



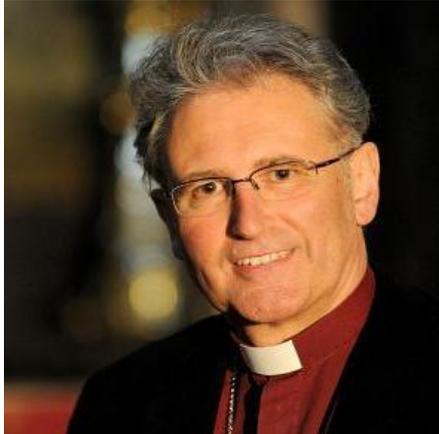
## Diocese of Coventry 8EQs Introductory Handbook

# Understanding the context of the **Eight Essential Qualities** of healthy growing churches





## Foreword by Bishop of Coventry



Fulfilling the 8 Essential Qualities of Healthy Growing Churches is fundamental to fulfilling our Diocesan purposes of Worshipping God, Making New Disciples and Transforming Communities. They are at the core of our Diocesan strategy and this booklet gives an overview of their context within the invaluable research of Natural Church Development which has identified them as central to the life of healthy growing churches, of all descriptions, across the world.

It is important that we have an understanding of the 8 Essential Qualities and the principles that underlie them if we are to be effective in growing healthy churches ourselves. I welcome this introductory booklet as an important contribution to our understanding and implementation of the 8EQs.

The 8EQs spring out of the research undertaken across the world and lie at the heart of what is known as Natural Church Development (NCD). This booklet explains the origins of NCD, what it is and what it is not. It encourages us to discern God's pattern of natural growth and development and how this applies to churches. It also sets out the process through which tools provided by NCD can help us examine our churches and work with the Holy Spirit to see them grow.

I hope that all who take the growth of Christ's church seriously will read this booklet and share its contents with leaders in their church.

*+Christopher*

**The Rt Rev Dr Christopher Cocksworth**  
**Bishop of Coventry**



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## Introduction

In recent years the Archdeacon Missioner, the Ven Morris Rodham, has introduced the Diocese of Coventry to Natural Church Development and the 8 Essential Qualities of healthy growing churches. Many across the diocese have seen his enthusiastic presentation of these qualities and they have been adopted by the Bishop and the Diocesan Synod as fundamental to fulfilling the diocesan strategy for growth, as we fulfil our purposes of Worshipping God, Making New Disciples and Transforming Communities.

It soon became clear that to help churches grow in these qualities it was necessary for the diocese to put resources into supporting churches and in being able to make use of the various tools available from NCD to facilitate qualitative growth. The 8 Essential Qualities have been identified through extensive research and were first published in “*Natural Church Development*” by Dr. Christian Schwarz, in 1996

The post of Healthy Churches Development Mentor was created to help the 8EQs to become part of the DNA of the whole diocese - its parishes and its structures - through developing a mentoring process based on a coherent set of tools. In this role I shall be working with the clergy and people of the parishes of the diocese as well as those responsible for the structures of the diocese.

This booklet was originally written by Ian Campbell, a consultant and Advisory Board Member at NCD International. Ian has given invaluable support and advice to the Diocese of Coventry and we are grateful to him for allowing us to adapt this material for our Diocese.

This booklet will stimulate your thinking about church health and growth in new ways, sharpen your focus on the real growth issues in your church, and increase the fruitfulness of your ministry.

It provides you with basic information about Natural Church Development (NCD) and how it assists you to identify and address the specific issues you and your church are facing now and into the future. On the following pages you will find information about:

- the basic concepts of NCD;
- the process of implementing NCD;
- the commitment required to gain the most value from NCD;
- the benefits of engaging;
- the steps to commencing the process; and
- how the Diocese and I can help you.

NCD continues to grow after thirteen years of engagement by churches internationally. Over 75,000 Surveys have been done internationally, creating an extensive database with unique insights into the health of the Church. Many church



leaders now find it an indispensable combination of growth principles, processes and tools for ensuring their churches find and remain on the path to healthy growth.

Please don't hesitate to contact me for any help or advice – indeed I would welcome hearing from you.



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# What is Natural Church Development?

## A different way of thinking about growth

*Natural Church Development* (NCD) is a **paradigm** – a way of thinking about church growth. Growth should be about quality (health) and not just quantity (numbers). In fact NCD has demonstrated that quality should take priority over quantity in church growth thinking.

At the heart of the paradigm is the Scriptural picture of the church as a living organism, not just an organisation (albeit a spiritual one). Looking at the church "organically" gives us a different perspective on what "health" and "growth" mean. The growth of organisms focuses on their health, their capacity to reproduce, and how the individual 'body' parts interact. They are grown, not built. They are nurtured, not assembled.

The NCD paradigm says that if church growth is about growing an organism, the *health* (quality) of the organism will have a direct impact on its *size* (quantity). If a church becomes increasingly healthy over time, it is more likely and better able to reproduce disciples, ministries and eventually itself.

How many times have church leaders counted the numbers of people in Sunday services but really had no true sense whether the members of the church community were growing to greater spiritual maturity and contributing all they could to Kingdom growth? Is size really a true measure of health?

The NCD paradigm helps you think about growing your church as a healthy living organism.

## A long term strategic process

*Natural Church Development* is also a long term strategic **process** for progressively improving a church's health. It is a process of continual improvement, not a programme which guarantees "a healthy church" if particular steps are followed. Growing a church, like growing a plant, requires a long term approach where the most critical issues impeding church growth are consistently addressed.

At the heart of the NCD process is a sophisticated diagnostic tool, the NCD Survey, developed in Germany. It is based on the only comprehensive international research ever done into what causes churches to grow or decline. The NCD Survey complies with the highest international statistical standards for validity and reliability.

Surveys are done annually, offering an accurate up-to-date "snapshot" of a church's health. Successive surveys enable church leaders to see the current state of health, how the church's health has changed over the previous year, and what areas need greatest attention over the coming year.

The capacity to see the health of the church very accurately as it evolves year on year enables church leaders to develop a clear sense of how the "organism" is evolving and what impact various decisions and activities are having on church life. It also reveals longer term trends and enables leaders to identify and address the deeper issues that have long held the church back. As one leader so eloquently put it, "It gives every church leader the clear view of their church from 40,000 feet that they need when so much time is spent in the day-to-day."



## Why church leaders find NCD helpful

*Natural Church Development* liberates leaders wrestling with growth issues:

- It reminds them that God brings the growth and their role is to partner with Him not try to generate the growth themselves.
- It offers universal growth principles that apply in all churches at all places at all times.
- It provides regular accurate "snapshots" of a church's health, keeping the leadership focused on the most important issues to achieve long term sustainable growth.
- It outlines a process of continuous improvement through the use of the NCD Cycle.
- It helps leaders determine values for church life that facilitate growth.
- It encourages the personal spiritual growth of leaders which, in turn, contributes to the growth of the church.
- It provides concrete input for developing and refining vision.
- It helps maximize the effective use of limited time, energy and resources.
- It confirms long-held beliefs that were previously not able to be tested objectively. The following comment is common: "Christian Schwarz affirms through the international research what I have been thinking for a long time, but until now nobody has done the research."

## What NCD is not

- NCD is not a prescriptive "silver bullet" programme guaranteeing church growth. It will not satisfy a church leadership looking for "the ten steps to health."
- NCD is not a substitute for spiritual leadership motivated to achieve healthy growth. It will not help church leaders lacking commitment to grow the church or themselves to greater maturity.
- NCD is not a substitute for a church finding its own sense of identity and direction. NCD cannot be "the vision" but it does help clarify and stimulate that sense of identity and direction.
- NCD is not a short term solution. Deciding to "try NCD this year" will miss the riches of exploring the paradigm, and the benefits. Every church progresses at a different pace.
- NCD is not a "complete package"; it is not all contained in a manual and a book. The NCD paradigm is dynamic, and understanding continues to grow as the international NCD community makes new discoveries in applying the universal principles.



# Thinking growth.... naturally

## God's principles for growing living organisms

Scripture invites us to consider the principles by which God sustains and grows living things in the world He has created. These principles are used by God to grow His Kingdom as well.

Scripture teaches that the local church is also a living organism which God wants to grow – the Body of Christ. The local church shares similarities with other organisms God has created and sustains. Its potential for growth lies in its health, not its size.

NCD has demonstrated decisively through comprehensive international research that healthy growing churches are more successful in releasing the potential for healthy growth because they apply these natural principles and treat the church more as a living organism to be grown rather than an organization to be built.

A fundamental part of the NCD paradigm is learning to see the church as a living organism whose growth can be stimulated by understanding and applying these principles.

## Partnering with God to stimulate healthy growth

Jesus gives a picture of the partnership God expects to have with His people in growing the Kingdom. In the Parable of the Growing Seed, Jesus said:

*"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 happen "all by itself" to the farmer).

The role of God's people, and their leaders in particular, is similar to that of the farmer. They cannot give life and produce growth. Only God can do that. All they can do is maximize the potential for growth. This is done by a continual process of identifying the barriers which impede growth within the life of the church and removing them. In this way the potential for 'all by itself' growth is constantly maximized.

It is often of great encouragement to church leaders to realise that they are not responsible for the growth of their churches. They are also encouraged by the prospect of a partnership with God where their gifts and skills, time and effort are a necessary and valued part of Kingdom growth. To be able to actually measure where progress is occurring is an added bonus.



## Quality as the foundation for quantity

To think of the local church as a living organism is to acknowledge that **quality** (health) is just as important to church growth as **quantity** (attendance). In fact, quality is the essential foundation for quantity.

The health of any living organism directly impacts its capacity to grow and reproduce. The ground-breaking international research by the Institute for Natural Church Development International has shown a clear correlation between quality and quantity: churches that continue to maintain focus on improving their health are more likely to grow numerically and reproduce ministries. Likewise, churches failing to heed the "health warning" are much more likely to be decline or making decisions that will lead to future decline. It is therefore most unwise for church leaders to measure ministry success predominantly in terms of quantity.

*Natural Church Development*  
helps leaders identify and address the  
unique health (quality) issues facing their church

## Not just any growth but 'all by itself' growth

It is important to recognise that Jesus speaks of 'all by itself' growth. This is not growth brought about principally by continually offering a diet of new programmes. It comes by progressively understanding the dynamics of the church as a living, growing organism and continually working hard to identify and remove the barriers to greater life and growth. This is what the farmer does in raising a successful crop.

For many church leaders who are used to setting the course of the church, taking the congregation with them and praying for God's blessings on the plans they've developed, this may not be an easy shift in thinking. Many leaders see their church predominantly as a (spiritual) organisation to be built rather than an organism to be grown. It is difficult to contemplate leading a church where 'all by itself' growth is the norm – where God's Spirit is constantly at work among His people without first seeking the blessing of the pastoral team.

Yet this is the essence of the Natural Church Development paradigm. It is a process of coming to understand how God grows healthy organisms – of which the church is one – and then cooperating with Him by doing what is necessary to remove the barriers to 'all by itself' growth.

*Natural Church Development*  
helps leaders work at creating an environment which  
maximizes the church's 'all by itself' growth potential



# The origins of Natural Church Development

## Comprehensive worldwide research

The Institute for Natural Church Development International, based in Germany under the leadership of Christian A. Schwarz, undertook worldwide research in the early 1990s.

**1000 churches in 32 countries** were surveyed to determine if there were principles producing healthy church growth independent of

- denomination or theology
- country or culture
- leadership style
- size
- ministry model

The key question was: "**What church growth principles are true, regardless of culture and theological persuasion?**"

As of 2012, over 82,000 Surveys have now been completed worldwide, confirming the reliability and accuracy of the original research and that there are indeed universal God-given principles that can be applied to the unique issues in every local church. As a database of comprehensive information on the health of Christendom, it is unique.

## The quality characteristics: a framework for healthy growth

The research revealed a framework of **eight quality characteristics** that were critical components of the life of healthy, growing churches. All were present and none could be missing. The names are sometimes slightly modified in the Diocese of Coventry to aid people's understanding but the meanings are the same. They are:

- **Empowering** Leadership
- **Gift-based** Ministry
- **Passionate** Spirituality
- **Effective** Structures OR **Functional** Structures
- **Inspiring** Worship
- **Holistic** Small Groups
- **Need-oriented** Evangelism OR Outreach
- **Loving** Relationships

The most significant finding was that the vital ingredient of each Quality Characteristic was the adjective. For instance, take leadership. It was not visionary leadership, nor pastoral leadership, nor decisive leadership which was the chief contributor to long term healthy growth but *empowering* leadership. That is, the principal contributor to healthy growth by leadership was the degree to which leaders empowered their people to keep growing toward greater spiritual maturity and contributing to Kingdom growth. The same emphasis applies for the other seven Quality Characteristics.



## The growth forces: putting “natural” into church development

NCD has shown that what distinguishes healthy growing churches from others is not just high quality in the eight areas, but their application of a **core of natural growth principles** to church life so that the church functions more like an organism than a spiritual organisation. Six growth forces were identified in the research:

- **Interdependence** – all parts of the church know the impact of what they do on other parts and ensure that such impact is always positive for the sake of long term growth.
- **Multiplication** – every part of the church is looking to reproduce itself, including ultimately the church as a whole.
- **Energy Transformation** – all the church’s energy and resources are continually assessed, harnessed and directed towards achieving its long term potential, whilst eliminating wastage of effort.
- **Sustainability** – the church invests its resources in such a way that its various parts become self-sustaining, freeing up resources to be used elsewhere.
- **Symbiosis** – diverse parts of the church are encouraged to work together in relationships where each part becomes healthier and none lose out.
- **Fruitfulness** – all areas of church life are regularly assessed to ensure they are continuing to contribute to the overall healthy growth of the church as an organism.

The leaders of churches that are healthy, or becoming increasingly healthy, may or may not be aware that these principles are at work to a greater degree in their church, they may simply be employing these principles intuitively. They may use other names for these principles, or not name them at all, but they are nonetheless employing them. All NCD has done is identify and name the principles so that all churches can benefit.

The higher the health of the church, the greater the degree to which these principles are at work. This is encouraging for two reasons. First of all, it shows that God is entirely consistent in the way He superintends His creation, enabling churches to grow as organisms in the same way as He brings about the growth of other organisms. Secondly, identifying these principles makes it possible to understand and apply them as part of partnering with God to grow the church.

It should come as no surprise that these principles are thoroughly biblical. In some instances the teaching is direct, such as in John 15 where Jesus speaks about “fruitfulness.” In others we see the principles undergirding the message, such as “multiplication” in the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

For church leadership, therefore, understanding and applying these principles consistently until they become a natural part of the “way of life” of the church is essential. They are a key to releasing ‘all by itself’ growth.



## The NCD Survey

### A regular accurate “snapshot” of your church’s health

The international research was used as a foundation for developing the NCD Survey which gives local churches an accurate annual profile of their health. The Survey is based on:

- an internationally-validated, user-friendly questionnaire completed by selected congregational members chosen according to specific criteria;
- a computer software program arising out of the original research programme; and
- a statistical standardisation which measures the health of the church against other churches in the country to provide objectivity.

The Survey profile gives a rating for each Quality Characteristic and then provides a detailed breakdown of the individual questions. Effective analysis produces wealth of information about:

- relative strengths and weaknesses of the Quality Characteristics;
- the potential interrelationships between the Quality Characteristics ("Why is Holistic Small Groups high but Loving Relationships low?");
- the trends in health in various parts of the church from survey to survey; and
- most importantly, the so-called "Minimum Factor", the principal focus for discussion, analysis, strategic planning and action (see below).

### The Minimum Factor

The strategy to improve the health of the church is simplicity itself – work at improving the health of the Quality Characteristic that is least developed. Christian Schwarz calls this Quality Characteristic the Minimum Factor. Since all eight Quality Characteristics are essential to healthy growth, it makes sense to address the lowest characteristic, the part of the body making the least contribution to its overall health and growth. It is the most strategic use of energy and resources to maximize the church’s potential for growth.

Taking action to address the Minimum Factor brings changes to the church’s health. The next survey reveals the extent of such change to all the Quality Characteristics, that is, the overall health of the church). The new Minimum Factor reflects the area most needing attention at the new level of health. And so it goes with each successive Survey. This ensures leaders stay focused on what is most important for long term healthy growth.

More specifically, this strategy is about identifying the barriers hindering "all by itself" growth for that Minimum Factor and then taking steps to remove them, just as the farmer does in the *Parable of the Growing Seed*. This acknowledges that each church is a unique organism with a unique growth path and a unique set of emerging barriers as it grows, each requiring a unique and timely response.

Focusing continuously on successive Minimum Factors as they emerge with each new Survey does not mean an abandonment of the church’s strengths. On the contrary, NCD recognizes the vital importance of engaging the church’s strengths to help address areas of weakness.



# Of Cycles and Spirals

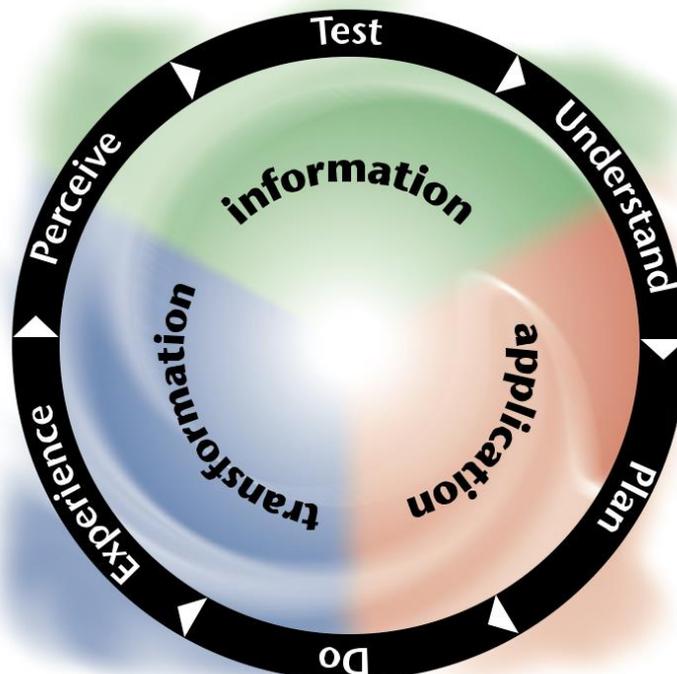
## Linear versus cyclical thinking

So much of what we do in the Western world, and therefore the Western Church, is a result of thinking in linear ways. Everyone knows the standard approach to planning: know where you are, decide where you want to be, then 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 naturally operates in cycles. It is the natural order of all growing things. We acknowledge this without even thinking twice about it. The cycle of life is something we take for granted.

Cycles are part of the everyday life of churches. The "church year" is but one example. The issue is that very few church leaders pursue the growth of their church in a systematic cyclical way. Yet adopting a cyclical approach is the most effective way to address issues of life, health and growth. Experience has shown that farmers and others whose lives are largely influenced by the forces of nature intuitively understand the power of the cyclical approach to life whereas those from the city find it harder to grasp.

## The NCD Cycle



The NCD Cycle is the foundational tool for undertaking the NCD process of consistently addressing a church's least healthy areas. It is more fully explained in other resources, however the following can be said by way of introduction:

- It encourages leaders to pursue a deeper partnership with God in growing His Kingdom.



- It challenges leaders to pursue “increasing fruitfulness” in their ministry (see below).
- It binds the process to Scripture by laying a biblical foundation for each cycle phase.
- It raises the bar for church activity by settling for nothing less than ongoing transformation.
- It offers the capacity for churches to move progressively to identify and address the deepest barriers to healthy growth over time, starting from where they are.

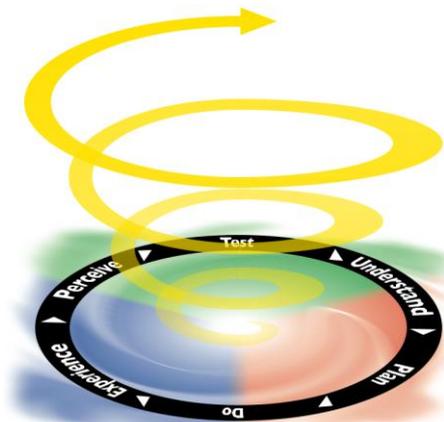
The most natural starting point for using the Cycle is to see the annual NCD Survey as the major part of the “Test” phase. This helps match the Cycle to the annual church calendar, with its normal processes of review, visioning, programmes, holidays, etc.

It is not hard to introduce. 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. Consistently working through the Cycle brings greater balance to the process which contributes to healthier outcomes.

## Turning the cycle into a spiral

No church, whether it works consistently on addressing current health issues or not, ends up in the same place at the beginning of each year. All activity in church life is contributing in some way to the long term healthy growth of the church, or not. It may come as a surprise to church leaders but there is no such thing as a “plateau” – right now seeds are being planted in churches which will deliver future fruitfulness or fruitlessness, growth or decline, health or sickness. It is unwise to assume that decisions, actions and activity taken to address issues in the past will produce the same results in future, even if applied to what appear to be the same issues. In fact an entirely different response might be required.

This reality is represented by the NCD Spiral, which is in effect a three dimensional view of the Cycle.



In one sense, 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).

More specifically, the spiral represents the fact that every time a church undertakes the Cycle, each of the six phases will differ from their counterpart in the previous Cycle because the church’s health has changed, bringing new issues and dynamics. If the church is increasing in health, perceptions of where God is at work are 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 a practical ongoing process that progressively increases the Kingdom fruitfulness of everyone in church life, especially leaders.

## A challenge to become increasingly fruitful

Engaging with NCD principles and processes highlights the fact that continuously growing the local church to greater health is serious business, particularly for its leaders. Fortunately God's call is not first to "performance" but to "partnership." And it is the depth of that partnership which determines a leader's fruitfulness. That is why NCD is so strongly focused on growing that partnership in the practical processes of everyday church life.

Experience has taught us over the years that many leaders face one or more of the following hurdles when approaching NCD for the first time:

- They are not sure they want to know the state of their church's health, or believe they already do.
- They confuse activity with outcomes, and are consumed with keeping themselves and the church "busy."
- They prefer to see their own spiritual growth as separate from that of their church.
- They are satisfied measuring "success" in terms of quantity (numbers of people, financial giving, amount of activity) not quality (spiritual health and growth).
- They tend to focus on short-term programmes rather than a long-term process.

All of these issues have a bearing on fruitfulness. In John 15, Jesus calls on us to contemplate seriously what it means to be fruitful. He poses the following challenges:

- We are all called to lead fruitful lives (v15:16a).
- We are to bear lasting fruit, that is, fruit bearing long term results for the Kingdom (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 an acceptable option (v15:2a, 6).
- We must understand that in partnering with God, He desires to help us, expecting us to become increasingly fruitful as time passes (v15:2b). This is not achieved without effort on our part.

There is a strong growth dynamic evident in this passage, using the organic metaphor of the Gardener, the Vine and the branches. Ongoing healthy growth resulting in increasing fruitfulness is expected. It challenges all who are called to partner with God in leading their church to grow.

NCD offers the principles and processes which encourage increasing fruitfulness in practical ways.



# Commencing the NCD process

## Read the foundational resources

You have already commenced the NCD process by beginning to think through the issues raised in this handbook. The next step is to contact Martin Saxby, the Diocesan Healthy Churches Development Mentor whose role is to guide you through this process - Email: [tim.mitchell@covcofe.org](mailto:tim.mitchell@covcofe.org) Mobile: 07496821460.

If you haven't done so already it would be helpful to read the foundational NCD resources. There are many NCD resources but we would recommend that as a church leader, you begin with just two, both written by Christian A. Schwarz, the President of NCD International.

*Colour Your World with Natural Church Development* – published in 2005, this book explains the quality characteristics, growth forces, Trinitarian Compass, some of the NCD tools including the NCD Survey, and the impact of NCD on churches internationally.

For the serious student you could also read *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* – the original NCD “textbook,” it was published in 1996 with a new edition released in 2006. Although it covers some of the basic material found also in *Colour Your World*, there are significant additions: information about the original international research and its findings; an overview of the “twin pole” paradigm that lies at the heart of our partnership with God; and an outline of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation NCD Cycle.

You can obtain these from the Diocesan Offices by contacting Martin Saxby.

## When to do your first NCD Survey

The Diocesan Healthy Churches Development Mentor will guide you through the whole NCD Cycle process including consideration of the issues raised here.

Christian Schwarz says that there are no pre-conditions to doing a Survey. Every church can get a “health check” and begin to work on the most important issues affecting its health whenever it chooses.

Having said that, experience suggests it is helpful to consider the following issues. These do not disqualify a church from doing a Survey. It is solely about timing and whether the leadership is able to devote sufficient attention to working consistently through the cycle process and address the issues in the Survey. Just ensure that any reason for delay is not simply an excuse.

- Are you currently launching significant new programmes or building new facilities, activities which consume all available energy in the church?
- Is the leadership at the point of seeking new vision or direction, or questioning the fruitfulness of current approaches?
- Is there a time of the year when doing a Survey naturally fits in? For example, you may wish to do the Survey just prior to the time the leadership normally does its visioning, planning and budgeting.
- Are you going through leadership change, whether it be the senior leader or others in the church? You may wish to delay the Survey until the new leadership team is in place. (Many churches find that once they have started the Cycle process, it helps to keep



doing the Survey through times when there is no senior leader because it provides continuity and keeps them focused on the key issues.)

- Are there any significant crises currently occupying the church's leadership? It may be wise to address these first as they often take a lot of time and energy.
- Does the leadership of the church understand that doing the NCD Survey is not a "one off" programme but the start of a long term process of continuously addressing key health issues? Is there a need to do some more preliminary education on what NCD is all about?
- And more importantly, is there some heart for doing what it takes to grow the church, including having a highly accurate assessment of the current state of health? Is there a real interest in and commitment to address health issues that will undoubtedly arise?

## The "mechanics" of doing the survey

### What do you need to do the Survey?

The materials are available from the Diocesan Office and you will be advised on how to access them. These include the *Facilitator's Form* for the incumbent which collects basic information about your church, and the *NCD Survey Form*, containing the main questionnaire.

### How do you take it to your leadership?

NCD is best learned by doing the Survey and then getting to work on the issues using the NCD Cycle process. It is inadvisable to try to begin with any more theory than just the basic concepts. So keep it simple. Here are some tips for having a discussion with your leadership:

- Don't try to summarize everything you have read on NCD. But do encourage every leader involved in the decision-making process to have a copy of and read this handbook.
- The most important message to convey is that NCD is a process not a programme and one that requires ongoing commitment to address the issues that arise with each annual survey.
- Explain why you personally believe it will help the church to get an annual assessment of its health and work on the key health issues. Help the leadership to understand that everything a church leadership does either causes a church to grow or decline, so it is best to be making decisions based on regular accurate information rather than hearsay or the opinions of a few.
- Stress that the NCD process takes the church from where it is right now, but begins immediately to sharpen focus on the most important things. It is not a burden for leadership, but a release provided they are willing to address the issues it raises.
- Affirm that NCD has been tried and tested internationally for over ten years. NCD's original findings are no longer theory.

Remember the Diocesan Team will be working alongside you and will be able to answer your questions as they arise.



## How do you choose people to do the survey?

The *NCD Survey Form* is normally given to thirty people who meet all the following criteria:

- committed to the life of the church
- actively involved in ministry, preferably performing a regular task
- member of a small group

The Diocesan Team will advise you on this selection.

The Incumbent or Priest in Charge of the church would be an automatic selection. There may be other members of pastoral staff whom you wish to include in the thirty. It is not essential to do this, however.

If you have more than thirty people in your congregation, you select thirty people who fit all three criteria. Consider a broad range of people represent the various demographics of your church (gender, age, race, etc).

Leaders of larger congregations sometimes ask if they can survey more than 30 people. It is possible but unnecessary to produce a statistically-accurate result. We recommend leaders take the time to reduce their list to the 30 people fitting the criteria whose opinion they value most or those they consider to have the greatest influence on church life.

Smaller congregations are not excluded. If you have a congregation of less than 30 people, you simply survey *everyone* as long as they fit all the criteria.

The definition of a Small Group is any group which is small! Even in churches with no traditional small groups/home groups, the truth is that the vast majority of people in the church are in small groups of some kind. Many of these groups are not recognised as such and most are not holistic. But people are in small groups and all can be encouraged to become increasingly holistic, thus substantially enhancing the effectiveness of every gathering, without expecting people to give more time and to attend more meetings.

Such Small Groups include choir/music groups, PCC, committees, welcome and hospitality teams, women's groups e.g. Mothers' Union, young mum's coffee gatherings etc. In some churches the congregation on Sunday is a Small Group.

## How do you get the Survey forms completed?

Once you have decided to begin the Survey process, the Diocesan Office will provide the survey materials for you. Those selected to complete the forms will be invited to a meeting to do this. At the meeting a short introduction will be given about the purpose of doing the Survey and why they were chosen, along with an explanation of how long it will take. Holding the meeting after a church service can work well. Overall the process should take about an hour. The questionnaires are given out with a pen or pencil, go over the questionnaire instructions and let them begin – it normally takes people between 10 and 20 minutes to complete.

Once all the questionnaires are complete, follow the instructions from the Diocesan Office about how you get the results processed.

Do *not* mail out questionnaires or allow people to take them home. Your workload will increase exponentially trying to get them back. It is also better that people offer their "gut" responses to the questions rather than spend a lot of time mulling over answers.



## What do you get back?

NCD International provides a profile which rates the health of the church on the eight quality characteristics. The rating is calculated by taking the raw scores from the questionnaires and measuring them against a standardization calculated from the other surveys conducted across your country. This gives you a highly accurate assessment of the church's health with respect to the rest of the Church in your country. You are not measured against churches from other countries.

Specifically there are a series of reports which view the results in different ways.

- The Summary Guide offers a short overview of the results.
- The Story Guide views the results from a thematic perspective, that is, the results for individual NCD Survey questions are grouped under pre-determined themes.
- The Status Guide offers a comprehensive question-by-question analysis of the results.
- The Strategy Guide invites consideration of future outcomes if present health issues in the life of the church are addressed.

The value of these reports increase enormously as more surveys are done because up to four sets of survey results are presented. Changes in health from year to year can be tracked and matched against action taken to address specific health issues. Over time it also exposes long term trends, greatly enhancing the capacity to identify the deeper issues impeding healthy growth and to make longer term decisions with confidence.

## How long does it take to get the results?

In most instances, results are available to share with you within a week.

## How much does the Survey cost?

The full cost of each survey is over £200. The Diocese is committed to supporting the development of the 8 Essential Qualities in the parishes and as part of this commitment will pay just over £100 with the church being asked to pay £100.



# What happens after you get the results?

## Work through the results and resources provided

The Diocesan Team will help you work through the guides supplied with the results. The team's role includes helping to debrief you on the results. The purpose of the debrief is not to tell you what you need to act upon but help you to use the resources effectively to assess strengths and weaknesses and diagnose the issues most needing attention.

## Ongoing mentoring support

The Diocesan Team will work with you in the coming months to support you in your decisions and to provide advice where sort. They will also help you as you prepare to move on to the next stage in the cycle.

A mentor will be provided from the Diocesan Team to do this, working through the results, developing and executing an action plan, and helping you stay focused on implementing the NCD process over the long term.

## What about other resources?

The resources you receive with the results should be sufficient to get you engaging with the critical health issues in the context of the NCD Cycle. There are, of course, other resources that may be helpful in understanding your Minimum Factor or taking steps to address it. The Diocesan Team will discuss what is available with you.

There is a Diocesan Healthy Churches web site [www.healthychurches.org.uk](http://www.healthychurches.org.uk) which has free downloadable resource including this Handbook. Books with Coventry Diocesan discount can also be ordered online from this site.

A couple of warnings about other resources you may come across:

First of all, over the years many different resources have been written that are NCD-specific or contain elements of NCD as part of other church growth concepts and systems. A lot of that material is still available on the internet. Much of it is out-of-date or based on a limited knowledge of the NCD paradigm. Be careful and do not assume its validity or usefulness without checking with someone from the Diocesan Team.

Secondly, do not fall for the “programme trap” – the decision to grab a ready-made programme or solution to raising your Minimum Factor. This often occurs when a leadership is impatient to “do something.” Your church is unique and every time you get your Survey results, it will be facing a unique set of health issues. Rarely does a programme used in another church (no matter how large or well known) fit your needs perfectly. In many cases, putting on a programme from elsewhere becomes a distraction from addressing the specific issues you have diagnosed. Any course of action must be aimed squarely at removing the specific barriers to growth you have identified from your most recent Survey results. If you work hard at gaining clarity on the issues, quite often the need for a programme from elsewhere disappears.



## Your Next Steps

If you have read this far you are hopefully enthused to take the development of the 8 Essential Qualities further in the life of your church and to engage with the full NCD process.

Don't be in a hurry!

This cannot be rushed, it is not a quick fix for all the challenges you face in your church or benefice and without the necessary preparation it is likely to produce a lot of hot air and little by way of growth!

In the first instance please contact the Healthy Churches Development Mentor, Martin Saxby. He will arrange to come and see you as soon as possible to talk through the next steps in your situation, bearing in mind the unique circumstances of each church and benefice.

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