

The Organisational Dynamics of Healthy Church Communities

- Health is systemic – it is about how people, processes, and resources function together in a locality for the shared purpose of being God’s people and extending God’s kingdom.
- Healthy churches have a 1) clear sense of spiritual identity (being the people / the family of God) at the same time as also having a clear sense that they are 2) a well organised community of people in a particular social environment, location and time.
- Health is dynamic. Healthy churches do not stay the same; they grow, change, mature and develop. They also need regular self-evaluation, reflection and renewal.
- A lack of health can have a wide variety of both spiritual and organisational causes and require some careful reflection and assessment before any consultation or change process is undertaken.

Six Domains of Healthy Churches as Spiritual Communities

- **Worship**
While the expression of worship may differ significantly between church communities, all healthy churches give a central place to uplifting worship of God. Again, while the specific role of the sacraments may differ between churches, healthy churches recognise worship as both offering response to God’s grace and also receiving grace from God.
- **Prayer**
Healthy churches are praying communities, expressing faith and dependence on God through personal and collective supplication and petition.
- **Discipleship (Teaching)**
A key indicator of health is intentional discipleship formation and the growth of individuals and the church community through Biblical teaching.
- **Body life, fellowship and care**
Healthy churches enable the spiritual gifts given to all members of a local church body to function effectively.
- **Evangelism**
As bearers of the ‘gospel’, healthy churches are committed to meaningfully communicating the ‘good news’ within their own social context.
- **Service**
Healthy Christian churches bear witness to the love of God for all people through the way they engage in service to others especially the poor and marginalised.

Eight Attributes of Healthy Churches as Organisations

- **Vision and Values**
Healthy churches have a clearly articulated and shared sense of purpose, vision, and direction – “Who we are seeking to be as God’s people” and “what we believe God is asking of us together in this locality”. They also have a sense of shared values (or a culture) – “How we go about this together with God”.

- **Spiritual Leadership**
Functional spiritual leadership which enables the church to move towards its vision at both the governance level and the ministry leadership level.
- **Missional Focus**
A church which maintains an 'outward' focus and an 'open' sense of community. Healthy churches consistently reach out beyond their own natural boundaries and are welcoming to those who are drawn to join the community.
- **Participatory Processes**
Healthy churches have careful group processes including communication, conflict resolution and decision making. They are committed to empowering members to be active group participants.
- **Equipping and empowering members**
Effective churches are also committed to training and growing church members to enable their ministry to others both inside and outside the church. This includes discipleship, teaching, mentoring and commissioning.
- **Trust, Love and Encouragement**
Healthy churches are communities of love, support and encouragement. In a healthy community people genuinely care for one another and are intentional in their encouragement. Healthy churches are high trust environments.
- **Networking and partnering**
Healthy church organisations seek opportunities to co-operate with and to work alongside other groups and individuals for the sake of God's kingdom. This often includes a range of denominational, mission and community groups.
- **Evaluation and Renewal**
Healthy church communities regularly stop and take the time to reflect, to evaluate and to seek spiritual renewal in each of the areas above.

*Adapted from a wide range of sources
Summary by Tim Dyer, The Johnmark Extension 2019*