



How to ...

Carry out a parish review

There are a number of different approaches to reviewing your parish, its life and activity. If you embark on this process it is important that you find a method that works for you and is of an appropriate scale for your setting. These processes need to be of benefit to you and lead you to a place of better understanding of the way your parish works, some helpful things to consider and some useful action points. It should not be an onerous administrative exercise that upon completion is simply filed away.

A parish review should help you to evaluate the way that your parish operates, looking at areas of strength, possible weaknesses, the opportunities that exist and any things that are threats. Below we have listed some helpful tools. You may find that creating your own process based on elements of each of these is the most appropriate for you. This list is not exclusive, if you have found an alternative tool helpful, please do let us know.

Seven Marks of a Healthy Church

The 7 Marks of a Healthy Church model can be found in the book “Developing Healthy Churches: Returning to the Heart of Mission and Ministry”, by Robert Warren. You can access a summary of the handbook [here](#). To buy: ISBN-10: 071514281X or ISBN-13: 978-0715142813.

Warren identifies common characteristics of healthy churches:

1. **Energized by faith**; rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive
2. **Outward-looking focus**; with a ‘whole life’ rather than a ‘church life’ concern
3. **Seeks to find out what God wants**; discerning the Spirit’s leaning rather than trying to please everyone
4. **Faces the cost of change and growth**; rather than resisting change and avoiding failure
5. **Operates as a community**; rather than functioning as a club or religious organisation
6. **Makes room for all**; being inclusive rather than exclusive.
7. **Does a few things and does them well**; focused rather than frenetic

The book includes a church profiling exercise, based around scoring the church on each of the 7 marks, an ‘Angel of the Church’ exercise and action planning material.

Livability’s Church Healthcheck

This tool has been developed to help churches identify healthy ways of working and being. It aims to initially assess an honest baseline on which change and progress (or deterioration) can be identified and measured. It is a tool that involves a healthy integration of prayerful reflection and strategic action planning. The idea is to look at each factor and assess honestly where, on a scale of one to ten, your church sits. Livability has lots of ideas on their [website](#).

The factors are:

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| Presence | Level of connectivity to the local community |
| Impact | Extent of social action work developed by the church to serve the local community |
| Partnership | Extent of church’s connection to other community services or projects |
| Heart | Size of congregation and committed membership |
| Ownership | Degree of involvement of the membership in mission |
| Leadership | Robust and accountable leadership team |
| Roots | Integrated theology and practice |
| Adaptability | Responsiveness to evaluation and willingness to accept change |
| Finance | Ability to fund core costs and be sustainable |
| Vision | Agreed vision and realistic strategy for mission to the local community |

From Evidence to Action

From Evidence to Action has been developed using and building on the findings of the Church Growth Research Programme which was summarised in 'From Anecdote to Evidence', published in January 2014. The evidence provides an opportunity for the Church at all levels to respond and to consider what action may be needed to encourage growth.

On the website below, you'll find a guide to the findings and working materials based around some common factors which were found to be linked with growth. All the material on the site is designed to help those who want to reflect and act on these findings, whatever their context.

<http://www.fromevidencetoaction.org.uk/working-materials>

The 8 factors which are explored through the worksheets and discussion materials look at helping churches to:

- Have a clear mission and purpose
- Actively engage with a wider context
- Be willing to change and adapt
- Have a welcoming culture and ongoing relationships
- Support leaders that innovate, envision and motivate
- Involve lay people active in leadership
- Engage with children and young adults
- Nurture disciples

Purpose Driven Life

Every church is driven by something. Tradition, finances, programs, personalities, events, seekers and even buildings can each be the controlling force in a church. But Rick Warren believes that in order for a church to be healthy it must become a purpose driven church, built around the five New Testament purposes given to the church by Jesus.

"The issue is church health, not church growth!" declares Warren. "If your church is healthy, growth will occur naturally. Healthy, consistent growth is the result of balancing the five biblical purposes of the church." These purposes are identified as the church growing:

- Warmer through **fellowship**
- Deeper through **discipleship**
- Stronger through **worship**
- Broader through **ministry**
- Larger through **evangelism**

This book with its wealth of information can be purchased with ISBN-10: 0310201063; ISBN-13: 9780310201069

A Bespoke Approach

If you choose to design your own process for reviewing the life of your parish you might like to begin by using a **SWOT** method. This would involve considering all aspects of parish life under the headings:

Strengths – What does your parish do really well?

Weaknesses – What improvements could be made to the things you do?

Opportunities – What opportunities are there for making those improvements or starting new things?

Threats – What things may get in the way of you making the most of those opportunities and strengths?

By reflecting on the responses to these headings it is possible to see what your parish does well, what opportunities for growth and development there may be, as well as exploring where additional work may need to be done in order to move forward.

It may also be useful to begin by listing the 'activity' of the parish – the 'What we do'. From this list you can consider how well each of these activities are going, why you do them, how well resourced they are and whether they are the right things to continue doing in the future.

Conclusion

Parish reviewing and review is an ongoing process, as you explore the life of your parish you will undoubtedly discover things that you feel led to change, different ways you would like to do things, or new things that you would like to start.

This naturally leads you to produce a plan for working towards making those changes. It is therefore right that you review those actions and the impact that they made by repeating the review or audit process at a relevant time interval.

Parish reviewing should be a positive process, enabling you too celebrate the good things that God is doing in your parish, whilst also considering new possibilities for the future.

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