

A black and white photograph of a person's hands holding a white plate with a piece of food on it. The person is wearing a dark, long-sleeved garment. The hands are positioned to hold the plate steady, with fingers visible on the rim. The food on the plate appears to be a piece of bread or a sandwich, partially cut or torn. The background is dark and out of focus.

For Elders

November/2006

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Editorial Assistance: Keith Knight
The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2006**



November, 2006

Dear Elders,

Healthy Church Development

How healthy is your congregation? What steps can a congregation take to revitalize its ministries? Questions like these are explored in a stimulating and thought-provoking workshop called *Healthy Church Development*. This resource is written by The Rev. Keith Boyer, a retired minister of our church who served most recently as the Mission Consultant for the Synod of Central, Northeastern Ontario and Bermuda. We are grateful to Keith for this insightful contribution to *For Elders*.

Session Starters

The next few Session Starters, written by Don Muir, will reflect on the theological foundation of our polity and explore why we govern ourselves the way do. In this issue you will find:

- Theology and Polity - Law and Order
- Theology and Polity - Christocracy or Democracy

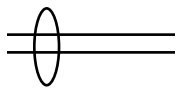
Elsewhere in the PCPak

As an aside, elsewhere in this PCPak you will find a resource entitled *How to Run a Church Workshop*. Drawing upon research gathered across the years and her considerable experience, Dorothy Henderson has written a guide that is filled with practical suggestions on everything from how long a workshop should be to ideas on how adults learn. This resource is sure to be a benefit to anyone planning a workshop.

Blessings,

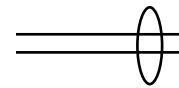
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Healthy Church Development

A Retreat or On-going Study for Elders by Keith Boyer



Introduction

We live in a time of heightened health awareness. Wellness is a topic of concern in every area of life: personal, public, corporate, economic, political, institutional, environmental, and ecclesiastical. Numerous books promote living a healthy lifestyle. Media pundits discuss the state of the nation's political health and look for evidence of a healthy economy. Scientists express grave concern regarding the health of the environment.

This workshop stimulates discussion regarding church health. Short dramatic readings encourage consideration of church development issues and introduce three programs that congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada have found helpful.

The material that follows is designed to be used for a self-directed three-hour session retreat. It may also be adapted to provide shorter units of study/discussion at three or four consecutive session meetings.

If your session has more than six members, small group discussion is important. The optimum number of participants in a discussion group should be three or four.

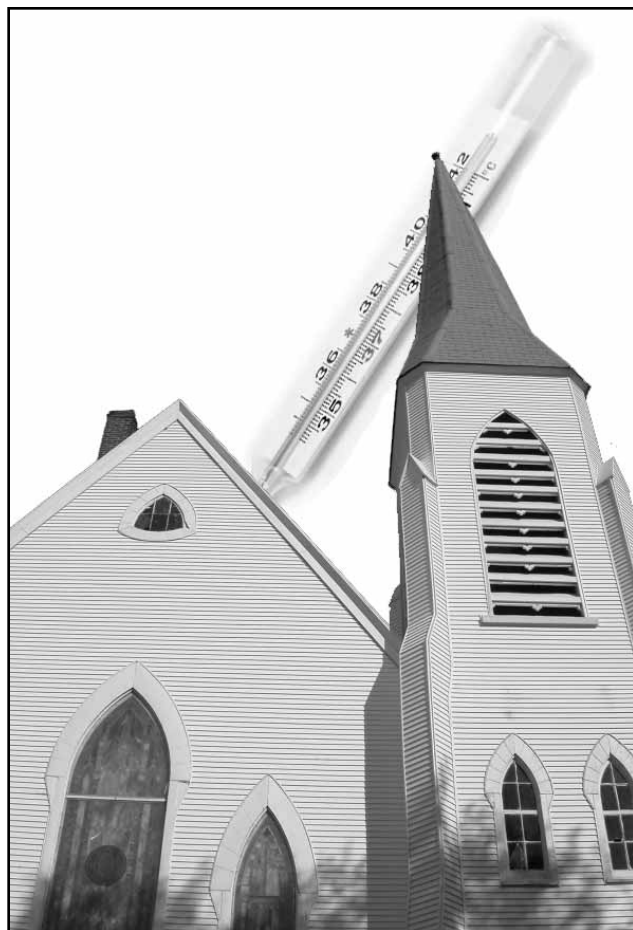
Preparation

Whether using the material for a retreat or at consecutive session meetings, the scripts (pp. 5 to 15) should be copied and parts assigned in advance of the retreat or meeting. The process will work best if the scripts are assigned to people who have some sense of the dramatic. (Do not try to match a part to a particular elder's point of view.) Due to the brevity of each reading there is limited opportunity for character development, but each role does have some personality consistencies within it. A minister/moderator may take the part of a ruling elder but should not take the role of the minister. All roles are gender inclusive.

In a retreat setting, every participant should have a copy of the *Retreat Agenda* (pp. 2-3) and the *Bible Discussion* sheet (p. 4). (If the readings are used in several consecutive meetings, every participant should have a copy of the related discussion questions.)

All elders should be provided with pen and paper to take notes during the readings.

Obtain at least one copy of each of the books described in the third script (p.9 ff). See the bibliography, p. 16, for information on availability. Those assigned to introduce the book should receive it with their scripts.



Session Retreat Agenda

Part I – Beginning the discussion (20 minutes)

- a. Bible Discussion - The Parable of the Sower
- b. Discussion starter skit I - The Ride Home (30 minutes)

Have five people read the skit (pp. 6-7). Following the skit discuss these questions:

- 1) Do you recognize yourself in any of the characters? Which one and in what way?
- 2) If you were a sixth passenger in *The Ride Home*, what would you say?
- 3) Which of the following statements most closely describe prevailing attitudes in your congregation: (*choose up to three*)
 - a) We want to grow but we don't want to change.
 - b) We want to change but without offending anyone.
 - c) Just wait, society will change and people will return to the church.
 - d) If we do nothing the church will die.
 - e) We have to bite the bullet and change, even if some people leave.
 - f) I just hope the church will still be here when I die.

Part II – The Tipping Point (30 minutes)

Have five people read the discussion starter skit, *The Tipping Point*, pp. 9-10.

Following the skit discuss these questions:

- 1) This conversation introduces the concept of the “tipping point.” How would you visually illustrate that concept? (Hint: Have you ever played the games *The Straw that Broke the Camels Back* or *JENGA*?)
- 2) What “tipping point” can you identify in the history of your congregation or a congregation you have attended? Was it immediately recognized or did it take some time to realize significant change had occurred?
- 3) Do “tipping points” just happen or can they be anticipated, engineered or planned?
- 4) Tipping points involve a change in balance or equilibrium. Is such change possible without discomfort?

Break (15 minutes)

If you are using this material at a retreat, plan a refreshment break here.

Part III – The Presentation (45 minutes)

Have five people read the discussion starter skit, *The Presentation*, pp. 11-15.

Following the skit discuss these questions:

- 1) As the minister observed, all three approaches focus on church health, but there are differences. What would you consider to be the most significant points of difference?
- 2) Each approach identified factors in congregational life (*purposes, keys and quality characteristics*). In what ways do they inter-relate or overlap?
- 3) If you had an opportunity to ask each of the presenters one question, what would it be?

Part IV – The Next Steps (30 minutes)

a. Discussion

Having been introduced to three ways of developing church health, which statement most closely reflects your present point of view:

- a) I have a clear leaning towards using one of the programs presented.
- b) I think we should use one of the programs presented, but I'm not yet sure which one.
- c) I think we need to consider other approaches to improving our church's health.
- d) I think we are a pretty healthy church just as we are.

b. Express an Opinion

Following discussion in your group, indicate your personal preference by moving to a part of the room designated to correspond to one of the four statements.

- If Statement A has the greatest support, immediately seek a second indication regarding the preferred program using the same method by moving to one of three designated areas..
 - If there is near unanimity, appoint a planning task force (three -five members) to establish a timeline, obtain resources and implement a process. Go to Closing.
 - If there is considerable divergence of opinion regarding approaches, go to the next step.
- If Statement B has the greatest support or there is a divergence of opinion regarding approaches, request each participant to write a question on an index card, the answer to which will help them come to a decision. Establish a task group to research the answers to the questions raised and request them to report to the next session meeting. Go to Closing.
- If Statement C has the greatest support, establish a task group to obtain information on other resources and report back to a future meeting of the session. Go to Closing.
- In the unlikely event Statement D has the greatest support, offer to tell your story in a future edition of *For Elders*. Go to Closing.

Closing (10 minutes)

Instructions:

The closing provides an opportunity to affirm the work that has been done and seek God's blessing on the next steps. To encourage a transition into an atmosphere of worship, begin with a minute of silence. A time for positive reflection and sharing is included. The final act is a sharing of the peace of Christ. A suggested script is provided.

Ask participants to form a circle.

Leader

As we come to the conclusion of our retreat, let us enter into a time of silence.

The scripture that has been foundational to our work is Jesus' *Parable of the Sower*. Listen to it once again. (*Read Luke 8:4-8*)

Let us read the parable in unison as it is printed on your Bible Discussion worksheet.

In the course of our time together, what is one thing you have heard about healthy church development that has taken root in you? It could be a concept, an idea, or a phrase. We don't have time for long explanations, but please share in a word or two some seed that has been sown in you today.

Allow time for individual sharing. This is not a time for group discussion.

Thank each person for what they offer without additional comment.

Let us pray. Mighty God: May the seeds that have taken root in us today bear fruit according to your purpose for (name of your church). We are thankful for an introduction to new concepts, reminders of time-proven truths, and an open sharing of concerns and ideas. In the words of one of your saints: "For all that has been, thanks! For all that will be, YES!"* In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

*Dag Hammarskjöld

Let us share the peace of Christ with one another, using the words, "*(Name), the peace of Christ be with you.*" The response will be, "*(Name), and also with you.*"

Bible Discussion – The Parable of the Sower

When a great crowd gathered and people from town after town came to him, Jesus said in a parable: “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell on the path and was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up; some fell on the rock and as it grew up it withered for lack of moisture. Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. Some fell into good soil, and when it grew, it produced a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “Let anyone with ears to hear listen!”

Luke 8:4-8

Instructions

- Read the text in unison
- Answer the questions individually
- Discuss your responses in small groups (three - four in each group)

1) How would you describe your gardening experience?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I deserve a “green thumb” award | <input type="checkbox"/> If I look at a plant it wilts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I say, “Buy it rather than grow it.” | <input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy other people’s gardens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I enjoy special times with God through gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

2) What do you consider the main point of Jesus’ parable?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fruitful growth is a matter of luck. | <input type="checkbox"/> Be a discerning seed-sower. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fruitful growth requires careful preparation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening is risky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There are many reasons why seeds don’t thrive | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

3) How would you describe the spiritual roots of your congregation?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty shallow | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep and strong | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry and thirsty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weak and vulnerable | <input type="checkbox"/> Growing daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

4) What areas of your church’s life and ministry effectively support growth and fruitfulness? (select up to three)

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worship Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality | <input type="checkbox"/> Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

5) What areas of your church’s life and ministry are most in need of improved health? (select up to three)

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worship Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer | <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality | <input type="checkbox"/> Study | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Discussion Starter Skit I: The Ride Home

The Setting: The minister and four elders from Knox Presbyterian Church are returning from *The New Millennium Conference*. The conference, sponsored by a well-known United States' mega-church, was hosted by a large Alliance congregation in a major Canadian city. Satellite communications linked the sponsoring mega-church with four Canadian sites and 16 locations in the United States. The total conference registration exceeded 17,000 participants. Worship and major presentations were projected on a large screen. Once on the highway for the ride home the minister opens the conversation:

Minister: Well what did you think? Are you glad we went?

Elder 1: I'm still trying to take it in. There must have been 800 people attending! Just at our location. Never mind all the others.

Elder 2: It reminded me of a youth conference I attended 40 years ago.

Elder 3: They sure are on to something! Imagine a church that has a weekly attendance of... what was it? Over 15,000 and growing. They must be doing something right.

Elder 1: We get excited when we have to put out extra chairs on Christmas Eve.

Minister: Are you glad we went?

Elder 1: I think so. I'm just trying to relate what we heard to who we are. I mean, Knox is so different. We go back to 1870. They were founded in 1975. We have had 12 ministers and they have only had one. We are Presbyterian and they are... What are they?

Minister: They are independent. They have no denominational affiliation.

Elder 2: At one point I felt they wanted *us* to join *them*.

Minister: That's what's happening these days. There are associations of churches that cross denominational lines. Did you pick up any ideas that could apply to us?

Elder 3: Well, it was clear to me that a lot has to change at Knox if we want to *grow*. As I see it we have been treading water for years. We really aren't keeping up in attendance and there are hardly any youth in the church.

Elder 1: *What* do you think has to change? Where would *you* begin?

Elder 3: I'd start with worship. Did you hear an organ at the conference? Did we sing any familiar hymns? Every keynote speaker said growing churches have given up using the organ. That's where I'd start. At our next session meeting I think I'll move that we completely change our ministry of music: organ, hymn books, choir... If we want to grow we've got to get with the times.

Elder 2: But at what cost? How many people will leave if we give up the organ in favour of a band? And I like hymns. I even like the organ.

Elder 3: That's my point! Our worship meets your needs but it's not attracting young people, is it?

- Elder 1:** I think it would be a mistake to change everything all at once. Changes have to be made gradually. I was impressed by their clown and puppet ministries. Now *there* would be a place to start. Everybody likes clowns and puppets. Knox could be known as the church that has a children's story with puppets every week. Just imagine our empty front pews filled with children!
- Minister:** I like that picture. I was also impressed by the mini-dramas that they included in the worship and as part of the sermon. That's something I wouldn't mind working on.
- Elder 3:** We can do that, too. But I don't think we will grow until we change our music.
- Elder 2:** We'll appoint *you* to inform Mary that she is no longer needed as organist and choir director. No one has yet mentioned the third presentation. I think we lack small groups. We have the WMS, the monthly men's breakfast, quarterly couples' fellowship evenings, and the youth group, such as it is.
- Minister:** Don't forget the Bible study.
- Elder 2:** Look at the groups they had! Every member was assigned a group. That's 15,000 people in small groups! I think that's the secret of their success. Based on that third presentation it looks like we will *never* grow unless we have small groups. (*brief pause*) I've noticed that someone's been awfully quiet so far.
- Elder 4:** Me? I'm just listening. Taking it all in.
- Minister:** No one has mentioned their social action program. Do you remember? They assigned some of their small groups to work at community soup kitchens and they are active in Habitat for Humanity. That showed they don't neglect justice ministries.
- Elder 3:** But we have to begin with music.
- Elder 1:** I'd start with puppets.
- Elder 4:** I'm confused. (*reflectively*) I was impressed by all that we saw and heard. Clearly they are doing things that have appealed to lots of people. But I'm left with many questions. This is the fourth conference I've attended in the past ten years. A few years ago I went to a synod conference. The speaker from the college said churches must offer three things: solid biblical preaching, excellent Christian education, and effective pastoral care. Then there was the presbytery evangelism event we attended. It was all about paradigm changes and living in a post-modern world. Last year we sent a delegation to the stewardship conference. We were told to be aware of how people are different. Some give because they want to be faithful and others give because they want to make a difference. Now today we have heard and seen another approach. I find it all overwhelming.
- Elder 3:** We have to start by changing the music.

Discussion Starter Skit II: The Tipping Point

The Setting: A meeting of the session of Knox Presbyterian Church is under way. A delegation is about to report on a recently attended church development conference.

Minister: The next item on the agenda is The New Millennium Conference. There were over 800 in attendance at our location and over 17,000 in different cities across North America. We had a very lively and stimulating conversation on the ride home. Who would like to begin?

Elder 3: I came away from that conference convinced we have to make changes around here! We just can't do things the way we've always done them. I'd start with our music ministry.

Minister: It sounds as if we are picking up where we left off.

Elder 4: I agree we have to make changes. But how can we know what to change and how to change? Where do we start? We have been talking about decline and growth for 20 years or more. I remember when we hoped we would "double in the eighties."

Elder 2: I remember Key '73! We went door to door giving out booklets.

Elder 3: We have to start with the music. Growing churches don't use organs. I think every conference speaker said that. We also need to invest in a really good projector and screen.

Elder 1: Music is a lightening rod. I think it would be prudent to initiate change by adding something, like puppets or clowns. We don't want to lose members by making changes.

Elder 4: Whatever we do needs to be well thought out. The congregation expects us as elders to lead in ways that will grow the church, not disrupt it.

Minister: I've just finished reading a book that I found very relevant when thinking about change. *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell explains how change occurs when three important factors come together. He calls that coming together, a "tipping point." Gladwell illustrates how tipping points can result in either positive or negative change.

Elder 1: That's for sure. Look at what happened when we added Passing the Peace to our service. Four good families packed up and left.

Elder 2: And I heard that St. Paul's down the street changed its music to guitars and drums and people are staying away in droves.

Elder 4: So what are those three important factors?

Minister: If I remember correctly, Gladwell called them, "the *Law of the Few*, the *Stickiness Factor*, and the *Power of Context*." I think of them as leadership, message, and context. Sometimes they come together to form a "tipping point" and change happens.

Elder 2: But often they don't come together. Look at doubling in the '80's.

- Minister:** Gladwell's book is full of examples of tipping points. Do you remember the midnight ride of Paul Revere? He spread the word that "the British are coming." Did you know that there was another person with a similar mission? William Dawes carried the same warning in another direction and is barely remembered. The towns he went through had similar anti-British leanings, but Dawes was not Revere. Revere had personal connections that Dawes lacked.
- Elder 4:** That's the issue of leadership. What about message? We have the best news anybody could ever hear.
- Minister:** Gladwell says that the way the message is *packaged* is important. He calls it the "stickiness factor."
- Elder 1:** And what about context? There's not much we can do to change our community. Sunday sports and shopping are here to stay. And I haven't been to a movie in years. There's nothing fit to go and see anymore! Remember Singing in the Rain and the Sound of Music? Puppets and clowns will bring children and parents back to the church.
- Elder 3:** There's no doubt everything's changing and so are we. We used to talk about saving for a rainy day. Well how hard does it have to rain? I say it's time to throw caution to the wind. We have to go for broke. Remember that hymn we used to sing: "Give us the heart of Abraham for changes make us bold!"
- Minister:** I think we need to make changes. But they need to be right for us. I don't think we can simply *copy* what another church, even a successful church, has done. We need to ask and answer some important questions before we embark on a process of change.
- Elder 1:** What questions?
- Minister:** Well one is, "Who in our community is God calling us to serve?" The answer will influence a lot of what we decide to do. And another is, "How can we best utilize our human and financial resources to glorify God?" What I'm saying is, I think we need to do some serious analysis before we embark on a particular course of change.
- Elder 4:** I suggest we consider several church development resources at our next meeting.
- Elder 2:** I agree. I'll make that motion.
- Minister:** I'm aware of several. I'll distribute some materials and we'll receive summaries at our next meeting. Are we agreed? Now let's move on to the committee reports.

Discussion Starter III: The Presentations

The Setting: A meeting of the session of Knox Presbyterian Church. Following the last meeting, the minister distributed books and resources related to church development to three elders. Each was asked to report on the material given to him/her at a stated hour. About half an hour into the meeting, the minister/moderator speaks.

Minister: I see it's time for our stated hour. At our last meeting we agreed to devote an hour to consider several church development resources. Who would like to be the first to report?

Elder 3: I can start. I was given the book *The Purpose Drive Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission*. It's by Rick Warren. He's the founding minister of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California.

Before I tell you about the book, let me tell you about his church. From its beginning, Rick Warren wanted to reach people who seldom went to church. He began with a Bible study in his home in 1979. The Bible study grew to 15 members. Then, in response to the distribution of 15,000 flyers, 205 people attended the first worship service in 1980. Today Saddleback Church has 22,000 members, more than 200 specific ministries, six weekend services held in three venues at the same time at a 140-acre church campus site! And get this: Each venue offers a different style of music but with the same message projected on a big screen!

Minister: Those are really impressive numbers. Saddleback sounds a lot like the church that sponsored the conference we attended.

Elder 1: Is Saddleback a Presbyterian church?

Elder 3: No. I think it's Baptist. They insist all members need to be baptized as adults. And from looking at their webpage, I think they are probably more conservative than we are. It struck me that Warren didn't seem to be aware of inclusive language. He refers to "men" when I assume he means "people." But I think any church could make use of many of the ideas in the book.

Elder 2: What does it propose?

Elder 3: Rick Warren believes that a church needs to grow in health before it tries to grow in numbers. He says a church needs to be driven by five New Testament purposes. And he believes that building up the faith of people is more important than developing programs.

Minister: Can you tell us about those five purposes?

Elder 3: Warren names them: *Worship, Ministry, Evangelism, Fellowship* and *Discipleship*. He describes each using the Bible. I should say one thing I liked about his book is its clarity. Many pages have boxes that summarize key points. For example, one says, "*A clear purpose not only defines what we do, it defines what we don't do.*" (p. 87) Warren says most churches focus on one purpose rather than all five. That made sense to me, because as I look at Knox I think we focus on fellowship and ministry, and do nothing regarding evangelism.

- Elder 1:** So how do you become “purpose driven?”
- Elder 3:** Warren describes a process of church development and illustrates it with concentric circles he calls the five circles of commitment. People move from the outside in, from community to the core of the church’s life. In order to achieve that, Saddleback offers four basic courses. Picture a baseball diamond with first base being Committed to Membership and home plate being Committed to Missions. The step by step process is all well laid out in the book.
- Minister:** It sounds as if you were impressed by the book and its development concepts. Any final thoughts before we go to the next report?
- Elder 3:** I think reading the book helped me broaden my understanding. I know I’ve been talking a lot about music, and I do think we have to make changes, but there’s a lot more to consider. I think we have to ask why we do what we do. For example, who are we trying to attract to Knox? I’ve always thought we were here for everyone, but I think we need to have greater clarity regarding who God wants us to reach. Presbyterians? Unchurched? Seniors? Young couples with no church experience?
- Minister:** Thanks for your informative report. Who would like to be next?
- Elder 1:** I was given a book by a consultant named Kennon Callahan. I remember him from that Stewards by Design Conference we attended a few years ago. He was the main speaker. He told some wonderful stories and we have implemented some of his suggestions, like our calendarized budget and the ways we now encourage generous giving. His book is called *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*. I was also given a workbook that goes with it.
- Elder 4:** I was at that conference. Callahan was an excellent speaker. It was the first time I had seen someone use PowerPoint. That really helped me follow his presentations.
- Elder 1:** He writes the way he speaks, clearly and concisely. Often he says the same thing two or three times using different words. The title of the book says it all. Callahan recommends that churches identify and build on key congregational strengths. He lists 12 key areas, six of which are “relational” in nature. He describes the remaining six as “functional.”
- Minister:** What are the six relational areas?
- Elder 1:** *Specific, Concrete Missional Objectives; Pastoral and Lay Visitation; Corporate, Dynamic Worship; Significant Relational Groups; Strong Leadership Resources; and Streamlined Structure and Solid, Participatory Decision Making.*
- Elder 2:** I think we are pretty strong in a few of those areas. Worship, leadership, and decision-making are Knox’s strengths. What about the other six?
- Elder 1:** They are: *Several Competent Programs and Activities; Open Accessibility; High Visibility; Adequate Parking, Land and Landscaping; Adequate Space and Facilities; and Solid Financial Resources.*

- Elder 2:** I think we have some needs there. There are areas of our building that aren't accessible, our parking lot is limited to ten spaces, we could take our church sign to the Antiques Road Show, and the nursery is small. On the other hand we do have a few good programs like the Couples' Fellowship, the Bell Choir, the WMS and the Men's Breakfast. And we have pretty solid finances thanks to some recent bequests.
- Elder 1:** We have ten parking spaces in the summer and seven in the winter. And I'm not sure I agree with you about the nursery. A lot of churches have nurseries just like ours. Callahan says that we can be an effective church even if our parking is limited and our building has some challenges. He says we should build up our strengths. That's where his long range planning workbook comes in.
- Minister:** Say some more about that.
- Elder 1:** The hardcover book describes each of the keys to an effective church. The Planning Workbook takes participants through a planning process. I could imagine us using it. It asks good questions.
- Minister:** I believe St. Andrew's in Nearby Town used Callahan's book to develop a long-range plan last year.
- Elder 1:** If possible, I think it would be best to invite someone from beyond Knox who is familiar with the twelve keys to lead the process. It can be done in two sessions and would help us develop a long range plan to be presented to the congregation at the annual meeting.
- Minister:** I like the idea of building on congregational strengths.
- Elder 1:** Callahan makes it clear he is not talking about the power of positive thinking. Building on strengths is a recognition that God has blessed each congregation with gifts and resources and it is important to make use of them. The planning process involves identifying strengths, then expanding them, and finally adding new ones.
- Elder 2:** We have a good choir and bell choir, but we have no children's choir. Adding a children's choir would expand our ministry of music.
- Elder 4:** I like the idea of identifying and expanding strengths. But I wonder if we can be sufficiently objective. Can we really assess our strengths ourselves?
- Elder 3:** I know we have a good choir, and it's been good for many years. Knox has a reputation for good music in town and throughout the presbytery. We were even asked to sing for the opening of synod. The choir may be a strength, but the church hasn't grown because of it, or the bell choir, or the WMS, or the Men's Breakfast.
- Elder 4:** I'd like to give my report. I think it addresses the issue of objectivity. I was given the book *Colour Your World with Natural Church Development*. It's by Christian Schwarz.
- Elder 1:** I don't think I've heard of him.

- Elder 4:** He's based in Germany and developed Natural Church Development based on research involving 1,000 churches in 32 countries around the world. To date, over 40,000 churches in 70 countries have used NCD.
- Elder 3:** I think there was an article about it in the Presbyterian Record a few years ago.
- Elder 4:** There were eight articles; one for each of the eight quality characteristics recognized by Schwarz.
- Elder 2:** According to my notes, that's eight for Schwarz, twelve for Callahan, and five for Warren. What are the eight?
- Elder 4:** In his research, Schwarz found a clear link between church health and numerical growth. Healthy churches grow naturally. He also found that healthy churches had high scores in eight areas of congregational life: *leadership, worship, ministry, small groups, spirituality, evangelism, structures or governance, and relationships*. He assigned adjectives to each to describe the quality. For example, for worship the important quality is "inspiring. " Every church has worship, but some churches have a worship service that is more inspiring than others.
- Elder 2:** But how do you measure that? When it comes to worship, everyone has different likes and dislikes.
- Elder 4:** That's what Schwarz discovered! There isn't any one *style* of worship that guarantees inspiring worship. His research led him to conclude that different styles can be equally inspiring. He studied churches of different denominations and traditions in very different contexts looking for principles of church health that were true globally.
- Elder 2:** But how do you measure qualities?
- Elder 4:** With a carefully designed tool, a survey that gives a score in each of the eight areas. The data from the survey is compared to data from thousands of other churches and a congregation is able to identify both its strengths and its area of greatest need. Based on the results every church has a maximum factor and a minimum factor.
- Elder 3:** Minimum factor. That sounds like negative thinking to me.
- Elder 4:** Schwarz explains that the church is like a body. When one part of the body is unhealthy the whole body is affected. In his research he found that a church's minimum factor held the church back from better health. He also found that churches need to use their strengths to address their most pressing area of need.
- Elder 2:** You said something about a survey. Is it like that questionnaire we sent out in the newsletter last year? Remember the one that asked questions about summer service hours and suggestions for fall programs?
- Elder 4:** Not at all. It is a 91 question survey with high statistical accuracy. It is completed by 30 carefully selected core participants of the church.

- Elder 3:** Then what?
- Elder 4:** The data is sent electronically for scoring. Based on the results, a support team coordinates the design of a plan of response and the congregation implements the plan. The plan will help concentrate energy where it will be most beneficial. About a year later a second survey is completed. Many congregations improve their scores in all areas and usually get a new minimum factor. Using NCD involves a cycle that could take up to five years. The research also indicates that most congregations experience increases in worship attendance while working through the process.
- Minister:** We have had three excellent and informative presentations. All three had one thing in common. They focus on quality and health more than quantity.
- Elder 4:** I need to say one more thing. While it is possible for a church to do Natural Church Development on its own, most congregations make use of a coach. If we decide to use NCD, I think a synod staff person is able to provide coaching for us.
- Minister:** Thanks again to our three presenters. Now let's take some time to consider possible next steps.

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