

### **What is Natural Church Development?**

For too long the Church has appeared to be interested mainly in numerical growth (or decline in too many cases), but the most important aspect of church life has been downplayed — the health of the local church. At last, there is a means of determining the health of every local church through the Natural Church Development process. In the natural world healthy organisms grow and the same is true in God's Kingdom, so we concentrate on improving the health of a local church as the basis of growth. We do not ignore the pressing need for numerical increase, although we recognise that it is God alone who gives the increase.

The NCD process examines eight important characteristics to discover the strengths and weakness thus enabling church leaders and members to concentrate on the lowest characteristic before another survey is undertaken to see what has changed.

The advantages are that the NCD process:

- concentrates on health rather than growth
- is International but from a European base
- discovers what the active churchgoers feel about the church
- through carefully researched and revised analysis, compares the church with others in the community
- enables the concentration of the church to be in one area and not on many different things
- gives the opportunity to analyse the church again one year later to see the progress
- provides resources and advisory help to churches going through the process

### **Where Does It Come From?**

The process began with a worldwide analysis in 1994-5 of 1000 churches from all theological backgrounds. It examined static, growing and declining churches and the eight characteristics were discovered in the process. Over the last three years more work has been done and now a revised survey is available using the Internet for analysis.

### **Resources**

There are a growing number of resources, both books and CDs, for leaders and congregations. Details are available on the Resources page of the Healthy Church web site at [www.healthychurch.co.uk](http://www.healthychurch.co.uk) or go directly to [www.ncdresources.co.uk](http://www.ncdresources.co.uk).

### **How Does a Church Enter the Process**

A church leader will normally commence the process by purchasing a copy of the *Natural Church Development Handbook* (price £14.00 inc p&p). This book sets out the background to the whole process and enables an initial understanding of Natural Church Development. An enthusiasm for the concepts and process usually follows and the second step is to build spiritual momentum in the church through teaching about NCD which will then provide a means of improving the overall health of the church.

The next step is to carry out a survey of the active church members. This is important, for the analysis is not based on the thinking of those on the periphery of the church, but on the leaders, the active people and the small group members. It is important that those who answer the questions are active in the local church and should be a member of a small group, although this does not have to be a home group.

To obtain the questionnaires it is necessary for every church to purchase a copy of the *Natural Church Development Implementation Manual* (price £20.00 inc p&p). The norm is for a 1 leader's survey to be completed and 30 church members, but the files are included on a CD enclosed with the book, so you can print as many as you want. This CD provides a wide range of information for carrying out the survey, including some PowerPoint presentations, and is included in the price of the Manual. The Manual is important before the Survey, but it is essential for the implementation of the process following the survey results.

### **Costs**

We prefer to come and present the results of the survey to a church meeting or a meeting of the Implementation Team in person, so that there is full understanding of the process and the results, and the initial steps beyond there are in place. The cost of this is £400 and it includes the full report with a detailed analysis. If you feel you have the knowledge and expertise to do this within the church we will send you the survey profile at a cost of £125 (plus £50 for the detailed analysis). The profile provides a full report and instructions based on the *Natural Development Implementation Manual*. We usually complete the report within 10 working days, but if we can, we send the results by email much more quickly than that. It is very important to us that you get your results as quickly as possible. Your payment of £125 also gives you 15 minutes of consultancy by telephone or email with Healthy Church UK. If you cannot enter the data yourself, we will do it for you, but there is a charge of £15.00 for each 30 questionnaires and the report may take a little longer.