

## What is your church like?

We might know our own church really well: what it feels like to be part of it, the role it plays in our lives, the things we really like about it, but church is a thing we do together. Do we know if the other church members feel the same way?

And when it comes to thinking about how things at church might be better, where do we start? We might know other places that do particular things really well: worship in a cathedral or schools' work in a village or somewhere where they really seem to care for each other. But those churches have different histories and settings to ours; you can't just lift something from their context and their resources, and expect it to work here. Churches are far too individual to expect that to work.

It would be really good if we could see how *our* church could be. To have some way to find the steps we could take to move in the right direction, so our church becomes 'better' or 'healthier' in a way which fits us.

## What is a healthy church?

The New Testament is full of pictures and encouragements about what the local church could be like. We are told to

meet together to motivate each other to acts of love, to know and grasp the incredible scale of Christ's love for us, to be patient with each other, to make new disciples for Jesus, to carry each others' burdens, and even to be a living sacrifice in our worship of God, along with many, many more encouragements towards health, growth and joy.



Over the past 20 years, a huge piece of research, learning from over 70,000 different churches across 86 different countries, has established a set of questions we can ask about our own church, which together help us take a sounding of what our church life is like. The questions come together to indicate the health of the church, seen through the lens of eight complementary

qualities. The research shows that being weak in any one of these qualities is not only unhealthy, but works against church growth.

**To what degree is the following statement true?**  
(For each question, tick one answer only.)

		Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Merely	Not at all
7	I feel my task in our church is a positive challenge that stretches my faith.					
8	It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church.					
9	The tasks I perform in our church match my gifts.					
10	I feel the sermon in the worship service speaks to my personal situation.					
11	My small group helps me with the challenges of my life.					
12	I connect with God in a meaningful way during the worship service.					
13	Our leaders seem to enjoy their ministry in our church.					
14	I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings.					
15	I feel that the worship service has a positive influence on me.					
16	I know what value my work has in the overall work of our church.					
17	I know that someone in our church will hold me accountable for meeting the commitments I make.					

Many churches of all sort and sizes, in towns and villages all across the diocese, have now used this survey to help give them a picture of their own church's health.

“ Over two thirds of our congregation said the changes made our worship better. ”

But much more importantly, by making changes in response to the survey results, they have found themselves growing and enjoying life in their own church much more.



## This process is available to your church

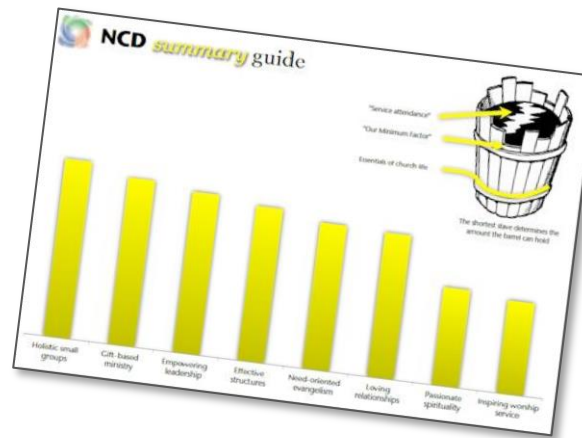
Because it has been found really helpful, the diocese has set up a small team of 'mentors' to help churches make best use of the survey.

Each mentor has experience of leading churches through the process. They can help you understand your survey results, and if you want, help you identify steps that your church can take together to improve where you are weak. They can put you in touch with others in similar situations to yours, so you can learn from what has, or hasn't, worked well for others.

Throughout the pages of the New Testament, Jesus recognises that no church is ever perfect, but that the Holy Spirit is continually working in us to change and develop both us and our churches for good.

We are convinced that God is working through the '8 Essential Qualities' survey to help us understand our strengths and weaknesses so Jesus can give health and blessing to churches all across the diocese and beyond.

*The '8 Essential Qualities' survey uses simple questions to help you to confidentially describe your experience of church.*



*Combining everyone's responses, it helps each church identify their overall strengths and weaknesses, seen through the lens of eight complementary qualities. It's then up to each church to decide what changes you want to make to improve your life together.*

To find out more, please contact  
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## What do you want church to be like?



What is it about your church community, services and activity that is just right? And what is it about your church that, if you stop to think, you wish was 'better' in one way or another?

For most of us, that's a really hard question.