



EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR MISSIONAL OUTREACH

“Can anything new come out of...”

“Jesus said, ‘The kingdom of God is like a farmer who planted seeds in his field and then went on with his other activities. He slept and rose and slept and rose. As the days went by the seeds sprouted and grew all by themselves, he did not know how. When the grain is ready to harvest, the farmer takes a sickle and cuts it down.’”

Mark 4.26-29 paraphrased

Nelson Searcy in his newsletter found at ChurchLeaderInsights.com, tells us that there are two questions that keep nagging us as pastoral leaders. The obvious one is the

wrong one: “How do I get my Church to grow?” He points out that this question, which seems to plague so many (if they haven’t given up and become cynical already) can not only lead to wrong conclusions but also to dangerous conclusions. And, when you stop to think about it, this is also a distinctly “works righteous” way of doing missional theology. If I remember anything at all about my theological training, this is also not Lutheran theology.

The second question is dangerously close to the same kind of observation, but does give us a glimpse of something more redemptive: “What is keeping my Church from growing?” Of course, the dangerous response here could lead us back to the first question. However, further

reflective thought and scriptural awareness leads us somewhere else, especially in this time of Holy Week and the season of Easter.



First of all, it is important to realize that something good can come out of any one of our ministries. Healthy organisms grow.

That’s the nature of the world God has given us. Second, we are people who live the redeemed life and the life that seeks continuing redemption as a part of sharing in the emerging reign of God around us. If that is true as a framework for ministry, then we are on the right track.

I’ve been reading through *The Shepherd Leader* by Jim Van Yperen, lately. One of the points that he makes is that pastoral leaders often make the mistake of paying attention to events rather than patterns. We also have much too much of a predisposition to quantify results rather than discern fruits. What this means is that we raise

questions about “what does God want me/us to do?” rather than questions about how it is we can become more of what God wants us to be. There is a world of difference between these two. And, this does not lessen an awareness that God does want our ministries to grow.

But here is the fundamental difference in focus. *The Lord is not lazy regarding Her promise...but is long-suffering...willing that none should be outside Her reconciliation and relationship* (paraphrase of 2 Peter 3 is mine). The important questions with which we must wrestle (just as Jacob at the Peniel) is, first, how can we be the Church God wants us to be so to bring this Good News to others? And, second, and just as important, how can I determine to be a part of leading others so that they are empowered to share this Good News with others? In keeping with the focus of this edition, the real question is: “How can we help people better understand ‘Who loves you?’” Come on, we’re in Holy Week and Easter, after all!!!


Natural Church Development overview...

When we give thought to whether anything good can come out of any one of our ministries and how we can ask the right questions, one process has been very helpful lately. Last time I indicated this edition of this newsletter would take a look at Natural Church Development as a tool for helping to assess the health of a ministry in general. NCD can be very helpful for taking a snapshot of a ministry's health at a particular moment in time. But there are certain conditions that are important to note as a ministry gives thought to whether this is an appropriate tool for a particular moment in time.

The first consideration is whether or not the ministry is generally healthy and functional. If not, the results of the survey will indicate that lack of health and/or dysfunction by the outcome of the survey results. A ministry in conflict or one that functions in dysfunctional ways reflects these conditions in the visible life that is lived in the community. In addition, the conflict or dysfunction will give very aberrant results that will feed the conflict or dysfunction and the whole enterprise will not be well served by that information.

Second, it is important that a ministry be very clear about

its vision/purpose and guiding principles as a precondition for doing the survey and entering the process. NCD is not a substitute for doing the important vision work that must be done by every ministry seeking to be the visible presence of God in the community. The very strong thing about NCD is that it doesn't impose an external blueprint on a ministry by substituting its own vision for the one that God is giving the ministry. Nor does it spell out just what ministry should look like. In other words, NCD, with a strong vision and healthy conditions, can help a ministry ask the right questions. Read on!



The six biotic principles at work in both nature and in ministry:

1. *Interdependence*
2. *Multiplication*
3. *Energy Transformation*
4. *Multi-usage (Sustainability)*
5. *Symbiosis*
6. *Functionality*

Six Biotic Principles...

The heart of NCD is the six biotic principles upon which the process is based. This is often an overlooked understanding that is essential to help ministries take full advantage of the process. Most ministries are impatient to just get to the quality characteristics of healthy ministries. They want to know what the survey says.

Early in Christian Schwartz' work with his D.Min., he made an insightful observation. He saw that many different kinds of ministries were growing but they were all different. That led him to hypothesize that there must be something common about the ministries that led to growth in spite of their differences.

What he discovered is that the biotic principles at work in nature are also at work in ministry to produce growth. He discerned that there are

six of these. They are:

1. ***Interdependence***: In a living organism the individual units are connected to each other to make a larger organism. Changes in one ministry will affect other ministries in the congregation and community. Key question: What are the short and long-term effects of this action on other parts of our ministry?

2. ***Multiplication***: Healthy organisms do not grow endlessly but reproduce themselves. Key question: How does this contribute to the multiplication of ministry, not just addition of ministry?

3. ***Energy Transformation***: Momentum or energy already flowing, positive or negative, can be redirected to accomplish a specific purpose. Key question: How can we utilize success or conflict to fulfill God's purpose for us?

4. ***Multi-usage (Sustainability)***: Resources used should increase the capacity for growth and serve multiple purposes. Key question: How can this action contribute to future ministry opportunities?

5. ***Symbiosis***: Cultivating cooperative relationships between different parts of the organism produces a greater benefit than would be possible working separately. Key question: How can we make this a win/win outcome for all our ministries?

6. ***Functionality (Fruitfulness)***: Everything in an organism has a function that benefits the organism's purpose or it doesn't exist. Key question: How can we maximize the fruitfulness of this ministry/activity effort?

The gift of NCD is to know that these are the important change points for helping a ministry to think and act differently.

Eight Quality Characteristics...

What most people have heard about in regard to NCD are the eight quality characteristics that describe a healthy ministry. I have taken this long to get to these because without understanding the place of vision/purpose and guiding principles of a specific ministry, and the biotic principles in general, the quality characteristics make no sense. The survey of NCD produces a score for each of the eight quality characteristics. But that only points us to “what” a ministry is going to work on. “How” that is going to get done is accomplished through the biotic principles.

Second, it isn’t the characteristic that is so important either. It is the adjective that describes the characteristic. For example, every ministry has leadership of one kind or another. The question is, does that leadership empower others, lots of others, for additional leadership in and through the ministry?

The eight quality characteristics are these:

- Empowering Leadership*
- Gift-based Ministry*
- Passionate Spirituality*
- Effective Structures*
- Inspiring Worship*
- Holistic Small Groups*
- Need-oriented (Contextual) Evangelism*
- Loving Relationships*

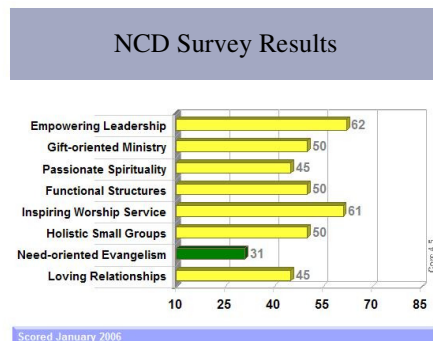
When a ministry decides to participate in the NCD survey, 30 people who are relatively active and involved in the ministry are asked to take the survey. In addition, the pastor completes a survey different from the others.

The results that come back from the surveys end up presented in quantitative and graphic form. See the bar graph to the right. The outcome of the survey gives the Church Health Team, the small group within the ministry that is charged with working on the results of the survey, a beginning point for

crafting a plan to raise the one factor that is the minimum factor.

One question often raised by folks is about this minimum factor. It seems contrary to so much of what it is that has been advised in the past. Most of the time, the strategy has been to focus on a ministry’s strength.

In fact, there is no difference here. The Church Health Team is asked to “get at” the area of ministry represented by the minimum score through the strengths of the ministry. In the survey shown here, this means using Empowering Leadership and Inspiring Worship to help Need-oriented Evangelism improve. That is done by applying the biotic principles.



Why focus on the minimum factor?

As indicated in the previous article, the focus of the Church Health Team is on the Minimum Factor of the survey. Another way of saying this that might help put this in a better perspective is that the CHT is asked to focus on the Maximum Leverage Point. When phrased this way, suddenly it becomes clearer why that area of ministry deserves the attention.



First of all, all ministries have a limited

amount of resources. We are always limited in time, in energy, in people, and other kinds of things. (This is dangerously close to being about an “economy of scarcity,” but that’s an article for a later time!) Second, focusing on the minimum factor or maximum leverage point acknowledges that

the place to give our attention is to that place that offers the greatest amount of possible change.

So, given that we have limited resources to begin with and we want to see the greatest amount of change, the maximum leverage point is the place to begin. In truth, however, as shared above, the CHT works with the minimum factor by working out of the ministry’s strongest areas. It is because of the biotic principles that this is possible...remember, interdependence, symbiosis, multiplication and the like. In fact, imagine how many different ways the energy in this picture of falling water could be transformed for good. There are three or four that come to my immediate mind. No doubt there are a ton of other ways as well.



EQUIPPING LEADERS
FOR MISSIONAL
OUTREACH

Texas Center for Mission

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Texas Center for Mission

Purpose statement:

"...do justice...love kindness...walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6.8

Solicitation is sought for additional articles to be included in this publication. Submissions to this newsletter will be considered when they follow the above purpose statement as well as the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

Please submit requests for inclusion in this publication to

Rev. Stephen C. Kanouse,

Mission Director for the Northern Texas/Northern Louisiana Synod
and the Southwestern Texas Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America.

Third Annual Second-Site
Conference

May 7 to 9

Santa Claritas, CA

This conference is for ministries seeking to understand ways in which they can become engaged in starting new ministries. You don't have to be big, you don't have to be rich, you don't even have to be really, really smart... all you need is a missional heart and a willingness to follow God into the mission field.

Come hear stories of how others have done it in surprising ways.

Test the waters for yourself.

For more information, contact:

*Rev. Stephen C. Kanouse
(phone and email above)*

So, can anything good come out of your ministry?

Well, that depends. It depends on where you are and what kind of leadership you choose to practice with your people. There are choices to be made. And, yes, people are different. Hopefully, that is something in which we can rejoice, though, admittedly, sometimes it is a challenge.

One significant gift of the NCD process is that it allows us to work within ministry with a focus on areas of ministry rather than with a focus on people or personalities. They are always present and a part of ministry, but when we focus on the missional opportunities that God is creating for us, that helps to

move ministry in very new directions. Of course, once again, this does assume a certain level of health and function. But, having the opportunity to talk about this can bring awareness and movement toward health if that is not already present.

At present, over 40,000 ministries in 60+ countries and on six continents with a wide variety of styles have participated in NCD. So far the "Rule of 65" has not been refuted. That is, any ministry that scores at 65 or higher on all eight quality characteristics is a ministry that is growing.

And here is the final insight about the Natural

Church Development process and why it is so helpful. It's main and primary focus is on the *quality* of ministry in all eight areas, not on the quantity. To do that, NCD honors the vision/purpose that God has given you and allows you to shape each area of ministry according to what it is that makes that area fulfill God's plan for you. Is NCD right for you right now? We can begin to discern that with a phone call.

In the meantime, remember Garfield's question: "Guess who loves you?" Actually, for us as people of the resurrection, this shouldn't be a secret for us or for anyone else!