

Defining a Healthy Church Resource

Preamble:

CCMBC's mission/vision is **“to cultivate a community and culture of healthy disciple-making churches and ministries, faithfully joining Jesus in his mission.”** We will not know whether we are moving closer to this mission/vision unless we are able to describe what we mean by “healthy disciple-making churches” that are “faithfully joining Jesus in his mission.” We are hoping that this discussion piece may assist local MB churches as they reflect on what being healthy looks like, as they reflect on what steps can be taken to move in the direction of greater health, and as they reflect on how to measure the growth (or the loss) of health over time. (Note: only one section presently includes metrics for measuring health. We invite you to fill in the remaining boxes with suggestions about the best way to measure these other components of health.) While the following document describes many church activities that (hopefully) are linked to church health, churches are not simply places of “doing” but of “being.” This document is not intended to create discouragement or a wave of new “programs.” May the Holy Spirit provide us with joy, patience, and grace (but also faithfulness and power) as we seek to be a family of healthy churches participating in God's big mission in the world! We offer this to each local church and look forward to hearing back about your reflections, responses, and suggestions.

The CCMBC National Faith & Life Team (Send feedback to listeningwell@mbchurches.ca)

Core Theological Convictions about Church Health for local MB Churches

*A Healthy Disciple-making Church in the MB family will pursue deliberate efforts that **DECLARE and EMBODY** the world-changing truths that...*

- ***the resurrected and exalted Jesus is the earth's Redeemer and rightful King*** who out of sacrificial love is inviting all humans to forgiveness, salvation, Kingdom citizenship, character transformation, and new life in a local church community of worship, mutual love, service, and mission;
- ***the Triune God's Kingdom of love, joy, righteousness, goodness, and peace is present now and is growing—but it will only be fully present at Jesus' final return;***
- ***the Holy Spirit is indwelling, empowering, and calling the church together*** to be Jesus' community on earth—a people being transformed into the character of Jesus, and from that foundation, responsible to live out the values, priorities, and mission of God's Kingdom.

	For a local church, declaring and embodying these world-changing truths involves the following:	Health in this area can be measured by...
<p>1.</p>	<p>A healthy local church is to be a people who before all else love and worship the Triune God. (Note: love and worship are about all the actions that lead to and demonstrate our complete and unforced giving of ourselves to the Triune God.)</p>	<p>[What are some ways of observing an increase in the love and worship of the Triune God?]</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>A healthy local church highly values and promotes activities that lead to Christlike character development in all members of the church community (viz. leaders and congregation). This character growth is ultimately from the Holy Spirit and must be consistent with the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in love (as in <i>Agape/Hesed</i>) • Growth in joy • Growth in peace (as in <i>Eirene/Shalom</i>) • Growth in patience • Growth in kindness • Growth in goodness • Growth in faithfulness • Growth in gentleness • Growth in self-control 	<p>[What are some ways of observing the presence of these Christlike character qualities in both the leaders and the other community members?]</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>A healthy local church will encourage widespread familiarity with and embrace of God’s biblical story from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22 and the key biblical themes that are central in this biblical story (e.g., the Triune God’s character, community, creation, sin, the human person, salvation, redemption, people of God, Kingdom of God, gospel, holistic discipleship, peacemaking, and the ultimate restoration of all creation at the final return of Jesus).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do we see intentional and faithful biblical teaching across the spectrum of ages in the local church.2. Do we see congregants being familiar with both the large biblical story and the key biblical themes central to that story.3. Do we see congregants being familiar with how to study and understand the Bible (especially the way the Old and New Testaments fit together, the way Jesus is the centre point of the story, and the importance of reading the Bible together in a faithful community).4. Do we see congregational engagement with the Bible (e.g., devotional reading, personal and group study, interest in learning more, etc.).5. Do we see practical obedience and life-change that results from this biblical teaching and engagement.
<p>4.</p>	<p>A healthy local church will seek a growing understanding and unity (“be like-minded” cf. 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:2) around its core theological, ethical, and missional convictions. (For churches in the MB family, this means growing understanding and unity around the core convictions articulated in all 18 articles of the MB Confession of Faith.)</p>	<p>[What are some ways to observe understanding and unity around core theological, ethical, and missional convictions?]</p>

5.	A healthy local church, as the body of Christ, will... <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gather together regularly• Worship God faithfully• Pray continually• Teach biblically• Love each other sacrificially• Give generously• Bear witness/evangelize joyfully• Baptise joyfully• Celebrate communion consistently• Disciple intentionally• Serve their community compassionately• Discern God’s will communally• Fellowship together honestly• Steward creation thankfully• Admonish each other lovingly• Care deeply• Forgive each other graciously• Submit to each other mutually• Grieve with others compassionately• Make peace non-violently• Raise up new leaders continually	[You may want to select what you see as the 7 or 10 most significant activities from this list for your local church in its growth toward increasing health—and then discern how that growth could be observed.]
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<p>6.</p>	<p>A healthy church will live out missional faithfulness to both the Great Commission (“make disciples of all nations”) and the Great Commandment (“Love the Lord your God...and love your neighbour”) by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging actions that the Holy Spirit can use so that individuals from all nations, ethnic, and economic groups become aware of and respond to Jesus’ gospel invitation to salvation, transformational discipleship, and full inclusion in his Kingdom family. • encouraging actions that the Holy Spirit can use so that all disciples of Jesus in the church family increasingly become true worshippers of God in all of life. • encouraging actions that the Holy Spirit can use so that all disciples of Jesus in the church family increasingly participate in the life priorities of Jesus (e.g., worship, prayer, community, acts of compassion, service, works of justice, mission, etc.). 	<p>[What are ways to observe increasing faithfulness in these areas?]</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>A healthy church will create and live in accordance with structures and procedures that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect the vulnerable within the church family, especially children and youth. • honour confidentiality within the church family as much as possible • encourage wise discernment and transitional procedures for leadership roles (paid and unpaid) • [Add others that you believe are essential to church health] • 	<p>[What are ways to observe growth in this kind of organizational health?]</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>What would you add here that is critical to defining a healthy church?</p>	