

Seven Marks of a Healthy Church

(Based on Robert Warren, 'Healthy Churches Handbook')

Introduction

This document is used as part of a lengthy process in discerning the health of a church and the whole process can be found in Robert Warren's book. However, this sheet has been found to be useful in helping churches reflect on their life.

It can be used to generate discussion by asking the members to give their ratings as to the strengths and weaknesses of their church. It will then be up to the facilitator to discern - with the members - what their priorities for mission should be going forward.

This has been **most** helpful when used to tease out and encourage the strengths of the church and use these as a basis for being more intentional in their mission.

It has been **least** helpful when churches have become preoccupied with their weaknesses

Use this to

1. Tease out where the church wants to put its short and longer term priorities and
2. lead on to some SMART planning (see appendix Questions to facilitate review discussion) or with agreement of your meeting, move straight to the Action Plan sheet

Finally - What does this imply for our Minister's role description and her/his allocation of energy and resources?

Do we need to update the Minister's role description in our profile?

Do we want our Elders to change their priorities in order to lead the church forward for the next 2 years? If so, how?

The Seven Marks

1. Energised by faith rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive.

Worship and sacramental life : move people to experience God's love.

Motivation : energy comes from a desire to serve God and one another.

Engaging with scripture : in creative ways to connect with life.

Nurturing faith in Christ : helping people grow in, and share, their faith.

2. Outward looking focus with a 'whole life' rather than a 'church life' concern;

deeply rooted in the local community, **working in partnership** with other denominations, faiths, secular groups & networks
passionate & prophetic about **justice and peace**, locally and globally making connections between **faith and daily living**.

responding to human need by **loving service**.

3. Seeks to find out what God wants rather than letting our own preferences set the church agenda

vocation : open to the Spirit's leading about what we should be and do.

vision : developing and communicating a shared sense of where we are going.

mission priorities : consciously setting both immediate and long-term goals.

able to call for and **make sacrifices**, personal and corporate, in bringing about the above and living out our faith.

4. Faces the cost of change and growth rather than resisting change and avoiding failure

taking on new ways of doing things while embracing the past.

taking risks : admitting when things are not working, and learning from experience.

crises : responding creatively to challenges that face the church and

community.

positive experiences of change, however small, are affirmed and built on.

5. Builds community rather than functioning as a club or religious organisation

relationships are nurtured so people know they are part of a community of faith, (often through small groups), with opportunities for service.

leadership : lay and ordained work as a team to develop appropriate expressions of all seven marks of a healthy church

lay ministry : the different gifts, experiences and faith-journeys of all are valued and given expression in and beyond the life of the church.

6. Makes room for others

being inclusive rather than exclusive

welcome : works to include newcomers into the life of the church.

children and young people are helped to belong, contribute and be nurtured in their faith.

enquirers are encouraged to explore and experience faith in Christ.

diversities : coming from social and ethnic backgrounds, mental and physical abilities and age differences are seen as a strength and sought after.

7. Does a few things - and does them well focused rather than frenetic

doing the basics well : especially public worship, pastoral care, stewardship and administration.

occasional offices : makes sense of life and communicates faith
being good news as a church in our attitude and ways of working.

enjoying what we do and being relaxed about what is not being done.