.
5. Build momentum for change.
6. Decide how the leadership will monitor what happens.

This sounds like a huge job, particularly if the church doesn't have a strong history of effective planning. It doesn't have to be. Here are some clues:

- If your church has generally lower than average Survey results, your capacity to address a range of issues is limited. You can't be unfit and expect to run a marathon immediately. Choose the number of issues to work on you believe is realistic. It is more important that you plan to address one issue well than several issues poorly.
- If you are working through the NCD Cycle for the first time the process may be a bit messy. If you come out of this phase with some clear decisions, action items focused on removing the barriers chosen, a clear idea of who is doing what by when, and a commitment to monitoring progress, you will be in front. The next time you come to do planning you will be more systematic.
- Don't forget the ultimate goal is not a sophisticated plan but removing barriers. Don't assume something elaborate is needed. Removing a barrier may only require something as simple as making a decision, where the "hard work" is not in the formulation of a detailed plan but harnessing the collective will of the leadership!
- You don't have to address all the issues immediately. Do them in order of importance.
- Even though you are going to be re-doing the Survey in a year's time to check on progress, some of the issues you have chosen may not be fully resolved by then. That's fine. Don't delay the Survey; use the next Survey results to evaluate progress and help sharpen your plan.
- Get help if you need it. Find people who are skilled at planning, either from inside or outside the church. (Generally speaking, these people have a Red Zone bias in their *NCD Colour Profile*.)





### **Step 1 – Prioritize the list of current health weaknesses**

At the end of the Understand phase you arrived at a list of key health weaknesses (barriers to growth) in the life of the church (see Appendix 10).

1. Put these in order, with the most important issue at #1. Determine the order by deciding what is most likely to have the greatest positive impact if addressed now.
2. Starting at #1, choose up to four areas to work on, depending on how many you think the church is capable of working on.

### **Step 2 – Decide a course of action that will remove the barriers chosen**

At Appendix 12 you will find a template that you can use for each of the barriers chosen.

### **Step 3 – Work on your strengths as part of the plan**

At 5.3.1 you worked to diagnose the current main health *strengths* of the church. You should not lose sight of these in the planning process even if your key focal point is the areas of weakness. After you have completed Appendix 12, consider the following:

1. How might you leverage the areas of greater health in the congregation to assist in removing specific barriers to growth?
2. Which people are involved in the areas of church life that are healthier who may assist you to address the areas of weakness, through ideas and participation.
3. What specific, regular actions might you take as part of the overall plan to keep the areas identified in 5.3.1 where they are, or even moving a little higher?

### **Step 4 – What will you stop doing?**

Many church leaders are really fond of adding activities to church life, but not good at stopping them. Churches often end up with “a patchwork quilt of wet bandaids”: a range of programmes, activities and events all plastered over the top of one another competing for limited time, energy and resources. There is often a sense of “we keep doing this but we don’t know if it produces fruit anymore,” *plus* “we start doing all these new things but we don’t know yet if they are making any difference.”

Revisit the biblical foundations of the Planning phase at Appendix 3 and consider the concept of *diligence* in Proverbs 21:5 and how it relates to the idea of “cutting or sharpening.” It is about decisive action with respect to fruitfulness or fruitlessness, based in a clear understanding of what God’s will is understood to be for the church *right now*.

Planning is not merely about deciding what will be done to remove barriers to growth. It is about reviewing what activities are currently bearing little or no fruit and either re-focusing them or bringing them to an end. Simply put, you cannot afford to expend time,



energy and resources on fruitless activity. All the church's efforts must be directed at what is currently (and demonstrably) stimulating fruitful growth or to removing barriers to such growth.

What does not seem to be clearly understood in many churches is that failing to identify and address areas of fruitlessness brings forth God's displeasure (John 15). If initiatives are in accord with God's will they will bear fruit; if not, they won't.

As one church leader put it, "We are not good at death." In the short term it may be easier to avoid the hard issues of addressing parts of the body making little or no contribution to healthy growth (or damaging it), but the church's health pays the price in the long term. A long history of NCD Survey results internationally consistently demonstrates this fact!

Appendix 13 helps you think through this and make at least one significant decision about what you will "cut out" of church life in the coming year.

### **Step 5 – How will you build momentum for change?**

Quite often churches will have excellent plans aimed at addressing the right issues but there is no momentum for change. It cannot be assumed that having a good plan alone will generate such momentum. Addressing momentum is not easy, particularly if churches have been in decline in both health and numbers.

Several things can help you generate momentum:

- Make sure the elected leaders and key influencers are personally engaged with the issues and the process of addressing them. As goes these people, so goes the health of the church. Get them using their influence to bring others on board.
- Get people committed to work at the issues until the Cycle is finished and the next NCD Survey is completed. Experience shows that diligence and consistency in addressing the issues will produce positive results in the next Survey. This releases new energy and confidence to address the new set of issues.
- Help the congregation understand the connection between qualitative and quantitative growth – that working on health releases "all by itself" growth.
- Set appropriate expectations. Get the congregation to see this as a long term process where the Cycle will be repeated each year. They are not required to solve all the issues now, just be a part of making steady growth to greater health by addressing what currently needs most attention.
- Work at ways of getting every person to "own" the key issues in the plan. If every individual knows they can play an important part in removing the barriers, there is broader engagement and the next NCD Survey results will



be better.

- Help the congregation to understand the consequences of not addressing the issues identified. Remind them there is no such thing as “plateau” in health.
- Encourage people to see that God is not limited by their perceptions of their circumstances. Help them to see that the Cycle process involves a partnership where they will see God at work in new ways as they engage with the issues.

### **Step 6 – Decide how the leadership will monitor progress**

The final step of this phase is to devise a simple process to stay focused and monitor progress. It is essential to make sure you are staying on track in implementing the plan, and becoming increasingly sensitive to what is happening in the church. Progress on implementing the plan must be a #1 priority for regular discussion by the leadership.

As the incumbent/priest in charge can have difficulty remaining focused on the key issues with all their other responsibilities, it is part of the role of the Mentor to help maintain focus.

Consider the following as you finalize the plan and put dates in the church’s calendar.

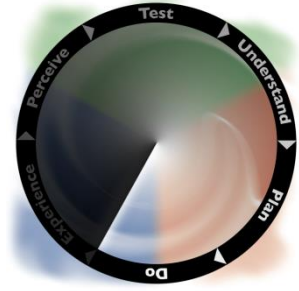
- How often will the leadership review what is happening?
- How and where will the leadership do this review so that the issues are not crowded out by other church matters?
- What feedback mechanisms are needed to ensure the leadership has a good understanding of what’s happening in the church as the plan is implemented? How will feedback be collected prior to times of review?
- Would the leadership benefit from asking the support team (if you have one) to organize and facilitate regular reviews for the leadership?
- How often would the leadership benefit from meeting with their Mentor?



## 7. Doing Phase

### 7.1 Overview

#### 7.1.1 Purpose and Outcome



The purpose of this phase is to implement the plan consistently and faithfully. It overlaps heavily with the next phase – Experiencing – they are two sides of the same coin. This phase involves:

- Staying focused on doing what you as a church committed to God you would do.
- Monitoring progress and responding to developments in a timely way.
- Expecting to see God at work and expecting to see increasing fruitfulness for your efforts.

At the end of this phase, as an expression of your commitment to God, you will have done your best in the partnership to address the issues discerned in the Survey results.

#### 7.1.2 Basic test question

- Are we following through and inviting God and others to go beyond the plan?

‘Doing’ combines action to implement the plan with an expectation that God will do more than you could ask or imagine (Eph 3:20). ‘Doing’ is about encouraging everyone in the church to “raise the bar” in terms of faith, becoming increasingly sensitive to where God is at work in the partnership for growth. So ‘doing’ is not just being active, but actively listening and watching, and responding accordingly. This lies at the heart of transformation.

#### 7.1.3 Biblical foundation

This phase is about implementing the plan. This means working consistently on the right things in order to see *increasingly fruitful outcomes*. It is a fatal mistake to think that activity of itself pleases God, no matter how good the intentions. The focus must remain on *fruitful doing* as an act of commitment to the partnership for growth.

This phase is about getting beyond the mentality that any fruit is the result of a transaction between us and God: that we do X and therefore God will do Y. It is all of grace. He alone gives the life and growth. However it’s helpful to know that He is a God of abundance, and the faith challenge in the *doing* is to expect Him to give more than is needed or asked for.

For full details of the biblical foundations of this phase see Appendix 3.



### 7.1.4 A 3 Colour Perspective

To get an overall perspective on the Doing phase in the context of the overall 3 *Colour Compass*, go to Appendix 4.

- The principal focus at this point in the Cycle is on a combination of *application* and becoming increasingly tuned into the *transformation*. Being diligently proactive, yet not ignoring the *affective*, the impact on church life.
- The principal role of leaders in this phase is to ensure everyone remains focused on the task and *motivated* to contribute, while at the same time *liberating* them by releasing them to do their part and helping them see where God is at work.

### 7.1.5 Warning: missing this phase or not doing it well

The consequences of not diligently implementing a plan are self-evident. The greatest risk is losing focus, drifting away from the plan, and allowing other issues or the daily tasks of church life to prove that in your church “the urgent will dominate the important.”

### 7.1.6 Who should be involved in this phase?

Clearly those who have responsibilities under the plan are involved. Beyond that, it is important for the incumbent/priest in charge and leaders to work out who will keep them and the key influencers focused on implementing the plan and monitoring what is happening in the church as a result.

## 7.2 Action Steps

This phase will be different for every church. At 6.2.6 you decided on a simple process to monitor progress as you executed the plan. During each review the areas to consider are:

- Progress on executing the plan.
- Seeing the signs of greater fruitfulness.

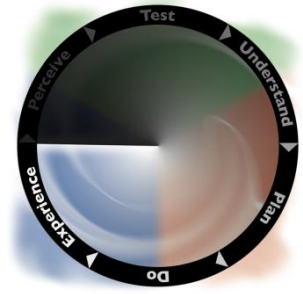
Appendix 14 has a range of questions you may find useful in working through these issues.



## 8. Experiencing Phase

### 8.1 Overview

#### 8.1.1 Purpose and Outcome



The purpose of this phase is to experience the abundant life that Jesus offers, and to celebrate God's faithfulness and goodness in the church's journey to greater health.

The Doing and Experiencing phases complement each other. One is focused on action; the other on grasping what it means to be blessed by a gracious God who gives more than you could ask or imagine. One is focused on achieving outcomes; the other about taking the time to enjoy the journey. One is about what we are doing with God; the other is about learning who God is and who we are through the process.

While the two phases represent different biblical principles, and fit together in this sequence in the Cycle, it is important to recognize that the *experiencing* does not begin at the end of the *doing*. Throughout the implementation of the plan, it will be evident things are happening! The skill comes in learning how to modify the plan in order to make best use of healthy developments. The focus is ultimately not on the plan itself but on learning to experience to the fullest possible extent what God is capable of doing in partnership with those committed to addressing barriers to growth.

At the end of this phase you will have:

- A growing sensitivity to where and how God is at work in the church: where there is greater life and energy; where fruitfulness is emerging; where transformation is occurring; and what "abundant life" is really all about.
- A fuller understanding of the nature of the God who loves to give in abundance.
- A greater capacity to live in the present, to really experience what God is doing.
- A stronger sense of the need to celebrate and be thankful.

#### 8.1.2 Basic test question

- Have we freed ourselves to receive from God and others?

Is there something within you and the church leadership that prefers to keep pressing ahead without pausing to experience what God is doing? Are you constantly living in the past or the future rather than the present? Do you find it difficult to receive what God wishes to offer you or the church? As Christian Schwarz says, "[Such people] know a lot about life but they do not know how to live" (*Colour Your World*, p.123). This phase reminds us that we are to live the Christian life, not just "do" it.



### 8.1.3 Biblical foundation

This phase must begin from the perspective that not only does God desire to give the life and growth, but that it is His nature to give lavishly, to give abundantly, to give over and above what is needed. This lies at the heart of Jesus' words, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

This is not a statement about worldly possessions but about the fullness of life in Christ that is more than sufficient to cope with all circumstances; is more than able to deal with the issues of health and growth that the church might face. As we grow in our partnership with God through Jesus Christ, we become more alive.

Does the church have this understanding of the nature of God? Are the people in the church increasingly able to see this abundance among them and be thankful?

For full details of the biblical foundations of this phase see Appendix 3.

### 8.1.4 A 3 Colour Perspective

To get an overall perspective on the Experiencing phase in the context of the overall 3 *Colour Compass*, go to Appendix 4.

- The principal focus at this point in the Cycle is appreciating the *transformation*. It is about opening up lives to experience what God is doing in church life.
- The principal role of leaders in this phase is to *liberate* people from anything impeding their capacity to embrace fully the transformation that God is bringing. It means encouraging people to celebrate God's goodness and thank Him for what He is doing.

### 8.1.5 Warning: missing this phase or not doing it well

The greatest danger of missing this phase, or not doing it well, is that the Cycle becomes pre-occupied with activity rather than relationship, with "doing" rather than "being". Yet healthy transformation hinges on a growing partnership with God, and that depends on a growing understanding of His nature and truly wanting to experience all He has to offer.

If the church does not open itself up to the prospect of seeing God "going beyond," the process progressively lapses into the transactional: "We do this, God will do that." The mentality becomes, "We are in control and will pray for God to bless us," rather than, "We will be diligent in fulfilling what we have committed to do, but at the same time we are expecting God to go beyond our plans and show himself in ways we may not have anticipated. As that happens we will be thankful."

### 8.1.6 Who should be involved in this phase?

Everyone! Leaders must reach the point where they really do believe God not only wants to bring growth but do more than they can ask or imagine. There must be a



heartfelt desire to see God reveal more of himself in the process, and to respond positively when that occurs.

Leaders must be prepared to challenge the people to engage likewise. If some people in the church are experiencing God at work in their lives to a greater degree, they need to be challenged to respond in faith. A greater understanding of God at work should be matched by appropriate faith in action, i.e. the “faith bar” is raised.

Of course it may happen in reverse – those experiencing the work of God in their lives to a greater degree “raise the faith bar” on the leadership. In this regard, it is wise not to forget the impact of “key influencers” on future growth (see Section 1.6.2).

At the same time, the leaders have a role in helping those not yet having such experiences to understand what is happening in the lives of others, so that all can participate in the experiences and be encouraged.

## **8.2 Action Steps**

This is the most difficult phase to prescribe any course of action because to do so can put unhelpful boundaries in place. It is more helpful to consider how you might be liberated to grow beyond your current understanding of whom God is and how He is at work, i.e. working at allowing God to be God, and celebrating that.

Appendix 15 offers a starting framework for thinking through what the church is experiencing as God’s community. Its focus is on how to liberate people in the church to experience all that God has for them.

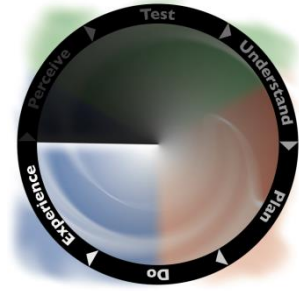




## 9. Perceiving Phase

### 9.1 Overview

#### 9.1.1 Purpose and Outcome



The purpose of this phase is to review what has been occurring in church life in preparation for repeating the NCD Survey in the forthcoming Test phase.

The Perceive and Test phases complement each other, forming the basis of the Understand phase. The first is focused on gathering and scrutinizing people's experiences; the other on testing the validity of those experiences in a broader context. One is more subjective; the other more objective. As the church keeps repeating the Cycle, any gap between what is perceived and what the testing shows tends to shrink because the church is increasingly in touch with its own health as an organism and where God is at work.

At the end of this phase you will have:

- A basic assessment of how the NCD Cycle process itself has gone.
- An initial review of the experiences of church life as a result of working on both weaknesses and strengths.
- A prediction as to what the next set of NCD Survey results will be.

#### 9.1.2 Basic test question

- What do we see?

In the Experience phase, the emphasis was on being in a position to see and appreciate what God is doing and be thankful. In this phase, the emphasis shifts to scrutinizing those experiences for what can be learned in order to become more effective in the partnership with God for healthy growth. It is about "seeing" with spiritual discernment.

#### 9.1.3 Biblical foundation

This phase highlights two interrelated biblical concepts as a basis for what it means to truly "see." In a practical sense, it is about pausing to reflect carefully on what is being experienced, i.e. taking a good hard look. However this can only be achieved with a God-given spiritual discernment with its foundations in a right heart which really wants to "see" and a readiness to respond in obedience. "Hard hearts" do not see, no matter how closely they scrutinize.

For full details of the biblical foundations of this phase see Appendix 3.



### 9.1.4 A 3 Colour Perspective

To get an overall perspective on the Perceiving phase in the context of the overall 3 *Colour Compass*, go to Appendix 4.

- The principal focus at this point in the Cycle is reflecting on the *transformation* in church life. The emphasis is on being intentionally *reflective*.
- The principal role of leaders in this phase is to discern and explain what has been occurring in church life. To do this effectively will require moving to the Test and Understand phases, but it begins in this phase with examining developments.

### 9.1.5 Warning: missing this phase or not doing it well

This is the hardest phase for leaders who:

- prefer the church to focus on activity rather than outcomes;
- are used to doing all the reflection on church life either because they do the visioning and planning, or because their people expect them to do it;
- like to keep everything under control; or
- have a predetermined view of how God will be at work in their church.

You may argue that all you need by way of reflection is the forthcoming NCD Survey results. Yes, it is highly accurate, and yes, it gives an objective picture of the church's current health from a representative sample of the congregation. What it doesn't give you is a body of stories, testimonies, events, encounters and insights that bring the story of church growth alive. A rich dynamic occurs when there are stories to match the statistics.

This phase brings an engagement with the congregation that can be missed if feedback is based purely on the NCD Survey or the perspectives of just a few. The church and its leaders need to keep learning how to "see" spiritually, in very practical terms identifying where God is at work among His people.

### 9.1.6 Who should be involved in this phase?

This phase should involve whoever is necessary to ensure a thorough review of the Cycle and what has occurred in church life over the past year. It is essential for the incumbent/priest in charge and elected leaders to be involved. They can then decide what additional assistance they need.

### 9.1.7 When to do this phase

This phase should be done in the final month of the year before repeating the NCD Survey.



## 9.2 Action Steps

There are three steps for working through this phase.

1. Assessing how the NCD Cycle process itself has gone.
2. Doing an initial review of the experiences in church life to discern where transformation has taken place.
3. Predicting what the next set of NCD Survey results will show.

### Step 1 – Assess how the NCD Cycle process itself has gone

It is essential to review the church leadership's experience of the past year at it has worked through the NCD Cycle process. For one thing, the capacity to do the Cycle in a thorough and balanced way has a direct influence on the health of the church. To know where the gaps and imbalances have been, and why, will make a significant difference to future results.

Beyond that, the Cycle process contains universal biblical principles that work together to strengthen the partnership between God and the church for the sustainable healthy growth. A weakness in one or more phases of the Cycle limits the functionality of the whole Cycle process in strengthening that partnership.

Appendix 16 offers a short assessment process for reviewing how well you worked through the Cycle. Use this in conjunction with the specific plans you developed (Appendix 12).

### Step 2 – Review the experiences of church life

The purpose of this exercise is to review people's experiences of church life over the past year to discern accurately where transformation has been occurring. To do this well you need feedback from across the church.

Ideally you set up a feedback process in the Plan phase (6.2.6) and already have a treasure trove of information to call upon. If not, it would be a good idea to make sure you set one up for the forthcoming cycle after the NCD Survey is repeated.

This step is neither onerous nor negative. People are being asked to recall experiences of church life so that these can be compared with the Survey results coming shortly. This will enable the leadership to perceive with much greater certainty not only how the health of the church is changing, but where and in whom God is at work producing that change.

It would be wise to pick a broad cross section of people for the review. In *3 Colour Compass* terms (see Section 3.4), you would choose a representative sample from the Red, Blue and Green zones.



Appendix 17 offers an approach for getting feedback. There may also be benefit from reviewing the questions at Appendix 11.

Be aware that with all processes of review, you may get additional feedback if people are also offered the opportunity to make some of their comments anonymous.

### **Step 3 – Predict what the next set of NCD Survey results will show**

By taking the time to predict what the next set of NCD Survey results will show, you test the degree to which the church leadership is tuning into where the church body is healthy, where it is less healthy, and where it is changing.

Appendix 18 outlines the exercise.



## **10. Conclusion of this Cycle**

### ***10.1 Unique international research and the pursuit of universal principles***

NCD remains the only truly universal, scientifically-validated research into what distinguishes healthy growing churches from those in decline, irrespective of country, culture or theological persuasion.

The foundation of the original NCD research and all that has followed subsequently is a passion for identifying and applying *universal principles*, i.e. principles that can be used by all churches, in all places, at all times to stimulate healthy growth. On this point Christian Schwarz will not yield one millimetre: “Not all that people claim to be principles are *universal* principles. These principles may be helpful for some churches in some places, but not all churches in all places. We must be clear on this.”

### ***10.2 More than a decade of proof***

In 1998, the question was regularly asked by church leaders, “This looks soundly based, it resonates strongly with my experience of church life, but does it work?” Our answer was, “Nothing to date has disproven the original international research by Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk at NCD International.”

After fifteen years of NCD continuing to grow internationally, this question is rarely asked. If it were, the answer would be, “Nothing to date has disproven the original international research by Christian Schwarz and Christoph Schalk at NCD International.”

Why mention this and say it in this way? Like all good scientific research, the findings are published as hypotheses, i.e. they acknowledge that there may be an instance in the future where further research either proves the initial research wrong or modifies it to some degree. To know that twelve years of additional international data has not in any way contradicted the original research findings should give every church leader huge confidence in NCD as a paradigm.

The issue is no longer the validity of the NCD principles, but how we give ourselves to understanding and applying them in church life. Yes, we can and should keep learning about the principles, but NCD’s value depends on increasingly effective implementation *processes* where those principles are put into action.

To say “NCD does not work” is really saying you haven’t yet grasped as a church how to apply the NCD principles effectively over the long term.



### ***10.3 Some advice from experience for moving ahead***

The foundations of NCD are strong; the key principles are there to be understood. The challenge is in learning to apply the principles. This has been the principal quest of Adam Johnstone (Director of NCD Australia) and Ian Campbell (NCD International) over many years. This manual is part of that quest and the following is advice to church leaders based on experience of working with hundreds of them at all levels. They come in no particular order and all are important.

1. *Partnership and Potential*: Think deeply about what it means to be invited by God to partner with Him to bring sustainable healthy growth in your church. Understand clearly that your role in that partnership is to maximize the potential for growth by identifying and removing barriers to growth consistently and in a timely fashion. This partnership lies at the core of the NCD Cycle process.
2. *Heart and Hope*: Do you have a heart for your people and a hope for the future? It is not possible to lead without either. You need to find both in Christ.
3. *Uniquely You*: Your church is a unique, dynamic, living organism whose health is constantly changing. To be effective in stimulating healthy growth, you need to learn where the organism is changing, why, and how to respond in a timely way.
4. *Impact of the Influencers*: Learn how to work effectively with those who have the greatest influence in the church. A church's NCD Survey results are always highly correlated with the spiritual health and preferences of its key influencers. If they are committed personally to addressing the areas of weakness every year, half the battle is won.
5. *Quality leads to Quantity*: Many church leaders in the NCD process talk about the priority of quality (growth in health), but still sub-consciously measure success by quantity (growth in numbers). Fine, just don't forget that to keep growing your church, you have to keep growing your people: the bottom line is spiritual health.
6. *Principles beat Programmes*: Running programmes is useful; implementing universal principles is essential. Study the foundations of NCD – the biblical principles, the Quality Characteristics, the six growth forces, and the phases of the Cycle. They should form a foundation for all the church's programmes, activities and events.
7. *Simplicity and Consistency*: Get into the habit of working through the NCD Cycle annually, consistently addressing each phase. It will help teach you the NCD principles. If you find aspects of a phase too complex to begin with, simplify, get some experience and do it with improved understanding next time around.
8. *Look long term for lasting change*: Many health issues in the church didn't emerge in the last year; they may not be addressed fully in the coming year. Indeed, many churches do not begin to wrestle with the most significant long term health issues until their third cycle. Keep surveying to measure what is happening and see it as a long term process of continuous improvement.



9. *Procrastination produces pain*: With health issues, timely intervention is vital. When ignored, small issues become large ones. A decision not to act is no less a decision. Avoidance, unwillingness to face reality, pushing things under the carpet, not wanting to take the hard decision and shifting responsibility to others all inevitably cause pain.
  
10. *The Ugly Unknown*: Curiously, some church leaders don't embark on the NCD process, or don't repeat the NCD Survey regularly, because they don't want to know whether the church's health under their leadership is improving or not. Is it better to know the health of your church or not?

## 10.4 Additional resources

While repeating the NCD Cycle process annually will reinforce the essentials of NCD, you should explore the NCD paradigm as fully as you are able. Here are some suggestions.

### 10.4.1 – Books

The following books by Christian A. Schwarz can be obtained from the Diocesan Offices:

- *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Characteristics of Healthy Churches* (2006 edition) – the original NCD “text” covering the original research; an introduction to twin pole (organic v organisational) thinking; and the biotic principles, now known as “growth forces.”
  
- *Paradigm Shift in the Church* – offers an extensive analysis of the theological foundations of NCD.
  
- *The 3 Colours of Leadership* - presents a new way of looking at leadership.. It portrays six fundamental leadership principles that anyone can learn and comes with an online test to help you develop your personalised training plan. Its focus is on the quality characteristic of *Empowering Leadership*.
  
- *The 3 Colours of Ministry* – offers a Trinitarian approach to identifying and developing your spiritual gifts. Its focus is on the quality characteristic *Gift-based Ministry*. Supplementary implementation resources are also available.
  
- *The 3 Colours of Love* – offers a Trinitarian approach to growing in the Fruit of the Spirit. Its focus is on the quality characteristic *Loving Relationships*. A supplementary implementation resource is also available.
  
- *The 3 Colours of Spirituality* – considers nine different spiritual styles which have enhanced engagement with God from a Trinitarian perspective. Its focus is on the quality characteristic *Passionate Spirituality*.



- *The 3 Colours of Community* – presents a new approach to small groups, applying seven qualities that all healthy communities have in common. Its focus is on the quality characteristic of *Holistic Small Groups*.

#### **10.4.2 – Warning about resources**

Remember that NCD is a paradigm, not a programme that is delivered to you complete. Being founded on universal principles, it has continued to develop as new understandings in thinking and practice have occurred over the past decade around the world. With this world-wide engagement, many resources have been produced which are NCD-specific or contain elements of NCD in the context of other church growth concepts and systems. Much of it is still available on the internet. Be aware that much of that material is based on a limited or dated knowledge of the NCD paradigm. So be careful.

Do not fall for the “programme trap,” the decision to go and find a ready-made solution to raising your Minimum Factor. The most critical element of the NCD Cycle process is that the church work hard to identify and address its specific health issues. This may or may not require an external resource.

If you have identified your barriers to growth and need additional resources, make sure that what you are buying helps you remove the specific barriers you have identified. Many resources need to be adapted to fit. For instance, you may have a Minimum Factor of Need-oriented Evangelism where a seven week course on “How to share the Gospel” would be a waste of time if the fundamental barrier is more about deficiencies in relationships inside the church than the ability of the church to reach its surrounding community.

#### **10.5 Questions**

If you have any questions contact the *Healthy Churches Development Mentor*, Tim Mitchell at [tim.mitchell@covcofe.org](mailto:tim.mitchell@covcofe.org)





## Appendices

### ***Appendix I: The Support Team***

#### **Does the leadership need assistance?**

There is no getting around the fact that the leadership team has to spend time regularly working through the issues raised during the NCD Cycle. Overall responsibility cannot be shifted onto others.

However it is possible for various tasks within the Cycle process to be delegated in order to save time. This might include:

- Facilitating congregational discussion and gaining feedback about the Survey results, e.g. with the leadership, the key influencers, those who completed the questionnaires, and those whose ministries are impacted by the Minimum Factor.
- Working with the leadership to develop the plan to address the health barriers identified and strengthen areas that are currently healthy.
- Monitoring developments during implementation, devising feedback strategies, and keeping leadership advised.
- Developing expertise in the NCD paradigm, with practical insights being presented to the leadership.

The team does no more or less than what is agreed to by the leadership.

#### **How many people should be on it?**

Keep it to three or four, no more.

#### **What gifts, skills and abilities would be of value?**

The criteria for selecting such people should be:

- positive and cooperative with a heart to see the church grow;
- respected by the leadership;
- comfortable questioning the status quo but without bringing their own agenda;
- well organized and able to keep the leadership focused;
- creative and innovative thinkers; and
- interested in learning about NCD and what it can do for the church.

The danger is ending up with a group that is heavily biased towards one or two phases of the Cycle, making it difficult to do the process well. For example, you don't want a group



who collectively focuses on the Perceive and Test phases, or the Plan and Do phases, to the exclusion of all others. The *NCD Colour Profile* in *Colour Your World with Natural Church Development* by Christian A. Schwarz will help you form a balanced team (see Section 3.4).

### **Authority of the team**

The authority of the team depends on what is agreed with the leadership. That said, the leadership must retain full responsibility for implementing the NCD process. It should also encourage the support team regularly to fulfil its role.

### **What commitment should team members make?**

At least twelve months, i.e. one full cycle of the NCD process from one NCD Survey to the completion of the next, preferably longer if they perform the role well. The leadership must ensure that other duties do not prevent team members giving the NCD process their fullest attention.

### **How often would the team meet?**

Whatever it takes to complete the agreed tasks for each phase of the Cycle and keep the leadership focused on moving through the Cycle and addressing the issues. It is important that it doesn't meet for the sake of having meetings.



## **Appendix 2: The Role of the Mentor**

### **What you need to help you through the Cycle**

Many churches have people with the sorts of skills needed to work effectively through the Cycle, e.g. facilitation, gathering and distilling feedback, doing diagnoses of issues, developing plans, etc. You should consider can get these onto the support team. What it comes down to is identifying where the leadership feels it will have difficulty doing a particular phase of the Cycle well, and seeking help accordingly.

Whoever you have on your team the Diocese will provide a Mentor to assist you through all of the phases of the Cycle.

#### Test Phase:

- The Mentor can give a preliminary presentation to the leadership or congregation prior to doing the NCD Survey. And help you prepare for the survey
- The Mentor would normally be available to come and facilitate the completion of the Survey itself. They will provide the necessary forms and arrange for the completed forms to be taken for processing afterwards.

#### Understand Phase:

- The Mentor, who is familiar with the *NCD Result Guides* detailed analysis will help you identify the key health issues. This may involve a presentation to leadership. Avoid the situation where the Mentor does the analysis for the leadership; their role is to facilitate the leadership's discovery, understanding and ownership of the issues.
- It should not fall to the Mentor to present the overall results, or the findings of the leadership, to the congregation.
- Once the results have been presented, it may be of benefit to have the Mentor gain feedback from the congregation on the issues presented. This most often works best in smaller groups. The larger the group the more difficult it is for everyone to make their contribution.

#### Plan Phase:

- It is very beneficial to have the Mentor help the leadership devise the action plan to address the key issues identified. Once again, it should not be that person's responsibility to come up with the ideas for the plan.



#### Do and Experience Phases:

- The Mentor will seek to encourage the leadership in the fulfilling of their plan, staying focused on working through the Cycle process, and answering questions regarding NCD as they arise. This could be anything from a quarterly phone call with the incumbent/priest in charge through to regular meetings with the leadership and support team. Agree what you think you need.

#### Perceive Phase:

- It is beneficial to have the Mentor facilitate a review of what has taken place during the Cycle prior to the completion of the next Survey.

### **Who should you do?**

The Diocese will help you identify the right Mentor for your church who has the skills and experience to do the specific task within the Cycle process. Clearly some of those tasks require specific NCD skills and experience (e.g. debriefing NCD Result Guides), some don't.

Even though the Mentor is there to assist you, it is important that you make the effort to understand the Cycle process yourself. Many churches discover that they are able to work through many of the issues on their own. The purpose of this manual is to help church leaders be largely self-sufficient. That said, if you find you need help at any point in the Cycle, do your best to find it without delay.

### **Questions?**

If you have any questions about Mentors contact Tim Mitchell at the Diocesan Office, email [tim.mitchell@covcofe.org](mailto:tim.mitchell@covcofe.org)



### **Appendix 3: The NCD Cycle – some biblical concepts**

The purpose of the biblical research was to explore each Cycle phase to see if it reflected particular biblical principles. These principles would then inform how each phase might be understood and acted upon practically in accordance with God's will.

In exploring the biblical concepts, there was no need to force the phases together to make a coherent whole. In fact, the opposite occurred. There was not only a striking unity, but the sense that truly understanding the biblical imperatives of each phase propelled one from one phase to the next.

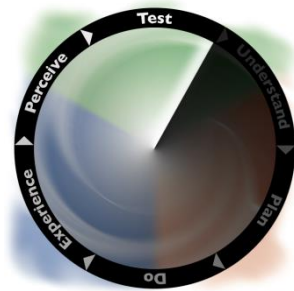
The purpose of outlining the biblical concepts is not to prove the efficacy of the NCD Cycle itself. Rather, it is to reinforce the message that *principles* should inform *process*. It speaks to the *why* rather than the *how*. Therefore, in working through each Cycle phase, it is vital to be thinking constantly about how the underlying biblical principle(s) give direction to action.

What follows is just a starting point. I have not attempted to give a full outline of relevant material. You need to go and do further study. No doubt you will make your own discoveries, draw your own inferences, and reach your own conclusions. If it leads you to exploring God's Word in the context of partnering with Him in very practical ways to grow a healthier church, this introduction has done its job.

The words in italics are transliterations of the Greek New Testament or Hebrew Old Testament.



## TESTING



### Biblical concepts

- *dokismos* – tested, proved genuine, reliable
- *dokimazo* – to test
- *adokismos* – not standing the test, disqualified, worthless

### God tests us

- God tests our work (1 Cor 3:13); faith (Jas 1:12); hearts and minds (Jer 11:20); and obedience (Deut 8:2).
- God allows us to be tested in order to refine us (Rom 5:3-4; Jas 1:2-4; 1 Pet 1:6-7; 2 Cor 8:2; Gen 22:1; Psa 66:10; Jer 9:7).
- What we do proves (attests) to the genuineness of our faith (2 Cor 8:8,22; 9:12-13).

### We are to test

- Ourselves – 2 Cor 13:5; motives (1 Cor 11:28); actions (Gal 6:4); obedience (2 Cor 2:9).
- Especially our understanding of God's will and what pleases Him (Rom 12:2; Phil 1:9-11; Eph 5:9-10).
- Our environment, 'the times' (Lk 12:56; 1 Thes 5:21; 1 Jn 4:1).

### Overall

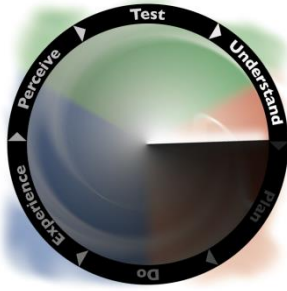
"Testing" sits in an eschatological context: God tests our faith and allows us to be tested so that on the last day we won't be found wanting. So we should test ourselves and our surroundings. Why? To ensure we are not being deceived by ourselves, the world or the devil.

Also, testing involves our active engagement in the refining of our faith. So we should be continuously testing what we are perceiving, and testing what we are doing, to ensure we are growing in our understanding of God's will and acting accordingly. What we do reflects who we are in Christ. Our fruitfulness in contributing to kingdom growth depends on rigorous testing.

In Philippians, Paul puts testing in the context of perception, knowledge of God's will, and ultimately fruitfulness (1:9-11):

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern [test] what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God."

We are to prove the validity, perseverance and fruitfulness of our faith. Testing ties in closely with perceiving and is a key to transformation.



## UNDERSTANDING

### Biblical concepts

- *yada* (OT) – know – (as related to God) God reveals himself to us such that we can have a relationship with Him, know His purposes and act accordingly
- *ginosko* (NT) – (generally) “intelligent comprehension” that comes from observation; (specifically) the foundation of all true knowledge is God’s revelation of himself, especially in Christ

### Old Testament – *yada* – to know

- Encountering God in His revelatory works and responding is the foundation of all true knowledge. So “knowledge of God” and “fear of God” are closely linked; “you shall know that I am Yahweh” (54 times in Ezekiel).
- Knowing God in His revelation makes relationship possible and commitment to that relationship is reflected in right action (Jer 4:22; 22:16).
- It is not about theoretical understanding but practical judgment. Heart, mind and works are inseparable. True knowledge of God is demonstrated by obedient acknowledgement.

### New Testament – *ginosko* – to know

- General sense: the “intelligent ordering of the mind” that comes from observing, reflecting, investigating and judging. Knowledge comes from “objective verification” (see Testing).
- True knowledge is a gift of God in Christ (1 Cor 1:5; Phil 3:8-11; Gal 4:8-9); Christ knows us so we can hear him and therefore obey him (John 10; His commands – 14:15; bear fruit – Jn 15; 1 Jn 2:3-6; 4:7-8).
- True knowledge always leads to practical outcomes (Col 1:9-13; Phil 1:9-12; Tit 1:1).
- Failure to respond to the understanding that God reveals brings judgment (Rom 1:28-32; 2:7-8; 2 Tim 3:7; Heb 10:26; 2 Pet 2:21). Essentially it shows lack of true knowledge.

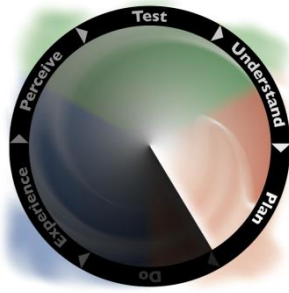
### Overall

God does not leave us wondering who He is and what His will is for us. In our relationship with God in Christ, knowledge, intention/will and activity are all integrated. Perceiving and testing our experiences of God’s work in our lives must culminate in a growing understanding of the nature and purposes of God which compels us to act. Gaining head knowledge about God is insufficient; our actions must keep changing to reflect our increasing understanding.

In Colossians, Paul links knowledge of God’s will with right action which results in fruitfulness and an ongoing growth in the knowledge of God (1:9-10):

“...and we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.”

A growing understanding of God should always compel new action reflecting that understanding. This is the only path to more abundant life and increasing fruitfulness.



## PLANNING

### Biblical Concepts

- Old Testament – the process of deliberation that results in action; it is related to wisdom
- New Testament – *boule* – free decision of the will with the resolve to carry it out; *boulomai* – to will, determine, choose

### Old Testament

- The concept is less about a plan than the act of planning, that is, strategizing a way forward that *will* be acted upon. A plan is not a plan if it isn't executed. Planning connects to the will.
- God plans (Jer 29:11; Is 25:1); what He plans happens (Is 14:26-27; 37:26; 46:10); and His plans always prevail over human ones (Prov 19:21; Ps 33:10-11; Is 8:10).
- So we should always align our plans with God's or they will fail (Is 30:1).
- Effective planning depends on the wisdom that comes from knowledge of God's will. God's people must rely on His Spirit (Is 11:2-3) and on wise counsel (Prov 15:21-22; 20:18).
- Lack of knowledge obscures the capacity to see God's plans (Job 38:2).
- The process must be one of careful deliberation. Proverbs 21:5 is most instructive here:

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to want.”

Being diligent – *harus* (root *haras*) – relates making a decision to the idea of “cutting or sharpening”, that is, the idea of weighing things up and making a decision (cut) which one is determined to carry through (cannot be uncut). Soberly, the “cutting” is reflected in the consequences – God's abundant blessing or God's judgment; fruitfulness or fruitlessness.

### New Testament

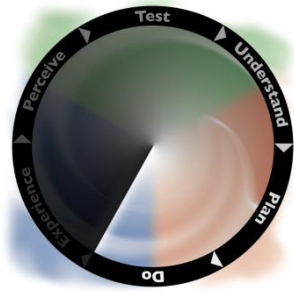
- Planning is a process of refining and shaping the will which leads inevitably to action.
- God's plans always work out in accordance with His will (Eph 1:11; Acts 2:23; 4:28).
- The success or otherwise of our plans depend on alignment with God's plans (Acts 5:38-39).
- Planning rests on a free will choice to understand God's purposes and obey, exemplified in Jesus (Lk 22:42) and the Pharisees (Lk 7:30). (See also Jas 4:4; 3:4.)

### Overall

Planning is the natural next step arising from a growing understanding of God's will, particularly as true knowledge is proven by obedient acknowledgement. Planning is the deliberate intention – the free decision of the will – to define a course of action in accordance with God's will.

Planning therefore requires careful *deliberation* and *diligence*, resulting in *decisiveness*, and the *determination* to execute faithfully the decisions reached.





## DOING

### Biblical Concept

The principal idea here relates not to activity but to the outcomes resulting from living “fruitful lives” and “doing the word.”

- *karpos* – fruit
- *akarpos* – fruitless, barren, unproductive
- *karpophoreo* – to bear fruit

### Bearing fruit for the kingdom

- We are to live (do) fruitful lives. The signature reference is John 15: we are to bear fruit (15:16a); do so in Christ (15:4-5); bear much fruit (15:8); bear fruit which lasts (15:16b); be increasingly fruitful (15:2); and avoid being fruitless (15:2a, 6).
- God ultimately gives the fruit (Mark 4:28) so our fruitfulness depends on our relationship with Christ (John 15:4-5,7) and our knowledge of God’s will (Col 1:9-12).
- Scripture provides a clear contrast between good fruit and bad/no fruit. By their fruit you will know them (Matt 3:8-10; 7:16-20; Luke 6:43-45).
- You reap what you sow (Gal 6:7; Rom 6:20-23; also Hos 10:13; Jer 6:19; Jas 3:18).
- Fruitlessness comes from choking off the word (Mark 4:19), not abiding in Christ (John 15), living in darkness not light (Eph 5:8-13), being caught up in the world (Matt 13:22). Accordingly, it brings judgment (Luke 3:8-9; 13:6-8; John 15:2,6), with preference given to those who do produce fruit over those who do not (Matt 21:43, see also 25:14-30).
- Consequently there must be a deliberate determination to live fruitful lives, e.g. living by the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), living “productive” lives (Tit 3:14; 2 Pet 1:5-9). And do so with patient endurance in acknowledgement that bearing fruit often takes time (Luke 8:15).

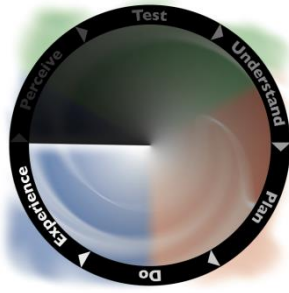
### James – “doing the word”

- James grasps clearly that true knowledge of God is exemplified by obedient acknowledgment. Listening without doing is to deceive yourself (1:22-25).
- Faith without works is worthless (2:14,20,26).
- To know the right thing and not do it is a sin (2:12-17).

### Overall

We see in this phase the logical extension of understanding God’s will and then planning to act on that understanding. “Being” and “doing” are indivisible. It is more than simply executing a particular plan. In reality, planning is a continuous deliberation to align our will with God’s as our understanding of Him grows. Three significant issues emerge.

- It is a fatal mistake to think that activity of itself pleases God, no matter how good the intentions.
- The growth in life and the measure of fruitfulness God gives is not proportionate to our efforts. Our partnership with God in growing His kingdom does not involve a transaction: we do X, so God does Y. It is all of grace. However, God’s nature is to give abundantly and if we do our part, we can expect to experience greater life and increasing fruitfulness.
- Implicitly, we should be able to measure that increasing fruitfulness.



## EXPERIENCING

### Biblical Concept

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

What does it mean to expect and experience the abundant life?

- *perisseuo* – abundance, more than enough, over and above
- *hyperperisseuo* – to super abound, profuse

### The Old Testament

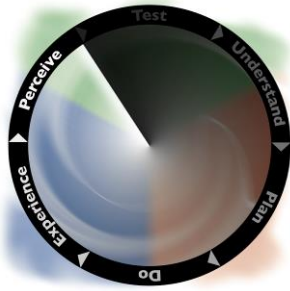
- At the heart of God’s relationship with His people is the choice of life or death, demonstrated in faith and action (Deut 30:11-20).
- God is the giver of life (Isa 44:3; Eze 39:27ff; Zech 12:10; Joel 2:28-32), but God’s people should not presume upon His grace if they continue to act in ways not according to His will (Jer 10:25; Eze 20:8; Hos 5:10).
- God’s people should see that what He offers them is good (Psa 34:8) and that faithfulness and obedience are rewarded (Job 42:10-17; Gen 15:6; Mal 3:10-12).
- The age of salvation, finding its fulfilment in Christ, promises to be one of abundance (Amos 9:13-15; Isa 65:17-25).

### The New Testament

- The abundant life is found in Jesus, and only in him (John 10:10; 14:6). The acts of Jesus themselves represent the abundant life that comes with the age of salvation (Matt 14:20-21 par).
- At the heart of our experience of the abundant life is God’s grace in Christ: it overflows (Rom 5:15,20); is lavished upon us (Eph 1:7-8); and is seen in God doing in, through and around us more than we could ask or imagine (Eph 3:20).
- The experience of the abundant life comes in the receiving and living out of this grace:
  - To love God and love one’s neighbour is the pinnacle of action; there is nothing greater [*perissoteron*] than these (Mark 12:33).
  - The abundant life comes from giving yourself fully (abundantly) to serving, whatever the circumstances (1 Cor 15:58; 2 Cor 8:1-7; 1 Thes 3:12; 4:1,10). Using fully what you have been given results in you being given even more (Matt 13:12; 25:29).
  - The evidence of the abundant life is: an attitude of thankfulness (Col 2:6-7; 2 Cor 4:15); knowing God is meeting your needs whatever the circumstances, so you can be generous (2 Cor 9:6-15; 1:5; 12:7-10); an overflowing hope (Rom 15:13); a growing knowledge of God’s will lived out (Phil 1:9-11); and a church strengthened and growing (Acts 16:5).
  - The abundant life is not about an abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15) but contentedness in every situation (Phil 4:12)

### Overall

This phase is a reminder that whatever we do in our partnership with God in growing His kingdom, it all begins and ends with grace. He calls us by grace through Christ (an abundant act in itself) and then responds in grace to what we do by giving us more than we could ask or imagine. Our willingness to perceive this abundant grace and respond “abundantly” lies at the heart of an ongoing transformation to greater abundance and increasing fruitfulness.



happening spiritually

## PERCEIVING

### Biblical concepts

- *noeo* – to direct one’s mind to discern, reflect, scrutinize
- *katanoeo* – critical examination, ponder, study so as to comprehend
- *blepo* – in this context, a God-given capacity to “see” what is

### **noeo – to think**

*Noeo* is about the mind but never divorced from the “heart”:

- Inner orientation or moral attitude (Rom 1:28; Eph 4:17; Col 2:18; 1 Tim 6:5; Tit 1:15).
- Capacity to perceive what God is doing; impacted by hardness of heart (Matt 16:1-17).
- Perceiving is a work of the Spirit enabling right judgments (1 Cor 2:6-16).

There is a strong connection between perceiving and the will. It is not about mere contemplation but growing in knowledge of God through seeing Him at work, which results in right conduct.

### **katanoeo – to examine critically**

*Katanoeo* is the more intensive form of *noeo*:

- Scrutinize behaviour closely and learn the lesson (Jas 1:22-24; Lk 6:41).
- Observing the way the world works – the facts and processes – reveals something of the nature of God and how He works (Lk 12:24,27; Acts 7:31-32).

Right perception is grounded in an intentional and detailed analysis of what is really happening with a view to understanding more of God and of self and taking action. Knowledge is bound to conduct. (Note that *metanoeo* – the act of repentance – is in the same word group.)

### **blepo – to see**

*Blepo* has the basic meaning of “seeing” but is also used metaphorically for discernment.

- Explore the use of the word in Mk 4:12, where Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. These verses link together four Hebrew words providing excellent context for Jesus’ message and what it really takes to perceive:
  - *shāma’* – true listening, “effective hearing” (versus defective hearing!)
  - *tēbūnâ* – comprehending; the capacity to discern between good and evil
  - *rā’â* – having the eyes to see, compared with “hardening the heart” (closed eyes)
  - *yāda’* – the knowledge of God that comes from “contemplative perception”; it is the basis of true wisdom; doing right demonstrates knowledge of God

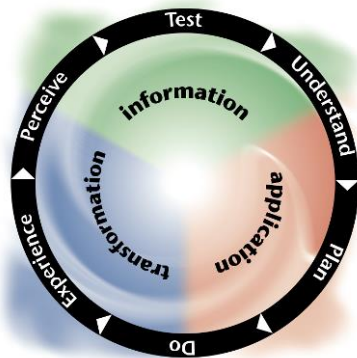
### **Overall**

Perceiving God at work requires: a willingness to scrutinize carefully what is happening around us; a preparedness to look critically at ourselves; a heart that wants to really “see”; and a readiness to respond obediently. True understanding and wisdom depend on accurate perception.

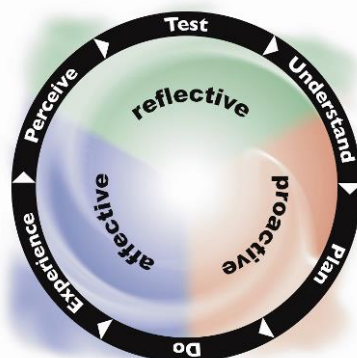


## Appendix 4: The 3 Colour Compass – overview diagrams

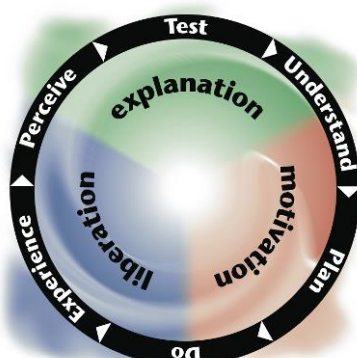
The process of achieving healthy growth is not limited to working on the key issues. It is about having a balanced Cycle process. Christian Schwarz talks of “radical balance” which in this context means growing to do all parts of the process well. For each diagram consider the descriptions of each zone and how they relate to the associated phases of the Cycle.



- *Information* – this is not about more information but the right information, i.e. specific, objective information on the unique health issues your church faces right now.
- *Application* – a clear understanding of the church’s issues must produce a considered, targeted, practical response.
- *Transformation* – addressing the key issues in partnership with God yields increasing fruitfulness which can be observed.



- *Reflective* – there is a need to take a break regularly from the “doing” to really see what’s happening and how things must be done differently to keep stimulating growth.
- *Proactive* – times of reflection are only beneficial if you get to work on the new understandings in a consistent, focused way.
- *Affective* – spiritual growth is not principally about “doing things better” but appreciating fully a growing relationship with God through Christ.



- *Explanation* – empowering leaders know the importance of keeping abreast of the church’s issues, knowing what God’s will is, and explaining both to the people with action in mind.
- *Motivation* – empowering leaders know the importance of a personal faith that helps them lift the sights of the people, so they have the courage to address the key issues.
- *Liberation* – empowering leaders know the importance of growing their people by releasing and encouraging them “to do the works of service.”



## **Appendix 5: Test Phase – initial reactions to the results**

Turn to the NCD Result Guides and consider the following prompts. Try not to get into any great detail or to think about how you might take action. This will be taken care of in the next two Cycle phases. The purpose here is purely to help you gauge your initial reactions.

- What are your immediate thoughts, feelings or reflections about the overall profile?
- What particular Quality Characteristic result(s) surprised you? Why?
- What particular Quality Characteristic result(s) did not surprise you? Why?
- Do you see yourself, other leaders or church members in the results anywhere?
- As you browse through the graphs for each Quality Characteristic, note down any result that grabs your attention or provokes a particularly strong response, whether positive or negative. Make a short note as to why such a strong response occurred.
- If you were tempted to take action immediately before considering the full implications of the results, what would you be doing and why?
- Can you say about the overall profile: “This is our church”? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- What does this short period of reflection tell you about what you think is important for the ongoing life, health and growth of the church?



## **Appendix 6: Test Phase – perceptions of the past year**

The purpose of this exercise is to lay a brief foundation for the Test phase where the church's results will be explored fully and systematically. If you have completed your second or subsequent Survey, you will have covered these issues in the Perceive phase as you completed your last Cycle. You may still find it of value to work through the questions.

To some extent these questions overlap, using different language to explore similar themes. Answer the questions which make most sense to you.

As you reflect on the church over the past year:

- Where have you seen God at work transforming the lives of people? What specific examples come to mind? What effect has this had on church life?
- Where have you seen signs of fruitfulness or greater fruitfulness for the Kingdom? How would you describe that "fruit"?
- Where have you seen effort which bore no discernible "fruit"? Why didn't it?
- What decisions, programmes, activities or events contributed to healthy growth? What specific outcomes support your conclusions?
- What decisions, programmes, activities or events did not produce the expected outcomes? Why?
- In what ways do the NCD Survey results reflect the beliefs, preferences, attitudes, skills or gifts of the elected leaders and key influencers?
- Where did people feel motivated to contribute to church life? Was this the result of specific empowering and equipping by the leadership?
- Is your assessment of these issues essentially qualitative (health) or quantitative (numbers), or a combination of the two?
- Would you say the church is more or less healthy than this time last year? What specific occurrences can you identify to support that conclusion?
- Who in church life would agree or disagree with your conclusions to the questions above? Why?

Summing up your reflections: what questions would you like to ask others as you begin to marry your perceptions of church life with a more detailed look at the NCD Survey results?



## **Appendix 7: Understand Phase – the basics of the NCD Result Guides**

### **Beginning with some basic facts about the NCD Result Guides**

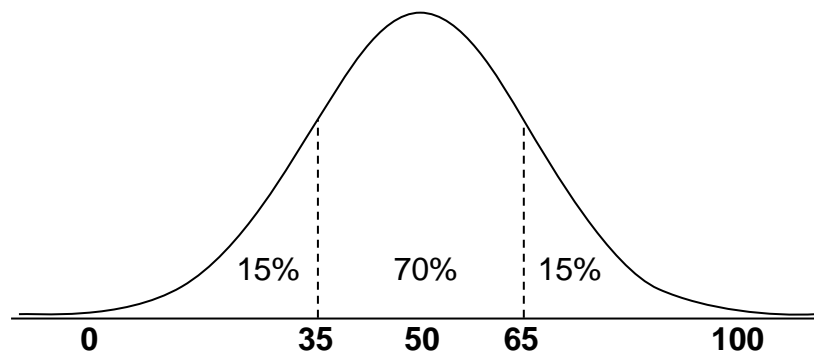
- The NCD Result Guides provide a snapshot of your church's health at the time the NCD Survey is done. Aspects of the health of the church will be different at times on either side of the Survey; the health of the church never stands still.
- The NCD Result Guides measure the effectiveness of *all* that takes place in church life, not just the results of working on NCD issues. Your next NCD Survey results will not only measure the impact of work to address key health issues as you have worked through the Cycle, but the consequences of *all* decisions, programmes, activities and events on the life of the people between now and then.
- The NCD Result Guides can contain up to *four* sets of NCD Survey results. Not only do you receive an accurate snapshot every year, but from the second Survey onwards there are change charts where you can see exactly how the church's health is changing. Over time this helps your effectiveness in diagnosing the key issues and gives you significant predictive capacity, increasing the power of the NCD Result Guides enormously.
- Being based on the NCD Survey, the NCD Result Guides is not what somebody outside the church thinks of your church's health. You have an accurate representative sample of what *your people* think about the church if the people who completed the NCD Survey were chosen according to the specified criteria.
- The NCD Result Guides questions are taken directly from the NCD Survey. These questions have been proven to distinguish healthy growing churches from those in decline (according to international statistical standards). Simply put, if you have a higher result, church activity is contributing to healthy growth; if you have a lower result, it is contributing to what is impeding healthy growth.
- Each result relates to the adjective of the Quality Characteristic with which it is associated. For example, all the questions for Empowering Leadership relate to the *empowering* nature of leadership. The higher these results are, the more the leadership is empowering; the lower the results, the more the leadership is disempowering. Greater empowerment contributes to greater health; greater disempowerment increases blockages to healthy growth.

### **What do the numbers mean?**



Misunderstanding the numbers on the graphs is a barrier to understanding what the results are really saying. You must ensure all who are working on the results understand what the numbers mean before going on to explore the issues. Here are some clues to interpreting them:

- The numbers are not percentages but standardized scores. There is no pass or fail.
- The Institute's software uses a standardization formula to convert the raw scores from the questionnaires completed by the congregation to the results shown on the profile. This standardization formula sets the country's "average" at 50. In other words, the "average" church would score 50 for each Quality Characteristic and for each of the individual questions.
- The standardization itself is built on a national database of churches to give the profile greater contextual accuracy. In other words, the health of your church is measured against other churches in the country. This database covers a wide spectrum of churches – different denominations and movements, traditions, liturgical styles, theological positions, locations, leadership, etc.
- The standardization has three main categories for scoring the results:
  - 70% of churches in the country will score between 35 and 65.
  - 15% of churches will score less than 35.
  - 15% of churches will score more than 65.It is possible to score less than 0 and more than 100, though this is rare.



- When you look at any graph on the NCD Result Guides, you will notice three horizontal lines at 35, 50 and 65. These reflect the three main reference points from the diagram above. They help you get perspective: above 50 is above average; below 50 is below average; above 65 is very healthy; and below 35 is very unhealthy.
- The numbers are comparable. You might think that you are comparing apples and oranges when you put, say, Empowering Leadership and Loving Relationships alongside each other. However the statistical foundations are such that the numbers do offer a reliable relative indicator of the health of individual areas.





## Negatively-phrased Questions

You will notice some questions are negatively-phrased and are tagged with a (*neg*). Such questions are commonly included in longer surveys to slow down those completing the questionnaire and thus increase statistical accuracy.

These questions appear in the NCD Result Guides exactly as they appear in the questionnaire. In order to graph these alongside the positively-phrased questions in the NCD Result Guides, the statistical results were *reversed* rather than try to re-word the questions.

In reading these results, you may wish to re-phrase the question by adding a “not” (or equivalent phrasing) at the end of the question.

Alternatively you can think about the question in the context of the *adjective* of the Quality Characteristic with which it is associated. For example, consider the following question in Empowering Leadership: “*The leaders of our church prefer to do the work themselves rather than collaborate with others (neg)*” Logic says that if leaders try to do it all themselves it dis-empowers the congregation, so a low result will occur. If leaders do *not* prefer to do the work themselves, this contributes to empowering the congregation, so a higher result occurs.

If that is all too difficult, just remember this: *the higher the result, the healthier it is*, irrespective of whether it is a positively or negatively-phrased question.

## The Min-Max Difference number – a look at sustainability

On the front page of NCD Result Guides you will see the Min-Max Difference number. As the term suggests, this is the difference between your Minimum Factor (least healthy characteristic) and your Maximum Factor (most healthy characteristic). It is a measure of the sustainability of your overall result.

For example, if you have an average result for your eight Quality Characteristics of 45 with a Min-Max Difference number of 10, your average is more sustainable than if you had a Min-Max Difference number of 20. Why is this?

Think of the Quality Characteristics as eight “health systems” of the church body. They are all essential for the healthy growth of the body. If the body’s health is to be sustainable, they should be in balance and working well together. Large differences between the health of these “systems” indicates the body is out of balance and therefore at risk.

One might use the example of going to the gym. If you have a strong muscular system (Maximum Factor) but a weak heart (Minimum Factor), pushing hard on the weights without first paying attention to appropriate cardio exercises first can be disastrous.



The goal, therefore, is to ensure that the body is in balance, with all eight areas functioning well together. When this happens, the Min-Max Difference number comes down over time, and the overall result is more sustainable.

So what are “good” and “bad” Min-Max Difference numbers? In NCD statistical terms, a difference of 15 points between one result and another indicates a significant qualitative difference in health. On that basis, the following is a reasonable guide.

- 0-15 points – good level of sustainability (church body balance is good to excellent)
- 15-30 points – significant sustainability issues present (church body balance is fair to poor)
- 30+ points – unsustainable (church body is highly unbalanced)

### **The “Gravity” of the Minimum Factor**

The sustainability issues surrounding the Min-Max Difference point to another issue that has emerged through experience – the “gravity” of the Minimum Factor.

In some church growth circles the argument has been put that churches should focus on their strengths. This “Maximum Factor” approach is not inherently wrong unless it involves ignoring the least healthy area of church life (Minimum Factor).

With NCD, all eight Quality Characteristics are essential for a healthy growing church. You cannot choose some and ignore others. The purpose of the Minimum Factor approach is to ensure that the church continues to focus on the body as a whole, strengthening those areas that are not as strong as others. This keeps the body in balance.

It has been shown through experience that if the Minimum Factor is not addressed, it will ultimately pull down the other Quality Characteristics (hence the term “gravity”).

This is also true of individual questions within Quality Characteristics. Over time some churches have seen significant progress in a range of questions across a Quality Characteristic, but the result for one particular question has either not moved or has in fact gone backwards. The overall result for the Quality Characteristic may have risen, but as the gap widens between the results for the questions going up and the one that has remained low, sustainability is threatened and ultimately the low result pulls the others back down.

To see a particular question stay down over time as others improve is usually an indication that there is a deeper barrier to growth within the life of the church that has either not been identified, or has been identified but not addressed effectively.



## Growth Projection

Two growth projection charts are provided to give you a perspective on what might happen to the size of your church as you address issues of health. Both use the results of 55,000 NCD Surveys internationally to consider the *potential* growth path based on your church's current attendance and health over a number of years. The following is a sample.

Chart 1 – Projected attendance growth if current NCD average is maintained

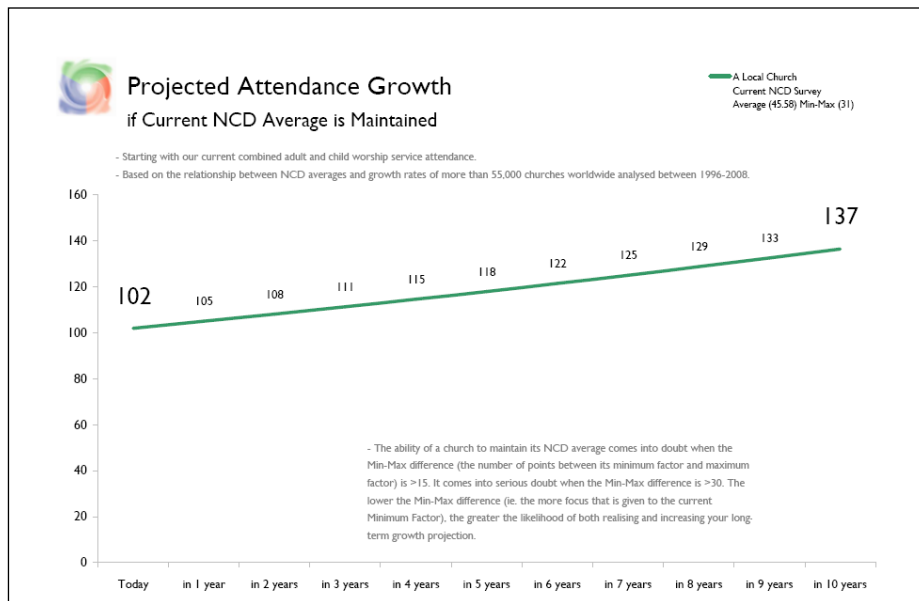
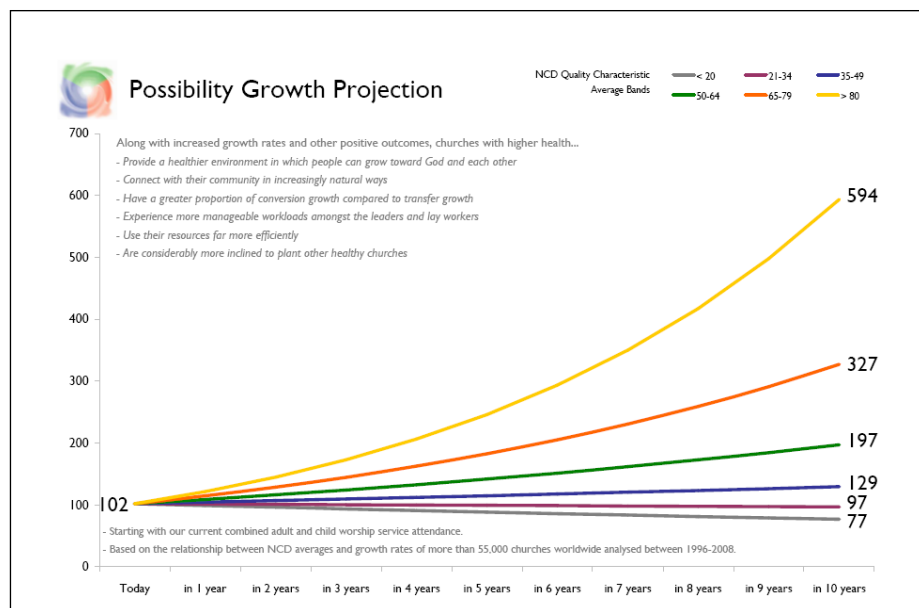


Chart 2 – Possibility growth projection if current average increases or decreases



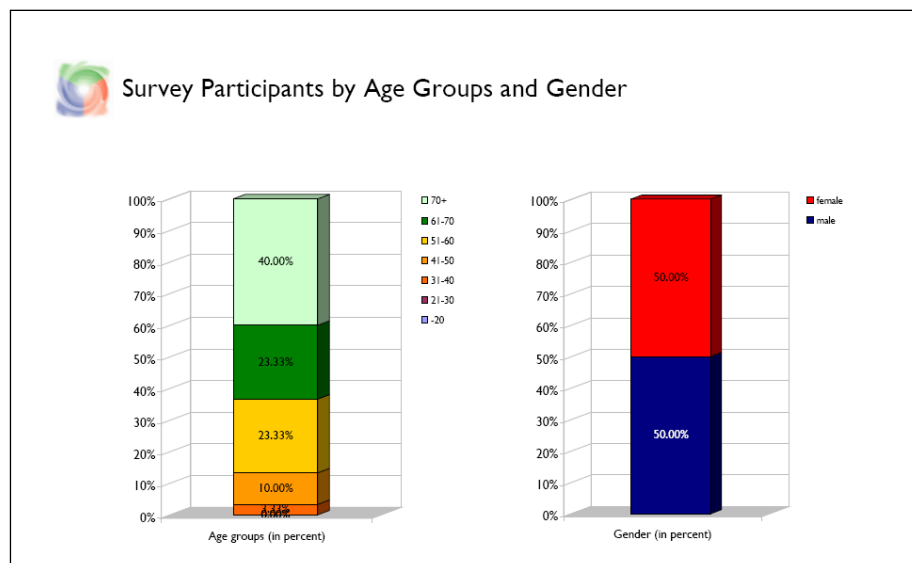


Although these charts arise from a calculation based on a large volume of data from churches around the world, you need to exercise caution:

- The graphs assume the church will *maintain* particular levels of health over the period.
- If your charts show you can expect growth, do not think you can simply keep doing ministry the same way for the next ten years. There is no such thing as plateau in church health: decisions and actions taken *now* will lead to future growth or decline in the average. Barriers must be constantly identified and removed.
- The graphs demonstrate that growth in numbers *can* be exponential, but the size of that growth is small in the first few years. Avoid expecting a significant jump in church size in any one year just because you may have achieved a significant increase in the overall average.

Why include these graphs? They demonstrate unequivocally that there is a connection between health and numbers, so they act as an incentive to keep working at increasing and sustaining your church's health over the long term.

## Demographic Information



These graphs are helpful in many ways. Here are a few:

- They tell you whether you achieved a broad cross-section of church life when selecting the Survey participants. If you did get a broad cross-section, it says something about the demographics of the church as a whole.
- People's perceptions of church life are influenced by age and gender.
- They offer insights into the way leadership should be exercised.
- They speak both to the likelihood for inertia and the pace at which change can be effected.



## Appendix 8: Understand Phase – NCD Result Guides methodology sample

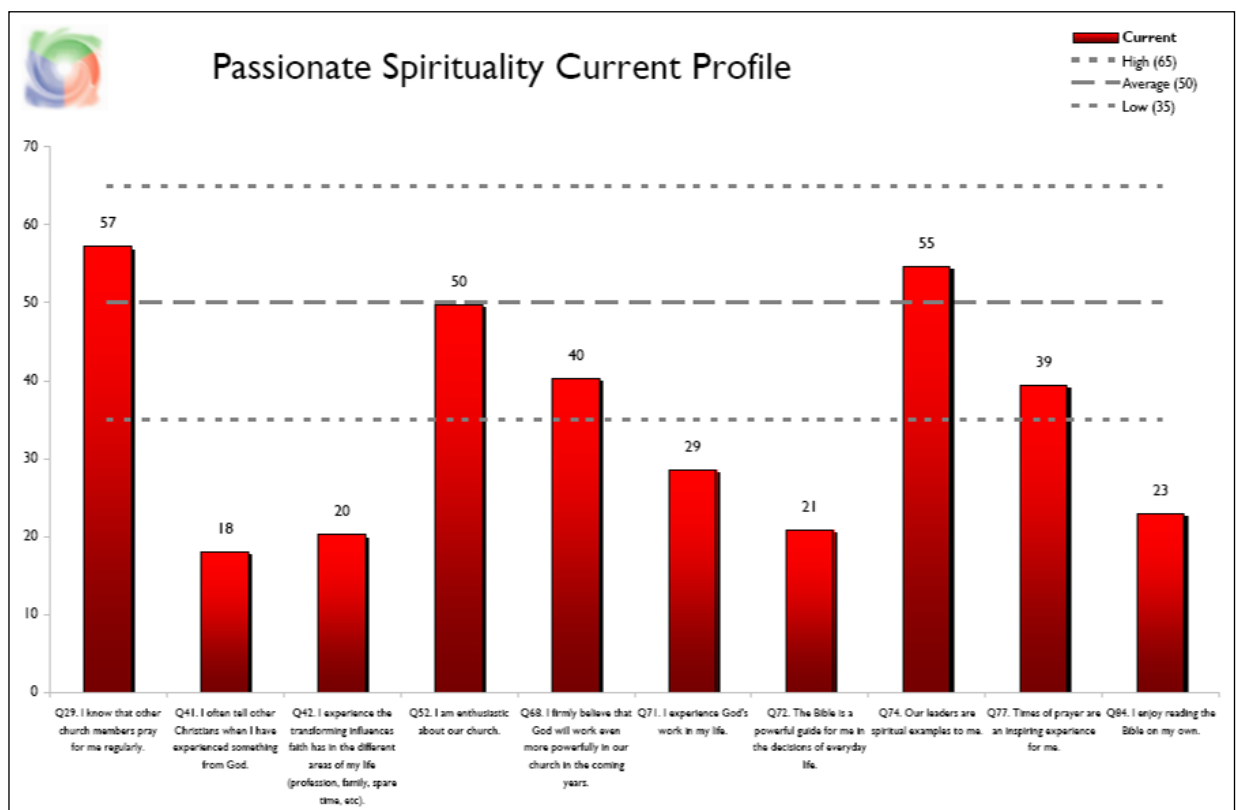
This appendix illustrates the NCD Result Guides methodology. It is not a comprehensive analysis. Rather, it demonstrates the main steps required to analyze strengths and weaknesses. The graphs are taken from a sample NCD Result Guides church profile. The themes identified are illustrative only. Your church may have similar results but entirely different issues.

Apologies for the size of the print on the graphs but there are space limitations. To read the questions you can simply refer to the corresponding graph in your own NCD Result Guides.

### I. Identify the major themes by looking at combinations of results

Begin by looking at the Minimum Factor graph, which in the sample is Passionate Spirituality.

#### I.1 Looking within a Quality Characteristic



Potential Theme #1: *People are having difficulty seeing how God is at work in their life*

- Q71 – I experience God’s work in my life (score: 29)
- Q42 – I experience the transforming influences faith has in the different areas of my life (profession, family, spare time, etc) (score: 20)



- Q41 – I often tell others when I have experienced something from God (score: 18)
- 

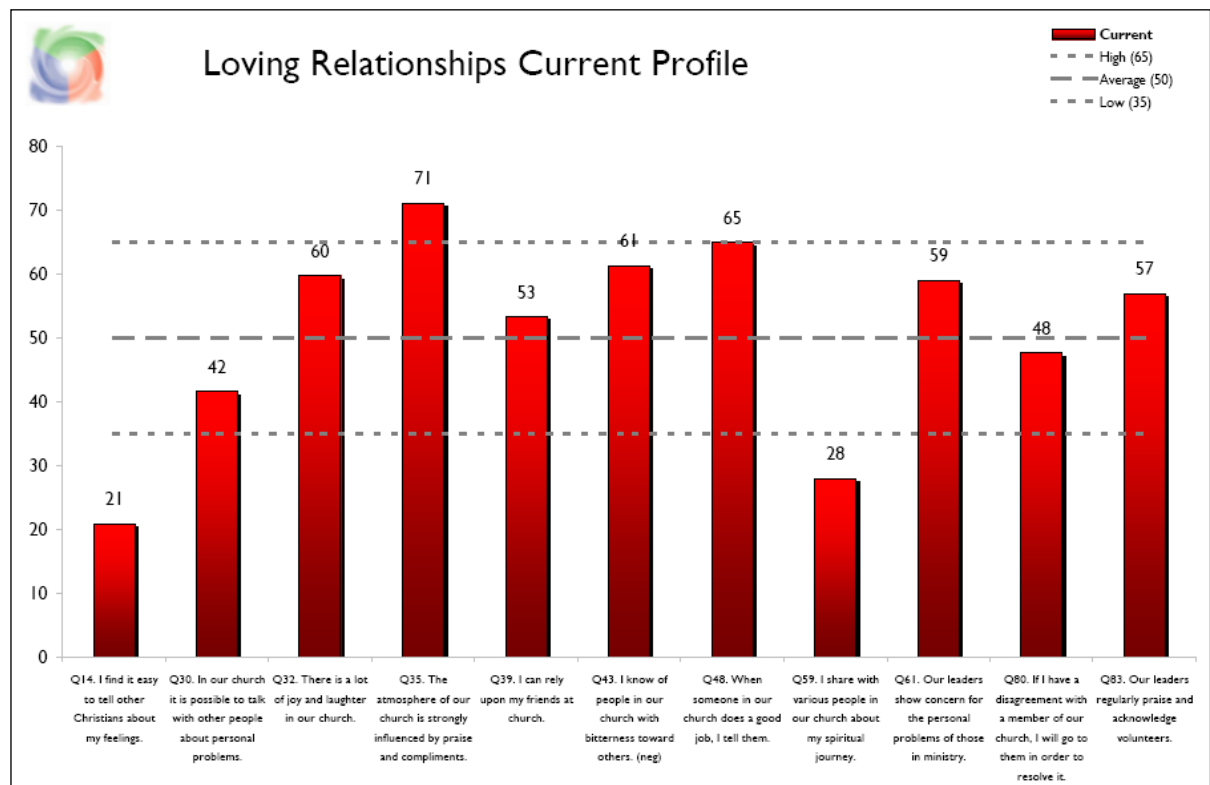
Potential Theme #2: *People are wrestling with the place of God's word in their lives*

- Q72 – The Bible is a powerful guide for me in the decisions of my everyday life (score: 21)
- Q84 – I enjoy reading the Bible on my own (score: 23)

## 1.2 Looking across the other Quality Characteristics

Before exploring the underlying root causes of these results, do we see these themes reflected in any of the results for the other Quality Characteristics? Here's a sample.

Looking at Theme 1 only, consider this Loving Relationships graph from the sample church:



Theme 1: *People are having difficulty seeing how God is at work in their life*

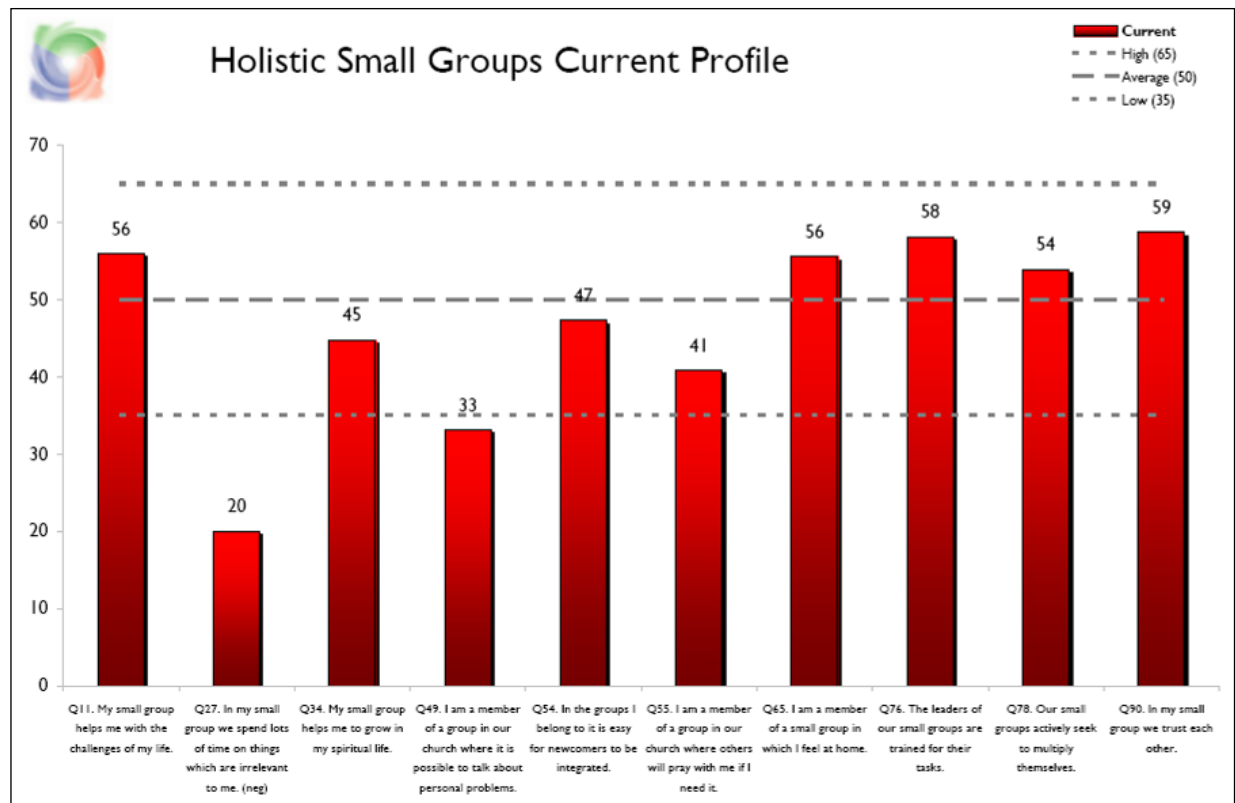
Within the church people are having difficulty with the following:

- Q14 – I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings (score: 21)
- Q59 – I share with various people in our church about my spiritual journey (score: 28)
- Q30 – In our church it is possible to talk with other people about personal problems (score: 42).



What is the connection between these results and the combination of results in Passionate Spirituality which has led to Theme 1? For example, how might difficulties inside the church with people sharing their spiritual journey impact their capacity to see God at work in their lives?

Again, looking at Theme 1 only, look at this graph for Holistic Small Groups:



Theme 1: *People are having difficulty seeing how God is at work in their life*

Within the church people are having difficulty with the following:

- Q27 – In my small group we spend lots of time on things which are irrelevant to me (score: 20)
- Q59 – I am a member of a group in our church where it is possible to talk about personal problems (score: 33)
- Q30 – My small group helps me to grow in my spiritual life (score: 45)

What is the connection between these results and the combination of results in Passionate Spirituality which has led to Theme 1? For example, do difficulties sharing with one another in small groups impact people's capacity to see God at work in their lives?



## 2. Identify the reasons (root causes) why these themes have emerged

Taking Theme 1, the aim is to understand **why** *people are having difficulty seeing how God is at work in their life.*

The answers may not be immediately apparent. It may involve going back to members of the congregation with “informed guesses” and testing. Here are some good initial questions to begin discussion based on the different combinations of results:

- Is what the church does to grow people spiritually disconnected from the challenge of living out their faith in the world? Is there an issue of relevancy?
- Do people not know how to recognize God’s work in their lives? Why is that?
- Perhaps people have a skewed understanding of who God is and how He is at work in their lives. Maybe the church went through a bad experience which shaped people’s view of God’s work among them in a negative or biased way.
- Have the people reached a point where what they see in church life and their own lives has led them to believe that God might be active in the world, just not in and through them?
- Is there a different issue here? Are many people believe they are seeing God at work in their lives but the church is not good at creating environments where people can share such spiritual experiences? So they are starting to doubt.
- Or perhaps the nature of the spirituality of the people is that spiritual experiences are not shared regularly, if at all. Perhaps over time, with the absence of up-to-date stories and testimonies, people have become increasingly desensitized to God’s work among them.
- Are people unable to explore their spiritual experiences together because they have difficulty growing close to one another – sharing feelings and problems with one another? If they are never close enough see God at work in each other’s lives, does that make it more difficult to see God at work in their own lives?

You should be getting the idea by now that the process of exploring “root causes” can go in many directions. Every church is unique, with a unique set of results. The point is being unafraid to ask as many questions about the different themes (collections of results) until it is clear *why* those results have occurred.





### 3. Summarize your findings

Summarizing the findings helps get agreement on the main issues. This is essential for ownership of the issues, especially by leaders. It is also an essential step for moving onto the Plan phase where priorities will be set.

A summary of the exploration of Theme I might look something like this.

It was determined in the end that under Theme I there were three main issues closely connected, expressed in the form of barriers to growth:

- Most people see what their local church does as increasingly irrelevant in a fast changing world. What happens on Sundays and in small groups doesn't really connect with the issues they were facing in everyday life. Their own spirituality is not "need-oriented." By equating God's work with church life, they are losing the capacity to see God at work.
- The tradition of the church is that people do not share their spiritual experiences when they do occur: they are to be kept private. Sharing such experiences is akin to displaying spiritual elitism, which is to be discouraged.
- More generally, church is not seen as a relational community where people grow close to one another, and encourage one another to keep growing in faith. It is not expected that relationships will be strong. Rather, people are there to receive the Word and the sacraments. Faith is essentially built on acquiring intellectual knowledge rather than sharing experiences of God at work among His people.

These barriers must be removed to maximize the potential for sustainable healthy growth into the future.

That requires a plan.



## **Appendix 9: Understand Phase – identifying strengths**

### **I. Exploring themes**

In this exercise you are looking for combinations of results which indicate major areas of greater health or strength in the church. This group of themes will be unique to your church.

If you have any difficulty following these instructions, look again at the sample in Appendix 8.

#### I. Turn to the *Current Highest 10* graph

On this graph you see the ten areas of church life which are currently the healthiest. At the end of each question you will notice the associated Quality Characteristic in brackets.

Begin by comparing your church with the rest of the country? Do you have results over 65, placing you in the top 15% of churches for those questions? Do you have results over 50, putting you above average for the country?

Now look to the results of the specific questions on this graph.

- Which Quality Characteristics are represented more than others? Can you see any connections between these results which indicate an overall strength or strengths in the life of the church? Summarize the connecting theme(s) in a sentence.
  
- Can you see any connections between the theme(s) identified above and the other results on this graph? Do these additional connections point to new themes or do they reinforce ones already identified? If new themes, summarize them in a sentence.

#### 2. Turn to the Quality Characteristic graph that currently rates highest

This Quality Characteristic is called your *Maximum Factor* – the “system” of the body that is currently healthiest.

- Can you see any connections between these results which indicate a strength or strengths in the life of the church? Summarize the connecting theme(s) in a sentence.
  
- Do the results on this graph contribute to your understanding of the theme(s) identified on the *Current Highest 10* graph?



### 3. Exploring other Quality Characteristic graphs

Turn now to the graphs for the other seven Quality Characteristics. If it helps, work through them from the highest scoring to the lowest.

- Looking at the high scores on each of the graphs, do they provide any additional insights to the themes already identified on the *Current Highest 10* and Maximum Factor graphs? Note these down.

## **2. Exploring the root causes of these strengths**

It is not sufficient to have a list of themes summarizing the church's strengths. It is necessary to explore *why* these are strengths. There is no exact science for exploring this; every church is different. Try the following exercise. (As you repeat the Cycle each year, this process will become easier, and more enjoyable.)

For each theme do the following exercise.

- Define each theme in a sentence or two.
- List next to each definition the specific questions from the NCD Result Guides you think combine to indicate this strength.
- Thinking back on the (recent) history of the church, what are the principal reasons or root causes why this area of church life is healthier? It may help to consider the following:
  - What programmes, activities or events might explain this set of results?
  - Are there individuals or groups who may have contributed to this area getting healthier? What have they been doing?
  - Have issues been resolved in church life (i.e. barriers to growth removed) which have allowed this area to grow healthier?
  - Can you recall specific moments where God was at work among His people in clear, powerful or unexpected ways which contributed to this area growing?
  - Was there a leadership decision, perhaps regarding overall vision, or plans and strategies, or where resources were allocated effectively?
  - Did the church change how it functions in some way, releasing life and energy?
  - Did the church stop doing something?
  - Has this area been strong for some time? If so, what does it reveal about the culture of the church, e.g. whether it is more task-oriented or people-oriented?
  - Does it reveal something about the personal ministry preferences of particular leaders and key influencers?



These are purely starting points to get you thinking. The critical point is that you are able to connect the results with what is actually happening in the life of the church. The results did not arise out of a vacuum.

### **3. Summarizing your findings**

Take the time to draw together what you have discovered to give you a clear, succinct picture of the church's strengths and why they are occurring.

At the end of the exercise you and the members of the leadership should be in a position to explain these strengths readily and easily to other people within the congregation or outside it.



## **Appendix 10: Understand Phase – identifying weaknesses**

In this exercise you are looking for combinations of results which indicate major areas of weakness in the church. This group of themes will be unique to your church.

If you have any difficulty following these instructions, look again at the sample in Appendix 8.

Allow plenty of time to do this exercise whether as an individual or as a group. It takes time to get familiar with the questions and then to start to see connections between them in the context of what has been happening in church life. What is most important here is the outcome: a clear set of issues that have been well thought through.

### **I. Exploring themes**

#### I. Turn to your *Minimum Factor* graph

This Quality Characteristic is called the Minimum Factor because it is the least healthy “system” of the church body. Addressing the underlying root causes of the themes identified here will be the principal focal point for the leadership over the coming year.

Before looking for specific themes, how does your church compare with the rest of the country? Do you have results over 50, putting you above average for the country? Do you have any results under 35, putting you in the lowest 15% of churches? What does this indicate about the general lack of health of the church in this area?

Now look to the results for the specific questions on this graph.

- Can you see any connections between these results which indicate an overall weakness or weaknesses in this area of church life? Summarize the connecting theme(s) in a sentence.
- Are there any combinations of results you find surprising or puzzling, e.g. you expect two results to be about the same but one is much higher? Exploring why this might be the case most often provides greater clarity about the real issues.

#### 2. Exploring other Quality Characteristic graphs

Turn now to the graphs for the other seven Quality Characteristics. If it helps, begin with the lowest and working through to the highest.

- Looking only at the low scores on each of the graphs, do you see any connections between these results and those on the Minimum Factor graph?



- Do they provide any additional insights to the themes already identified? If so, what?
- Do they suggest new themes? If so, write these down in a sentence or two.

### 3. Exploring the *Current Lowest 10* graph

Turn now to the graph of the *Current Lowest 10*. These are the ten least healthy areas of church life irrespective of Quality Characteristics.

- Which Quality Characteristics are represented more than others? Can you see any connections between these results which indicate a weakness or weaknesses in the life of the church? Summarize the connecting theme(s) in a sentence.
- Can you see any connections between the theme(s) identified above and the other results on this graph? Do these additional connections point to new themes or do they reinforce ones already identified? If new themes, summarize them in a sentence.
- Putting together what you have discovered from this graph, do the results add any new insights to your understanding of the theme(s) already identified on the Minimum Factor graph?

## **2. Exploring the root causes of these weaknesses**

It is essential now to explore fully *why* these are weaknesses. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this part of the process. Long term sustainable healthy growth depends on doing this well. Take as much time as you need to be clear about the issues. It may take several sessions.

For each theme do the following exercise.

- Define each theme in a sentence or two.
- List next to each definition the specific questions from the NCD Result Guides you think combine to indicate this weakness.
- Thinking back on the (recent) history of the church, brainstorm the reasons or root causes why this area of church life is less healthy? You may like to think of these root causes as barriers or obstacles to growth. It may help to consider the following:
  - What programmes, activities or events might explain this set of results?
  - Are there issues the church has struggled with and not resolved which you believe have directly impacted the health of this area of church life?
  - Are there aspects of the way the church functions that you believe have directly impacted the health of this area?



- Do you think there are beliefs, attitudes or ministry preferences in church life which may have directly impacted the health of this area?
- Can you trace the decline in health of this area to any particular decision, strategy, ministry preference, or approach by the elected leadership or key influencers in the life of the church?
- Has this area been weak for some time? If so, does this reveal something about the culture of the church, e.g. traditions, strongly held beliefs, theological understandings, generational perspectives on what's important? Why have these directly impacted this area in a negative way?
- Are there individuals or groups in the church who may have contributed to this area getting weaker? What have they been doing?

These are purely starting points to get you thinking. As with the church's strengths, the critical point is that you connect the results in different ways with what is actually happening in the life of the church. The results do not arise out of a vacuum; you are looking at the effects for which there is a cause or causes.

### 3. Summarizing your findings

It is essential that you now take the time to draw together what you have discovered in the exercises to give you a clear, succinct picture of the main areas of weakness in the church's overall health and why they are occurring. At the end of this exercise you and the members of the leadership should be in a position to explain these readily and easily to other people within or outside the congregation.

Recalling the Parable of the Growing Seed (see Section 2.2.1) it is God who gives the life and growth. Those in the church are to be like the farmer in the parable, maximizing the potential for sustainable healthy growth by removing barriers to growth in a timely way.

For each theme identified, here are some questions to help you put together the summary.

- What root cause do you believe is the *most significant barrier* to healthy growth for this theme which the church should remove? Why have you reached this conclusion?
- How do you see working to remove this barrier will increase the church's health?
- Do you feel compelled to address this barrier? What are the consequences of failing to do so?
- What do you believe God is saying to you with the identification of this barrier?
- How does removing this barrier bring the church more into alignment with God's will for the church?

This gives focus to the next phase where you will plan to remove these blockages.



## ***Appendix 11: Understand Phase – reflecting on God’s nature, purposes and activities***

The Understand phase is not just about a better understanding of your church’s health, but gaining a greater understanding of the nature, purposes and activities of God. He wants a stronger partnership with you so that the church can experience increasing fruitfulness and more abundant life. Remember the biblical principle that true understanding of God is shown in obedient acknowledgement, i.e. true understanding is shown in right action. The aim here, therefore, is to shift the focus away from the church and onto the One who gives the life and growth.

Here are some questions which relate to this point in the Cycle process. More general questions for review across the church will be canvassed in the Perceive phase.

### ***Think***

- How do the church’s strengths reflect the work of God and His grace?
- As you explored the weaknesses, have you experienced God’s prompting clearly indicating a particular issue really needed addressing in order to please Him?
- Have you personally felt convicted by God’s Spirit to address an issue in your own life you know is impacting your spiritual health and the church’s too?
- In what ways has God been calling you personally to contribute to the church’s partnership with Him for achieving greater health? Why would he be asking these things of you and not someone else?
- What have you learned through the process about the nature of God and the principles for growth that he uses?
- Having reached this phase of the process, what do you believe is God’s will for the church – generally, and specifically at this time?

### ***Share***

- Who are you going to share your discoveries with?
- How are you going to help others increase their sensitivity to the presence and work of God among them in church life?





## **Pray**

- Having reached this point, what do you want to thank God for regularly?
- When you look at the key weaknesses of church life – the barriers to growth – what do you want God to do in fulfilling His part of the partnership for growth?
- Are you being prompted to repent in any way for anything you have done to impede God's work in the church? How will you think or behave differently?
- As the church begins the Planning phase, what specific things do you need to be praying for regularly over the coming months?
- Pray for an increasing sensitivity to God's presence and work in the church over the coming year. Ask Him to show you things and give you an understanding of Him and the church you have never had before.
- Pray for God to give you the gifts of the Spirit you need to achieve the part you are being called to play. (If you don't know your gifts, find out.)
- Pray for God to give you increasingly mature Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) so you can be an encouraging, positive, unifying influence as the church addresses the most difficult health matters.
- Pray for the (other) leaders of the church that they will be encouraged, emboldened and equipped to lead the church in addressing those health issues.



## **Appendix 12: Plan Phase – developing an action plan**

An action plan is required for each of the barriers identified. It should be no longer than a few pages, covering the following issues. Don't make it complex!

**Growth barrier:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **The Whats**

- What is the overall initiative to remove this barrier?
- What specific activities make up this initiative?
- What resources will be required?

### **The Whos**

- Who has to decide the initiative will proceed?
- Who is taking overall responsibility for leading the initiative?
- Who makes up the team to assist that person?
- How will the key influencers in the church be engaged continuously?
- Who is responsible for addressing any barriers within the church to getting the initiative completed?
- Who will advise the congregation of the initiative and keep them informed?

### **The Whens**

- When will the initiative start?
- When will it finish?
- When will the elected leadership review progress?



## The Hows

- How will this initiative be integrated into the overall vision and mission of the church?
- How will this initiative be incorporated into any other initiatives taking place to address the church's Minimum Factor?
- How will this initiative be reviewed and assessed?



## **Appendix 13: Plan Phase – what will you stop doing?**

Choose several areas of church life (ministry, programme, activity or event) where you have some doubts about fruitfulness. For each area, work through the following questions:

### **What has happened to date?**

- Why was this area of church life established in the first place?
- Have you ever seen fruit? Describe that fruit? Why was it fruitful?
- If it is no longer bearing fruit, or bearing much less fruit than before, why is that?

### **Refocus or finish?**

- Can it be re-focused to be more fruitful? What fruit would you expect to see that would make it worth the investment of time, energy and resources?
- Would refocusing it be in line with addressing the current key barriers to growth?
- Is it better to bring it to an end? Has it simply reached its “use by” date? What specific reasons would make it hard to do that?
- What time, energy and resources would be saved by ending it?
- Are there more important areas where effort would be better spent?

### **Decide (at least) one area of church life to be brought to a conclusion**

- List the reasons why this decision has been taken?
- Who are the key influencers you need to work with?
- What must you do to finish it well?
- How will you explain the decision to the congregation in the context of the overall plan to address the key issues of healthy growth?
- How will you celebrate what this area of church life has achieved?

You may have decided in this exercise that there is nothing you wish to bring to an end. Instead you may want to do some re-focusing. This is fine provided you have a clear sense of what fruit you expect to see from that re-focusing. You also need to be clear



that it is an essential component of the overall plan. Honesty is required here. Don't forget the tribal wisdom of the Dakota Indians, passed on from one generation to the next, that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount!

There are times when looking foolish doesn't have significant consequences. Not so here. It is unwise to pursue programmes, activities, ministries, events, etc, that you don't believe will make an optimal contribution to growing the health of the church. For one thing, it is failing to maximize the potential for healthy growth by wasting limited time, energy and resources. Worse still, the plan is your declaration of purpose to God based on what has been discovered in the Understand phase. It is wise to offer Him your best plan.



## **Appendix 14: Do Phase - the review**

The leadership should be reviewing regularly the progress on implementing the plan. The following questions might help in such reviews.

### **Executing the plan (How is the *application* going?):**

- What parts of the plan have been completed, looking specifically at the following:
  - Addressing the key barriers to growth.
  - Strengthening the main areas of health and using them to work on weaknesses.
  - Stopping what was determined to be producing little or no fruit.
- What is yet to be done?
- Does the plan need to change? (See next sub-heading on fruitfulness.)
- If there are delays, why are these occurring?
  - Is there a lack of ownership or commitment? Is this coming from within the leadership? What are the specific reasons?
  - Is there resistance within the congregation? What are these issues?
  - Are there insufficient resources?
  - Is the “important” being crowded out by the “urgent”?
- Are the key influencers (still) on board? What issues might they have that need to be addressed to maintain momentum? Is anyone resisting? Why?
- What specific action is required to address the above issues?

### **Signs of fruitfulness (are you alert to emerging *transformation*):**

- Are there signs of change, new energy and increasing fruitfulness? How can you “sharpen” the plan to harness that energy more effectively and keep people focused on the key issues?
- Are you identifying additional areas in church life where there are questions about the fruit for the time and resources being committed? Are you taking action to address those now or will that occur in the next cycle?
- Do you have good feedback mechanisms in place so the leadership can see the signs of where God is doing new things among His people? Are these being shared with the congregation regularly?
- As a leadership:
  - Do you need to offer more *explanation*? Would it help to offer more explaining why the key issues have been chosen, why particular actions



are being taken, or why the leadership believes it is God's will to follow this path?

- Do you need to provide more *motivation*? Are people lacking faith that the effort will bring about change? Do they need to lift their sights? Do they need a greater focus on the nature of the God with whom they are partnering for growth?
  - Do you need more *liberation*? Are the people willing and energized but feel the way the church is functioning limits their capacity to get things done? Do the people need additional equipping to do the tasks such as help in identifying and using their gifts?
- How will the leadership explain to the congregation the changes that have been occurring in order to continue motivating people to engage with the issues?



## **Appendix 15: Experience Phase – allowing God to be God**

The purpose of this phase is to experience the abundant life that Jesus offers, and to celebrate God's faithfulness and goodness in the church's journey to greater health.

The focus here is not on analyzing what God may be doing in the church but on creating "space" in church life where the people are able to see God at work, learn to know Him better, and appreciate what He is doing.

You do not need to answer every question. They are to act as prompts. Refer to them regularly throughout the year as the plan is implemented.

### **Liberating the people to experience all God has for them**

- How do people in the congregation expect to experience God's presence among them?
- Are there any biases (theological, biblical, traditional, cultural, ethnic, etc) which may limit people's capacity to see what God is doing in the life of the church?
- Are there any biases (theological, traditional, cultural, ethnic, etc) which may limit people's thinking about the nature of God as one who wants to bless abundantly? What are the dangers of acting as if you believe you know all that can be known about the triune God? Is this a case of "believing is seeing"?
- Are there any circumstances in recent times that may have caused people to think God is not "for them," willing to work with them, or bless them?
- Are there people who would prefer the church *not* to be liberated to see God at work in new and different ways?
- Is there anything in church life which may limit people's capacity to share with one another what they believe God is doing in their lives and in the church?
- Is the church a place where faith is seen more in terms of the intellectual than the experiential?
- Is the church a place where it is more about "what we do for God" rather than "what God can do for us and in us"?
- Is the church always more concerned about moving onto the future or staying in the past rather than seeing and appreciating God at work in the present?
- Does the leadership worry what might happen if people do not experience God in prescribed ways? Is the natural tendency to empower and release or





to feel threatened and try to bring things under control? What are the reasons for this?

### **Appreciating the transformation**

- Does the church have a broad enough appreciation of what healthy spiritual transformation looks like in church life?
- Are any leaders perhaps missing some of what God is doing in the church because they are still measuring “success” first in terms of quantitative growth (increasing numbers) rather than qualitative (health)?
- Does the church have an effective feedback process for gathering stories and testimonies of where God is at work transforming people’s lives in the church or through the people in the church? How does the church tend to determine the validity of these stories? How are they shared with the congregation?
- What would it take to increase the church’s overall sensitivity to see and experience all that God is doing, and respond to that?

### **Celebration and thankfulness**

- Does the church regularly thank God for His goodness, and do so with honesty and passion?
- Does the church know how to celebrate who God is and what He is doing in and through His people in the church?
- Is the church’s capacity to celebrate and thank God dependent on circumstances?

### **What’s happening this cycle?**

- What is the church currently thankful for?
- Have you experienced anything in church life while implementing the plan that has taken you by surprise?
- In what ways are you becoming more sensitized to God working in the church?
- Where have you seen positive energy arising that you had not expected?



- Are there signs of “all by itself” growth – positive things happening in church life which are not being controlled or directed by the leadership? What has been your response after finding out these things have been occurring? Why?

### **Gaining a more balanced experience**

- In God’s Church, people have grown up with different traditions of experiencing and celebrating God’s presence. What can you learn from other traditions (from within your denomination or movement, or outside it) that would help your church broaden its perspective?
- Return to the *3 Colour Compass* (see Section 3.4). People with a bias towards the green, red or blue zones are also going to display a bias in terms of their experience of the triune God.
  - By identifying where each person in your congregation was placed on the *3 Colour Compass*, you would have a solid foundation for exploring how people across the church experience God. How might this help?
  - If you discovered an overall congregational bias (e.g. largely Red), you would know there is an inbuilt limitation in the church growing to a greater experience of God’s presence. What would you do about it?



## **Appendix 16: Perceive Phase – reviewing the NCD Cycle process**

It is important to recognize that a failure to have a balanced approach to working through the Cycle in a clear and systematic way can itself be a barrier to the healthy growth of the church. So taking time to consider how well you have worked through the Cycle process is as important as considering what has occurred in church life as a result of implementing the plan.

In working through these questions, consider whether at any point you more helpful responses would be achieved by people being able to offer comments anonymously.

### **Looking at the whole NCD Cycle process over the past year:**

- What phase or phases of the Cycle were done best? Where did those involved in the process feel liberated, empowered, energized or deeply affected? How will their positive experiences be harnessed during the next Cycle?
- In what ways did you sense the Cycle process “coming together,” where each phase played an essential part in the overall process?
- What phase or phases of the Cycle were the most poorly done or missed completely? Were there times when those involved felt disempowered or demotivated? Why? For example, e.g. process steps poorly executed, loss of focus, lack of ownership, lack of accountability, or lack of understanding of the process.
- Have you detected in any way a bias, attitude or preference by those responsible for keeping the church working through the Cycle for some phases over others? You may wish to revisit the *3 Colour Compass* of the various participants (see Section 3.4). How will you ensure all phases of the Cycle are represented in the team next time around?
- Is there anything else you think should be done to ensure a more balanced approach to working through the Cycle as you approach re-doing the Survey?



## **Appendix 17: Perceive Phase – reviewing experiences of church life**

The purpose of this exercise is to review people's experiences of church life over the past year to discern accurately where transformation has been occurring. To do this well you need feedback from across the church.

With the next NCD Survey imminent, don't turn this into a huge exercise, just enough to get a good perspective from a broad cross-section of the congregation.

How you do this is entirely up to you! It may be by handing out a short questionnaire, asking people to email, doing it through small groups, or holding some focus groups. In keeping with the biblical principles for this phase, people should be asked to think through their responses, considering them carefully before responding. You may decide better responses would be achieved by people being able to offer comments anonymously

Here is a selection of questions you *may* find useful. Use as many and in whatever combination you think is appropriate. (The questions in Appendix 11, used during the Understand phase, may also be helpful.)

- Where have you seen God at work in the church over the past year? Briefly describe what happened?
- Did you see God at work in the church in new ways this year? What did you see?
- Did the leadership do a good job to “raise the faith bar” on the congregation in response to expecting and seeing God at work in the church?
- When have you seen God bringing the church as a whole, or people in the church, to the point of confession and repentance?
- Where have you seen God's love expressed through people in such a way that it made a discernible difference to church life?
- In what new ways did you personally experience the presence of God in the church this year? Briefly describe what happened?
- What experiences have others shared with you that encourage you to see that God is at work in the church? (Share these only if you have permission.)
- Where have you seen God's gifts at work producing healthy change in church life? What were these gifts? Who was using them and how? Why do they stand out in your mind?
- Where have you seen God's hand transforming people's lives in the church? What were the circumstances?



- Where do you think the activities of the church had “fruitful outcomes” this past year? What were the activities? How would you describe the fruit?
- Where do you think the activities of the church were less fruitful, considering the time, effort and resources committed? What did you see? What did you expect?
- Do you believe you have grown spiritually this year as a result of being a part of the church? If so, in what ways?
- In what ways might you have felt “hard of heart” in your spiritual walk over the past year? Was this the result of anything that occurred or didn’t occur in church life? How might the church community help you to see God with fresh eyes?
- What did you get involved in during the year that you really felt contributed to the church becoming healthier?
- Would you say you have developed a better understanding of the nature of God and how He works as a result of what has happened in the church over the past year? How would you describe that new understanding?
- How far do you think your perceptions of where God has been at work in the church over the past year have been influenced by theological, traditional, cultural or ethnic issues? How did these influences help or hinder your perceptions?
- Who in the church over the past year was a spiritual example to you, taught you the most, role-modelled the spiritual life, or reflected the nature of God most strongly? What did they do that had such a positive impact on you?



## Appendix 18: Perceive Phase – predicting next NCD Survey results

The purpose of this exercise is to test the degree to which the leadership is tuning into the church as a body: where it is healthy, where it is less healthy, and where it is changing.

1. In Columns 1 and 2 enter the current survey results – score for each Quality Characteristic and ranking from most (#1) to least healthy (#8).
2. Photocopy and give to the elected leaders, key influencers, support team and any others whose opinion you would like.
3. Each person should
  - predict the score and ranking for each Characteristic in the next survey; and
  - offer some reasons for the changes predicted.

Quality Characteristic	Current Profile		Next Profile	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Empowering Leadership				
Gift-based Ministry				
Passionate Spirituality				
Effective Structures				
Inspiring Worship				
Holistic Small Groups				
Need-oriented Outreach				
Loving Relationships				

What do you predict to be the healthiest Quality Characteristic? Give reasons.

What do you predict will be the new Minimum Factor? Give reasons.

Which Quality Characteristic will have improved the most? Give reasons.