

The Church Health Review

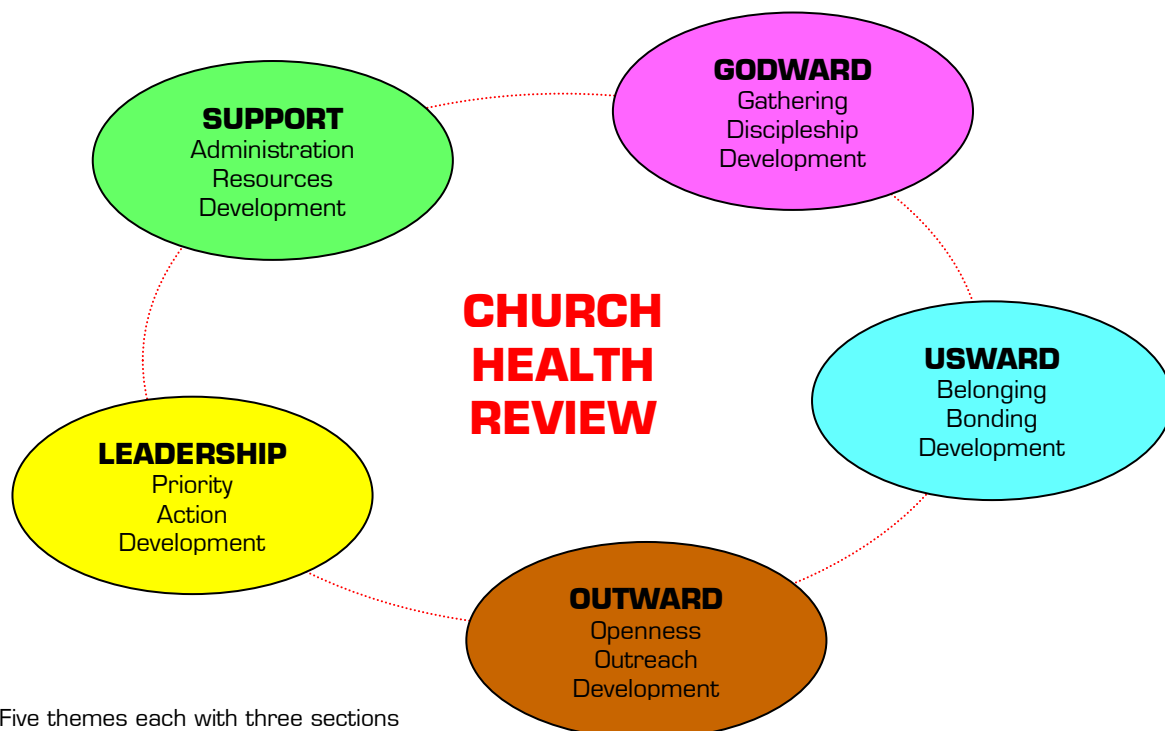
Part 1: Introduction

HC4 Health-checks series

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This first paper gives the background to the Church Health Review (CHR), provides an outline of how the Review is conducted, and explains the structure and all the terms that are used. It is followed by a second paper in HC5 on this website which lists in full the 45 questions and the 225 sample tests and provides a *pro forma* sheet for using the Review.

This is the 2014 version (last updated in August 2022) which includes a recasting of all the questions, revised explanations and other new material. The Review will continue to be updated as users and readers suggest improvements.



Five themes each with three sections

Church health

Introduction

This Review is designed to help any Christian church assess its general health. It seeks to provide a detailed checklist of areas to investigate and, for each of these, gives ideas for how to determine the state of health or sickness.

It sets out to enable a thorough investigation to be made and is therefore more detailed than most other tools that are available. Instead of picking on a number of ‘marks’ of good health, it investigates every area of church life through the choice of five main **themes**.

The Church Health Review (CHR) focuses on a set of 45 questions to be answered. In its simpler form a specially selected **Assessment Group** checks each question and selects one of six possible responses. So, in summary, the Review has:

- 1 Five **themes**, areas of church life that deserve some form of measurement. Each theme is divided into three **sections**. See the diagram on page 1 for all themes and sections (start with ‘Godward’ and go round clockwise).
- 2 Each theme has nine **questions** to answer. To help you do this there are five **sample tests** for each question to give some idea of how to assess your church’s health.
- 3 A small **Assessment Group** chooses one of six possible responses for each question and so builds up a picture of overall health to see where action may be necessary.

The heart of the Review lies in its 45 questions (nine for each of the five themes). One of the most likely benefits from conducting the exercise is to see the way in which these have been grouped.

The Review is designed to cover a wide range of churches across different denominations and streams. Some of the questions themselves will need to be adapted or expanded for the church to which the Review is applied. But this should not prove difficult.

There is no need to use the whole Review at once. You can select just one of the five themes and review, for example, the church’s ‘Outward’ dimension or its ‘Leadership’. The Review provides the framework: its application is open to a wide variety of choices.

Note that technical terms relating to the Review are given in bold italic – as in **themes, questions, sections, sample tests, Assessment Group** above. Such terms will be similarly highlighted in the text whenever they are first introduced, and at other times when such emphasis may be helpful.

Church, health and review

Three terms appear in the title and these require explanation.

Church is assumed to mean a local body of Christian believers from any denomination or stream. It is not intended to cover groupings such as Anglican Team Ministries or Deaneries or Methodist Circuits. But it should be applicable to any grouping of congregations that see themselves forming one church. The Review has been prepared from a UK perspective and might need adapting elsewhere.

Health is intended to convey the idea of a church that is being what the Scriptures indicate a church should be, as applied to today’s world. There should be no signs of illnesses such as lack in reality of faith, conflict or coldness between members, an inward-looking club mentality, loss of direction or structure strain. A healthy church will be developing in a wide range of ways (the Review tests growth in faith, love, numbers, thinking and quality).

Review is simply a term used for a sophisticated checklist with an assessment system built into it, so that some kind of measure can be used to assess the level of health. The idea is to help any church ask hard questions across every aspect of its life.

It is not the aim of this Review to consider churches as business enterprises; any quick skim through should quickly demonstrate that this is far from the case. But there is the assumption that churches should be assessed and that this in itself is a healthy thing to do. One biblical precedent for this lies in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, and it would be worth reading these two chapters carefully before undertaking the Review.

The idea of a medical check-up has been used as a background to the themes and tests. We are used to the idea of health-checks for our bodies, MOT tests for our cars, OFSTED inspections for our schools and appraisals in our workplaces. This Review takes the medical example and applies it to a church. Are we well or sickly? If sickly, if only in part, what medicine can we take to bring healing?

The basic ideas in the CHR are a development of an earlier paper I wrote as the Administry How-to Guide 2:4, *Checking your church's health*, back in 1999. These have been considerably developed for CHR, and further still in the 2014 revision.

Fitting a wide variety of churches

One problem when devising any such review is to enable it to fit the wide variety of churches represented in the UK: from small, rural clusters under the care of one Minister to large city-centre churches with considerable staff teams. Some churches have well-formed structures and systems through their national denomination, whereas others are independent and much simpler in outlook.

In view of this, a number of points need to be noted.

- 1 The Review has been written for a church with a total weekly congregation of, say, 100 upwards. Smaller churches will find the Review

applies perfectly well to them provided they recognise that some questions need to be adapted. Small churches will not be running a wide range of activities, are unlikely to have staff, and will have limited resources. The Review is no call for every church to do everything! In fact a healthy church may well be doing less than others.

- 2 Structural language differs markedly across different denominations and streams. The Review seeks to avoid using terms that apply to only one grouping and to use a general term where possible (so 'Church Council' is used but not 'PCC'). Churches will need to work out which group in their structure such a term relates to. Similarly, churches with, say, Elders, Deacons and Trustees as distinct bodies, may need to apply certain questions to one of these groups or all of them.
- 3 Throughout, the Review should be seen as something to base your own work on and never as a strait-jacket. If one part does not work for the kind of church you are, ignore it or adapt it. But do not miss out on the challenge that it may present. Particular **sample tests** may well not apply, but all, or almost all, the **questions** should.
- 4 It is therefore important to interpret the findings wisely. Lack of activity in answer to one question may or may not be important. It may show up something that has been ignored. But it may equally be something that is rightly not a priority at the moment.

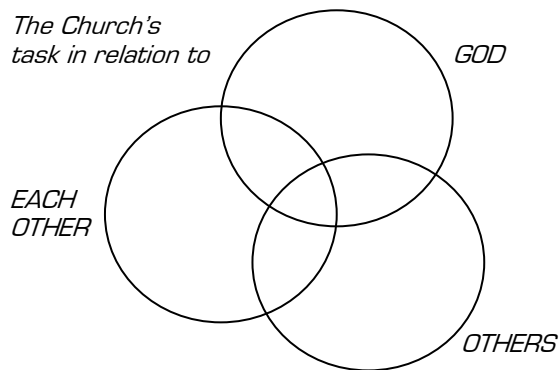
Five sources for CHR

The ideas in this Review owe much to other writers and thinkers. The line in the UK goes back to the early church growth analysis of David Wasdell, Eddie Gibbs and the Bible Society, and also to mission audit concepts (originally from inner-city churches).

But this Review also builds on five, later pieces of work.

1: Three-circles diagram

This idea was developed, independently, by both Robert Warren and John Cole. I am describing John Cole's analysis here, set out in the workbook *How to be a local church* (Kevin Mayhew 1990).



The idea is based on a Venn diagram of three inter-locking circles which represent three relationships: with God, with each other as fellow disciples, and with others. Various activities within the church will fall within different areas of the diagram: a funeral service might fall within the overlap between the GOD circle (as it is a service), the EACH OTHER circle (for its pastoral aspects) and the OTHERS circle (as it is a point of contact with those who do not normally attend church).

This basic idea is then developed in a number of ways. John Cole shows that the three relationships may be summed up in the words Communion (with God), Community (with each other) and Communication (with others); or with the idea of the holy (God), catholic (each other) and apostolic (others) faith. He then shows the danger of a church that focuses on just one of these three to the exclusion of the others, or on two of them without the third.

He lists four tasks within each of the circles:

- Relationship with God: worshipping, praying, meditating, contemplating.
- Relationship with each other: edifying, inspiring, uniting, calling.
- Relationship with others: evangelising, forgiving/recreating, reconciling, healing.

He shows that these twelve activities make a useful summary of the ways in which the Holy Spirit enlivens us to be God's church engaged in God's world.

The CHR owes much to the idea of these three areas being ones of relationship.

2: Purpose-driven church

Rick Warren, in *The purpose driven church* (Zondervan 1996), defines five purposes of the Church, based on the tasks that Christ ordained his followers to accomplish in what we know as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. He then shows how he communicates these at Saddleback Church, California (where he is Senior Pastor) through five key words all beginning with M.

- 1 'Love the Lord with all your heart' – hence the idea of Worship
Magnify: *we celebrate God's presence in worship*
- 2 'Love your neighbour as yourself' – hence the priority of Service
Ministry: *we demonstrate God's love through service*
- 3 'Go and make disciples' – hence the work of Evangelism
Mission: *we communicate God's Word through evangelism*
- 4 'Baptising them' – identification with the body of Christ
Membership: *we incorporate God's family into our fellowship*
- 5 'Teaching them to obey' – he links Discipleship to this particular phrase
Maturity: *we educate God's people through discipleship*

The purpose statement then reads as follows:

'To bring people to Jesus and *membership* of his family, develop them to Christ-like *maturity*, and equip them for their *ministry* in the church and life *mission* in the world, in order to *magnify* God's name.'

The order of the five is changed to create a statement that moves on logically from one to the other. The statement is also stated in terms of results rather than activity so that outcomes can be more easily measured.

What comes out may well be a little too neat in the effort to make the alliteration work, but it provides a helpful breadth of purpose to act as a basis for any church health-check.

The CHR has been checked against these five areas to ensure that it covers each of them adequately.

3: Natural church development

In 1996 Christian Schwarz published his findings into international research of what makes churches grow. *Natural church development* (published in the UK by ncd-uk) is widely respected for its quality of research. It shows that there are significant differences between large churches and growing churches, and calls into question some of the earlier church growth concepts (such as styles of leadership required).

The research identified eight 'quality characteristics' of growing churches.

- 1 **Empowering leadership**
Such leaders assist Christians to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. They invest their time in discipleship, delegation and multiplication. Most such Ministers are not superstars and are little known.
- 2 **Gift-orientated lay ministry**
The concept is that ordinary Christians can accomplish the extraordinary if they are helped into ministries that accord to their gifting and calling from God. Lay training becomes a vital element, with the emphasis on the people not just on vacancies to be filled.
- 3 **Passionate spirituality**
The research found that the distinguishing marks of growing churches were not based on spiritual styles (such as charismatic or not), but on whether the church members were 'on fire' for God, with a living relationship with him.
- 4 **Functional structures**
In spite of widely varying types of church structure, Schwarz shows a close connection between structure

and life. A 'department head' model was found to promote growth, whereas traditionalism had a very negative impact.

- 5 **Inspiring worship service**
The research found that the idea of seeker services is not a principle for church growth, whereas services of any kind that are inspiring experiences for participants (ie. with the Holy Spirit at work) do draw new people in.
- 6 **Holistic small groups**
The multiplication of small groups is a universal (and the most important) church growth principle, but such groups must relate to the practice of daily life. The meaning of discipleship becomes clear within such groups
- 7 **Need-orientated evangelism**
Schwarz distinguishes between programmes and universal principles for evangelism. The key for church growth is for the church to focus its evangelistic efforts on the questions and needs of non-Christians.
- 8 **Loving relationships**
Church growth proves to be closely linked to the ability of a congregation to express love. People do not want to hear Christians talk; they want to see if love really works. Hospitality and laughter feature strongly in growing churches.

These are not optional features; the ability of a church to grow is hampered by the weakest one of the eight.

The CHR has been checked against these eight features to ensure that it represents each one adequately.

4: The healthy churches' handbook

Robert Warren's work in the field of church growth and health is widely known and respected. His book, *The healthy churches' handbook* (Church House Publishing 2004/2012) distils much of what he has discovered in his life and research. The marks, which can be assessed without lengthy procedures, are as follows. Many churches have worked through this material to their great profit.

- 1 **Energised by faith** – rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive
This covers worship and sacramental life, motivation, engagement with Scripture and nurturing faith in Christ.
- 2 **Outlook-looking focus** – with a ‘whole life’ rather than a ‘church life’ concern
Aspects include being rooted in the local community, passion about justice and peace, connecting faith and daily living, and offering loving service.
- 3 **Seeks to find out what God wants** – discerning the Spirit’s leading rather than trying to please everyone
Vocation, vision, mission priorities (goals) and the ability to make sacrifices in living out the faith.
- 4 **Faces the cost of change and growth** – rather than resisting change and fearing failure
The ability to take on new ways of doing things, taking risks, handling crises well and affirming positive experiences of change.
- 5 **Operates as a community** – rather than functioning as a club or religious organisation
Relationships are nurtured, often in small groups, lay and clergy leadership work together and lay ministry is valued within and beyond the church.
- 6 **Makes room for all** – being inclusive rather than exclusive
Welcome into the church, children and young people helped to belong, enquirers encouraged and diversities evident.
- 7 **Does a few things and does them well** – focused rather than frenetic
The basics are carried out well (eg. worship, care, stewardship and administration), occasional offices make sense of life, with the church being good news and enjoying what it does.

Once again, the CHR has been checked against these marks to ensure it is covering each of them adequately.

5: Christian Effectiveness Model

Reference is made to these other four works when the questions and tests are listed in paper HC5. The Review itself has a foundation set in the concepts of both church purpose and support, and goes somewhat wider than any of these four tools.

But there is another, and rather different, source. The structure of the Review is identical to that for my own *Christian Effectiveness Model* which I developed over the period 2000 to 2003.

For that I was asked to undertake an original project by a client to see if there was a way of assessing effectiveness in the work of a Christian mission agency. The Model represents my output from that, and its inputs came from the ideas within the secular not-for-profit sector and, in particular, the Excellence Model (from the European Foundation for Quality Management).

CEM, however, is a distinctly Christian approach to the topic with a theological slant in every aspect of it and a unique question and test approach.

The Church Health Review has been structured to match the Christian Effectiveness Model; the ideas of themes, sections, questions and sample tests are identical.

So the two investigations look very similar in structure, but are very different in the themes and questions (and therefore tests). One is for a Christian mission agency, the other for a local church. One is seeking to measure effectiveness, the other to measure health.

The *Christian Effectiveness Model* is only available in its full form through licence from me but, exactly as with the Church Health Review, it can be used in a simpler version without charge direct from this website. The explanatory paper is given at HC6 in the Health-checks pages of the Resources section. The full set of questions and tests is given at HC7.

It is worth noting that there is also a simplified version of the Church Health Review at Article A35 on this website.

Explaining the five themes

The Review makes the assumption that church life can be categorised under three themes of church purpose (based on the three-circles diagram above) with two further themes to enable this purpose to be worked out.

The three ‘purpose’ themes

My preferred way of analysing a church’s purpose from the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, with due acknowledgement to John Cole’s thinking, is to take the same three ideas but to see each one in terms of *growth* in relationships. This makes it very clear that we are not talking about ‘doing’ but ‘being’, nor about something that is static but something that is developing. I give these titles as follows:

Any church is to grow in its relationships:

- with God, the Trinity;
- with each other within the Church;
- with everyone else.

We can express this, instead, as helping everyone to grow closer to God, each other and the world. The point is that there is movement in each of these three, but in differing proportions, depending on the activity. Everything in church life has elements of all three.

So a Sunday service should encourage growth in relationship with God through a real meeting with him, through prayer, the hearing of Scripture, Bible-teaching, inspiring music, a sense of awe, and so on.

But the same service should also encourage growth in our relationships with each other through the corporate activity, through being together, greetings, sharing the Peace, different people taking part, refreshments and a time to meet each other (seen, properly, as part of the service rather than ‘after the service’).

At the same time we should be growing in our relationships with the world, by intercession, reports from external activities, by meeting visitors, by being inspired to live out our faith during the coming week, and by being a shop window for all that is our church.

For many church services there may be more of the first than the second, and the second than the third. Other church activities, though, will have different proportions of each.

Any church purpose statement can be tested to see if it includes all these three dimensions. If one is lacking, the church is in danger of ignoring a key part of the purpose God has for it. A church without very much of the third dimension becomes inward-looking, one without much of the second may be cold, and one without much of the first is merely a social club.

The equivalent three themes of the Review are labelled as:

- **Godward**
- **Usward** (*a term coined to avoid ‘inward’*)
- **Outward.**

It is vital to remember that each of these is a *relationship* (not an *activity*) in which each person, and the church as a whole, is to be growing.

The two ‘enabling’ themes

But for a church to function there are two key human and physical requirements to enable such purpose: first, ‘Leadership’; secondly, what I term ‘Support’.

Leadership is the idea of enabling people to move towards God, each other and the world. Without leadership there can be no change, no movement. But, for people to undertake such journeys together, they also need support in terms of management, administration and physical resources (buildings and money, for example). So we add:

- **Leadership**
- **Support.**

This gives five ‘themes’ which form the main categories for the questions (see the diagram on page 8). This explains the background of how the Review is structured.

It is time now to describe the CHR itself, which is simply a set of questions to ask, and some sample ideas of the kind of criteria that would give a positive assessment in answering each one.

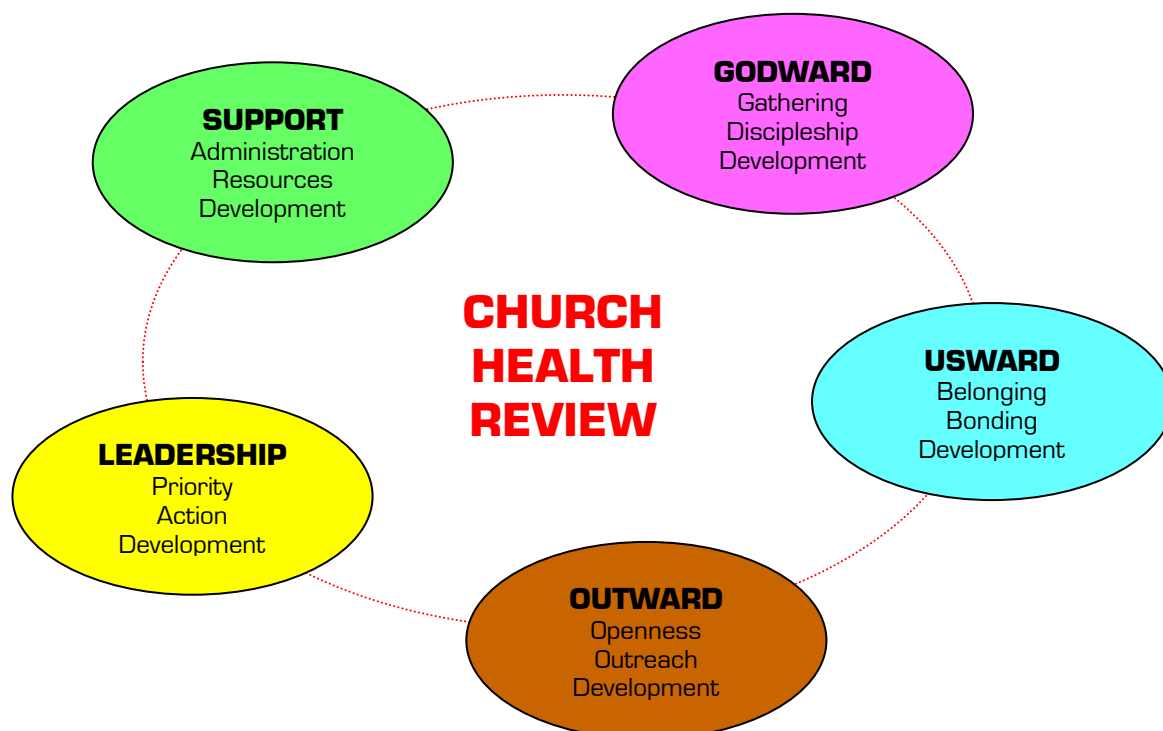
CHR in outline

The structure of CHR

The meaning of 'health' in a church is, first, focused into five **themes** listed below. Each theme is then assigned nine **questions**, broken into three **sections**, two of four questions each plus one extra question in the third section. A parallel is drawn with a medical inspection for each.

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| 1 | 9 questions on the GODWARD theme | <i>heart</i> |
| | How well is this church developing its relationships with the Trinity? | |
| | 4 questions each on Gathering and Discipleship , 1 on Development | |
| 2 | 9 questions on the USWARD theme | <i>blood pressure</i> |
| | How well is this church developing its relationships within its membership? | |
| | 4 questions each on Belonging and Bonding , 1 on Development | |
| 3 | 9 questions on the OUTWARD theme | <i>eyes and ears</i> |
| | How well is this church developing its relationships with the world? | |
| | 4 questions each on Openness and Outreach , 1 on Development | |
| 4 | 9 questions on the LEADERSHIP theme | <i>mental faculties</i> |
| | How well is this church being led towards its vision? | |
| | 4 questions each on Priority and Action , 1 on Development | |
| 5 | 9 questions on the SUPPORT theme | <i>digestive system</i> |
| | How well is this church being organised to achieve its purpose? | |
| | 4 questions each on Administration and Resources , 1 on Development | |

Note the colour coding for each theme (and red for general items) used throughout the Review.



The 45 questions

Questions, rather than statements, have been chosen to underline the open approach required when testing a concept such as church health. We need to come to this task as servants, knowing that the final answers are God's and we are seeking to discover his purposes. People love formulae, but God has patterns.

You may prefer to check out page 10 now before reading on.

Each **question** is given a **reference** (letter and number, so G1) and a **title**. Page 10 shows a listing of all 45 references and titles within the 5 **themes** and 15 **sections**.

The references take the theme letter (G, U, O, L, S) followed by a number from 1 to 9. So, in the table, it can be seen that L3 is the reference for the question titled **Vision** within the **Priority** section of the **Leadership** theme.

Each question is also given a **sub-title** to show how it relates to the others in its **section**. So the **titles** and **sub-titles** for U1-4 ('Belonging') are as follows:

Ref	Title	Sub-title
U1	Community	The life of the family
U2	Support	Sharing within the family
U3	Care	Special needs within the family
U4	Integration	Welcome into the family

Multi-part questions

Most questions are made up of more than one part. For example, question O8 on **Global mission** asks:

'How enthusiastically does our church share in the work of mission elsewhere in the UK and throughout the world through personal support, prayer and giving to partners engaged in outreach?'

You could argue that there are several questions wrapped up here: two distinct areas of the world, and three means of support for each. Other questions add several phrases together.

Such grouping is deliberate for three reasons. First, the Review needs to fit many different types and sizes of church and, if questions are too specialised, many will not apply to any one congregation. Secondly, the sub-questions are closely related and the single question format helps to bring this out. Thirdly, 45 questions are quite enough if the structure and the flow of the Review are to remain visible!

If the answers are different for different parts of the question, that is no problem. In the simpler form of the Review this can be noted beside the answer given.

Open questions

The instructions have always been to answer the 45 questions in an 'open' way: you assess how well the church is doing or how healthy you perceive it to be rather than giving a YES/NO answer.

The 2014 version has now clarified this by rewording all the questions into 'open' format even though this leads to some repetition of phrase. Feedback has indicated this to be the better option.

The fact that the Review asks for one of six possible answers for each question (see below) demonstrates the real intention clearly. Note also that some questions do not tightly define each word. This is so that different churches can interpret it in a way that is appropriate for them.

Growth questions

The ninth question for each theme tests growth over the past three years (or you may choose to vary this period). It is worth noting the five questions together to see the picture they build up.

Development section questions (each one has the idea of 'quality' built into it):

G9	Spiritual growth
U9	Relational growth
O9	Numerical growth
L9	Attitudinal growth
S9	Professional growth

Listing of the 45 question titles in their themes and sections

<p>GODWARD theme</p> <p>Development section G9 Spiritual growth</p>	<p>Gathering section</p> <p>G1 Form and liturgy G2 Music and worship G3 Scripture and teaching G4 Children and teens</p>	<p>Discipleship section</p> <p>G5 Enthusiasm G6 Prayer and Bible G7 Lifestyle G8 Stewardship</p>
<p>USWARD theme</p> <p>Development section U9 Relational growth</p>	<p>Belonging section</p> <p>U1 Community U2 Support U3 Care U4 Integration</p>	<p>Bonding section</p> <p>U5 Small groups U6 Young people U7 Involvement U8 Communication</p>
<p>OUTWARD theme</p> <p>Development section O9 Numerical growth</p>	<p>Openness section</p> <p>O1 Gospel outlook O2 Local presence O3 Ways in O4 Wider concern</p>	<p>Outreach section</p> <p>O5 Network witness O6 Practical service O7 Direct evangelism O8 Global mission</p>
<p>LEADERSHIP theme</p> <p>Development section L9 Attitudinal growth</p>	<p>Priority section</p> <p>L1 Minister L2 Character L3 Vision L4 Christ as Lord</p>	<p>Action section</p> <p>L5 Planning L6 Decision-making L7 Difficulties L8 Outcomes</p>
<p>SUPPORT theme</p> <p>Development section S9 Professional growth</p>	<p>Administration section</p> <p>S1 Office S2 Structures S3 Co-ordination S4 Good practice</p>	<p>Resources section</p> <p>S5 Staff S6 Plant S7 Finance S8 Records</p>

A typical set of five sample tests that are listed with each of the 45 questions

(see page 11 for an explanation of this)

G7: LIFESTYLE – The outworking of faith

How much of an impact is the Christian faith having on our church members' lives at work, at home, in their local communities and in all their networks, so that others can see that they are attractively different from most people?

Sample tests *(cf. O5)*

- 1 members seeking to grow into the likeness of the image of Jesus Christ in all parts of their lives, and sharing with each other how to do this and the problems they experience;
- 2 relationship issues such as singleness, marriage and parenting taken seriously by the church with practical support available and people able to raise areas where they are struggling; *(cf. U2.4)*
- 3 teens seeking to live out their faith at school or college against the norms of today's society, with support from their church group on matters of sexuality, ambition, self-worth, etc.;
- 4 current political and ethical issues discussed and debated within church circles: the environment, the economy, sexual ethics, honesty in the workplace, simple lifestyle;
- 5 the challenge to holy living regularly presented in church teaching, with members encouraging each other to live out their faith in the power of the Spirit.

The sample tests

Each of the 45 questions is given five **sample tests** to help assess how well the church meets the requirement of the question. On the previous page is an example of one such set of sample tests.

The tests are merely **samples** (this is a vital point to grasp). Any church applying the Review should use these carefully.

- 1 They show the *kind* of evidence that would point to a healthy assessment.
- 2 The wording used may not be appropriate for your church.
- 3 It is not the aim that your church should be involved in all the activity listed! These are *sample* ideas.

If a church does not do what one test suggests, this does not necessarily mean that this is wrong in any way. The church may do something different in its place or may simply not have the resources to attempt what is listed. So treat them just as starting points for assessment.

It is important to note that the Review is defined by its 45 questions, NOT by the 225 sample tests.

The tests are only given to show how the questions *might* be answered and to challenge the church to take the question seriously. They are seeking to provide evidence to see how positively the question can be answered.

If the church can produce good evidence as listed in a sample test that will be a sign that the question to which the test applies can attract a healthy assessment. But if the church has not carried out what the test asks for, that may or may not be an indication that the question to which the test applies needs a more sickly assessment.

In the simpler application of the Review (which will be sufficient for most churches) a carefully selected Assessment Group will now be able to assess each question. There is a fuller form of the Review where many of the tests will call for research, or for wide knowledge of people's views both inside and outside the church.

Throughout the sample tests there are a number of cross-references to other

questions (marked as, for example, *cf. S3*). If one is listed after the heading 'Sample tests' this means that the whole question links to another one. If listed after one particular test, this means that this one test links to one of the other questions. The cross-referencing is far from exhaustive as there is no desire to complicate the Review.

Running the Review

The questions and sample tests are listed in full in paper HC5 on this website. There are three main ways in which CHR may be used.

1: As a structure to aid analysis

This is not really a use of the Review, but the way in which the questions have been structured may well prove to be a helpful way of 'thinking' about church in a wider setting.

The list of question titles in their sections and themes as given on page 10 could be used as a simple checklist with many applications in church life. Examples include:

- When writing a profile of the church for a new Minister (or any other purpose), check against the 45 question-titles to ensure that no significant areas are omitted, or use the five themes to check that an overall balance has been maintained.
- A church's Operations Manager might use the structure as a guide to areas to include in a medium-term plan.
- The nine questions in one theme alone could be used as an overall check on whether a church is missing out on specific areas in, for example, its outreach policy.

2: As a simple review of the church

In this case the Review is run by assessing each of the 45 questions, or by taking just one theme and assessing the nine questions there.

In the simple application of this model an **Assessment Group** assesses each question in the light of the sample tests

(adjusted as necessary). They assess each question (or area of health) on a scale of:

- Healthy
- Reasonably healthy
- Patient action
- Needs treatment
- Hospitalisation

and then make notes on the action required. There is also a sixth *Not applicable* option although this should only apply in very special cases.

The Assessment Group should consist of about four to seven people, leaders and others, who between them have a wide understanding of people's views. The idea would be to carry out the exercise at a reasonable speed within about three meetings if covering the whole Review.

From this the more sickly assessments need to be seen across the structure of all themes, sections and questions. Are there themes that are more ill than others, or sections within a theme that show signs of sickness? From this, an appropriate health-plan can be put together. Part 2 in HC5 includes a *pro forma* sheet for noting results.

The group can decide the details of how to carry this out themselves and, by using copies of the two papers on the website, need no authorisation to do so. I would however be keen to hear that the exercise has been carried out, with any details of findings and planned actions.

3: As a detailed exercise

However, the CHR has also been written with a more thorough approach in mind. For those wanting to take part in a more detailed assessment, advice is given in a handbook. The following is a brief summary of that so that the questions can be read with some idea of how they are put to use.

The **Assessment Group** is made up of perhaps nine people chosen to represent different stakeholders both within and outside the church. Ideally, one member should be an external facilitator with experience of the Review. They follow six **phases** covering **training, preparation, investigation, diagnosis, report** and **health-plan**.

After initial training and preparation, they carry out whatever investigation they consider to be necessary to enable them to answer the questions. Some of this may need to be carried out confidentially by an external member of the group to provide accurate answers.

For diagnosis, they investigate each of the questions and list four outputs.

- 1 **Healthy features** – any specific aspects where the church is strong.
- 2 **Areas to treat** – particular points that the question has shown up as requiring action in some way.
- 3 **Issues raised** – any point (whether tackled directly in the question or not) they believe the church needs to consider.
- 4 A numerical **grade** – the replies to the questions are graded on a scale from 0 to 10. The manual gives advice on how to do this.

These results then need to be interpreted carefully because this Review has to apply to such a wide spectrum of types of church. Again, the manual provides advice. The Assessment Group then **report** to the Church Council or Elders and a **health-plan** is produced.

The whole process needs to be undertaken in an attitude of prayer. There may then be a far richer outcome than what some may at first expect.

This full exercise (whether complete, or of only one theme) needs to be carried out under licence. There is no charge for this, or for the manual, but I ask that I either conduct the exercise or (more likely) train the Assessment Group, both at my normal consultancy rates. Please get in touch if you would like to follow this up. Such initial contact assumes no commitment to go through with a licensed Review.

Having explained that, the simpler application will suit most churches and this may be used from papers HC4 and HC5 without any charge.

Summing up

Even in its simpler form this is a detailed process. It is intended to be. It is designed as a thorough analysis of a church's health in a complex world. To keep it all straightforward:

- 1 Assess only one of the five themes – at least as a first exercise. This gives you nine questions to assess.
- 2 If the language is too detailed for many people in your congregation, take the questions but revise the sample tests to give simpler possibilities – a few bullet points.
- 3 Use it as a private tool for Ministers, staff or leadership teams. If you take just one theme, this could become an annual exercise with a different theme each time.

Part 2 follows with a full listing of all the questions and sample tests. Access it by clicking on [HC5](#).

Summary of terminology used

The **Church Health Review (CHR)** enables any *local church* to assess and improve its state of health. The heart of the Review is a series of 45 *questions* and the way they are grouped.

The Review is based on five *themes* (Godward, Usward, Outward, Leadership, Support).

Each theme has nine *questions* to answer broken down into four questions in each two *sections* and a single Development question as a third *section*.

Each question is identified by a *reference*, a *title* and a *sub-title*.

Each question is assigned five *sample tests* to enable it to be answered. These are only samples. The Review is defined by the questions, not by the tests.

A specially selected *Assessment Group* follows a programme looking at each question in turn and, in the light of the sample tests, gives one of six responses, noting actions then to take.

There is a more detailed form of the Review available for those who wish a more thorough approach.

This paper is available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Health-checks-index> then HC4. It forms the first part of two papers outlining the Church Health Review with the second part available at the same web address but with HC5 instead of HC4. For details of the Christian Effectiveness Model (for Christian mission agencies), see HC6 and HC7 on the same site. For a simplified version of CHR, see Article A35, *Mapping your church*. For more on the three purpose themes, see Training Notes TN124. For indexes of all items available on the site, visit the [Resources page](#).

Contact John if you would like to enquire about using the Review in its fuller form, with detailed advice on grading and assessment in general. John would also like to hear of any use of the Review with your ideas for improving it.

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