

St Thomas Third NCD Survey Results

In June of 2014, we at St Thomas completed our Third NCD Survey. Its results showed little significant change from those of our first two Surveys. This is good news; it shows that our St Thomas ministry profile is stable, both in how we value our ministries, and how we conduct them. Our parish 'DNA' is steady and clearly identifiable. While individual Quality Characteristics' relative strength has changed slightly, their overall pattern remains much the same. Our NCD Committee is reviewing these results and will be identifying how to use them to strengthen our parish ministries.

NCD Quality Characteristic 1: Empowering Leadership

Our NCD survey results show that at St Thomas, Empowering Leadership continues to be one of our greatest strengths. We believe that in general our leaders demonstrate the following characteristics:

- They enjoy their ministry in our church, and are good at explaining things.
- They prefer to collaborate with others rather than doing the work themselves
- They seek to remove barriers that limit the ministry of others, though they also hold parish members accountable for meeting the commitments they make.
- They receive outside help through mentors, consultants, etc., on how to develop our church

We also observe that at St Thomas, many people have an opportunity to participate in our worship services. We must nevertheless continue to pay attention to those beyond our church who are unfamiliar with Christian teachings, and we must ensure that our clergy do not become overworked.

NCD Quality Characteristic 2: Gift-Based Ministry

Our Third Survey identified Gift-based Ministry as our greatest parish strength. In particular:

- We feel very strongly that our work for the church matches our gifts.
- We strongly feel that we contribute to building our church, and understand the value of our work to the church.
- We enjoy the tasks we do at the church, and believe they stretch our faith.
- We benefit from working on teams.
- We feel we are prepared for our ministries and that the church supports us in our work.

NCD Quality Characteristic 3: Passionate Spirituality

This is one of the quality characteristics that has given us greatest difficulty at St Thomas. Although we live out our faith, we are not accustomed to verbalizing it. The NCD survey uses terms which we tend to find unfamiliar, and our responses therefore reflect some reticence in how we publicly present our faith. This has led us, in the NCD survey, to register lower strength on this characteristic, which may understate the actual level of our enthusiasm.

Responding to the NCD questions, we report that:

- We do not always share with others when we feel we have received something from God.
- Relatively few of us rely on the Bible as a guide in everyday life, or enjoy reading the Bible on our own.

There is also room for growth in the extent to which:

- We are enthusiastic about our church, or view our leaders as spiritual examples.
- We see faith as a transforming influence in our lives.
- We experience God's work in our lives, or find times of prayer an inspiring experience.
- We believe that God will work even more powerfully in our church in future.

There is room for discussion about whether these NCD questions, phrased as they are, allow us to accurately demonstrate the depth of our spirituality. This characteristic remains a challenge for us.

NCD Quality Characteristic 4: Effective Structures

Our Third Survey confirms that Effective Structures remain one of our greatest parish strengths.

- We understand the goals we are working towards as a church, and how the various parts of the church work together. We also believe that our organizational structure promotes our church life.
- We feel that our leaders actively support church development, meet regularly for planning, and mentor others.
- As volunteers we are trained frequently and our contributions to church life are reviewed regularly.

NCD Quality Characteristic 5: Inspiring Worship Service

Our NCD survey results suggest that, though this is far from a weak point, there may be some room for growth in some aspects of our services. Our responses to the NCD Surveys show that:

- We look forward to worship, and can easily explain why we attend worship services;
- We feel that worship has a positive influence on us;
- We do report, however, that we can get bored during services, and that there is perhaps some room for growth in our sermons
- Our services could also improve in how they attract visitors.

NCD Quality Characteristic 6: Holistic Small Groups

Our St Thomas small groups, committees, and gatherings are a solid, although not outstanding, feature of our parish ministry. Our NCD survey responses show that:

- To a very great extent, we feel that our small groups easily integrate newcomers
- We feel at home in our small groups and feel that they spend lots of time on things that are important to us;
- While we trust each other, we may still be somewhat reluctant to discuss personal problems with our small groups, and are less sure that other members will pray for us if we need it.

NCD Quality Characteristic 7: Need-Oriented Evangelism

According to our NCD survey results, this is one of the weaker features of our parish ministry, although this may in part reflect our discomfort with the 'evangelical' language used in the survey questions. These often refer to how we reach out to 'our friends who do not yet know Jesus Christ'. We would prefer to talk in terms of 'demonstrating our faith to the wider community'.

Our Survey shows a breadth of responses:

- We are very strong in our traditional outreach, and try very hard to help those in need. (Through ministries such as Messy Church, Chat & Chew, and Food Facts and Fun.)
- We feel strongly that our church leaders support us in our 'evangelistic endeavours'.
- We feel that we do an average job of approaching new Christians and new people and helping them find friends quickly.
- We do a less satisfactory job in praying for, and deepening our relationships with, 'people who do not yet know Jesus Christ'

We may want to pay greater attention to how we demonstrate this characteristic.

NCD Quality Characteristic 8: Loving Relationships

Our NCD survey shows that St Thomas is a loving, supportive place. In particular:

- Our leaders praise and acknowledge volunteers, and the church atmosphere is strongly influenced by praise and compliments. There is a lot of joy and laughter at St Thomas.
- Church leaders show concern for individuals' personal problems.
- We feel we can rely on one another, and when someone does a good job, we tell them.

Our supportive character, however, is moderated somewhat by a sense of reserve. Thus:

- We report that we find it difficult to tell others about our feelings, and we feel it is difficult in the church to talk to others about personal problems.
- We don't tend to share with others about our spiritual journey.

For further information, contact Derwyn Sangster, Chair, St Thomas NCD Committee