

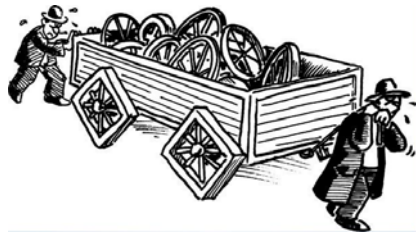
The Pastor's Journey from Frustration to Joy

The Transformation of a Church with Natural Church Development Principles

A Desperate Passion

As you speak with pastors and church leaders across the CNH District you will feel the desperate passion for the church and her mission to reach into our communities. The illusion of a safe and healthy society was finally and irrevocably crushed on September 11 of last year. Perhaps we have awakened, along with our nation, to the fact that life is not as it should be. Drug addiction, violence, pornography, divorce,

promiscuity, abuse, apathy and self-centeredness, have taken their toll. We know the church holds the keys to hope for our nation and its peoples and yet many church leaders are crushed by the weight of the burden, the length of the journey and the seemingly endless obstacles before them as they try, desperately, to make a difference in their communities. Leading a church is hard work. The depiction on the right symbolizes how many feel as they lead their local church. Every three feet of progress is a struggle and the journey seems endless. The leaders are devoted, hard workers but the progress is slow and frustrating. The church seems to have square wheels.



The Million-Dollar Question

Christian Schwarz, the author of Natural Church Development, asked himself the question, "What is different about growing churches?" Are there distinctive quality characteristics which are more developed in growing churches than in those which are not growing? Before he would arrive at an answer he would embark on the most comprehensive research project on the causes of church growth ever undertaken. He would survey over 1000 churches in

What is different about growing churches?

various cultural, denominational, theological and economic climates, small and large churches in 32 countries around the world. The answer to the million-dollar question was that growing churches had quality in eight essential areas of church life; their leadership was empowering, their ministry was gift-oriented, their spirituality was passionate, their structures were functional, their worship was inspiring, their small groups were holistic, their evangelism was need-oriented and their relationships were loving. Frankly, it all seems so simple and clear.

Eight Essential Quality Characteristics

Natural Church Development focuses on strengthening the essential qualities of a church. This approach to growth is "natural" or "biotic". NCD treats the church as an organism rather than a machine. Every organism has the potential to grow, reach adulthood and reproduce. Nothing we can do however can cause the organism to grow, God gives the growth. This is illustrated for us in the scriptures in Mark 4:26-29, "...the kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the ground... the seed sprouts up and grows – how, he himself does not know. The earth produces crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, and then the mature grain in the head. But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come." The direct application of this scripture is to the life of the church and it implies that certain developments appear to happen "all by themselves," or "automatically". Growing churches utilize this principle. They recognize that there are certain things that we can do and some things that are only performed by God Himself. Natural Church Development attempts to "release the growth automatisms" with which God Himself builds the church. Those automatisms or biotic principles are released when the church is healthy in the eight quality characteristics. Think of the eight quality characteristics as the essentials for health and life in the church organism.

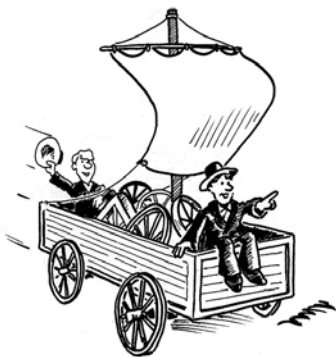
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The “Minimum Strategy”

The typical response is “How can I focus on all this at once”? To begin with, the research confirms that concentration on the “minimum factor” will make a significant difference. Consider the barrel illustration. If we pour water into a barrel it will fill to the level of the shortest stave and then the water will begin to pour out. In the

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illustration the staves of the barrel are the eight quality characteristics and the water is the people that God is pouring into your church. There is a point at which the barrel (the church) will no longer hold any more water (people). They pour out at the level of the minimum stave. The strategy is to determine your minimum stave or quality characteristic and then develop a plan to strengthen that area. When the minimum stave is lengthened the barrel will hold more water.



The Joy Filled Journey

Imagine an end to the “push and shove” frustration of church growth. Imagine a church where leaders empower, where laity minister according to their God-given giftedness, where the

services are inspiring and evangelism reaches into a community and meets its people at their relevant point of need. Imagine a church where the organizational structures facilitate ministry, where people passionately pursue their spirituality,

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where the relationships within the church are profoundly loving and small groups are holistic in their ministry. God will grow that church. The pastor and leaders will rejoice in the harvest. This is a church that makes a difference in a community and a country that is filled with broken, hurting and lost people with little or no concept of God. A country filled with these churches will once again feel hope for tomorrow as it experiences the healing that only God can give.

Practical Steps

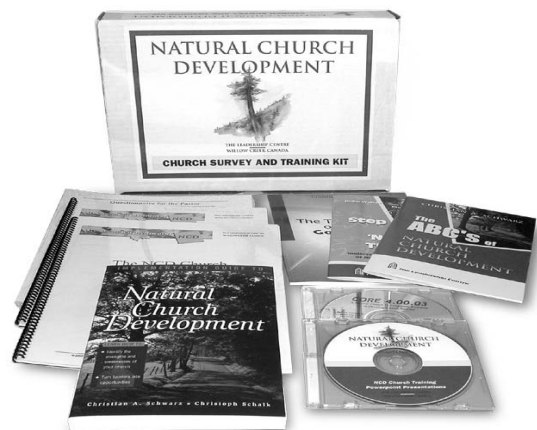
Christian Schwarz has developed a survey tool for evaluating the health of your church in each of the eight essential quality characteristics.

Thousands of churches in the United States have participated in the survey and a number of people in our district have taken the NCD Coaches training. Once you have surveyed your church you can develop a strategy to address your minimum factor and begin moving to greater health.

The cost for an NCD survey-30 for laity and 1 or more for pastor(s)-plus consultation and implementation materials:

\$150

The California-Nevada-Hawaii District LCMS has developed an NCD package to help you get started on your church’s journey to greater health. The package includes the surveys, scoring of surveys, assessment, follow up material including the book, *The Implementation Guide to NCD*,” a consultation, and a number of NCD resources for learning about Natural Church Development.



To learn more about Natural Church Development go to cnh-icms.org/ncd or call the District Office, 866-264-6079, and ask for Ed Krueger or John Whaley.