

The Church Health Review

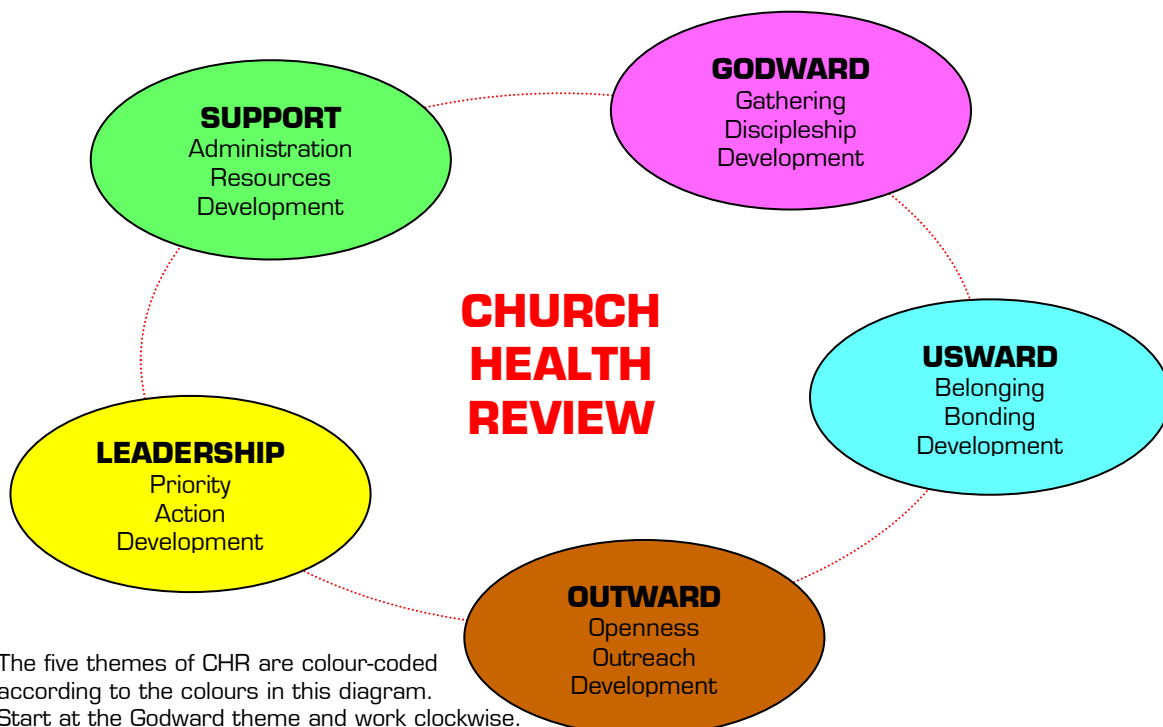
Part 2: Questions and tests

HC5 Health-checks series

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This paper shows, in full, the 45 questions which form the core of the Review, together with the sample tests for each question. The questions are divided into five themes (shown below). Each theme has three sections. To understand how to use the Church Health Review (CHR) and these questions, it is essential to have first read Part 1 in [HCA](#) on this website.

This is the 2014 (last updated in August 2022) version 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.



The five themes of CHR are colour-coded according to the colours in this diagram. Start at the Godward theme and work clockwise.

Using the review

A summary of the Introduction paper

The following describes the simpler form of the Church Health Review which should prove sufficient for most churches.

This page summarises the Introduction paper (HC4) but that should still be read by everyone taking part.

Five themes in church life

The **Church Health Review** takes five **themes** in church life and asks nine questions about each one. The themes are:

- 1 The GODWARD theme
- 2 The USWARD theme
- 3 The OUTWARD theme
- 4 The LEADERSHIP theme
- 5 The SUPPORT theme

Nine questions for each theme

In each case the nine questions are divided into three **sections**. The third section always has just one question and that is to do with development.

The themes and sections are listed on the diagram on the previous page which gives a visual representation of what the Review covers.

The questions have several phrases within them and so any one of them may be seen as a series of linked questions. This is deliberate because the Review has to cover a wide range of churches.

Five sample tests for each question

To help you make the assessment each question has five **sample tests**. The model depends on the questions not the tests so these may be varied to fit your church. You are not expected to be doing everything listed in the tests!

In the simpler form of the Review there are six possible assessments for each question:

- 1 Healthy
- 2 Reasonably healthy
- 3 Patient action

- 4 Needs treatment
- 5 Hospitalisation

There is then a sixth option for 'Not applicable', but this should only be used in special cases and is not intended as an excuse for avoiding issues!

Assessment Group

The review is carried out by an **Assessment Group** of church leaders and members. This might be four to seven people who between them understand attitudes and views throughout the congregation and who have a wide perspective on church life.

The final page of this second part of the Review includes a pro forma sheet which can be used by the group to record their assessment for each question

No need to cover all five themes

You may find it preferable to deal with just one of the five themes and come back to the other four later. The Review depends on the whole, but can be carried out on one theme at a time.

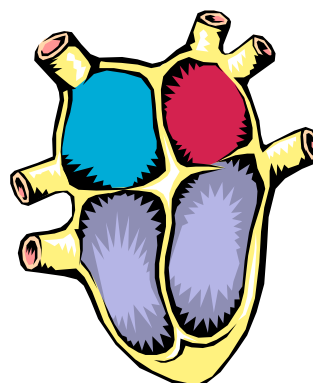
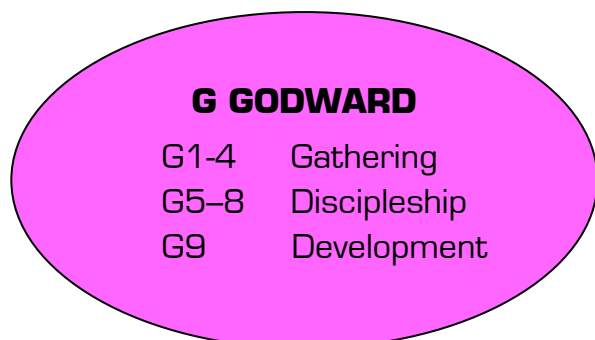
A more detailed application

There is a more thorough way of using the Review which involves a grading system, possibly congregational research, an external observer, etc. There is a detailed manual for this and a licence system so that I can train the Assessment Group.

The simpler form of the Review described above will be sufficient for most churches. Everything needed for this application is included in this paper and the previous one.

The GODWARD theme

How well is this church developing its relationships with the Trinity?



The heart

A medical check-up is likely to start with the doctor listening to the patient’s heart, the organ of life for the whole human body. Is it beating regularly and soundly? Can it deliver the blood to the whole of the body so that every different part can flourish?

The equivalent in any local body of Christians can be seen as the church’s relationship with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If this relationship is healthy, life will flow to all other parts of the church.

In any check-up of church health this should be the first area of investigation. There is no point in sorting out a weak limb or impaired function elsewhere if the heart is sickly and liable to pack up. The relationship with God needs to be in good health and developing in both its corporate and individual aspects.

These first questions test the ‘Godward’ aspect of every area of church life. This is not an investigation into church services alone, and is much wider in scope than any thoughts of it being about ‘worship’ (though people’s understanding of that term is often sadly restricted). The aim is to ask some tough questions about how the church is building its relationships with the Trinity.

This is a challenging place to start. Too often people find this approach too scary to contemplate and therefore test their outputs as a church: the activity programme, the impact on people’s lives. Or they may test the church’s public services in terms of

numbers attending, styles of music and levels of participation.

There is nothing wrong with these approaches, but they should not be the starting point. They can also lead to ideas of ‘performance’, so that larger churches can lay on inspiring events that smaller churches, lacking resources, can only dream about.

These tests, instead, look at something rather more hidden and far more fundamental: at the building of a meaningful, passionate relationship with God himself that is real and not faked, and that has depth to withstand pressures and hardships. Then there can be true energy and the church can be set in the right direction.

How healthy is the heart of your church’s life?

A health-check of the church’s heart

The following nine questions, when put together, seek to build up evidence of a church that is genuinely engaging with and growing in its relationship with God (‘the first commandment’). This theme includes, first, the church’s corporate life in this respect; secondly, each member’s own spiritual growth; thirdly, development within both of these. It is important to remember that these are testing the strength of a relationship rather than any set of activities.

The **Gathering** section (corporate activity) tests the reality of the liturgical, musical and teaching aspects of the church’s celebratory life together, and then covers how younger members are seeking to build the Godward relationship.

The **Discipleship** section covers the reality, source, outworking and challenge of everyone’s faith.

The **Development** question investigates progress within this whole theme.

Ref	SECTION Question title	Sub-title
GATHERING – testing the church’s spiritual life when together in celebration		
G1	Form and liturgy	Meeting with God
G2	Music and worship	Praising God
G3	Scripture and teaching	Listening to God
G4	Children and teens	Young people with God
DISCIPLESHIP – testing the development of each believer as a child of God		
G5	Enthusiasm	The reality of faith
G6	Prayer and Bible	The source of faith
G7	Lifestyle	The outworking of faith
G8	Stewardship	The challenge of faith
DEVELOPMENT – testing growth in both the above		
G9	Spiritual growth	Evidence of movement

John Cole (*see Part 1 in HC4 for an explanation of the following*) develops the ‘Godward’ concept as our ‘communion’ with God, breaking this down to tasks of worship, prayer, meditation and contemplation.

Rick Warren’s five-fold purpose includes ‘magnify’ (celebrating God’s presence in worship) and ‘maturity’ (educating God’s people through discipleship) which map closely to the two ‘Godward’ sections in the analysis above.

Christian Schwarz has two quality characteristics similar to the purpose-driven church analysis: ‘inspiring worship service’ and ‘passionate spirituality’. His questions of challenge are, ‘Are the Christians in this church ‘on fire’?’ and ‘Do they live committed lives, and practise their faith with joy and enthusiasm?’

Robert Warren places ‘energised by faith’ as his first mark of a healthy church (as opposed to just keeping things going). He lists elements of worship and sacramental life, motivation, a creative engagement with Scripture, and a nurturing of faith.

Keep in mind that ...

The Review is defined by the 45 questions and NOT by the sample tests. The five tests listed for each question are provided to give an idea of the kind of evidence required to answer the question positively. Because an activity is listed, this does not imply that every church should be doing it! Re-read Part 1 (HC4) for further details.

G1-4: THE GODWARD THEME – Questions of Gathering

These test the church's spiritual life when together in celebration.

G1 **FORM AND LITURGY** – Meeting with God

To what extent are our services prepared and led in such a creative way that everyone is drawn into meaningful involvement rather than just spectating, with appropriate variety in forms of liturgy and days/times/lengths that appeal to a range of tastes?

Sample tests *(cf. G2)*

- 1 people acknowledging a sense of excellence about each service with a blend of confession, prayer and intercession, praise, silence, news, Bible teaching, sacrament, ministry, etc.;
- 2 evidence that people present are encountering the Holy Spirit and being changed as a result, seen through discussion afterwards, enlightened faces and changed lives; *(cf. G5.3)*
- 3 church members making regular attendance a priority in their weekly schedule, inviting friends and enthusing about services so newcomers are frequently present; *(cf. G4.4, D5.4)*
- 4 a rich variety in styles of services on offer, with many people involved in taking part up-front;
- 5 a sense of real engagement with the meaning of Holy Communion (held regularly) and festival services so that these are seen as powerful events, not perfunctory ritual.

G2 **MUSIC AND WORSHIP** – Praising God

How well does the quality and manner in which both music and words are used inspire people and lead them to real engagement with Father, Son and Holy Spirit rather than just to personal enjoyment, with a right use of emotion and a sense of awe and wonder?

Sample tests *(cf. G1)*

- 1 appropriate cultural styles of music and words (whether hymns, songs or a variety) for the types of people that each service is seeking to attract;
- 2 the congregation clearly engaging with the words being sung, with times to reflect on and drink in the meaning, rather than everything being rushed or activity-centred;
- 3 scope for a wide range of engagement through all the senses: visual aids, colour, banners, DVD clips, candles, incense, dance, flowers or whatever the church feels is appropriate;
- 4 newcomers commenting that something powerful is happening through the worship, and helped to take part themselves even if the musical genre is not familiar to them;
- 5 high quality of musical provision (whether through band, choir, organ, keyboard) and worship leadership, and a lack of interruptions or technical malfunctions in PA/PowerPoint. *(cf. S6.3)*

G3 **SCRIPTURE AND TEACHING** – Listening to God

To what extent are the Scriptures viewed as having authority, being taught in such a way that they are seen to be both powerful to challenge and change lives and relevant to daily experience, so that God's voice is heard and applied through Bible teaching?

Sample tests *(cf. G5, G6)*

- 1 lesson reading and Bible teaching given due prominence, ranging over the entire Bible, carried out in a variety of innovative means (not just monologue), and supported by a well-used bookstall;
- 2 an expectation that God will speak through his word, with people discussing the teaching or prophecy afterwards, sharing how they have applied it during the week, listening to it online;
- 3 Bible teaching sought as a gift within the church, with those so gifted being offered training so that the quality of teaching and application is improving;
- 4 yet the emphasis being on learning more than teaching, with styles appropriate for a wide range of people including those from a non-book culture;
- 5 special opportunities both for more in-depth teaching than normal services may permit, and/or some form of Christian education programme, especially for the nurture of new Christians. *(cf. U4.5)*

G4 CHILDREN AND TEENS – Young people with God

How well does our church enable younger people to worship God through Jesus in a way that is relevant for them, whether in their own groups or in all-age services?

Sample tests *(cf. U6)*

- 1 children helped to pray and praise in creative ways through culturally relevant sections in services, through all-age events or in their own, separate worship-times;
- 2 teens enabled to take part in culturally relevant worship (as judged by them) within main services, their own worship times, or by linking with peer groups in other churches;
- 3 families joining the church, with a lack of any drop-out during the 11-14 age range;
- 4 teens feeling confident to invite unchurched friends from school and their local community to church services and group activities; *(cf. G1.3, D5.4)*
- 5 encouragement and opportunities for children and teens to attend local and national events for worship and teaching designed specifically for their age-group.

G5–8: THE GODWARD THEME – Questions of Discipleship

These test the development of each believer as a child of God.

G5 ENTHUSIASM – The reality of faith

How much evidence is there that our church members are passionate about their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and disciplined in living it out, and that this is what shapes the people they are and the way they behave?

Sample tests *(cf. G3, G6, L4)*

- 1 the church taking the ideas of discipleship and spiritual warfare seriously for people at all stages of Christian experience, through its teaching, small groups, training courses, and in other ways;
- 2 people encouraged and helped in specific ways to grow in their faith through reading, Bible study and practical service;
- 3 evidence of changed lives in people who have come to faith, and of integrity at work, at school, and in the community from all church members; *(cf. G1.2)*
- 4 church members talking naturally about how they came to faith and the difference that this makes to them now on a day-to-day basis;
- 5 the church applying teaching by challenging members on topics such as intercession, fasting, forgiveness, chastity, other spiritual disciplines, holiness and the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

G6 PRAYER AND BIBLE – The source of faith

How confidently can it be stated that both prayer in all its forms and the study of the Scriptures are central to the life of the members of our church?

Sample tests *(cf. G3, G5)*

- 1 evidence of prayer in the church's programme: corporate times for prayer, groups meeting before services, small groups engaging in meaningful intercession, etc.;
- 2 clear signs of prayer such as weekly or monthly prayer diaries for the congregation, circulations of prayer needs, prayer chains, occasional prayer events, prayer ministry offered at services; *(cf. D4.1)*
- 3 people encouraged to read the Bible regularly and supported by means of published notes, internal notes, online resources, appropriate apps and practical ideas in church teaching;
- 4 members familiar with the whole sweep of the Bible, understanding the context for particular passages, able to answer simple questions on major doctrines and turn to relevant passages;
- 5 members linked one-to-one to encourage each other in their devotional lives or to read and pray together, with most setting aside regular time for individual Bible study and prayer.

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. D5)*

- 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.

G8 STEWARDSHIP – The challenge of faith

How willingly and generously are church members offering for God's work their time, their gifts/experience and their wealth for the benefit of others?

Sample tests *(cf. U7)*

- 1 stewardship viewed in the totality of life, not just for work within the church, so that involvement in community affairs is both encouraged and then prayerfully supported;
- 2 members giving generous proportions of their wealth for their church and for those in need worldwide, with the church able to finance all its outgoings without stress; *(cf. OB.4, S7.3)*
- 3 a sense of vocation with people offering their lives to God, both those in normal work and activity and with some moving into specific Christian ministry, training, ordination, etc.;
- 4 evidence that both time involvement and financial giving come from across the congregation rather than from only a small group, with no strain on finding activity helpers; *(cf. U7.1)*
- 5 evidence of Christians seeking to live simply as pilgrims in today's world, not accumulating wealth but sharing possessions/homes, and mindful of environmental and fair-trade issues. *(cf. U2.3, S4.5)*

G9: THE GODWARD THEME – A question of Development**G9 SPIRITUAL GROWTH** – Evidence of movement

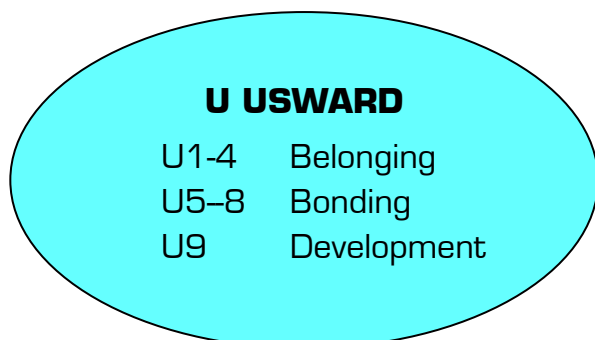
To what extent are our church members growing in their relationship with the Trinity so that there can be seen to be developing spiritual maturity over the past three years?

Sample tests

- 1 growth in discipleship seen through growing regularity of attendance at services, growing numbers at prayer times and a steady flow of stories of changed lives;
- 2 a growing understanding of the Christian faith by congregation members evidenced by increased confidence in sharing their faith or talking about it in a natural way;
- 3 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or activity within the scope of the Gathering section (such as the introduction of healing services or a 'fresh expression' congregation) that can be seen to have enabled greater spiritual challenge or encouragement;
- 4 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or activity within the scope of the Discipleship section (such as a stewardship campaign) with similar effect;
- 5 evidence that those outside the church have noticed changed lives of the membership with people more able to talk about God in their lives to their friends and colleagues.

The USWARD theme

How well is this church developing its relationships within its membership?



Blood pressure

One of the most frequently described pictures for the Church in the New Testament is that of the body. Paul uses it at some length in passages in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.

The ‘Uward’ dimension of church life is concerned with the level of relationship that exists between the different members of the church, the different parts of the body. There are therefore several medical analogies we could use (including nervous system as the communications network, or joints and muscles to allow different parts of the body to join up with each other and to be controlled by the brain).

The idea of blood is a helpful one for it concerns a liquid that flows round the body to bring life and to clear waste. It proceeds out of the heart to give a natural connection with our first theme for testing. In any medical health-check, blood pressure is tested and, in many cases these days, action is necessary to correct it.

The idea of *koinonia* is sadly caricatured today by the over-used term ‘fellowship’ that lacks, in our thinking, the deep sense of community based on love. Jesus Christ founded a community which was startling in the culture of the time and should be no less surprising today. But just how deep and meaningful are our relationships with each other? The Uward theme tests them to see if they stand up to the kind of expectations that Scripture places on

churches. The second commandment is to love each other.

The tests do not attempt a definition of ‘membership’ as this varies considerably between denominations and for churches in different settings. Consider a large city centre church from a tradition where there is a strict membership system with a number of hoops to jump through before people are accepted. Now take a small, rural parish church which is part of the culture of village life. Those who live in the village may well regard this as their church, whether they attend weekly, annually or never. Both need to interpret the questions and tests in the light of who they are.

Having checked our heart, the doctor now turns to the blood pressure. Is this vital fluid flowing correctly round the body and doing its job properly? Are we belonging to each other and bonding with each other in a way that is a witness to today’s community-starved society of something better and greater?

A health-check of the church’s blood

If the idea of discipleship describes individual relationships with God, the concept of family membership can be used to describe those who are God’s children. Christians are members of that family – they belong to its community.

So the first section of four questions takes the idea of **Belonging** and tests its depth by means of its life, practices, love and welcome. Is this a family which shines as having relationships as they ought to be?

The second section is titled **Bonding** and looks at what there is to enable this belonging to have real meaning. It covers

small groups both for adults and for young people, the concept of involvement in the work of the church (and of the Kingdom), and the communication channels that exist to allow the church’s blood to flow.

As before, the single **Development** question studies recent change within this theme in addition to whatever has come up earlier.

Ref	SECTION Question title	Sub-title
BELONGING – testing the reality of love for each other		
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
BONDING – testing the means for such love for each other		
U5	Small groups	Growing together
U6	Young people	Growing up together
U7	Involvement	Working together
U8	Communication	Staying together
DEVELOPMENT – testing growth in both the above		
U9	Relational growth	Evidence of movement

John Cole develops the idea into our ‘community’ with each other, and considers the ideas of edifying, inspiring, uniting and calling.

The purpose-driven list includes ‘membership’ (incorporating any of God’s family into our fellowship) and ‘ministry’ (demonstrating God’s love through service) which, together, broadly link to the concept of the Usward theme.

Christian Schwarz includes the quality characteristics of ‘loving relationships’ and ‘holistic small groups’. He looks in particular at the idea of hospitality, how much time people spend with each other outside official church functions. He discovered that the presence of loving relationships was more significant than types of activity in drawing people to the church and the

gospel, yet this quality, he points out, had been ignored in most church growth thinking up until that point.

The *Healthy churches’ handbook* has ‘operates as a community’ (rather than as a club) as another of its marks and lists elements of relationships, leadership (which CHR takes later) and lay ministry.

Keep in mind that ...
 You simply assess each question on a scale of: **Healthy - Reasonably healthy – Patient action – Needs treatment – Hospitalisation.** Only use the extra *Not applicable* option in special cases. See the pro forma on page 29 which you can use to record assessments.

U1-4: THE USWARD THEME – Questions of Belonging

These test the reality of love for each other.

U1 **COMMUNITY** – The life of the family

To what extent do our members think in terms of ‘belonging to a local group of Jesus’ disciples’ rather than ‘going to church’ and how often do newcomers remark on the depth of relationship and the reality of love?

Sample tests

- 1 real commitment to each other so that people do not rush away after church services and events, and newcomers find it easy to get to know others at such times; *(cf. U4)*
- 2 food playing an important role in the life of the church both in terms of central meal events and generous hospitality in people’s homes;
- 3 regular and well attended social events appropriate for all ages and types, with an emphasis on fun and laughter together, with occasional church days, weekends or holidays;
- 4 a diverse membership seen as strength with different ages and those who have come through different faith journeys all valued for who they are not what they do or have; *(cf. O1.2)*
- 5 a system of church discipline seen to be healthy, conflicts handled well, lack of any long-standing feuds, no cliques or unhelpful power-bases, and honest discussion of contentious issues. *(cf. L7.2)*

U2 **SUPPORT** – Sharing within the family

What level of support is there for individuals so that practical needs are being constantly met and no one can drift away without this being noticed and acted on?

Sample tests *(cf. U5, U6)*

- 1 lack of any evidence that anyone within the church (whether in a small group or not) feels lonely, that they do not matter to others or that no one cares about them;
- 2 members say this is a listening church where they can share problems from work or home and receive empathy, advice and prayer from others without confidences being betrayed;
- 3 practical needs are sensitively discovered, and possessions of all kinds are freely and generously shared within the congregation so that no one is in want; *(cf. G8.5)*
- 4 the church offers practical help on relationships: quality marriage preparation and teaching, plus support for those who are single, those whose relationships are in trouble, those who are separated, those who have been abused, etc.; *(cf. G7.2)*
- 5 other people notice and take appropriate action when children, teens or adults start to drop away from regular attendance at services or groups.

U3 **CARE** – Special needs within the family

How well does our church show costly love for those in special need within its membership and for others we are seeking to serve?

Sample tests *(cf. D6 for care for those outside the membership)*

- 1 elderly members and shut-ins visited regularly whether by staff, visiting team or friends, with availability of sacramental ministry, recordings of services, etc.;
- 2 church-organised support for those who have been bereaved: visiting, meeting practical needs, anniversaries remembered;
- 3 some form of ministry of healing and/or healing services, together with practical support for all who are in hospital, in care homes or who are ill at home: visiting, lifts, shopping, care home services;
- 4 practical help for those with disabilities such as signing services, large print books, loop systems for the hard of hearing, lifts to church, wheelchair access, help as possible for those with emotional illnesses, plus appropriate training for church members;
- 5 the ability to provide counselling for a few people who need more than average love and care, without leaders finding time and emotional energy sapped by such people.

U4 **INTEGRATION** – Welcome into the family

How easy do newcomers find it to become part of this community and how much are they valued and welcomed not just on their first visit but from then onwards?

Sample tests *(cf. U1.1. 03)*

- 1 a steady flow of new members as appropriate for the size of church who, after tasting the church, decide to stay, finding themselves valued whatever their faith journey;
- 2 the testimony of newcomers of a welcoming church where they are seen as full church members without any need to earn that position over time, and valued for all they bring;
- 3 human barriers such as age, gender, married/single, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, social background not evident in the way in which people relate to each other;
- 4 the church's membership-spread appropriate for its catchment area, without undue bias or lack in one gender, one age or one social class; *(cf. LB.1)*
- 5 suitable means of baptism and entry for new members, and for young people now ready for the commitment of membership, plus nurture courses for new Christians. *(cf. G3.5)*

U5-8: THE USWARD THEME – Questions of Bonding

These test the means for such love for each other.

U5 **SMALL GROUPS** – Growing together

How effective is the small group structure within our church and how widely does it cover all the congregation, enabling people to relate closely to each other, to support each other by prayer and in practical service, and to apply the gospel to daily living?

Sample tests *(cf. U2)*

- 1 the existence of a set of small/cell groups (including specialist groups such as a seniors' group) that involves a significant majority of the congregation;
- 2 group meetings include a mix of activity such as worship and concern/prayer for each other, as well as study of the Scriptures and/or application of main service teaching;
- 3 where appropriate, the existence of a cluster or mission community system, perhaps with these as the basic unit of church grouping and small groups formed from these; *(cf. S2.2)*
- 4 all groups open and expecting to welcome newcomers, subdividing as appropriate, with new leaders trained, supported and available to take on new groups;
- 5 outside group meetings, members seeking to support and build each other up in the faith by praying for each other, visiting each other and applying teaching in practical ways.

U6 **YOUNG PEOPLE** – Growing up together

How healthy are our relational groups for each age band from crèche to senior teens, being fun to belong to, with young people valued as full members of the church, contributing to its health, and disciplined in the gospel in appropriate ways?

Sample tests *(cf. G4, U2)*

- 1 a properly staffed and equipped crèche during church services where parents can leave young children to trusted leaders;
- 2 a series of groups for different infant/primary age bands where there is worship, fun and quality spiritual teaching, with evidence of children growing in the faith;
- 3 appropriate groups for younger and older teens with little if any fallout and with teens keen to invite friends from school and to be living Christian witnesses; *(cf. O5.3)*
- 4 an all-age culture in the life of the church so that families are not always split up and children are valued for what they can bring to the whole of church life;
- 5 sufficient leaders to staff these activities, with appropriate training, and resourcing and DBS checking, and a good understanding of modern educational methods. *(cf. S4.2)*

U7 **INVOLVEMENT** – Working together

How truthfully could it be said that our church is full of workers rather than passive observers, with people trained to serve God in the world and play their part in the church's own mission and ministry according to how they have been gifted by God?

Sample tests *(cf.GB)*

- 1 'all-member ministry' taught and applied throughout the life of the church, with the work shared over a wide body of people, this being evident from main services and events; *(cf.GB.4)*
- 2 some system whereby people's gifts and passions are identified, recognised, developed and applied, with everyone encouraged to discover what God is calling them to; *(cf.O7.1)*
- 3 proper support and review systems in place for all who work for the church in any capacity, so that no one becomes trapped in one post, time out is encouraged, and no one is over-burdened;
- 4 the church's leadership seeking to empower people for ministry rather than to control the church tightly, with such ministry helping people's faith to grow; *(cf.L2.4)*
- 5 some people's main sphere of service encouraged to be outside the church whether to their family, in their local community, in local politics or by serving on national bodies. *(cf.O4.2)*

U8 **COMMUNICATION** – Staying together

How effective do members feel that communication from the leadership and between groups is to create a sense of purpose and unity, and how well do leaders stay in touch with the views of the membership?

Sample tests *(cf.S3)*

- 1 lack of complaints that people have been kept in the dark, of diary double-bookings, or of frustration caused by ignorance;
- 2 good channels of internal communication that are widely appreciated: notice-sheets, newsletters, email or text systems, church meetings, website, social media, service announcements; *(cf.S1.3)*
- 3 someone appointed to oversee internal communication to ensure that mistakes are put right and standards maintained;
- 4 means of helping people get to know others such as photographic displays, church family listings, joint meetings of small groups;
- 5 effective systems to keep staff and leaders in touch with how people are feeling. *(cf.L6.4)*

U9: THE USWARD THEME – A question of Development

U9 **RELATIONAL GROWTH** – Evidence of movement

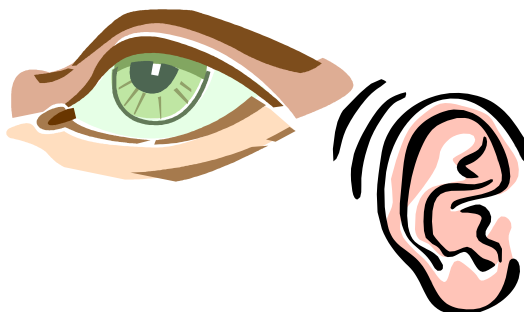
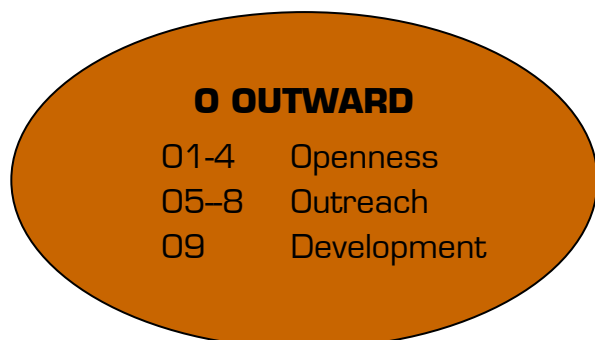
To what extent are our members growing in their relationships with each other so that there can be seen to be development in committed love over the past three years?

Sample tests

- 1 growth in love for each other shown in growing numbers in small groups, more people staying after services or other appropriate indicators;
- 2 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or activity within the scope of the Belonging section (such as the introduction of a Newcomers Team) that can be seen to have enabled greater depth of mutual commitment within the congregation;
- 3 a gradual change in any aspect of the Belonging section (such as a growing sense of real community) that can be seen to have led to greater love for each other;
- 4 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or activity within the scope of the Bonding section (such as a new system of children's groups) with similar effect;
- 5 a gradual change in any aspect of the Bonding section (such as more people offering their time and expertise) that has again enabled a greater love for each other.

The OUTWARD theme

How well is this church developing its relationships with the world?



Eyes and ears

Many of us discover that our eyes do not focus correctly and need correction through lenses, or that our ears get blocked from time to time and need syringing. If our eyes and ears are not functioning properly, we cannot take in the signals that we need from the world around us. These are our key means of communication in to us. Without them, we live in isolation; we are disabled.

Sadly, many churches have dim eyesight and blocked ears. Signals from the outside world are not getting through to them, or the sounds are muffled and the sights hazy. It is easy for a church to lose contact with its community, with the nation and with the global scene. They are out of touch with the international Christian community and with the society they live within.

Such churches may be enthusiastic to know God and friendly with each other, but they become introverted. They expect others to come to them and to fit in with the style that the members are comfortable with. They are unaware of how strange they may seem to those outside.

So the third theme of this church health check-up concerns vision and hearing, and these point to the outward dimension of church life. Again, this is not an activity (although activities such as evangelism fit here). It is an aspect of everything that Christians are and do that demonstrates that our reason for being here is to pass on the good news that has been entrusted to

us, both in deed and in word.

The tests go a little wider than this and include the worldwide church as well as the unchurched society. Anything, in fact, that encourages a church to widen its horizons and see a bigger picture. A healthy church is one that knows that it is one small group of Christian disciples in a large global Church and an even larger and more diverse world, most of whom have little or no knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Our calling is to not so much *do* mission but to *be* mission. But that is not particularly comfortable and there is a natural tendency to retreat into our comfort areas and create a church that suits ourselves. This part of the medical check-up forces us to recognise this danger and assess how prone we are to it. Perhaps we need to acknowledge how blind and how deaf we have become.

A health-check of the church's eyes and ears

The first four questions concern attitudes to being part of a wider world; the next four apply these in four distinct ways, before a ninth question on change.

Since mission is a way of life more than an activity, the first four questions are grouped in a section titled **Openness**. Any church needs to have mission within its DNA before it can engage in activities that are part of its mission calling. So these four questions

explore different aspects of being mission-minded.

The second section covers **Outreach** and takes four specific types of activity to keep a church from navel gazing. Although evangelism (in all its forms) is one of these, it is only one of the four. The witness of

church members in their daily lives in the community and at work, works of compassion, and global mission are also included.

The single **Development** question studies change in both the above to ensure we continue to think in terms of movement.

<i>Ref</i>	<i>SECTION Question title</i>	<i>Sub-title</i>
OPENNESS – testing how mission-minded the church can claim to be		
01	Gospel outlook	Thinking on the outside
02	Local presence	Living on the outside
03	Ways in	Welcoming all from outside
04	Wider concern	Linking to the outside
OUTREACH – testing how mission-engaged the church can claim to be		
05	Network witness	Being good news
06	Practical service	Living out good news
07	Direct evangelism	Sharing good news
08	Global mission	Supporting others in the good news
DEVELOPMENT – testing growth in both the above		
09	Numerical growth	Evidence of movement

John Cole’s third circle in the Venn diagram covers ‘communication’ in relation to others outside the Church. He breaks this down into evangelising, forgiving/recreating, reconciling and healing. He points out that the last three tasks are prerequisites for any form of evangelism.

The purpose-driven list includes ‘mission’ (for evangelism) and it would be hoped that their idea of ‘ministry’ (for loving service) does not have to be restricted to within the Church alone.

Christian Schwarz cites ‘need-orientated evangelism’. He points out that it is vital to identify the (supposed) 10% of church members with the gift of evangelism and put them to work in a way that identifies and meets people’s perceived needs. But we do not need to increase our circle of contacts with those who are not yet Christians, he

argues. Instead, we need to make more effective use of our existing contacts.

Mark 2 of Robert Warren’s marks of a healthy church is an ‘outward-looking focus’ and a ‘whole life’ rather than a ‘church life’ concern. Mark 6 ‘makes room for all’ which includes elements of ‘ways in’ as well as community,

Keep in mind that ...

The sample tests are exactly that: samples. The model is all about the questions rather than the tests. The tests simply give you an idea of how you might assess this area. You are not expected to be doing all the activities listed!

O1-4: THE OUTWARD THEME – Questions of Openness

These test how mission-minded the church can claim to be.

01 GOSPEL OUTLOOK – Thinking on the outside

How gospel-centred and outward-focused is our church, seeing this not as one more activity but as part of its very reason for existing, seeking to engage with other people on their terms rather than through a church-centred agenda?

Sample tests

- 1 several major items of an outreach nature on the previous year's Council or leadership agendas;
- 2 a steady movement into church involvement from a broad mix of people from backgrounds of no, little or lapsed faith; *(cf. U1.4)*
- 3 one or more church ministries reaching out that would be classified as 'fresh expressions' of worship or faith;
- 4 a recent change in an activity or structure to make it more 'outsider friendly', with almost every church group testing their activity on this criterion on a regular basis;
- 5 quality publicity to those outside the church through means such as printed materials, a website designed for those who are not church members, and regular inclusion in the local media.

02 LOCAL PRESENCE – Living on the outside

How well acknowledged is our church for its clear involvement for good within the local community, acting as a place of healing and siding with the powerless?

Sample tests *(cf. O6)*

- 1 a high profile within local schools, whether for assemblies taken, Youth Worker involvement, or church members playing key roles as Governors;
- 2 the Minister well-known in the community, with a high proportion of church members living locally and active in neighbourhood groups, with others seeking to move house into the immediate area;
- 3 good networks with other churches, faith groups and secular agencies (including police and local councillors) to help give the local community identity and meaning;
- 4 the church known locally to take a stand on matters such as justice, support for the disadvantaged, employment opportunities, affordable housing;
- 5 the ability to maintain a Christian witness in the face of vandalism to church property, crime against church members, or 'persecution' in any form.

03 WAYS IN – Welcoming all from outside

How wide a range of ways exist into the church family and the Christian faith, especially for those for whom a standard service would be intimidating, so that the process has minimal barriers and fits many different kinds of people?

Sample tests *(cf. U4, O7)*

- 1 healthy attendance through personal invitation at regular enquirers' courses (Alpha, Pilgrim, Christianity Explored, etc.) where the faith is explained in a relaxed, discussion-based environment;
- 2 a range of cringe-free events and groups to which people outside the church come as a first step: men's events or speaker/DVD evenings on issues such as parenting or debt;
- 3 opportunities such as major festival services, holiday clubs, funerals and baptisms organised well and linked to other suitable second-step events, with people moving on to the next stage;
- 4 the existence of 'fresh expression' activities such as Messy Church, God-slots at youth events, short family-friendly worship events, after-school worship, church plants in local schools or halls;
- 5 a well-organised welcome team so that no newcomers are overlooked at services.

04 WIDER CONCERN – Linking to the outside

To what extent does our church demonstrate an active and informed interest in the wider world both secular and ecclesiastical: locally, nationally and internationally?

Sample tests

- 1 intercessions and prayer lists showing involved and knowledgeable concern for local, national and international affairs in both world and Church; *(cf. G6.2)*
- 2 support for members' involvement in groups concerned for justice, peace, Third World development, the eradication of poverty, the environment, local politics, so bringing a Christian emphasis to these agendas; *(cf. U7.5)*
- 3 active and personal church links with local agencies such as the police, social workers and local politicians, so that such people consult the church on items of concern;
- 4 on-going co-operation with other local churches of all denominations and networks to promote the Kingdom of God;
- 5 active involvement in denominational thinking and activities on a local and national scale.

05–8: THE OUTWARD THEME – Questions of Outreach

These test how mission-engaged the church can claim to be.

05 NETWORK WITNESS – Being good news

How often does our church positively encourage members to be active Christians 24/7 and support them in their daily lives at work, school, home and with their friends?

Sample tests *(cf. G7)*

- 1 teaching that service in the world is as important as service in the church, and encouraging some church members to drop church responsibilities so they can give their time elsewhere;
- 2 people's weekday life seen as important, eg. through a display showing a map of where all the church's members live and work (or go to school) or other means;
- 3 church children and teens encouraged and helped to lead and be involved in Christian groups at school and college; *(cf. U6.3)*
- 4 church members confident to talk about their faith, so that there are regularly visitors invited by church members from their road, workplace or community activity; *(cf. G1.3, G4.4)*
- 5 an active interest in each member's daily work (whether employment or not) with teaching and training applied to daily life and support for Christians witnessing to their networks.

06 PRACTICAL SERVICE – Living out good news

How well is our church seeking to offer a healing ministry to a hurting world through acts of compassion and service to our local community and to the poor everywhere?

Sample tests *(cf. O2, and U3 for care within the membership)*

- 1 research carried out on needs in the local area and plans made that fit these but which also are appropriate for the church's available resources;
- 2 blessing the local community through free hospitality, church-organised community activities, litter-picking, graffiti cleaning, landscaping, painting community buildings;
- 3 the running of specific activities for the community such as lunch-clubs, after-school clubs, playgroups and youth groups, musical events, sport;
- 4 the church plant designed and made available for community use and, especially, for the disadvantaged, without necessarily charging for use; *(cf. S6.2)*
- 5 offering partnerships through financial and personnel help to disadvantaged churches elsewhere in the UK or abroad, or to development projects in Third World countries.

07 **DIRECT EVANGELISM** – Sharing good news

How regularly and effectively is our church involved in activity designed to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ through networks available to us?

Sample tests *(cf. D3)*

- 1 the church identifying those with the gift of evangelism and enabling them to use this gift rather than being stifled by other internal church activity; *(cf. U7.2)*
- 2 specifically telling good news in print through the website (with opportunities to respond), and local leaflet or newsletter distribution (perhaps calling personally on each home);
- 3 regular events appropriate for those outside Christian circles with suitable follow up: street evangelism, children’s holiday clubs, speaker events, sports activities, etc.;
- 4 opportunities to present the gospel taken at normal services as well as at funerals, baptisms, civic and other special services, also in ministries to pubs, prisons, etc.;
- 5 a steady movement of people into faith in all kinds of different ways, and therefore regular baptisms or rededications.

08 **GLOBAL MISSION** – Supporting others in the good news

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 and development?

Sample tests

- 1 a high profile for worldwide mission activity, of equivalent standing to other areas of church mission, in Sunday services, small groups, special events, church displays, etc.;
- 2 specific partners and projects supported by the church with a real attitude of involvement and interest shown in prayer take-up and occasional visits to such people;
- 3 church members regularly taking up the challenge to get involved in global mission in person during gap years, on retirement, or long-term, with others considering moving to ordination training;
- 4 generous giving to mission projects outside the church with high levels of enthusiasm for visits from partners and regular news from them; *(cf. G8.2, S7.3)*
- 5 sacrificial responses to needs for aid to developing countries, the poor, or in major disasters.

09: THE OUTWARD THEME – A question of Development

09 **NUMERICAL GROWTH** – Evidence of movement

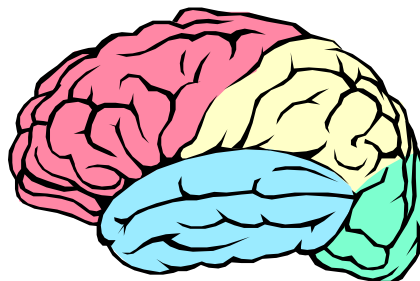
To what extent has there been growth in numbers over the past three years (other than through transfers from other churches) and in mission effectiveness across all activities?

Sample tests

- 1 growth in numbers at church services, in people coming to faith, and in children’s and teens activities (excluding transfers);
- 2 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or activity within the scope of the Openness section (such as the start-up of a new congregation) that has led to growth;
- 3 a gradual change in any aspect of the Openness section (such as growing numbers at enquirers’ groups) that can be seen to have led to numerical growth in the church;
- 4 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or activity within the scope of the Outreach section (such as a new evangelistic initiative) with similar effect;
- 5 a gradual change in any aspect of the Outreach section (such as a growing number involved in local service) that has also led to numerical growth.

The LEADERSHIP theme

How well is this church being led towards its vision?



Mental faculties

Now that psychometric and intelligence testing are commonplace in job interviews, it should come as no surprise to find something similar in the well-church clinic. After our three themes of testing on the different dimensions of church life, it is time to assess the church's ability to think and so to plan and to change.

Is it able to react creatively to a situation where Christendom is now no more, where there is no longer a solid foundation of Christian values in society (in the UK), and where the Church is perceived by most as irrelevant at best, and dangerous at worst? The environment is a new one. Society norms are changing so that a new generation thinks in a different way from what has been accepted in the past.

A church that cannot think and adapt for a new situation will soon become sickly. It will become retarded, unable to thrive and make use of the opportunities available.

It is leadership that is the key here and the topic of this fourth theme. Any church needs to be constantly changing to meet the needs of the society it serves. But many of its members feel comfortable with how they have known it. The situation calls not so much for carers as leaders, people who will take others on a journey to new pasture.

This theme is directed at all in leadership, whether for the whole church or for specific groups or areas. This includes the Minister so every part of this theme applies to that

role. But the theme should also be taken for Church Council, Diaconate, Session or Eldership. These tests apply very much to these bodies to assess how they are structured and how they work together to move the church forward (or not, as the case may be).

But leadership is also exercised in groups all over the church. Any children's group needs to be led, and the same is true of a cell group, any bereavement team, a choir and a one-off committee meeting. These are not tests designed simply for Clergy or Elders.

A health-check of the church's mental faculties

These questions cover both spiritual quality and the performance of leadership within the church.

Keep in mind that ...

You simply assess each question on a scale of:

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

See page 29 for a pro forma to use.

The Priority section tests aspects of quality that churches are often too wary of to bring into the light and examine. So this may prove to be a challenge to some. Just as the tests on the outward focus tested attitudes first, so we look here at matters of role, spiritual qualifications, vision and the focus on Christ as the senior shepherd of the flock of the church.

The Action section moves on to four aspects of the work of leadership to test whether leaders are in fact moving the church in an appropriate direction or simply keeping it active without progress.

The Development question tests recent changes, as before. This is a constant theme of the Review.

SECTION
Ref Question title Sub-title

PRIORITY – testing the spiritual quality of the church’s leadership		
L1	Minister	The leader for leaders
L2	Character	Standards required for leaders
L3	Vision	The driving force for leaders
L4	Christ as Lord	The spiritual foundation for leaders

ACTION – testing the performance of the church’s leadership		
L5	Planning	Preparing and monitoring the journey
L6	Decision-making	Choosing the route for the journey
L7	Difficulties	Managing hardships on the journey
L8	Outcomes	Reaching the end of the journey

DEVELOPMENT – testing growth in both the above		
L9	Attitudinal growth	Evidence of movement

The work of leadership is implicit in church purpose models but not specifically covered because it is a means towards such purposes.

Christian Schwarz has ‘empowering leadership’ as the very first in his list of quality characteristics. He remarks that “Pastors of growing churches do not need to be superstars. Most of the Pastors with the highest scores in our survey are little known.” He finds that Pastors of growing

churches are goal-orientated, but also more relational than their colleagues in declining churches.

Robert Warren’s seven marks of a healthy church are very much bedded in the idea of leadership. All of them could be cited, but mark 3 is ‘seeks to find out what God wants’ and this explores vocation, vision, priorities and sacrifices. Mark 4 is ‘faces the cost of change and growth’ and this includes the ideas of risk and crisis.

L1-4: THE LEADERSHIP THEME – Questions of Priority

These test the spiritual quality of the church's leadership.

L1 **MINISTER** – The leader for the leaders

To what extent are our church's Minister(s) clear as to their role and priorities, released from areas of work they should not be spending time on and not placed under unacceptable pressure: physically, mentally and spiritually?

Sample tests *(cf.S5)*

- 1 sufficient time in the diary each week for prayer, sermon preparation, engaging with others, pastoral work and other priorities;
- 2 sufficient availability, time off and time for family responsibilities (of all relevant kinds);
- 3 external training provision with appropriate oversight, study breaks, etc and opportunities for the development of Christian character;
- 4 effective use of time through good self-organisation and sufficient administrative support in people and in software *(cf L5.5)*;
- 5 respect from the congregation for their leadership ability and vision drive.

L2 **CHARACTER** – Standards required for leaders

How accurately can it be said that leaders throughout the church are chosen on the basis of Christian character and self-awareness, so they are respected as people of God and act as role models of teamwork, godly behaviour, family life and wise judgement?

Sample tests

- 1 a team leadership structure of some kind which is known, respected and supported by the church;
- 2 leaders focusing on their defined priorities, with clear roles for all leadership groups, to avoid such people being diverted onto matters of detail or business that rightly belongs to others;
- 3 leadership positions (central, groups, activities) provided with not only simple job descriptions but person profiles, with guidance given to those who select leaders on characteristics to seek;
- 4 leaders working to empower others and acting in ways that demonstrate self-awareness and servanthood, not status, seen to be vulnerable and open to correction; *(cf.U7.4)*
- 5 some appropriate form of training for leadership with a system of leadership appraisal system to encourage development in their roles. *(cf.L5.3)*

L3 **VISION** – The driving force for leaders

To what extent do church members, through their leaders, have vision for what God might do through them and where he might be leading them, with a willingness to follow his Spirit, even though he may take people out of their comfort zones?

Sample tests *(cf.L8)*

- 1 a stated vision as a focus for all activity, with some expression of this that is known by all and which points to a future destination which will involve change;
- 2 all groups and departments of church actively working towards this vision in terms of their planning and activities, demonstrated in their agendas and annual reports; *(cf.S3.5)*
- 3 an expectation that the Holy Spirit can enable vision to be initiated by anyone in the church, though leaders then shape it and work to it;
- 4 regular monitoring of the vision to ensure that the church is on track yet open to the Spirit;
- 5 an excitement about the vision in all leaders, with an openness to innovation in all aspects of church life, so that risks can be taken and failure accepted as part of the learning process.

L4 **CHRIST AS LORD** – The spiritual foundation for leaders

How passionate are our leaders at all levels to allow Christ to be Lord of his church, so that all decision-making seeks to follow God's will rather than to be determined on the basis of human logic or preference alone?

Sample tests *(cf. G5)*

- 1 a deep-seated, spiritual hunger throughout all in leadership that leads to seeking God's will through prayer, study of the Scriptures, skill training, and all means of spiritual grace;
- 2 a clear statement of, and engagement with, the meaning of the Christian creeds, with a determination to maintain doctrinal orthodoxy;
- 3 proper testing by the leadership of spiritual gifts such as words of knowledge and prophecy;
- 4 evidence that leaders are seeking to live within the radical value-system of the Kingdom of God at home and at work, as well as in the ministry they are responsible for;
- 5 an attractiveness about the way the church is led noted by newcomers, distinct from similar secular institutions.

L5-8: THE LEADERSHIP THEME – Questions of Action

These test the performance of the church's leadership.

L5 **PLANNING** – Preparing and monitoring the journey

How well is the church seeking to move towards its vision through the preparation, outworking and monitoring of a suitable planning process, with the big picture clearly distinguished from the daily detail?

Sample tests

- 1 the existence of some form of Mission Action Plan based on annual aims and specific targets, but seen as a matter for constant prayer and submission to God's control;
- 2 evidence of other forms of planning through means such as programme cards for activities, teaching programmes, young people's syllabuses, statements of values;
- 3 occasional but regular reviews of where the church is at, or health-checks, or appraisal against published criteria, ensuring the church is not trying to be over-busy; *(cf. L2.5, S2.5)*
- 4 a church where everyone understands the purpose of a local church and how that is working out here through some form of purpose statement being applied to every area of church life;
- 5 lack of last-minute panics in the church's programme, or of any frustrations caused by a bottleneck at the Minister's desk or at any other point in the leadership structure. *(cf. L1.4)*

L6 **DECISION-MAKING** – Choosing the route for the journey

How efficient is our process of leadership decision-making in its operation (by not wasting time or people while delivering wise outcomes) and how effective is it in what it achieves (by engaging with the real issues instead of trivia)?

Sample tests

- 1 business meetings in the church (Council or other) appreciated by all involved, with satisfaction at the way they are run, sensitive honesty from everyone, and lack of destructive conflict;
- 2 decision-making groups kept small, committee structures designed to fit needs, chairing carried out to a high standard, and paperwork delivered on time and with clarity; *(cf. S2.3)*
- 3 the Holy Spirit's presence sought at church business meetings so that there is an edge to proceedings and high attendance, with prayer for wisdom in decision-making seen as essential;
- 4 good communication so that the congregation are kept in touch with decisions; *(cf. UB.5)*
- 5 meetings that take clear decisions which are then actioned effectively without delay.

L7 **DIFFICULTIES** – Managing hardships on the journey

How robust is our leadership in handling both external attack and internal difficulties with wisdom and discernment, in managing change well, in taking hard decisions when required, and in seeking external advice when this is appropriate?

Sample tests

- 1 lack of gossip and hidden criticism of the leadership among church members, with conflicts handled openly and fairly so that matters are dealt with and the church can move on;
- 2 evidence of the use of appropriate discipline by the church, in a way that is widely regarded as fair, to tackle pastoral problems within the membership; *(cf. U1.5)*
- 3 evidence that disputes with and criticism from those outside the church's membership, including unhelpful press coverage, have been handled wisely;
- 4 key leaders demonstrating an ability to learn from their mistakes, to seek advice from others (including specialists from outside the church) and to submit to it when wise, and to change their leadership style to fit the occasion and need;
- 5 lack of people leaving the church, or people unnecessarily hurt, through times of change and development.

L8 **OUTCOMES** – Reaching the end of the journey

How well balanced is our church in its attention to all three dimensions of relationship growth, with a general sense by all that it is working well towards its vision and achieving its aims, whatever the cost?

Sample tests *(cf. L3)*

- 1 a healthy church membership profile in terms of gender, ages, social types, etc.; *(cf. U4.4)*
- 2 a church that is seeking quality in a breadth of ministry that is within its resource capability, rather than suffering under structure strain by trying to do too much;
- 3 a church that is structured in an appropriate way for its size and future plans; *(cf. S2)*
- 4 a church that is prepared to close activities down when they have fulfilled their purpose;
- 5 a church that is prepared to live dangerously and at a cost to its members as it seeks to do God's will, rather than to live in human comfort zones.

L9: THE LEADERSHIP THEME – A question of Development

L9 **ATTITUDINAL GROWTH** – Evidence of movement

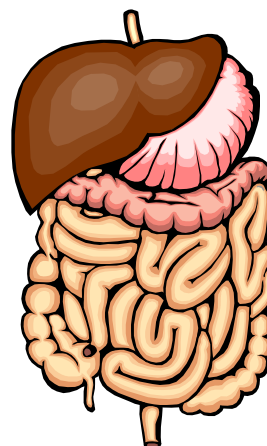
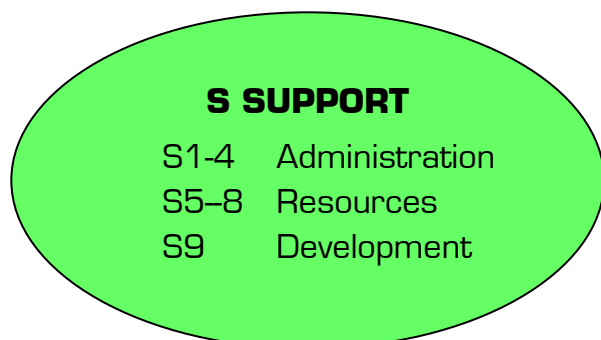
To what extent are our church members growing in their ability to think in and accept new ways so that there can be seen to have been agreed and wise changes introduced by the leadership over the past three years?

Sample tests

- 1 evidence of a growing ability for the church to adapt its structures, activities, methods and attitudes to match its setting and the people it is dealing with;
- 2 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or thinking within the scope of the Priority section (such as the introduction of a challenging vision) that can be seen to have enabled a growing acceptance of the need to make certain changes;
- 3 a gradual change in any aspect of the Priority section (such as a growing self-awareness among the leadership team) that can be seen to have led to a changing culture;
- 4 evidence of new approaches within the Action section (such as new forms of decision-making) with similar effect;
- 5 the successful working through by the leaders of a major pastoral difficulty or project, with general agreement that this was handled well and any change has been positive.

The SUPPORT theme

How well is this church being organised to achieve its purpose?



The digestive system

The fifth and final health-check involves a scan to see that the digestive system is working properly. We want to know that everything that keeps us healthy inside (stomach, intestines, kidneys, liver, etc.) is functioning properly. Although these parts of our bodies are not visible, failure in their function soon produces painful symptoms.

The ‘insides’ of our church are our structures and organisation. These are the parts of church life that are, or should be, out of sight. But once they break down the pain is obvious. Financial or building problems have an immediate impact on church life. Poor communication systems frustrate and hurt many people. If our leaders are caught up in constant administrative duties, the whole church suffers.

There is a close link between administrative malfunction and pastoral breakdown. Any church which seems to be sick in its relationships, whether with God, each other or the world, needs to determine whether the source of the sickness is in personal spirituality or in administrative structure. The answer is probably more often in the latter category than we realise. We are in great danger if we try to cure the sickness by treating the wrong cause.

To take a famous New Testament example, the grumbling in the Jerusalem church in Acts 6:1-7 was a pastoral issue. But the solution that the apostles correctly adopted

was an administrative one. They could have organised an all-night prayer gathering, but that in itself would not have put the problem right. It needed creative thinking about structures (and, no doubt, plenty of prayer too) and the problem was solved – at least, we assume so since Luke makes no further reference to it.

So, in the well church clinic, let’s not ignore our internal organs or we could end up in great pain!

A health-check of the church’s digestive system

The first section covers the administrative systems within the church; the second, the resources at the church’s disposal (other than the church’s main workforce, its membership, that was considered under the Usward theme).

So the Administration section covers four aspects of the church’s operation to see how well the church is being run and its front-line ministry being serviced.

The Resources section studies the staff (including clergy), buildings, finance and records to assess how these are being mobilised to service the church’s life and work.

The Development question checks on changes in the above and brings this set of 45 questions to its completion.

SECTION
Ref Question title Sub-title

ADMINISTRATION – testing the church’s operational systems		
S1	Office	The hub of the church’s operation
S2	Structures	The shape of the church’s operation
S3	Co-ordination	Collaboration within the church’s operation
S4	Good practice	Professionalism within the church’s operation

RESOURCES – testing the church’s human and physical assets		
S5	Staff	People to enable ministry
S6	Plant	Buildings to enable ministry
S7	Finance	Money to enable ministry
S8	Records	Information to enable ministry

DEVELOPMENT – testing growth in both the above		
S9	Professional growth	Evidence of movement

As with leadership, support is not part of the church’s purpose and so does not feature in the purpose lists as such.

Christian Schwarz includes ‘functional structures’ within his list of quality characteristics. He stresses that structure and life are intimately connected and good leadership includes effective structures, though some people see them as unnecessary and unspiritual.

Robert Warren’s seven marks in *The healthy churches’ handbook* have, as their final point, ‘does a few things and does them well’. In my experience of churches working with this material, this is the point that strikes a particular chord. It is the one that most church leaders remark on and remember from the book. This is at heart an issue of both leadership and resourcing. It includes the idea of quality and mentions administration within this.

Keep in mind that ...

This is the September 2014 version of the Church Health Review, first published on the website in October 2007. John Truscott welcomes comments and ideas. He aims to add improvements and to update the Review in the light of these.

Please email ideas for areas you feel the questions have omitted to cover, better examples for tests, and suggestions for how to go about the Review. If you want to be more radical, do question the basis for the Review or give your ideas for a better categorisation system. See page 28 for communication details.

If you are interested in something similar for a Christian mission agency, see HC6 and HC7 on the website.

S1–4: THE SUPPORT THEME – Questions of Administration

These test the church's operational systems.

S1 OFFICE – The hub of the church's operation

How effective is our reference point for administration, reception and communication for the church (whether a physical office or other means), and is it kept separate from pastoral leadership but still seen as spiritual ministry?

Sample tests *(cf. SB)*

- 1 church leaders freed from routine administration by specialist staff/volunteers using dedicated spaces for their work and appropriate technology;
- 2 efficient handling of all incoming phone calls, email, post and visitors with a high quality of customer care, able to answer all queries from both church members and the public;
- 3 the church's communication (news-sheets, email, social media, etc.) handled well so that everyone trusts and appreciates both the system and the content; *(cf. UB.2)*
- 4 administrative and IT systems that are efficient (with almost no errors), current (not outdated) and simple (people use and understand them) so that the church is felt to be well organised;
- 5 a church office (if it exists) that is safe to use, well resourced, easy to find and offering a pleasant work environment, with trained and efficient staff who model the church's values.

S2 STRUCTURES – The shape of the church's operation

How appropriate are our structures and staffing for our present size, planned future development and particular style of ministry; and our programme for the amount of resources available?

Sample tests *(cf. LB.3)*

- 1 lack of any evidence of structure strain through overstressed staff or volunteers, or of bottle-necks for the flow of decision-making, or of tensions caused by confusion;
- 2 evident ability to adapt pastoral structures to prevent the church coming up against a glass ceiling in terms of numerical growth because people are not covered; *(cf. U5.3)*
- 3 an effective but lightweight committee structure so that people are not spending hours in meetings but freed up to do the work of the church rather than just to discuss it; *(cf. L6.2)*
- 4 agreement that the church does not try to do too much, and does what it does to a high standard;
- 5 evidence of a recent review of big-picture thinking, with someone responsible for oversight of the support given for the church's front-line work advising the leadership. *(cf. L5.3)*

S3 CO-ORDINATION – Collaboration within the church's operation

How healthy is the level of co-ordination between the different areas of the church, so that there is rarely a clash of interest or loss of opportunity because of two areas not working well together?

Sample tests *(cf. UB)*

- 1 excellent levels of communication between different departments of the church so there is no frustration caused by people feeling they have been left in the dark;
- 2 someone other than the Minister responsible for everything working together smoothly, for information flow through the church, and for learning from any mistakes made;
- 3 only rare examples of waste of time and effort caused by doubling up or messages not getting through correctly;
- 4 some form of internal newsletter or email or text system and an effective, responsive website always up-to-date, so that information can be passed round quickly and effectively;
- 5 a church purpose and vision that everyone buys into and which provides a focus for unity for all activities throughout the church's life. *(cf. L3.2)*

S4 **GOOD PRACTICE** – Professionalism within the church’s operation

How well does our church take due care to adhere to all relevant legislation and best practice in the way it deals with people and handles its ministry?

Sample tests

- 1 clear policies in place, with up-to-date guidelines where relevant, for all who serve in areas involved (children’s work, maintenance, catering, etc.);
- 2 everyone working with children properly cleared with DBS and given adequate training on a regular basis, with an up-to-date policy published, known and adhered to by all involved; *(cf. U6.5)*
- 3 issues of health and safety, HR and employment legislation, food hygiene, equal opportunities, disability awareness, etc. taken seriously (eg. an appointed trustee and a staff member responsible for health and safety);
- 4 high standards of confidentiality throughout the church, especially in matters of pastoral counselling;
- 5 environmental and other global concerns taken seriously with practical action to reduce the church’s carbon footprint, use fair-trade goods, etc. *(cf. G8.5)*

S5–8: THE SUPPORT THEME – Questions of Resources

These test the church’s human and physical assets.

S5 **STAFF** – People to enable ministry

How sufficient is our level of staffing (including Minister/clergy) with appropriate abilities and experience to enable our church to function well, without sidelining the ministry of (unpaid) church members?

Sample tests *(cf. L1)*

- 1 staff (both pastoral and administrative) in place for specialist and other areas of service where necessary, remunerated properly and employed to professional standards;
- 2 Church Council (or equivalent) taking a clear governance role with no confusion with staff role, but also proper responsibility for employment and training of staff;
- 3 selection of both Minister and lay staff handled in a professional manner with proper Christian care for finding God’s choice, and then adequate line-management and support;
- 4 staff work together in harmony as a team with a clear corporate role;
- 5 the effect of employing staff can be clearly seen to enhance (unpaid) ministry rather than to stifle it, with staff enabling the work of others rather than drawing all work to themselves.

S6 **PLANT** – Buildings to enable ministry

How suitable are the church’s buildings (church, halls, houses, hired buildings) and equipment for their intended uses, and how well are they maintained and used?

Sample tests

- 1 buildings (for gathering, activities, housing) that enable ministry to flourish and develop rather than restricting activity and growth, with sufficient space for present and planned future use, and facilities of a quality that people would expect at home;
- 2 church building / centre open each day to the local population and fit for purpose; *(cf. D6.4)*
- 3 an effective use of technology: good sound system, use of multi-media technology in worship, quality website, email throughout the congregation, social media, etc.; *(cf. G2.5)*
- 4 buildings of all types (including those let out to others) that show regular maintenance, good cleaning, high standards of lighting and heating, and proper attention to health and safety;
- 5 church equipment (office, kitchen, youth, worship, etc.) of sufficient quality and availability for the ministry of the church, with proper levels of insurance and maintenance.

S7 **FINANCE** – Money to enable ministry

How true is it that our finances are seen as a key area of spiritual ministry which serve rather than dictate vision, and are they overseen with wisdom and thoroughness?

Sample tests

- 1 General Fund income sufficient over time to cover outgoings (without forced cutbacks) and without the need for panic appeals;
- 2 annual budgets led by the agreed vision, with good controls in place but a willingness to take risks where there is a belief that God is leading;
- 3 special needs (eg. major projects, global mission giving) handled in such a way that generous sums are provided and people's faith grows; *(cf. GB.2, OB.4)*
- 4 good reporting through management accounts to decision-making bodies and through innovative means of communication to the congregation, so all understand the position;
- 5 good processes in place so that all bills and salaries/expenses are paid without delay, trading activity is managed to a high standard, significant levels of Gift Aid tax are refunded, methods of collection and offering within services have been chosen well, etc.

S8 **RECORDS** – Information to enable ministry

How well does our church keep and use records so that we can maintain professional standards in pastoring, mobilisation, communication and administration?

Sample tests *(cf. S1)*

- 1 a membership database that is up-to-date and comprehensive enough to provide information for placing people in groups and in ministry areas;
- 2 statistical data and other information (about congregational sizes, patterns of attendance, the local area, etc.) that enables the leadership to analyse trends and plan for mission;
- 3 an understanding of the church's history and personality, put to good use in assessing how God has been at work through it and the direction in which he might be leading;
- 4 a well-maintained and clutter-free paper and digital filing system, both central and dispersed throughout leaders in the congregation, that enables smooth continuity of activities and groups;
- 5 proper adherence to and adequate software for matters of musical and other copyright, archiving, financial records, graveyard files, and issues relating to freedom of information.

S9: THE SUPPORT THEME – A question of Development
S9 **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH** – Evidence of movement

To what extent is our church growing in its quality of life and service so that there can be seen to be development in appropriate standards of excellence over the past three years?

Sample tests

- 1 evidence of a growing quality about the church's worship, life, mission, and leadership through administrative structures that are both effective and invisible;
- 2 the successful introduction of any major new form of structure or system within the scope of the Administration section (such as the opening of a church office) that can be seen to have enabled higher quality;
- 3 a gradual change in any aspect of the Administration section (such as a growing professionalism in the church's systems) that can be seen to have led to improved quality;
- 4 evidence of improved resources (such as a new staff appointment) with similar effect;
- 5 gradual improvement in any aspect of the Resources section (such as income growing year on year above inflation) that again has led to a high quality in the way that the church lives its life and arranges its ministries.

Postscript

The following page gives a pro forma for an Assessment Group to use for any one theme. You may copy this as many times as you like. The codes used for the six boxes are:

- He Healthy
- ReHe Reasonably healthy
- PaAc Patient action
- NeTr Needs treatment
- Hosp Hospitalisation
- N/A Not applicable (only to be used in special circumstances).

Part 1 mentioned that a biblical precedent for a review such as this can be found in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. It can be a valuable exercise to surmise what might have been said there about your church.

Here are some of the words to the church at Ephesus.

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: you have forsaken the love you had at first.... Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 2:2-4,7 (NIV)

This paper is available at <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Health-checks-index> then HC5. It forms the second part of two papers outlining the Church Health Review with the first part available at the same web address but with HC4 instead of HC5. 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.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow.

69 Sandridge Road, St Albans, AL1 4AG

Tel: 01727 832176

Email: john@john-truscott.co.uk

Web: <https://www.john-truscott.co.uk>

Theme

agree and tick one box for each question

Q	Question name	He	ReHe	PaAc	NeTr	Hosp	N/A
1	Treatment						
2	Treatment						
3	Treatment						
4	Treatment						
5	Treatment						
6	Treatment						
7	Treatment						
8	Treatment						
9	Treatment						

Priority treatment