

Kia ora e te whanau

I'm writing from Wellington, on an unfamiliar laptop which may have out-of-date email addresses. Lynne and I are here to farewell her brother who died in Wellington hospital late on Friday night. Hence this abbreviated news update.

As I intimated last week, the next 2 years for UCANZ promises to be challenging.

During this period I'm resolved to assist CVs (Co-operative Ventures) where I may have any influence. As indicated last week, I'll be promoting NCD (Natural Church Development) as a useful, tried, tested, and proven tool for promoting congregational health and life.

NCD has been around almost 30 years.

NCD is not a programme. It starts with a simple premise – that healthy organisms tend to grow – 'all by themselves' (Mk 4:28). It is more focussed on Church health than church growth. It doesn't tell you what to do in your context, and isn't captive to a particular brand of theology or spirituality.

NCD springs out of significant statistical research base. Over 70,000 congregations world-wide have been surveyed and continue to add to a pool of validating data. These churches cover the whole range of theological differences – from Pentecostal/Charismatic to Liberal/Progressive.

NCD identifies eight characteristics of healthy churches as:

1. Empowering Leadership
2. Gift-based Ministry
3. Passionate Spirituality
4. Effective Structures
5. Inspiring Worship Services
6. Holistic Small Groups
7. Need-oriented Evangelism
8. Loving Relationships.

The base NCD tool is a survey which identifies the relative strengths and weaknesses a congregation has. In NCD terms, the area of greatest weakness is the 'limiting factor'. It invites you to give this area your focussed attention. The survey doesn't tell you what to do – it simply points you where to look.

The initial survey costs \$435. If I can get 10 congregations signed up, we can get it discounted to \$350 each. The general rule is that 30 people, representing the breadth and diversity of the congregation, are invited to complete the survey. If your congregation doesn't have 30 people, invite all who are able to complete it.

You may have noticed that I have referred to 'congregation', not 'parish'. This recognises that it is the congregation that is the basis of mission. Each is discrete, and unlike any other. Each congregation has its own mission – separate from a parish which may include a number of congregations.

NCD is first and foremost a diagnostic tool pointed razor sharp at definable measures of what constitutes a healthy church. As I said, it doesn't tell you what to do – that's for you to decide. It does tell you what areas of unhealth you could profitably look at. The evidence is that those churches that consistently respond to the insights gained become healthier, and, almost inevitably, will grow.

Interested? Want to know more? Drop me a line yomyom@xtra.co.nz or give me a call 027 559 9042.

Homilies & Preaching Resources

My response to the lectionary for the 17th of August focusses on the Gospel reading of Luke 12 vs 49-56. Jesus is inviting his followers to a simpler lifestyle, in a state of readiness. The reflection is titled 'Discerning the Seasons of the Heart' and can be engaged with here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2B8-mw_prk

Trevor Hoggard is currently on long leave, so we won't be seeing him again until September.

Gospel Conversations - out of the Dunedin Anglican Diocese. They host a conversation of 4 Theologians / Practitioners around the Gospel lectionary text for the coming Sunday. The site with all its options can be accessed here: <https://www.calledsouth.org.nz/gospel-conversations/> . The reflection for this coming Sunday of the 17th of August also focusses on the lectionary Gospel of Luke 12 vs 49-56. The discussion can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-9JKB3XXu8>

Again, it will help broaden all our reach if you '**subscribe**' and '**like**'.

Once again, use the videos as you will.

Finally.

As always, if you find you'd prefer not to receive this weekly newsletter, please let me know and your address will be removed.

Ngā manaakitanga

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