



Orthodox Natural Church Development



**An Introduction for Orthodox Parishes &
Church Health Teams (CHTs)**



Acknowledgments

Grateful appreciation goes out to:

Christian Schwarz, David Wetzler, and Ian Campbell

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Orthodox Natural Church Development.

The journey continues to be extraordinary, and the potential unbelievable.

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Glory to God for all things!



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Welcome!

Welcome to this introductory booklet on Orthodox Natural Church Development, - or just simply NCD. We know NCD will stimulate your thinking about church health and growth in new ways, sharpen your focus on the real growth issues in your church, and increase the fruitfulness of your parish and her ministries.

The booklet provides you with basic information about NCD and how it assists you to identify and address the specific issues you and your church are facing now and into the future. On the following pages you will find information about:

- the basic concepts of NCD
- the process of implementing NCD
- the commitment required to gain the most value from NCD
- the benefits of engaging; and
- the steps to commencing the process by getting your first NCD Survey completed.

NCD continues to grow after almost twenty years of engagement by churches internationally. Nearly 70,000 Surveys have now been done internationally, 50,000 of those right here in the U.S. The number of Orthodox parishes utilizing the survey is growing: as of 2010, over 20 parishes have taken the Survey at least once, and several are in or are entering a second or subsequent cycle. An increasing number of parish clergy and leaders now find it an indispensable combination of growth principles, process and tools for ensuring their churches remain on the path to healthy growth. We look forward to partnering with you as you join them.

May God give you courage, insight and blessing as you partner with Him in the exciting journey ahead.

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What is Natural Church Development?

A different way of thinking about growth

Natural Church Development (NCD) is a **paradigm** – a way of thinking about church growth. Growth should be about quality (health) and not just quantity (numbers). In fact NCD suggests that quality should take priority over quantity in church growth thinking.

At the heart of the paradigm is the Scriptural picture of the church as a living organism, not just an organisation (albeit a spiritual one). Looking at the church "organically" gives us a different perspective on what "growth" means. The growth of organisms focuses on their health, their capacity to reproduce, and how the individual 'body' parts interact. They are grown, not built. They are nurtured, not assembled.

The NCD paradigm says that if church growth is about growing an organism, the *health* (quality) of the organism will have a direct impact on its size (quantity). If a church becomes increasingly healthy over time, it is more likely and better able to reproduce disciples, ministries and eventually itself.

How many times have church leaders counted the numbers of people in Sunday services but really have no true sense whether the members of the church community are growing to greater spiritual maturity and contributing all they can to Kingdom growth? Is size really a true measure of health?

The NCD paradigm helps you think about growing your church as a healthy living organism.

A long term strategic process

Natural Church Development is also a long term strategic **process** for progressively improving a church's health. It is a process of continual improvement, not a program which guarantees "a healthy church" if implemented to the letter. Growing a church, like growing a plant, requires a long term commitment which is intentional and consistently addressing the most critical issues facing the church at each stage of growth.

At the heart of the NCD process is a sophisticated diagnostic tool, the NCD Survey. It is based on the only comprehensive international research ever done into what causes churches to grow or decline. The NCD Survey complies with the highest international statistical standards for validity and reliability.

Surveys are done cyclically (about every 18 months), offering an accurate up-to-date "snapshot" of your church's health. Each Survey enables the church leadership to see the current state of health, how the church's health has changed over the previous year, and what areas need greatest attention over the coming year.

Put several "snapshots" together and you have a motion picture of the life of your church. This reveals longer term trends, enabling you to identify and address the most significant issues impacting long term health and growth. As one leader so eloquently put it, "It gives every church leader the clear view of their church from 40,000 feet that they need when so much time is spent in the day-to-day."



Why parish clergy & leaders find NCD helpful

Natural Church Development liberates leaders wrestling with growth issues:

- It reminds them that God brings the growth and their role is to partner with Him, not try to generate the growth themselves.
- It offers universal growth principles that apply in all churches everywhere and at all times.
- It provides regular accurate "snapshots" of a church's health, keeping the leadership focused on the most important issues to achieve long term sustainable growth.
- It outlines a process of continuous improvement through the NCD Cycle
- It helps leaders focus on essential growth values.
- It provides concrete input for developing or refining vision.
- It helps maximize the effective use of limited time, energy and resources.
- It confirms long-held beliefs. The following comment is common: "Christian Schwarz affirms through the international research what I have been thinking for a long time, but until now nobody has done the research."

What NCD is not

- NCD is **not** a prescriptive "silver bullet" program guaranteeing church growth.
- NCD is **not** a substitute for parish leadership motivated to achieve healthy growth.
- NCD is **not** a substitute for the unique vision that God has for each church. Every parish leader must seek the Lord for that vision. NCD helps clarify, stimulate and enable that vision.
- NCD is **not** a short term solution. Deciding to "try NCD this year" will miss the riches of exploring the paradigm....and the benefits.
- NCD is **not** a "complete package." The NCD paradigm is dynamic, and understanding continues to grow as the international NCD community makes new discoveries in applying the principles.



Thinking growth.... naturally

God's principles for growing living organisms

Holy Scripture invites us to consider the principles by which God sustains and grows living things in the world He has created. These principles are used by God to grow His Kingdom as well.

Holy Scripture teaches that the local church is also a living organism which God wants to grow – the Body of Christ. The local church shares similarities with other organisms God has created and sustains. Its potential for growth lies in its health, not its size.

NCD has demonstrated decisively through comprehensive international research that healthy growing churches are more successful in releasing the potential for healthy growth because they apply these natural principles and treat the church more as a living organism to be grown rather than an organization to be built.

A fundamental part of the NCD paradigm is learning to see the church as a living organism whose growth can be stimulated by understanding and applying these principles.

Partnering with God to stimulate healthy growth

Jesus gives a picture of the partnership God expects to have with His people in growing the Kingdom. In the Parable of the Growing Seed, Jesus said:

*"This is what the Kingdom of God is like. A farmer scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know why. **All by itself** the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."* (Mark 4:26-29)

Jesus points to Kingdom growth as a cooperative effort:

- The farmer creates an environment which maximizes the potential for new life and growth by consistently removing the obstacles to healthy growth,
- But God alone brings that life and growth (which appears to happen "all by itself" to the farmer)

The role of God's people, and their leaders in particular, is similar to that of the farmer. They cannot give life and produce growth; only God can do that. All they can do is maximize the potential for growth. This is done by a continual process of identifying the barriers which impede growth within the life of the church and removing them. In this way the potential for 'all by itself' growth is constantly maximized.



Quality as the foundation for quantity

To think of the local church as a living organism is to acknowledge that **quality** (health) is just as important to church growth as **quantity** (attendance). In fact, quality is the essential foundation for quantity.

The health of any living organism directly impacts its capacity to grow and reproduce. The groundbreaking international research by the Institute for Natural Church Development International has shown a clear correlation between quality and quantity: **churches that continue to maintain focus on improving their health are more likely to grow numerically and reproduce ministries**. Likewise, churches failing to heed the "health warning" are much more likely to be decline or making decisions that will lead to future decline. It is therefore most unwise for church leaders to measure ministry success largely in terms of quantity.

Natural Church Development
helps leaders identify and address the
unique health (quality) issues facing their church

Not just any growth but 'all by itself' growth

It is important to recognize that Jesus speaks of 'all by itself' growth. This is not growth brought about principally by continually offering a diet of new programs. It comes by progressively understanding the dynamics of the church as a living, growing organism and continually working hard to identify and remove the barriers to its life and growth. This is what the farmer does in raising a successful crop.

For many parish leaders who are used to setting the course of the church, taking their fellow parishioners with them and praying for God's blessings on the plans that have been developed, this may not be an easy shift in thinking. Many leaders see their parish predominantly as a (spiritual) organization to be built rather than an organism to be grown. It is difficult to contemplate leading a parish where 'all by itself' growth is the norm – where God's Spirit is constantly at work among His people without first seeking the blessing of the pastoral team.

Yet this is the essence of the Natural Church Development paradigm. It is a process of coming to understand how God grows healthy organisms – of which the parish is one – and then cooperating with Him by doing what is necessary to remove the barriers to 'all by itself' growth.

Natural Church Development
helps leaders work at creating an environment which
maximizes the church's 'all by itself' growth potential

The origins of Natural Church Development

Comprehensive worldwide research

The Institute for Natural Church Development International, based in Germany under the leadership of Christian A. Schwarz, undertook worldwide research in the early 1990s.

1000 churches in 32 countries were surveyed to determine if there were principles producing healthy church growth independent of

- denomination or theology
- country or culture
- leadership style
- size
- ministry model

The key question was: "**What church growth principles are true, regardless of culture and theological persuasion?**"

As of the beginning of 2011, nearly 70,000 Surveys have now been completed worldwide, confirming the reliability and accuracy of the original research and that there are indeed universal God-given principles that can be applied to the unique issues in every local church.

The quality characteristics: a framework for healthy growth

The research revealed a framework of **eight quality characteristics** that were critical components of the life of healthy, growing churches. All were present and none could be missing. They were:

- **Empowering** Leadership
- **Gift-based** Ministry
- **Passionate** Spirituality
- **Effective (Functional)** Structures
- **Inspiring** Worship Service
- **Holistic** Small Groups
- **Need-oriented** Evangelism
- **Loving** Relationships

The most significant finding was that the vital ingredient of each quality characteristic was the **adjective**. For instance, take leadership. It was not visionary leadership, or pastoral leadership, or decisive leadership which was the chief contributor to long term healthy growth but *empowering* leadership. That is, the principal contributor to healthy growth by leadership was the degree to which leaders empowered their people to keep growing toward greater spiritual maturity and contributing to Kingdom growth. The same emphasis applies for the other seven quality characteristics.



The six growth forces: putting the “natural” into church development

NCD has shown that what distinguishes healthy growing churches from others is not just high quality in the eight areas, but their application of a **core of natural growth principles** to church life so that the church functions more like an organism than a spiritual organisation. Six growth forces were identified in the research:

- **Interdependence** – all parts of the church know the impact of what they do on other parts and ensure that such impact is always positive for the sake of long term growth
- **Multiplication** – every part of the church is looking to reproduce itself, including the church as a whole
- **Energy Transformation** – all the church’s energy and resources are continually assessed, harnessed and directed towards achieving its long term potential, eliminating wastage
- **Sustainability** – the church invests its resources in such a way that its various parts become self-sustaining, freeing up resources to be used elsewhere
- **Symbiosis** – diverse parts of the church are encouraged to work together in synergistic "win-win" relationships
- **Fruitfulness** – all areas of church life are regularly assessed to ensure they are continuing to contribute to the overall healthy growth of the church as an organism

The leaders of parishes that are healthy, or becoming increasingly healthy, may or may not be aware that these principles are at work in the life of their parish, they may simply be employing these principles intuitively. They may use other names for these principles, or not name them at all, but they are nonetheless employing them.

The higher the health of the parish, the greater the degree to which these principles are at work. This is encouraging for two reasons:

- 1). It shows that God is entirely consistent in the way He superintends His creation, enabling churches to grow as organisms in the same way as He brings about the growth of other organisms.
- 2). Identifying these principles makes it possible to understand and apply them as part of partnering with God to grow the church.

That such principles are thoroughly Scriptural should be easily seen. In some instances the teaching is direct, such as in John 15 where Jesus speaks about “fruitfulness.” In others we see the principles undergirding the message, such as “multiplication” in the Great Commission in Matthew 28.

For parish leadership, therefore, understanding and applying these principles consistently until they become a natural part of parish life is essential. They are a key to releasing 'all by itself' growth.

The NCD Survey

A regular accurate “snapshot” of your church’s health

The international research was used as a foundation for developing the NCD Survey which gives local churches an accurate annual profile of their health. The Survey is based on:

- An internationally-validated, user-friendly questionnaire completed by thirty (30) parishioners chosen according to specific criteria
- A computer software program arising out of the original research program; and
- A statistical standardization which measures the parish against other parishes in North America to provide objectivity.

In essence the Survey profile gives a rating for each quality characteristic, but it holds a wealth of information about:

- Relative strengths and weaknesses of the quality characteristics
- The potential interrelationships between various quality characteristics ("Why is Holistic Small Groups high but Loving Relationships low?")
- The trends of different quality characteristics from survey to survey; and
- Most importantly, the so-called "Minimum Factor", the principal focus for discussion, analysis, strategic planning and action (see below).

The Minimum Factor

The strategy to improve the health of the church is simplicity itself – work at improving the health of the quality characteristic that is least developed. Christian Schwarz calls this quality characteristic the *Minimum Factor*. Since all eight quality characteristics are essential to healthy growth, it makes sense to address the lowest characteristic, the part of the body making the least contribution to its overall health and growth. It is the most strategic use of energy and resources to maximize growth potential.

Taking action to address the Minimum Factor brings changes to the parish’s health. The succeeding Survey reveals the extent of such change on all eight quality characteristics, that is, the overall health of the parish). The new Minimum Factor reflects the area most needing attention at the new level of health. And so it goes with each successive Survey. This ensures leaders stay focused on what is most important for long term healthy growth.

More specifically, this strategy is about identifying the barriers hindering "all by itself" growth for that Minimum Factor and then taking steps to remove them, just as the farmer does in the Parable of the Growing Seed. This approach acknowledges that each church is a unique organism with a unique growth path and a unique set of emerging barriers as it grows, each requiring a unique and timely response.

Focusing continuously on successive Minimum Factors as they emerge with each new Survey does not mean an abandonment of the church’s strengths. On the contrary, NCD recognizes the vital importance of engaging the church’s strengths to help address areas of weakness.

Of Cycles and Spirals

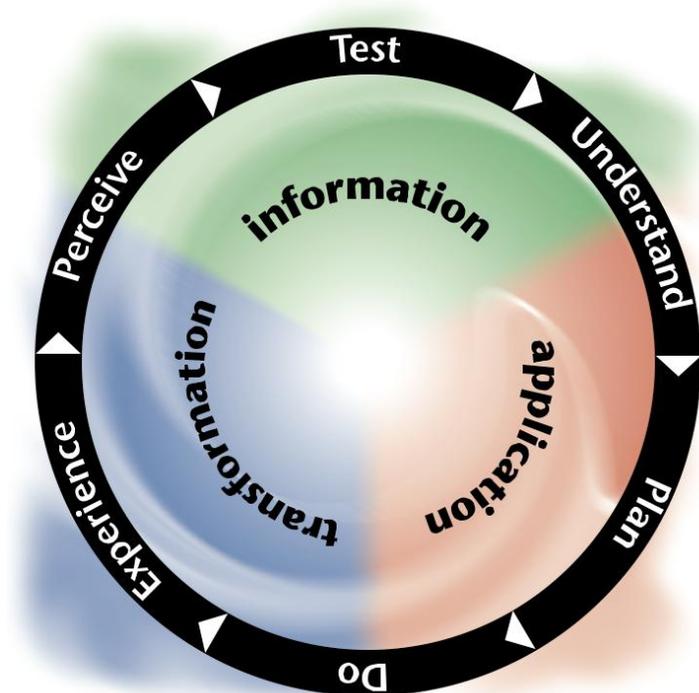
Linear versus cyclical thinking

So much of what we do in the Western world, and therefore what we find influencing the Orthodox Church, is to think in linear ways. Everyone knows the standard approach to planning: know where you are, decide where you want to be, then put a plan in place to get there. It's always about getting from A to B. But is it?

The world that God created naturally operates in cycles. It is the natural order of all growing things and we acknowledge this without even thinking twice about it. The cycle of life is something we take for granted. It is certainly reflected in the Orthodox Church's daily, weekly, and annual liturgical cycles.

Cycles are part of the everyday life of parishes, and the church year is but one example. The issue is that very few parish leaders pursue the growth of their church in a systematic cyclical way. Yet adopting a cyclical approach is the most effective way to address issues of life, health and growth. Experience has shown that farmers and others whose lives are largely influenced by the forces of nature intuitively understand the power of the cyclical approach to life whereas those from the city find it harder to grasp.

The NCD Cycle



The NCD Cycle is the foundational tool for undertaking the NCD process of addressing each Minimum Factor as it arises. It is more fully explained in other resources; however the following can be said by way of introduction:

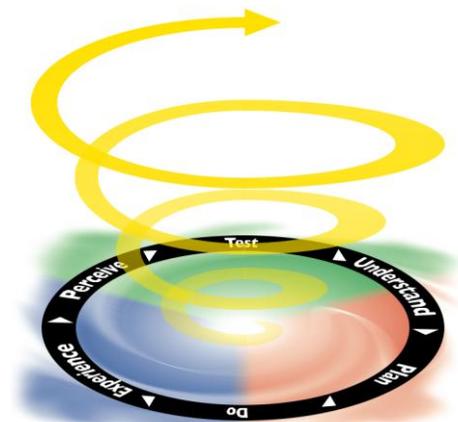
- It grounds the process of growing a parish in the essential nature of God who reveals Himself to us in Trinity (represented in various NCD publications by the three colors)
- It encourages the pursuit of depth in the partnership with God in growing His Kingdom
- It challenges leaders to pursue “increasing fruitfulness” in their ministry (see below)
- It binds the processes to Scripture by laying a biblical foundation for each cycle phase
- It raises the bar for parish activity by settling for nothing less than ongoing transformation – parish “theosis,” if you will
- It offers the possibility of practical application to every part of, and person in, parish life.

The most natural starting point for using the Cycle is to see the annual NCD Survey as the major part of the “Planning” or Test phase. This helps match the cycle to the annual parish calendar, with its normal processes of review, visioning, programs, holy days, etc. It is not hard to introduce. Every church leader is *already* using the Cycle phases to some degree: perceiving how church life is going, testing those perceptions, developing greater understanding, planning, taking action, and seeing the resultant impact on the experiences in the church. Consistently working through the Cycle brings greater balance to the process which contributes to healthier outcomes.

Turning the cycle into a spiral

No parish, whether it works consistently on addressing current health issues or not, ends up in the same place at the beginning of each year. All activity in parish life is contributing in some way to the long term healthy growth of the church, or it is not. As such, it could be said that there is no such thing as a “plateau” – right now seeds are being planted in your church which will deliver future fruitfulness or fruitlessness, growth or decline, health or sickness. It is unwise to assume that decisions, actions and activity taken to address issues in the past will produce the same results in future, even if applied to what appear to be the same issues. In fact an entirely different response might be required.

This reality is represented by the NCD Spiral, which is in effect a three dimensional view of the Cycle.





In one sense, the NCD Spiral represents the changing health of every parish. While a church may “begin again” each year, it will always begin from a new place on the spiral, either more healthy (up the spiral) or less healthy (down the spiral).

More specifically, the spiral represents the fact that every time a parish undertakes the Cycle, each of the phases will differ from their counterpart in the previous Cycle because the church’s health has changed, bringing new issues and dynamics. If the church is increasing in health, perceptions of where God is at work are sharper, the testing process more focused, understanding greater, planning tighter, actions more effective – all contributing to new experiences of God at work.

At its heart, the spiral is about a practical ongoing process that progressively increases the Kingdom fruitfulness of everyone in church life, especially leaders.

A challenge to become increasingly fruitful

Engaging with NCD principles and processes highlights the fact that continuously growing the local parish to greater health is serious business, particularly for its leaders. Fortunately, God’s call is not first to “performance” but to “partnership.” And it is the depth of that partnership which determines a leader’s fruitfulness. That is why NCD is so strongly focused on growing that partnership in the practical processes of everyday parish life.

Experience has taught us over the years that many leaders face one or more of the following hurdles when approaching NCD for the first time:

- They are not sure they want to know the state of their church’s health, or believe they already do
- They confuse activity with outcomes
- They prefer to see their own spiritual growth as separate from that of their church
- They are satisfied measuring “success” in terms of quantity (numbers of people, financial giving, amount of activity) not quality (spiritual health and growth)
- They tend to focus on short-term programs rather than a long-term process

All of these issues have a bearing on fruitfulness. In John 15, Jesus calls on us to contemplate seriously what it means to be fruitful. He poses the following challenges:

- We are all called to lead fruitful lives (v15:16a)
- We are to bear lasting fruit, that is, fruit bearing long term results for the Kingdom (v15:16b)
- We should aim for more fruit rather than less because it brings glory to God (v15:8)
- We need to know in very concrete terms if we are bearing fruit because fruitlessness is not an acceptable option (v15:2a, 6)
- We must understand that in partnering with God, He desires to help us, expecting us to become increasingly fruitful as time passes (v15:2b). This is not achieved without effort on our part

There is a strong growth dynamic evident in this passage, using the organic metaphor of the Gardener, the Vine and the branches. Ongoing healthy growth resulting in increasing fruitfulness is expected. It challenges all who are called to partner with God in leading their church to grow.

NCD offers the principles and processes which encourage increasing fruitfulness in practical ways.

Starting the NCD process

Read the foundational resources

You have already commenced the NCD process by beginning to think through the issues raised in this booklet; the next step is to read the foundational NCD resources. There are many NCD resources but we would recommend you begin with the following:

Initial Introduction: *The ABCs of Natural Church Development* – this small booklet of 28 pages is ideal for introducing some of the main concepts to your parish. It asks why church growth can seem so hard, then looks at the eight quality characteristics, the minimum factor approach, and “all by itself” growth. It’s a fun read, and entirely Orthodox in view and approach.

Initial Introduction: *Color Your World with Natural Church Development* – published in 2005, this book explains the quality characteristics, growth forces, Trinitarian Compass, some of the NCD tools including the NCD Survey, and the impact of NCD on churches internationally over the past ten years. (The NCD Cycle featured in the book is the 1st generation Cycle, since upgraded to the Cycle featured in this booklet and in the 2006 edition of the book *Natural Church Development*, see below).

Church Health Team: *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* – the original NCD “textbook,” originally published in 1996 with a new edition released in 2006. Although it covers some of the basic material in *Color Your World*, there are significant additions: information about the original international research and its findings; an overview of the “twin pole” paradigm that lies at the heart of our partnership with God; and an outline of the 2nd generation NCD Cycle.

You can read more about these resources at our website: www.oncd.us (under development)

When to do your first NCD Survey

There are no pre-conditions to doing a Survey. Every church can get a “health check” and begin to work on the most important issues affecting its health whenever it chooses.

Having said that, experience suggests it is helpful to consider the following issues. They do not disqualify a church from doing a Survey. It is solely about timing and whether the leadership is able to devote sufficient attention to working consistently through the cycle process and address the issues in the Survey. You may wish to discuss them with your leadership before deciding finally when to do your first Survey.

- Is the parish currently launching significant new programs or building new facilities, activities which are consuming all available energy?
- Is the leadership at the point of seeking new vision or direction, or questioning the fruitfulness of current approaches?
- Is there a time of the year when doing a Survey naturally fits in? If, for example, you do your visioning and planning over the Summer vacation, you may want to do the Survey in the

March to May period, giving time to obtain the results and get parishioner feedback before everyone heads away. Alternatively, you may do the Survey in the Fall when people are fresh and enthusiastic and wanting to engage with the issues.

- Are you going through significant leadership changes, whether it be a new priest or new council members? You may wish to delay the Survey until the new leadership team is in place. (Many parishes find that once they have started the Cycle process, it helps to keep doing the Survey through times when there is even no priest because it provides continuity and keeps them focused on the key issues.)
- Are there any significant crises currently occupying the church's leadership? It may be wise to address these first as they often take a lot of time and energy.
- Does the leadership of the church understand that doing the NCD Survey is not a "one off" program but the start of a long term process of continuously addressing key health issues?
- And more importantly, is there some heart for doing what it takes to grow the church, because NCD will not "do the growing" for those who have no real interest or commitment?

The "mechanics" of doing the Survey

What do you need to do the Survey?

- Enough copies of *The ABCs of Natural Church Development* to ensure the people in your parish know something about NCD before the Survey process begins.
- The two questionnaires: the *Orthodox NCD Survey – Priest's Form* which collects basic information about your church, and the *Orthodox NCD Survey Form*, containing the main questionnaire.

How do you take it to your leadership?

NCD is best learned by the practicalities of working through the NCD Cycle over a given period (12-18 months), identifying and addressing the issues specific to your parish raised in the Survey results. It is inadvisable to try to begin with any more theory than just the basic concepts. So keep it simple. Here are some tips:

- Don't try to summarize everything you have read on NCD. Often it is enough to ensure that every leader involved in the decision making process has read the *ABCs* booklet.
- The most important message to convey is that NCD is a process not a program and one that requires ongoing commitment to address the issues that arise with each annual Survey.
- Revisit with them the reasons why you personally believe it is important to get an annual assessment of the parish's health.
- Stress that the NCD process takes the parish from where it is right now but adds the qualitative information that begins immediately to sharpen focus on the most important things. It is not a burden for leadership, but a release provided they are willing to address the issues it raises.
- Affirm that NCD has been tried and tested internationally for nearly twenty years. Refer people to the Orthodox NCD website if they want to go exploring for themselves.
- Direct any questions that you can't answer to us at frjonathan@hotmail.com.



How do you choose people to do the Survey?

The *Orthodox NCD Survey – Priest’s Form* is completed by the (senior, if more than one) parish priest. Other clergy, is assigned/attached, and if selected to participate, can use the form below.

The *Orthodox NCD Survey Form* is given to thirty people who meet all the following criteria:

- Committed to the life of the church, attending the parish’s liturgical cycle and participating in the parish’s sacramental life regularly
- Actively involved in ministry, preferably leading one or performing a regular task
- Member of one of the parish’s fellowship groups

If you have more than thirty people in your congregation, you select thirty people who fit all three criteria. Consider a broad range of people in the life of the church who fit the criteria.

Leaders of larger parishes sometimes ask if they can survey more than 30 people. It is possible, but the software randomly selects 30 because no more are required to produce a statistically-accurate result. We recommend leaders take the time to reduce their list to the 30 people fitting the criteria whose opinion they value most or those they consider to have the greatest influence on church life.

If you have a parish of less than 30 people, you survey *everyone* as long as they fit all three criteria.

How do you get the Survey forms completed?

Once you have decided begin the Survey process, contact Orthodox NCD at frjonathan@hotmail.com. We will then send you the Survey forms and instructions. Call a meeting of the people selected to complete the forms. At the meeting give a short introduction and explain how long it will take (which is usually about thirty minutes). Holding the meeting after a church service (Saturday evening Vespers, Sunday morning Divine Liturgy, etc.) seems to work well.

At the meeting, offer people a short explanation of the purpose of doing the Survey and why they were chosen. Hand out the questionnaires with a pen or pencil, go over the questionnaire instructions and let them begin. The fastest people take about 20 minutes and the slowest 40 minutes.

Once all the questionnaires are complete, mail them back in to Orthodox NCD; allow about a week for the surveys to be received and scored.

Caveat! Do *not* mail out questionnaires or allow people to take them home! Your workload will increase exponentially trying to get them back. It is also better that people offer their “gut” responses to the questions rather than spend a lot of time mulling over answers.

What do you get back?

Orthodox NCD provides a profile which rates the health of the church on the eight quality characteristics. The rating is calculated by taking the raw scores from the questionnaires and measuring them against a standardization calculated from over 50,000 Surveys conducted across the United States since 1995. This gives you a very accurate assessment of the church’s health with respect to other churches.



Optional – but recommended – Supplemental Reports

In 2004, the *Profile Plus* was introduced offering a question-by-question analysis of the results. Its value increases enormously as more surveys are done because it presents up to four sets of survey results on a single report. Changes in health from year to year can be tracked and matched against action taken to address specific health issues. Over time it also exposes long term trends, greatly enhancing the capacity to identify the deeper issues impeding healthy growth and make longer term decisions with confidence. Every parish in the ONCD process will now get this report as a matter of course. It is an indispensable tool for those who wish to see their church as an organic whole. (A sample Profile Plus from an actual church is available by visiting our website and requesting one). It is provided in digital – not printed – form.

Other reports and tools are in development and will be announced when released.

How long does it take to get the results?

In most instances, results are emailed back to you within a week.

How much does the Survey cost?

Currently the costs are as follows:

- 30 Surveys + Priest's Survey - \$175
- Profile Plus - \$75

It is inexpensive, effectively amounting to just a few dollars per week. The savings in time, energy and resources from being able to work consistently on the most important health issues facing the church far exceed the cost of the Survey.



The Survey process: A Quick Overview

1. Read the foundational resources.

- i. Go to www.oncd.us (under development) and click on the Resources tab. These resources are listed first.
- ii. Once you have reviewed the resources, email Orthodox NCD at frjonathan@hotmail.com to place your order.

2. Discuss NCD in overview with your leadership team.

Develop consensus and buy-in from leadership and ministry leaders.

3. Register for the Survey process.

- i. Contact us at frjonathan@hotmail.com requesting the NCD Survey pack.
- ii. You will be sent the *Orthodox NCD Survey – Orthodox Clergy Form*, and the *Orthodox NCD Survey – Lay Survey Forms* and instructions for completing the Survey in your church (unless this has been sent to you previously).
- iii. If so desired, order The Profile Plus report; otherwise, you will receive only the basic graph. You will be invoiced.

4. Select and invite Survey participants

- i. Use the instructions to select the Survey participants.
- ii. Write to those selected inviting them to meet after a church service to complete the Survey. You may wish to include a short explanation.

5. Prepare for the meeting.

- i. Prepare a short presentation to explain the purpose of the meeting (ten minutes maximum). Basing it on some of main points of the *ABCs of Natural Church Development* will suffice.
- ii. Review the instructions on the front of the *NCD Survey Form* so that you can take participants through it before they begin.

6. Hold the meeting and ensure all completed questionnaires are returned.

- i. Deliver the presentation: short and simple. Assure people of anonymity.
- ii. Hand out the *NCD Survey Form* and take people through the instructions on the front page.
- iii. Invite people to return the form and leave as soon as they have finished.

7. Mail the NCD Surveys back for scoring.

8. We will email you the results (and Profile Plus report, if ordered) within approximately two weeks.

If you have any questions about this process, please contact us at frjonathan@hotmail.com.



What happens after you get the results?

Work through the resources provided

A time of analysis and reflection now begins. The meaning of the scores, both on the survey and on the *Profile Plus* report, if ordered, will need to be reviewed, discussed, prayed over, and diagnosed by the parish.

With your results you will receive the *Profile Plus* (if you have ordered it and we thoroughly recommend you do). This contains instructions on how best to read the graphs. (See next section.)

On the Orthodox NCD website, www.oncd.us (under development), you will find further resources and tools to assist your parish in the further analysis and work needed to understand the survey results and plan and implement any necessary changes.

Get an initial debriefing of the results

If you are utilizing the services of an ONCD Certified Coach, especially if you are doing your first or second Surveys, it can be helpful to have your coach facilitate a results debriefing using the *Profile Plus*. Such debriefs can be done via teleconference in person. The purpose of the debrief is not to tell you what you need to act upon but help you to use *Profile Plus* effectively in the process of assessing strengths and weaknesses, diagnosing the issues which most need attention. The debriefing should take no longer than an hour, but may take longer depending on the interest and involvement of the parish team created and assigned to review the Surveys.

Contact us at Orthodox NCD to find out who may assist you. Such facilitation can be done separately from any planned or desired coaching.

Once you have the skills in interpreting *Profile Plus*, you may not require such debriefs after a third or subsequent Survey, though it will always help to gain the insights on your results from an ONCD Certified Coach who has worked with other parishes who are at a similar stage or further advanced in their NCD journey. Contact ONCD or visit the website to view the names and profile of coaches in the Orthodox NCD coaching network.

What about other resources?

The resources you have at this point are sufficient to get you engaging with the critical health issues in the context of the NCD Cycle. There are, of course, other resources – NCD-specific and others – that may be helpful in understanding your Minimum Factor or taking steps to address it.

The NCD resources we recommend specifically are on the Orthodox NCD website, www.oncd.us (under development).

This note about other resources comes with a couple of warnings:

- Over the past ten years many different resources have been written that have either been NCD-specific or contained elements of NCD within the context of other church growth concepts and systems. A lot of that material is still available on the internet. Much of it is out-of-date or based on a limited knowledge of the NCD paradigm. Be careful.
- Do not fall for the “program trap,” the decision to go and find a ready-made solution to raising your Minimum Factor. The most critical element of the NCD Cycle process is that you and your leadership work hard at using the Survey results to diagnose the specific (unique) health issues your church needs to be addressing over the next twelve months. If this is done with care and effort, quite often the desire and need to go and find a program some other church has developed disappears. If you do go in that direction, remember that it needs to be adapted to address the specific issues identified in your results.

The NCD International website also has some very helpful introductory material.

Go to www.ncd-international.org. You can sign up for the Institute's free online magazine *eNCDine* by clicking on the link to the NCD Portal site.

Ongoing Coaching support

Parishes can always benefit from the assistance of a coach in working through the results, developing and executing an action plan, and staying focused on implementing the NCD process over the long term. Orthodox NCD does offer the services of trained, experienced and certified coaches via our nationwide pan-Orthodox coaching network. Coaching costs vary according to the experience and competencies of the coach and are listed on the ONCD website. Please contact us for further details.

Orthodox NCD Coaches can:

- Conduct presentations in a parish-wide, deanery, or diocesan setting to introduce Orthodox NCD fundamentals and familiarize attendees with the concept of *Natural Church Development* (presentations take approximately 45 minutes and can also be offered as webinars)
- Train the parish Church Health Team (CHT) (1 full day, 6 hours, seminar format)
- Debrief the priest and CHT on the survey results (approximately 1-2 hours)
- Facilitate workshops designed to work through the survey analysis and come up with a plan to address necessary issues (1 full day, 5-6 hours, workshop format)
- Debrief the priest and CHT on the ONCD process at the conclusion of a cycle (usually after the end of a 12-18 month period)
- Offer training in any number of areas related to parish growth and revitalization (1-2 hour modules, workshop format)

ONCD will also be offering national and regional conferences on NCD themes and training beginning in 2011.

Orthodox NCD

Orthodox NCD was initiated in 2007 when Christian Schwarz, the founder and Natural Church Development and based in northern Germany, called Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff, an NCD Certified Coach who had been using NCD in Orthodox parishes since 2001 to discuss furthering NCD among the Orthodox parishes here in North America. That initial meeting led to the development of a form of NCD that was contextualized to produce both initial “parish-friendly” materials that could appropriately and adequately explain NCD to the average Orthodox parishioner as well as an Orthodox form of the NCD Survey. This is also now supported by Orthodox training materials and workshop facilitation materials utilized by the ONCD Coaching Network.

Orthodox NCD seeks to:

- Train and support priests, coaches and parish leaders;
- Develop additional local resources;
- Provide statistical information on NCD findings;
- Work with all Orthodox jurisdictions to effectively bring ONCD into any parish that wants or can use it;
- Liaise with the NCD International Institute in its ongoing research to take full advantage of the latest information and data.

As of 2010, over two dozen NCD Surveys have been done in Orthodox churches throughout North America in both the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and the Orthodox Church in America.

The Director of Orthodox NCD America is Archpriest Jonathan Ivanoff. Fr. Jonathan has been using NCD principles in parish work since 1992 and has been a coach and presenter for NCD since 2003 as well as a presenter for the Church Multiplication Training Center and OCA “Boot Camp” from 1998 to 2002, and a member of the OCA’s Department of Evangelization since 2003. He is also a CoachNet Certified Coach and a member of NCD International’s Advisory Board. Fr. Jonathan is a 1986 graduate of St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary and was ordained a priest in 1993.

Orthodox NCD is blessed to also have Frs. Sergius Halvorsen and James Kordaris integrally involved in the development and expansion of ONCD throughout North America. Both Frs. Sergius and James were involved and active in the initial partnering and training that occurred in the winter of 2008 that eventually led to the creation of the Orthodox tools and materials for NCD. Fr. Sergius, who also teaches theology at a seminary in Connecticut and is the Chairman of the Committee for Evangelization and Revitalization for the OCA Diocese of New England, has been instrumental in the development of quality presentational material, and Fr. James, as the Director of the Department of Outreach and Evangelism for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, has been a tireless advocate for the increasing use of Orthodox NCD tools throughout Greek Orthodox parishes in North America.

Questions

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at frjonathan@hotmail.com. Our website is www.oncd.us (under development).