

Session 1: Healthy Churches – Members' Handout

Vision Prayer:



Heavenly Father,
we embrace Your call for us to make disciples,
to be witnesses and to grow leaders.
Give us the eyes to see Your vision,
ears to hear the prompting of Your Spirit
and courage to follow in the footsteps of Your Son,
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Getting Started:



- Health and wellbeing are a focus to modern life; for example eating 5-a-day, exercise, low fat, low salt, stopping smoking and losing weight.
- Give an example of someone you would regard as healthy. Why did you choose this person?
- If you were able to make one change to your life to be healthier what would it be?

Bible Passage: Acts 2:42-47



⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common.

⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

As you study the Bible passage you can choose one of two options for exploring the passage further.

Option 1.

Which aspects of this passage encourage you, challenge you, inspire you or confuse you?

From the passage which aspect of the life of the early church would you most like to see developed in the life of your own church?

Option 2

Acts tells the story of how the Gospel of Jesus Christ spread from Jerusalem to Rome. At several key points, and here particularly, the author wants his readers to see what underpins this extraordinary growth of the church in these early years.

1. Acts 2:42 indicates four priorities in the life of the early church. Why did the first Christians focus their devotion and priorities on these four areas?
2. From the text, what was the result of this level of devotion?
3. What are the lessons for a church that wants to be healthy and grow?

DVD Teaching Input:



Garden Exercise:



Using the picture of a garden on page five, which plant best represents the health of your church?

Share your choice in groups of three.

Healthy Church Survey:



A great deal of research has been done to find ways of assessing church health. These include Natural Church Development, Growing Healthy Churches, Anecdote to Evidence and Leading your Church into Growth. Our diocese has combined all this research and has identified six qualities which make a church healthy. These qualities are Worship, Vision, Strong sense of Community, Outward looking focus, Leadership and Discipleship.

Using the healthy church audit below score your church on a scale of A to F by putting a circle around the appropriate letter for each of the health qualities. Scoring A means being very healthy and F means being very unhealthy. Don't try to over analyse the score you give as a 'gut impression' is often the most honest response.

Write some action points to improve your church health under each of the headings.

1. Worship

A healthy church offers worship which inspires, encourages, has depth and richness, that connects with people and helps them encounter God. A church that has a deep rooted commitment to prayer which is demonstrated in every area of its life.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

2. Vision

A healthy church has a clear sense of purpose and direction, a current Mission Action Plan (or similar), has clear priorities and seeks to build God's Kingdom in its local communities. A church which seeks to find out what God wants and then does it!

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

3. Leadership and Collaborative Ministry

A healthy church embraces a positive pattern of Christian leadership, promotes collaborative working and encourages all people to find opportunities to put their faith into action. A church that encourages Christian vocations and encourages people to explore God's call upon their lives.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

4. Active Discipleship

A healthy church actively encourages people of all ages to grow in their relationship with Jesus through prayer, bible study and other devotional activities. A church that actively encourages people of all ages to find expression for their faith in the church and the world.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

5. Strong sense of Community

A healthy church has a church community that is open, warm, caring and supportive, that nurtures a sense of belonging for people of all ages and backgrounds and is open to new people joining the life of the church. A church that actively reaches out to others and has a warm and positive relationship with the communities it serves.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

6. Outward looking focus

A healthy church seeks to reach out to the local community and further afield with God's love and compassion. It is committed to helping people find faith and seeks to build the Kingdom of God in all situations.

Score: A B C D E F

(A – very healthy F – very unhealthy)

Actions

Our Priorities:



- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

Prayer Reflection:



Take it Away Material:



Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.
1 Corinthians 3:6 (ESV)

Try to memorise this verse or write it down and pin it up in places where you will see it regularly. We all have a part to play in helping God's Church grow just like Paul and Apollos, but ultimately it is God who brings health and growth. Each time you see a garden, or plants, repeat the verse and ask God to help your church to be a Healthy Church transforming your community.

Garden Exercise:

