

GROWING HEALTHY CHURCHES

*expressing the life of Christ
through the local church*

USER'S HANDBOOK

**For those conducting a
*Healthy Church Exercise***

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *Growing Healthy Churches Handbook*.

This **Handbook** is designed to help anyone involved in running a *Healthy Church Exercise*. Obviously it will repay careful study so that the outline is familiar. All the material has been 'road tested' and is designed to be accessible as possible. However, there is no substitute for actually doing the *Exercise* with a church.

It is important to remember that this material will involve a church in a sustained process of engagement with the themes of the *Growing Healthy Churches* material. Beyond the doing of the actual exercise outlined in this *Handbook*, a church will need to reflect further and then identify exactly what action it is right to take.

Once action has been taken, it will need to be monitored so that any further issues, obstacles to progress, and problems are identified and addressed.

The role of a Consultant in all this, is to help the church to learn for, and from, itself and to then take action on the issues which arise. Churches often need help to keep going rather than giving up before real change, growth and development have taken place.

Our prayer is that all who use this **Handbook** may find the grace and wisdom of God to help churches reflect on their present life so as to discern how they might, more fully, express the life of Christ in all they do.

Canon Robert Warren and Dr. Janet Hodgson

Outline of the process

The *five steps* in the process, covering *three one-hour sessions*, are....

SESSION ONE

one hour

step one: *doing the Checklist*

Introducing the Exercise and the **Seven Marks of a Healthy Church**, then getting people – individually - to score the church on each Mark.

during the break

step two: *creating the Group Checklist*

Collecting individual scorings (**Sheet 1: Church scores** – page 9) and transposing those scores onto a flipchart-sized grid of the seven marks (see back cover).

SESSION TWO

one hour

step three: *reflecting on the Checklist*

Working as a whole group, with the *Group Checklist* (see back cover), exploring our *strengths, differences* and *what is holding us back*.

step four:

identifying what needs working on

Identifying where action most needs to be taken, including completion of **Sheet 2 (Action lists - p.10)** by each person.

during the break

Creating lists of possible actions from the *Action lists* handed in.

SESSION THREE

one hour

step five: *taking action for the future*

Deciding what to do. This is necessarily preliminary and will need to be taken further at a future meetings.

The value of external help

The advantages...

- *affirming the good things* that are happening, which are easily overlooked or taken for granted.
- *adding objectivity* both about our strengths and about things which we may, as a group, prefer to avoid.
- *bringing expertise* as such a person will have wider skills and experience to draw upon.
- *releasing leaders* (especially incumbents) from running the process so they can take part more fully in the deliberations.
- *helping fruitful action*. A Consultant can help us keep to the task when we might want to move to 'other business'!

Each church needs to choose their name for such a person – e.g. Consultant, Facilitator, Companion, etc. For simplicity, we use the term 'Consultant' whether the person is local or external.

Finding a 'Consultant'

- **Diocesan Resource people** – Adult Education, Lay Training or Parish Development Departments, Continuing Ministerial Education Officer, Diocesan Missioner/Evangelist, or an Archdeacon can provide help or will know others who can do so.
- **People known to us** – trained as consultants in their work.
- **Members of our churches** may well have these skills.
- **Other denominations** can help – *and* bring a fresh perspective.
- **Springboard** has trained Consultants in a number of dioceses and is willing to do so elsewhere.

Preparing to conduct the Exercise

Timing of the Exercise

The Exercise can be done in any of the following ways...

- a **Whole Day Exercise, lasting three hours** – e.g. 10am – 4pm.
- in **two evening sessions** (one of two hours & one of one hour)
- in a **shortened version** - in 90 minutes – see p.7

The material in this *Handbook* is set out within the framework of the three hours, so needs adapting for other options.

Identify the church group

- at least five people from a church are needed for the exercise to work.
- multi-parish benefices need to decide whether to do the exercise as a benefice or as individual churches.
- larger churches (150+) sometimes find it more fruitful to do the exercise with each of their main congregations.

Who to do the exercise with

- typically with a *Church Council* or *Leadership Group*
- some churches have done it with *Whole Church meetings*
- some with a *sample group* of older/younger/newer members
- some churches have used a *combination* of the above

Equip the meeting place

- choose a *well heated/ventilated* room
- *moveable chairs* rather than fixed seating are essential.
- *enough space* for people to circulate and form small groups.
- *Flip chart*, with plenty of pens and paper.
- *The list of Seven Marks*, on a Flipchart sized paper, as per the Grid on the *back cover*.¹
- *Scoring grid* (see p.8) on acetate or flipchart.
- *OHP & screen* if being used.

¹ Pre-printed sheets available from Springboard or some Diocesan Offices

Handouts – enough for everyone taking part in the Exercise

- Pages 9-10 (from this *Handbook*) need to be photocopied, then cut in two for handing out separately as **Sheets 1 & 2**
- photocopies of centre page from *Growing Healthy Churches*
- copies of the *Growing Healthy Churches* booklet

Do not hand out at the beginning, but as indicated in the text

Helpers

Whilst much of the Exercise (particularly with a group of 20 or less) can be done on your own, or with the help of one other person, time can be saved by having...

- **Three people creating the *Group Checklist*:** two to read out the 'scores' (each having half the returned **Sheet 1s**) and one person putting in ticks. All three to add up the 'scores' (see p. 14).
- **Three people creating the *What needs working on lists*:**
 - each with two flipchart sheets for two of the Marks
 - write title of Mark in capitals on top of each sheet
 - each person takes one-third of the forms returned
 - write up every idea which refers to each of your Marks
 - where there are repeats simply put a tick
 - when completed, exchange your one-third of forms for another one-third and record the ideas from the new forms onto your sheet for your two Marks
 - repeat for final one-third of the forms.
 - complete the remaining Mark together

This material works best when handled with

- space for *honest personal reflection*,
- *serious listening* to each other
- time to *pray together*
- determination to take clearly *focused action*.

Shortened version of the Exercise 90 mins

It is possible to do the complete Exercise in 90 minutes at an Evening Meeting. To do so, follow the directions below.

Step one: *doing the Checklist* 35 mins

- keep the *Welcome/introduction/prayer* to five minutes
- limit the introduction of each Mark to 3 minutes
- do not read out the bullet points in introducing the Marks.

Step two: *creating the Group Checklist* inside 10 mins

- have people set up ready to create the Group Checklist (see p.6 under 'Helpers')
- *in groups of three*: get people to share what has struck them most about the life of the church by doing this Checklist
- *if the Checklist is not yet ready*: invite people to talk about *what might need working on*.

As soon as the Checklist is ready proceed to the next Step...

Step three: *reflecting on the Group Checklist* 20 mins

- keep the discussions on *strengths, what is holding us back, and differences*, to no more than 6 minutes each.

Step four: *what needs working on?* 10-15 mins

Step five: *taking action together* 10-15 mins

- say that all the ideas will be *presented* at the next meeting
 - explain that now is not the time for *decision-making*
 - but it would help to *get the feel* of what we are thinking
 - invite people to share *one key action* they see as important
- Invite a variety of contributions, do not allow discussion about individual points: rather get out as many ideas as possible.

End the Meeting, with *thanks* for all those who have taken part, the *promise of returning to the issues* raised, and *prayer*.

SCORING

Put up this list when people score their church on the Seven Marks,

EITHER

write it up beforehand on a flipchart or ohp.

OR

Photocopy and enlarge it and display on flipchart.

SCORING

Circle the number that best describes what *you see* is happening in your church

1. *weak and holding us back*
2. *only a few signs*
3. *some evidence of this*
4. *making progress*
5. *evidence of much of this*
6. *this is a strength*

1. CHURCH SCORES

circle the number you consider most appropriate

1. energised by faith

rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 high

2. outward-looking focus

with a 'whole life' rather than 'church life' concern

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 high

3. seeks to find out what God wants

rather than letting our own preferences set the church's agenda

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 high

4. faces the cost of change and growth

rather than resisting change and avoiding failure

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 high

5. builds community

rather than functioning as a club or religious organisation

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 high

6. makes room for others

inclusive rather than exclusive

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 high

7. does a few things and does them well

focused rather than frenetic

low 1 2 3 4 5 6 high

2. ACTION LISTS

1. energised by faith

what needs working on.....

.....

2. outward-looking focus

what needs working on.....

.....

3. seeks to find out what God wants

what needs working on.....

.....

4. faces the cost of change and growth

what needs working on.....

.....

5. builds community

what needs working on.....

.....

6. makes room for others

what needs working on.....

.....

7. does a few things and does them well

what needs working on.....

.....

SESSION ONE

one hour

step one: *doing* the Checklist

30-40 mins

Welcome people, including Consultant – if present,

Introduce background/purpose of the exercise.

Pray.

5-10 mins

Introducing the Exercise

In introducing the Exercise the following points can help...

- this material is based on an analysis of growing churches in the Durham diocese.
- Those churches covered all social settings (rural, urban, suburban, city centre and ex-mining communities), all church traditions, all ages of clergy, and all sizes of churches
- It was subsequently checked out in two further dioceses in the Midlands and the South.
- It is, therefore, reporting what is actually happening rather than being based on some grand theory about what ought to be happening in churches.

Introduce Marks 1 and 2 as per previous page

6 mins

Introducing the Marks of a healthy church

When introducing each of the Marks in the first step

- **display** the *title only* of the Mark (e.g. *Energised by faith*) on a flipchart/ohp
- **quote** the subtitle (the 'rather than' text)
- **introduce** the bullet points as 'what you might well find in a healthy church are...'
- then **read out** bullet points.
- **illustrate**: the Mark with one or two stories of... 'how this works out in some other churches'.

Give out Sheet 1: Church scores (page 9 above) to each person

Ask people to score Marks 1 and 2, as per instructions below.

- allow time for instructions and scoring

3 mins

Instructions for scoring

Ask people **not** to start scoring until after these instructions...

- *use full range* of scores, avoid playing safe or being polite.
- *score by putting a circle round the appropriate number* (display the 'Score Grid' – back page - on flipchart/ohp)
- *do it on your own*: no consulting with others
- *just score these two marks – only.*

Introduce Marks 3 and 4, as per previous page

5 mins

Repeat the instructions for scoring given above, then ask people to score these *next two marks only*.

2 mins

Introduce Marks 5, 6 & 7, as per previous page

8 mins

Repeat the instructions for scoring given above and then ask people to score *these last three marks*.

1 mins

Collect in Church scores sheets – see p,13 section 1 for this stage – and proceed to create Group Checklist during the break between sessions.

between SESSION ONE and SESSION TWO

step two: creating the Group Checklist

10 – 25 mins

1. collecting in the scores

5 mins

When people have completed their scoring,

- give out copies of the **Full Checklist** (centre pages of the *Growing Healthy Churches* booklet).
- ask them to copy their score onto the **Full Checklist**, so they have a record of their scores.
- collect in *Church scores sheets* in order to create a church list

Handing in sheets, rather than getting people to shout out their scores, is important as people tend to 'adjust' their scores in the light of what they hear others saying.

2. copying the Church scores sheets

5 mins

With such help as you have previously arranged (see p.6 above)

Creating the Church Checklist

Use a bold felt tip pen

black is best: so everyone can see the scores clearly

Put one tick for each person's score.

So if four people have scored a Mark as '4', do not write up '5' in the box provided, but put in five clear ticks.

Note: Do not create the Group Checklist in front of the group as this will distract them. Do it at the back of the room, or turn the flipchart so its back is facing the group.

Completing the TOTAL column

For each Mark,

- score 1 for every tick in the '1' column,
- score 2 for every tick in the '2' column, and so on
- add the total points for the Mark
- put this total in the *Total* box against the Mark, see example below...where the total comes to '36' (check that there are the same number of ticks against each of the Seven Marks, otherwise the scoring will be distorted.)

| Mark | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Total |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| <i>energised by faith</i> | 0 | 2 | 4 | 5 | - | - | 36 |

Quicker scoring method

(suitable for use with larger numbers)

For each Mark...

- add up the total of scores for 4-6
 - subtract from the total of scores of 1-3,
- If the 4-6 total is bigger there will be a + figure, and if it is less there will be a - figure.
- In the example below the *Total* column would be -1 (rather than '36' which relates to the fuller scoring method above).

SESSION TWO: part one

step three: reflecting on the Group Checklist

25-35 mins

This is done as a whole group with the **Group Checklist** displayed on a flipchart where all can see it.

To stimulate discussion by the whole group it is useful to begin by asking people, in groups of two or three, to share what strikes them most from the Group Checklist. 4-5 mins

Then, as a whole group get them to consider...

What are our strengths?

7-10 mins

This can be 'read off' from the Group Checklist

- *visually*, from where the majority of ticks are placed
- *numerically* from the *Total* column.

Get the group to make their own observations rather than giving them your answers

Insights have to be drawn out of people: to illustrate the point they are making with a story from their experience.

How did our strengths come to be so?

This is often a valuable question but there may not be time to explore it unless a whole day is being given to the exercise.

- there are not necessarily easy or obvious answers.
- finding answers can help discovering what is likely to be involved in addressing what is holding us back.

Just raising the question and inviting immediate answers for a couple of minutes can be instructive and a natural lead in to the next stage in the *Reflection...*

Where are we differing?

7-10 mins

It is important to look at any Mark where there is a wide spread of scores. This may be due to people looking at the same thing from two different angles. A high score in *Outward looking focus* might be because of the level of overseas missionary support while a low score might be because of the weakness of the church's engagement with mission locally.

A wide spread of scores can indicate differences of opinion which have not previously surfaced or have not yet been addressed. It is important to get these out in the open.

What is holding us back?

7-10 mins

This is where we need to look at the Marks with lower scores.

Once the obvious points have been made about lower scores, it is helpful to unpack this further by asking such questions as:

- *where do we see evidence of this in the life of our church?*
- *has this always been the case?*
- *if so, why do you think this happened?*
- *if not, what has contributed to it being so?*

SESSION TWO: *part two*

Step four: *What needs working on?* 15 mins

Explain that we are now going to think about *what needs working on*.

Ask them to turn back to the **Full Checklist** (handed out during *step two* above) and read it through with a view to identifying areas that need attention in the life of the church. 2 mins

In groups of three, get people to share ideas about 'what needs working on'. 5 mins

Handout Sheet 2 (*Action lists* on page 10). Ask people to fill in their own forms without further discussion – see instructions below...5 mins

Instructions for completing *Action lists*

From what you have heard, and thought about so far, what do you think we most need to work on? To answer this

- **identify** (*one or two*) **Marks** you think need addressing.
- **if you identify with one or more of the bullet points** put down the words in italics (e.g. *motivation* under Mark One)
- **if none of the bullet points express what you think** add your own words – in a single phrase or sentence.
e.g. our patterns of worship,
our corporate prayer life, or
doing work with children in the school holidays

Tell people you want to collect in their **Sheet 2**, so if they want to make a note of what they have put there, they need to copy it onto the **Full Checklist** before handing it in. 3 mins

Proceed to *creating lists* on p.18, during break between sessions

SESSION THREE:

1 hour

Step five: *Action Planning*

creating lists

between sessions

- create flipchart sheets, one for each Mark, with the Mark title (e.g. *Energised by faith*) on the top of the sheet
- write up every comment from the returned **Sheet 2: Action lists** where there are repeats put a tick for each repeat next to the point
- see under *Helpers* – p.6 above for more detailed suggestions

exploring options

35 mins

Some **Marks** will emerge as the key ones and some **bullet points** (e.g. *motivation* in Mark 1) will have several ticks.

- *give people time to read the lists* (let them *walk round* to read the lists: useful conversations may well emerge) 5 mins
- *invite general comments* 5 mins
- *as a whole group* identify the *three or four areas* which emerge as the key issues that need to be addressed 5 mins
- *let people form self-selected groups to work on any of the issues*. If an area, previously identified, does not have anyone wanting to work on it, note it for future consideration.
- get them to identify *what action could be taken* 15 mins
- then get them to put their ideas down on a flipchart sheet to be displayed *when their list is complete*. 5 mins

planning action

15 mins

As a whole group, make decisions about

- what are the one or two *next steps* we should take?
- how can we best *implement* and *monitor* such action?
- how can we *communicate* all this to the whole church?

end Meeting with

10 mins

- *thanks* for all those who have taken part,
- the *promise of returning to the issues* raised,
- *and prayer*.

HEALTHY CHURCH CHECKLIST

| <i>Mark</i> | 1 low | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 high | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---|---|---|---|-----------|-------|
| 1. energised by faith | | | | | | | |
| 2. outward-looking focus | | | | | | | |
| 3. seeks to find out what God wants | | | | | | | |
| 4. faces cost of change & growth | | | | | | | |
| 5. builds community | | | | | | | |
| 6. makes room for others | | | | | | | |
| 7. does a few things – well | | | | | | | |