

**FROM ASSESSMENT TO STRATEGIC VISION**

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We accept this thesis as conforming  
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## Abstract

This study asked, “How can strategic visioning towards growth be stimulated by organizational profiling?” The opportunity of this project was to implement a Natural Church Development (NCD) Assessment (Schwartz, 1998) at Bow Valley Christian Church (BVCC), and present the organizational profile created from the results of the assessment, focus group interviews, and field notes of the researcher to the staff and board in a strategic visioning session.

The literature shows widespread agreement regarding the importance of a common vision within an organization; the relationship between church health and church growth; and explains key terms and concepts as they relate to this study.

This action research project employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a NCD assessment, focus group interviews, and field notes of a participant observer. The study shows BVCC to be a healthy church with opportunities for improvement in three key areas.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
CHAPTER ONE – FOCUS AND FRAMING .....	1
Introduction .....	1
The Opportunity .....	1
Significance of the Opportunity .....	2
Systems Analysis of the Opportunity .....	3
Organizational Context .....	4
CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW .....	7
Topic One: Strategic Visioning .....	7
What is vision? .....	7
Why do we need a vision? .....	9
How should vision be communicated? .....	11
Is organizational vision static or dynamic? .....	12
Conclusion .....	12
Topic Two: Church Growth .....	13
The Church Growth Movement and the “Fuller Factor” .....	13
Natural Church Development .....	14
Sonlife and Growth by Discipleship .....	14
The Purpose-Driven Church .....	15
Journal and Magazine articles regarding church growth .....	16
Conclusion .....	16
Topic Three: Natural Church Development Methodology .....	17
Introduction to NCD .....	17
The Work of Christian Schwarz .....	18
Eight Quality Characteristics .....	19
The “Minimum Factor” Principle .....	21
CHAPTER THREE – CONDUCT OF RESEARCH REPORT .....	23
Research Approach .....	23
Research Methods and Tools .....	25
Natural Church Development Assessment .....	25
Focus Group / Purposive Sample Interview .....	26
Focus Group / Strategic Visioning Session .....	28
Participant Observer .....	28
Project Participants .....	29
Ethical Issues .....	31
Respect for Human Dignity .....	31
Respect for Free and Informed Consent .....	31
Respect for Vulnerable Persons .....	32
Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality .....	32
Respect for Justice and Inclusiveness .....	32
Balancing Harms and Benefits / Minimizing Harm / Maximizing Benefit .....	33
Study Conduct .....	33
CHAPTER FOUR – ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS AND	
CONCLUSIONS .....	36

Study Findings.....	36
Empowering Leadership .....	37
Gift-Oriented Ministry .....	38
Passionate Spirituality.....	39
Functional Structures .....	40
Inspiring Worship Service .....	41
Holistic Small Groups.....	42
Need-Oriented Evangelism.....	44
Loving Relationships .....	45
Study Conclusions.....	46
Matching of Gifts to Ministry.....	46
Friendliness, Inclusiveness, and Hospitality.....	47
Multiplication of Small Groups.....	48
Strengths to Capitalize On.....	48
Scope and Limitations of the Research .....	49
CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS .....	51
Study Recommendations.....	51
The Congregation.....	51
The Staff.....	52
The Board.....	53
The Community .....	53
The Curriculum (biblical principles) .....	54
Organizational Implementation .....	54
The Congregation.....	54
The Staff.....	54
The Board.....	55
The Community .....	55
The Curriculum.....	55
Implications of Ignoring Recommendations.....	55
Implications for Future Research .....	56
CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED.....	57
Research Project Lessons Learned .....	57
References.....	60
Appendix A .....	63
Appendix B.....	71
Appendix C.....	72
Appendix D .....	74

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Current Profile Graph 2005.....	37
Figure 2. Empowering Leadership Graph 2005.....	38
Figure 3. Gift-Oriented Ministry Graph 2005.....	39
Figure 4. Passionate Spirituality Graph 2005. ....	40
Figure 5. Functional Structures Graph 2005.....	41
Figure 6. Inspiring Worship Service Graph 2005.....	42
Figure 7. Holistic Small Groups Graph 2005. ....	44
Figure 8. Need-Oriented Evangelism Graph 2005. ....	45
Figure 9. Loving Relationships Graph 2005.....	46

## CHAPTER ONE – FOCUS AND FRAMING

### Introduction

Following seventeen years as a teacher and guidance counselor in public education, I currently serve as Pastor of Worship and Arts at Bow Valley Christian Church (BVCC) in Calgary, Alberta. The seeds of what would eventually turn into my major project were sown in Senior Pastor Rick Scruggs' office at BVCC in April 2004 when I asked him for suggestions regarding potential research projects I could work on that he felt would benefit our church. We generated several ideas that afternoon, as had been developed in conversations with other mentors in recent days. After much discussion and personal reflection, the project I decided on was the implementation of a "Natural Church Development (NCD) Assessment" (Schwartz, 1998), in order to create an organization profile that could be used for strategic visioning towards growth opportunities for BVCC. My main research question was, "How can strategic visioning towards growth be stimulated by organizational profiling?"

Guiding questions included:

- Is the church poised for growth?
- What are the organization's strengths and weaknesses?
- What factors are hindering the growth and effectiveness of the organization?
- What can we do to strengthen areas of perceived weakness?
- How can we focus resources on specific leverage points?

### The Opportunity

The research opportunity of this project was to implement a NCD assessment at Bow Valley Christian Church (BVCC), and present the results of this assessment and the

organizational profile created to the staff and board for use in strategic visioning. This project was a follow-up to an NCD assessment implemented at BVCC in 1999, which was used as the basis for much of the current vision of the church.

The assessment helped create an organizational profile, which focused on the eight characteristics of growing churches developed by Christian Schwarz (1998), whose initial research involved over 1000 churches spanning all five continents. In his introductory guide, *The ABC's of Natural Church Development*, Schwarz (1998) says, "Don't let it bother you that the names we selected to describe these principles sound relatively abstract: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships" (p. 9). His research identified these eight areas as the "eight quality characteristics of growing churches" (p. 9). I provide the reader with definitions of these terms and concepts in the literature review section of this paper.

This project provided an amazing growth opportunity for me, as I developed my leadership abilities by working at an organizational level with BVCC staff, board, and congregation. Throughout this project, I performed the role of an internal consultant, stretching me far beyond my normal roles and responsibilities.

### Significance of the Opportunity

When I began my position as Pastor of Worship & Arts at BVCC in August 2003 I was told the church had essentially "plateaued" in attendance. The five-year interval that passed since the original profile made a follow-up study such as this one timely and potentially a turning point and impetus for growth and positive change.



Approaching from the standpoint of my personal philosophy of servant leadership, I pursued this project primarily to benefit the church organization and the people I directly work with, and to provide myself with a learning and development opportunity. This project centered on benefit to the sponsoring organization. One of the personal benefits for me was that I could merge some of my responsibilities at the church with my action research project increasing the amount of time I could spend with the staff, board, and congregation. The strengthened relationships that resulted benefited both the church and me personally (win – win).

This project was essentially about leading an organization through positive organizational change. Without this project BVCC may have remained a relatively stagnated organization, falling short of its mission statement: “Making more and better disciples” (BVCC website, 2004, home page, ¶1). (used by permission).

#### Systems Analysis of the Opportunity

The system in which this research project took place was Bow Valley Christian Church (BVCC) in Calgary, Alberta. BVCC is a congregationally governed, multiple staff church, with a shared leadership model. The pastoral staff includes ten full or part-time pastors with responsibilities in the following areas: Senior Pastor, Chinese Ministries (vacant), Worship & Arts (me), World Outreach, Family Ministries - Children (2), Family Ministries -Youth, Young Adults, Seniors, and Small Groups. Augmenting the pastoral staff are a full-time office administrator, and a full-time secretary/receptionist. Under the leadership of each of the pastoral staff are various ministry teams consisting of volunteer leaders and workers.

An appointed board of Elders consisting of ten or more people runs the church business. Elders are selected through an application process based on scriptural principles; consisting of an application, personal study, an interview, and opportunity for congregational voice. The board is divided into two major roles: pastoral and administrative, and meets together to provide governance and decision-making. The board delegates daily operations, management, activities and programs of the church to the senior pastor and staff (BVCC Constitution, 1991).

BVCC belongs to a loose affiliation of Christian Churches / Church of Christ, but is not a member of a structured denomination. A recent study by Glenmary Research Centre in the United States shows, “during the last decade the Christian churches / Churches of Christ fellowship was the fastest-growing Christian group in America” (Alexander, 2003, p. 4). BVCC and its Canadian counterparts have not experienced that magnitude of numerical growth in the past decade.

Individual members of the pastoral staff of BVCC are active members of the Calgary Evangelical Ministerial Association (CEMA), meeting regularly with ministers and church workers from across Calgary. Many staff members also belong to organizations and associations within their own specialized areas (music, youth, missions, etc.). All members of the pastoral staff strive to develop relationships with members of the congregation, and encourage interaction between congregational members and adherents. By virtue of its mission statement, BVCC is also impacted by and seeks to affect the community in which it resides.

### Organizational Context

BVCC is a non-denominational evangelical Christian church whose history is

rooted in the Restoration Movement. The congregation formed in 1928, located in the Tuxedo Park area of Calgary. In 1954, they incorporated as Cambrian Heights Church of Christ. In 1991, they sold their church building on Northmount Drive N.W. and the congregation became Bow Valley Christian Church. The congregation moved into its present building on 53rd Avenue N.W. in January of 1993 (BVCC website, 2004).

BVCC's mission statement is "Making more and better disciples" (BVCC website, 2004). The church vision statement is, "To participate in the growing Kingdom of God by creating new communities of believers" (BVCC website, 2004). Both of these statements underscore the importance of organizational growth as core value of this organization. Evangelical churches follow the teaching of the New Testament and the Great Commission, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere" (Mark 16:15 NLT). BVCC strives to fulfill this biblical mandate through partnerships with international Christian agencies, by planting new churches, and by responding to needs in the community in which it resides.

In the year prior to this study BVCC launched four new growth-related initiatives, which directly or indirectly affected the results of this research project. These included:

- 1) A building and renovation program – including improvements to the parking lot, renovations to the Christian Education space (lower level), and upgrading and maintenance of the building exterior. This also included the necessary fundraising campaign to finance the initiative. This construction project was a major inconvenience at times, and due to construction delays and cost overruns, continues at the time of this writing.

2) A merger with a Chinese congregation - BVCC merged with a small Chinese congregation in July of 2003, bringing a Chinese pastor on staff, and welcoming 30-40 new members and adherents to our church. They combined Christian education (Sunday School & children's club) programs, and held separate Cantonese and Mandarin services. In July 2004 BVCC combined their Sunday morning services, by introducing instantaneous translation. In February 2005, our Chinese pastor resigned (the position remains vacant at the time of writing), causing some instability in the Asian portion of the congregation.

3) Instantaneous translation – In July 2004 BVCC became the first church in Calgary to provide instantaneous translation of their Sunday services into Cantonese and Mandarin. This allowed them to combine their Cantonese, Mandarin, and English Worship services. This was accomplished by the use of low output FM transmitters, received anywhere in or around the building on personal pocket radios.

4) Addition of a second Sunday service – In September 2004 BVCC added a second (duplicate) Sunday morning service to accommodate anticipated growth, and facilitate the translation of services.

These four initiatives all related to church growth, and were at various stages of implementation throughout the duration of this project. These initiatives (positively and negatively) influenced the results of the NCD assessment, and are examples of the dynamic and fluid nature of church development.

## CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

### Topic One: Strategic Visioning

“Where there is no vision, the people perish...” (Proverbs 29:18a (KJV)).

#### *What is vision?*

Shipley (2000) thoroughly outlines the changing meaning of the word ‘vision’. He says that “...the concept of vision has been constant through time from biblical to classical, to the renaissance, enlightenment, industrial revolution and down to the present” (p. 2). While the concept has remained constant, the meaning and usage of the word has changed over the years. In the case of Proverbs, the Greek and Hebrew terms for vision translate to mean divine communication or a message from God. He tells us in modern usage the words vision and visioning refer to a human construct which is meant to be clearly understood (Shipley, 2000).

Even though this research project is being conducted in and for a church organization, the use of the words ‘vision’ and ‘visioning’ (particularly ‘strategic visioning’) are being used, for the purposes of this research project, in the modern organizational context. This does not undermine or diminish our belief in the Supremacy of God, or our desire to keep the vision of our church through prayerful consideration in line with the will of God, but acknowledges that BVCC is an organization that needs to be managed responsibly, as does any private or public institution.

Sometimes in considering a definition, it is important to state what the subject is not. Malphurs (1999b) says a vision is not a dream, not goals and objectives, not a purpose, nor a mission (PP. . 31-32). Other writers use powerful descriptors and imagery to relay what vision is:

“...what will guide your journey” (Stoner, 2003, p. 1).

“...a realistic, credible, attractive future for an organization” (Nanus, 1996, p. 1).

“...statements of destination...future-oriented” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 130).

“... a mental image of a possible and desirable future state of the organization... a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists... a target that beckons” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 89).

Yukl (2002) tells us, “vision should be simple and idealistic, a picture of a desirable future, not a complex plan with qualitative objectives and detailed action steps. The vision should appeal to the values, hopes, and ideals of organization members and other stakeholders whose support is needed” (p. 161). Malphurs (1999b) defines organizational vision as “a clear and challenging picture of the future of a ministry as you believe that it can and must be” (p. 32). He outlines six important attributes of a clear and compelling organizational vision:

- a vision is clear
- a vision is challenging
- a vision is a mental picture
- a vision is the future
- a vision can be
- a vision must be (PP. . 32-41).

This compelling future-oriented mental picture that guides an organization’s journey is what we call a vision. Spader and Mayes (1991) state it quite eloquently:

“Vision is that compelling conviction which determines where you are headed. It is that tangible expression of purpose which ignites your passion for progress” (p. 185).

*Why do we need a vision?*

Kline (1999) tells us:

The proverb says, 'Without vision, the people perish.' This proverb may not always apply; an organization may not perish. But without vision an organization will often languish, become dispirited, and suffer from lack of enthusiasm and purpose. Almost certainly if a leader doesn't know where to go, the organization will not achieve its potential (p. 1).

Repeatedly the literature points to the fact that leaders must have a strong sense of personal vision, and organizations require a common vision. In fact, there is far more agreement than disagreement among authors, both secular and Christian, in regards to the importance of having a positive vision, and communicating that vision effectively.

Kouzes and Posner (2002), Barna (1997), Kline (1999), and Nanus (1996) all refer to a sense of vision as an essential leadership characteristic. Barna (1997) says, "vision is the starting point of effective leadership. It is also the end point because all our efforts are ultimately measured in terms of progress we made toward fully and faithfully implementing the vision" (p. 60). Overwhelmingly the literature agrees a strong sense of vision is an essential component of strong leadership.

Stoner (2003) reminds us we need vision, not only when times are good, but also in times of uncertainty, and "...during times of growth, change or opportunity so we know we're headed in the right direction" (p. 1).

"An organization, if it is to be successful, must be driven by its vision" (Stanfield, 1995, p. 6). "Few good things in human affairs 'just happen'. In the majority of cases, things happen only when people dream of a better tomorrow, decide they truly want to make it happen, and then act to turn their dreams into reality. That's what vision is all about" (Nanus, 1996, p. 1). "... since human behavior in organizations is very much

shaped by a shared vision of the future, developing and promulgating such a vision may well be “the highest calling and truest purpose of leadership.”” (Nanus, 1996, p. 1). “One of *the* most important practices leadership is giving life and work a sense of meaning and purpose by offering an exciting vision” (Kouzes and Posner, 2002, p. 112).

Malphurs (1999b) suggests ten reasons why vision is important in churches:

- Vision clarifies direction
- Vision invites unity
- Vision facilitates function
- Vision enhances leadership
- Vision prompts passion
- Vision fosters risk taking
- Vision offers sustenance
- Vision creates energy
- Vision provides purpose
- Vision motivates giving (pp. 17-28).

The subject of vision has evoked some strong emotion in writers, including statements such as:

(Vision is) “...the highest calling and truest purpose of leadership” (Nanus, 1996, p. 1).

“A good vision makes your heart groan with hope at the very thought of it” (Stanfield, 1995, p. 3).

“One of *the* most important practices in leadership... offering an exciting vision” (Kouzes and Posner, 2002, p. 112).



(A shared vision) “is... a force in people’s hearts, a force of impressive power” (Senge, 1990, p. 206).

“A compelling vision unleashes energy and potential...” (Stoner, 2003, p. 1).

“The most important role of visions in organizational life is to give focus to human energy” (Kouzes and Posner, 2002, p. 130).

The emotion and passion with which these authors speak is testimony to the necessity of a shared vision to the health of an organization. Few topics in the area of leadership bring such unanimous agreement among authors as the benefits of a strong and shared organizational vision.

#### *How should vision be communicated?*

The old English teacher’s cliché applies to vision casting. Tell them what you’re going to tell them. Tell them. Then tell them what you told them. A vision, to be cast effectively, needs to be repeated time and time again. Bennis and Nanus (1985) set the stage for much of the current thinking in the field of leadership. They tell us, “a vision... must be repeated time and again. It must be incorporated in the organization’s culture and reinforced through the strategy and decision-making process” (p. 109). They suggest the use of metaphors or models to communicate vision, as they are easily absorbed and remembered.

Stanley (2004), almost twenty years later tells us, as part of human nature, vision simply ‘leaks’. To be effective in vision casting, a leader needs to find creative ways to relentlessly display and describe the vision. Every conversation, every newsletter article written, every organizational celebration needs to draw people in the organization back to the vision, until the vision becomes a way of life. Barna (1997) uses strong language to

emphasize the importance of relentless vision casting, stating, “if your vision remains just a compelling idea or an alluring dream, you have failed. Vision is about creating a preferable future. Part of your responsibility as a leader is not only to identify, articulate and sell the vision, but also to ensure that it becomes a reality” (p. 58).

*Is organizational vision static or dynamic?*

Widdrington (1993) tells us, “vision is an expression of creative attitude. It is a living thing...” (p. 5). He goes on to describe vision as “the mechanism which reconciles immediate needs with future position. It changes with the passage of time in response to its environment” (p. 4). Bennis and Nanus (1985) agree, stating that vision “must be constantly evaluated for possible change in the light of new circumstances” (p. 109). Similarly, Malphurs (1999a) says, “over time, the vision must be renewed, adapted, and adjusted to the cultural context...” (p. 133). Clearly these authors believe vision is dynamic, and can (and must) change or adapt over time.

This issue was addressed in the sponsoring organization through a series of messages entitled, “Emerging Vision...Enduring Values” (BVCC website, 2004) in which Rick Scruggs and other pastors reviewed the core values of the organization, and how the collective vision of the organization is being adapted to capitalize on new (unforeseen) opportunities that are consistent with its values.

*Conclusion*

Helen Keller once said the saddest thing in the world is people who can see, but have no vision. The literature reviewed suggests a clear sense of vision is essential to the success of an organization, and is a necessary characteristic of a leader. Strategic visioning is using the past and present to guide the future. Vision is not an unchangeable

document or statement. Southerland (1999) reminds us that “vision is not just a destination; it is a journey. Vision is not just a product; it is a process. Vision is not just the finish line; it is the whole race” (p. 20).

Gautschi (1996) leaves us with a sobering thought:

The one universal requirement of leadership in this new age is to catalyze a clear and shared organizational vision, and to assure commitment and vigorous pursuit of that vision. Without vision, organizations have no chance of creating their future, they can only react to it (p. 1).

## Topic Two: Church Growth

### *The Church Growth Movement and the “Fuller Factor”*

Church growth as a movement in North America can be traced back to the work of Donald McGavran in the 1960’s and early 1970’s (Wagner, 1984, p. 13). In fact, Wagner (1984) contends the term “church growth” is an “McGavranism” (p. 13). McGavran was the first in North America to try to study the church in scientific terms. He founded the Institute of Church Growth in Eugene Oregon in 1961. In 1965 the institute moved to Pasadena, California housed at Fuller Seminary and became the Fuller School of World Missions and Institute of Church Growth, which remains today (Wagner, 1990, p. xi). This is significant not only because it started the movement, but because the majority of the church growth theories and practices used today can be traced back to study of McGavran’s (and later Wagner’s) work at Fuller Seminary. This has become known in church growth circles as “the Fuller factor”. Church growth “tries to explain, in a reasonable and systematic way, why some churches grow and others decline, why some Christians are able to bring their friends to Christ and into church membership and others are not, or what are the symptoms of a terminal illness in a church” (Wagner, 1984, p. 43).

In the 70's, 80's, and into the early 90's a large volume of books concerning church growth were written by Fuller influenced authors including Wimber, George, Towns, Arns, and Wagner who each took slightly different directions in their focus on church growth. George writes of growth through evangelism, working extensively as a church analyst, and designing early diagnostic tools for assessing church growth potential. Wagner writing concentrates more on the "how to" of church growth. Towns and Arns tend to write about church growth statistics and trends.

Logan and others focus on management and business principles, and believe in multiplication by training and excellence in leadership. The topic of church growth has obvious spillover into the world of effective leadership practices with champions such as Maxwell and Blanchard.

#### *Natural Church Development*

Schwarz (1998) also received training at Fuller, and expanded on the work of McGavran and others. He set himself apart by conducting the largest research project into the causes of church growth ever attempted, and developing an assessment tool (the Natural Church Development Assessment) which allows churches to easily and inexpensively assess their growth potential and compare their results to the data of thousands of other churches worldwide. This study utilized a Natural Church Development Assessment, and further details of Schwarz's work are found in the next section of this literature review.

#### *Sonlife and Growth by Discipleship*

Spader and Mayes (1991) received their training at Moody Bible Institute, and founded the Sonlife movement with a focus on discipleship, our "original call". They

contend that if a church focuses on discipleship it will grow (growth through multiplication). They agree with all other experts on church growth that, “Leadership cannot make growth happen; it is God who causes growth... the church needs to create an environment that will help people grow” (Spader and Mayes, 1991, p. 48).

They pattern their model of church health (and growth) on the four phases of Christ’s ministry on earth: 1) Building – creating an environment for growth. 2) Equipping - training a team for ministry. 3) Winning - mobilizing for evangelism. 4) Multiplying – restructuring for multiplication and expanding your leadership base (Spader and Mayes, 1991, p. 35).

### *The Purpose-Driven Church*

One of the most influential books on church growth in the last decade is Rick Warren’s “The Purpose Driven Church” (Warren, 1995). Warren based his book on twenty years of personal research and interviews with pastors, his personal experience in leading one of the largest and fastest growing churches in North America, and a research project he conducted while at Southwestern Baptist Seminary studying one hundred of the largest churches in USA at the time.

Warren(1995) is extremely well-read in the area of church growth, and draws from the pioneering work of McGavran, Arns, and others (PP. . 29-30). Warren contends church growth (and church health) is all about achieving a sense of balance. “Healthy, lasting church growth is multidimensional. My definition of genuine church growth has five facets. Every church needs to grow *warmer* through fellowship, *deeper* through discipleship, *stronger* through worship, *broader* through ministry, and *larger* through evangelism” (Warren, 1995, p. 48).

Like others, Warren uses organic metaphors to illustrate his thoughts. “The church is a body, not a business. It is an organism, not an organization. It is alive. If a church is not growing, it is dying” (Warren, 1995, p. 16). He contends that as churches remove hindrances to growth, churches will grow automatically, as they were designed to grow. He charges, “The task of church leadership is to discover and remove growth-restricting diseases and barriers so that natural, normal growth can occur” (Warren, 1995, p. 16).

Warren (1995) repeatedly emphasizes that church health (and therefore growth) can only be achieved through balance. He writes and speaks with authority, stating, “Church growth is the natural result of church health (p. 49), and “balance is the key to healthy church (p. 122).”

#### *Journal and Magazine articles regarding church growth*

Most of the articles written specifically on the topic of church growth appear to fit into one of three categories: 1) Book summaries of the authors listed in this review (quick and easy top 10 lists). 2) Unsubstantiated conjecture about the causes of church growth (style of music, style of service, appealing to particular demographics). 3) Reports of growth statistics and trends (typically denominationally based rankings of mega-churches within their denomination or region). There was a conspicuous absence of researched independent articles regarding church growth or church health.

#### *Conclusion*

There is widespread agreement among all authors from McGavran’s pioneering work through to the most recent texts that sustainable church growth is a natural expression of church health, and cannot be manufactured, forced, or coerced. We cannot

make a church grow. The best we can do is to create a positive environment and the right conditions for church growth and let it happen. This is a biblical principle taken from Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed recorded in the Bible in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8.

Many of the metaphors used by different authors to illustrate church growth principles are taken from nature, using analogies of farmers and crops, the human body, or other organic, natural growth mechanisms. They all contend (in slightly different ways) that creating the proper conditions, maintaining a suitable environment, guarding against or preventing disease, and nurturing and caring for overall health are all we can do to promote growth.

The differences that exist in the literature are not disagreements, but slightly different emphasis in way they relate models, principles, and guidelines for church health and church growth. Literature concerning church growth has shifted from a focus on church management in the 70's and 80's (McGavran, Wimber, George, Wagner) towards concern for the health of a church in the 90's (Schwarz, Warren, Spader and Mayes), and appears to be moving toward more writing about church planting, and the creation of new churches in the early 2000's.

“Growth is the most dynamic thing in life. Life is a gift of God to the farmer who grows crops. Life is the gift of God to parents who raise a baby, and life is a gift to pastors who lead a church. Growth means life...energy...new horizons... new freedoms...new attainments. Growth means the fulfillment of expectations” (Towns, E.L., Wagner, C.P., & Rainer, T.S., 1998, p. 1).

### Topic Three: Natural Church Development Methodology

#### *Introduction to NCD*

The Natural Church Development (NCD) Methodology is based on the “most comprehensive research project about the causes of church growth that has ever been conducted in the Christian church...” (Schwarz, 1998b, introduction). NCD Methodology utilizes vocabulary and principles unfamiliar to the average reader, and it is the purpose of this section of the literature review to explain these terms and concepts.

*The Work of Christian Schwarz*

Schwarz, like many others specializing in the field of church growth, received training at Fuller Theological Seminary, studying and building on the work of Donald McGavran, C. Peter Wagner, and others. Schwarz ultimately embarked on an enormous research project, surveying over a thousand churches on all five continents. This was (and remains) the largest study on church growth ever attempted (the NCD survey has to date been implemented in thousands of churches worldwide).

Schwarz (1998a) explains,

The major differences between natural church development and other church growth concepts can be expressed in three main points:

1. Natural church development rejects merely pragmatic and a-theological approaches (“the end justifies the means”) and replaces them with a **principle-oriented** point of departure.
2. Natural church development has no quantitative approach (How do we get more people to attend services?”), but looks at the **quality** of church life as the key to church development. (Schwarz, 1998a, pp. 13-14).
3. Natural church development does not attempt to “make” church growth, but to release the **growth automatisms**, with which God Himself builds the church. (Schwarz, 1998a, pp. 13-14).

This third point, and the term “growth automatisms” warrant further explanation.

Schwarz (1998a) views the church as an organic entity, and speaks of “biotic potential” or “inherent capacity of an organism or species to reproduce itself and survive” (p. 10).

He contends, “it was God’s intent to build this perpetuity into His creation from the start”



(p. 10). Schwarz uses organic metaphors to explain we do not have to force or make growth happen, but merely have to remove the barriers and provide the right environment to release and develop the potential for growth to occur “all by itself” (Schwarz, 1998b, p. 20).

### *Eight Quality Characteristics*

Through his research, Schwarz (1998a, 1998b, 1999) discovered eight quality characteristics that he contends are universal principles essential to church health and church growth. In order to understand the vernacular used to describe the essential eight quality characteristics of growing churches, the reader must first realize:

Each quality characteristic consists of two parts: a noun (e.g., leadership, ministry, spirituality, structures) and an adjective (e.g., empowering, gift-oriented, passionate, functional). The secret of each of these quality characteristics is not described by the nouns – every church has some kind of leadership, ministries, spirituality or structures. Rather the secret is hidden in the practical application of what each of the adjectives represents (Schwarz, 1998b, p. 21).

The following is a brief working definition of each of the eight quality characteristics.

Empowering Leadership – the extent to which leaders equip, support, motivate, and mentor individuals” in their organization (pp. 22-23).

Gift-Oriented Ministry – the extent to which people know their gifts, and serve in an area of their giftedness. The role of leadership, then, “is to help its members to identify their gifts and to integrate them into appropriate ministries” (p. 24).

Passionate Spirituality – the extent to which members of the church are enthusiastic about the spiritual matters. This quality is reflected in living committed lives, and the enthusiasm and joy that comes from a dynamic relationship with God (pp. 26-27).

Functional Structures – the extent to which “the most important criterion for forms and structures in the church is if they fulfill their purpose or not” (Schwarz, 1998b,

p. 13). Examples include leadership structures, programs, facilities, meeting times, etc. Changing (or eliminating) any institutional structures that do not fulfill their purpose keeps the organization moving forward, and helps avoid traditionalistic ruts that hinder growth and development (Schwarz, 1998b, pp. 13-14).

Inspiring Worship Service – the extent to which the worship service is a joyous and inspiring experience for the participants. This quality does not refer to a particular style of service (liturgical or free-flowing), but to whether the participants attend because it's a positive experience (even “fun”), or out of some sense of obligation or duty. (Schwarz, 1998b, pp. 14-15) (Schwarz, 1998a, pp. 30-31).

Holistic Small Groups – the extent to which small groups provide a sense of “intimate community, practical help, and intensive spiritual interaction” (Schwarz, 1998b, p. 15). These groups move beyond mere “Bible study” to practical application of biblical principles into everyday life. An important church growth principle is the planned multiplication of small groups through cell division, providing opportunities for continual leadership development (Schwarz, 1998a, pp. 32-33).

Need-Oriented Evangelism – the extent to which evangelism (spreading the gospel message) focuses on the needs and questions of non-Christians. It is important that the leadership recognizes people in the congregation with the “gift of evangelism” so they can direct them to an area of ministry where they can effectively use their gift. It is equally important that every Christian in the congregation uses their gifts “to serve non-Christians with whom one has a personal relationship, to see to it that they hear the gospel, and to encourage contact with the local church” (Schwarz, 1998a, p. 35).

Loving Relationships – the extent to which relationships in the organization are characterized by practical love. Examples include desiring to spend time with one another, exchanging compliments, awareness and concern for individual problems and needs, and laughter and enjoyment in the relationship. “Unfeigned, practical love has a divinely generated magnetic power far more effective than evangelistic programs which depend almost entirely on verbal communication. People do not want to hear us talk about love, they want to experience how Christian love really works” (Schwarz, 1998a, p. 36).

Schwarz (1998b) emphasizes that these eight quality characteristics are “universally valid principles” (p. 18), meaning they are transferable to each local situation, and “each of these principles has a positive relationship with both the quality and the quantitative growth of the church” (p. 18). He also emphasizes that none of the eight quality characteristics can be missing if the church wants to ensure health and growth.

#### *The “Minimum Factor” Principle*

Schwarz and Schalk developed an assessment instrument, the Natural Church Development Survey, to measure the eight quality characteristics in a local church and help identify the church’s “minimum factor”. Schwarz (1999) explains, “The minimum factor strategy is taken from biology. It goes back to the discoveries made by Justus von Liebig in agriculture about 150 years ago. These discoveries have been applied to the dynamics of social systems by Wolfgang Mewes and others” (p. 249). The minimum factor strategy is essentially a cyclical process whereby the minimum factor is identified (in the case of Liebig, one of the essential nutrients - in the case of NCD, one of the eight

essential quality characteristics), and an intervention takes place designed to raise the level of that factor to allow growth. Re-assessment then establishes a new minimum factor and the cycle continues. This cyclical assessment and intervention closely parallels the “look, think, act” cycle of action research (Stringer, 1999, p. 18).

## CHAPTER THREE – CONDUCT OF RESEARCH REPORT

### Research Approach

This project was a community-based action research project in that it was participatory, democratic, cyclical, and reflective in nature. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) define action research as, “the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change” (p. 223). This project sought to bring about social change by involving the researcher as an internal consultant and facilitator with the board, staff, and congregation of the sponsoring organization. Stringer (1999) tells us that,

a fundamental premise of community-based action research is that it commences with an interest in the problems of a group, a community, or an organization. Its purpose is to assist people in extending their understanding of their situation and thus in resolving problems that confront them (p. 10).

I have a passion for seeing Bow Valley Christian Church thrive and grow.

Serving as an internal consultant and participant observer on this project meant that I was “at every moment embedded in some part of the hierarchy and the current politics of the organization” (Block, 2000, p. 130). As stated in the organizational context section, this action research project did not happen in isolation; BVCC had undertaken several change initiatives during the year before the study. My role as a full-time staff member allowed me to establish meaningful relationships with other staff members, the church board, and the congregation. Describing the benefits of an internal consultant in an action research project, Senge (1999) says, “the real benefit lies in having a human mind that fully comprehends the specifics of the context of a project, is equally aware of the specifics of other projects, and has the time and energy to make the connections” (p. 438).

This project utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative component of this project utilized purposive sample interviews, focus group

sessions, and the researcher as participant observer. The quantitative component included the use of a proven instrument (NCD Assessment) (see Appendix A), used successfully by thousands of other churches worldwide. Literature on research supports the use of several different concurrent research methods. Palys (2003) emphasizes, “qualitative and quantitative researchers are pursuing similar overall objectives and may well have much to learn from and contribute to each other” (p. 21). He goes on to say, “many quantitative researchers now incorporate qualitative elements into their research strategies, and many qualitative researchers now realize that numbers aren’t inherently sinful” (p. 30). Stringer (1999) tells us that “even within action research, there is a place for some of the methods, procedures, and concepts usually associated with traditional science” (p. 203).

Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in this project was appropriate because it augmented a proven quantitative instrument with qualitative methods, which clarified and verified emerging themes. As organizational change was a goal of this project, it was essential stakeholders participated in this process, and that we heard their interests and opinions. Stringer (1999) warns, “in almost all situations, some people will resist changes of any sort unless the processes are carefully defined and their interests are taken into account” (p. 137). Stringer (1999) explains that involving ordinary people inside the organization, rather than relying on experts, “gives voice” to people rather than treating them as subjects in the research, he calls it “research *of, by, and for* the people” (p. 167).

The use of several different research methods also allowed for triangulation of results and a more complete and accurate organizational profile. Berg (2004) says, “by combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of

reality... and a means of verifying many of these elements” (p. 5). This mixed method of data collection, using qualitative and quantitative methods, best answered the posed research question, leading to a deeper understanding of the organization and increasing its potential for church growth.

### Research Methods and Tools

In keeping with the action research approach for this study, this project utilized a variety of forms of inquiry, including a quantitative survey (NCD assessment) with detailed analysis, purposive sample interviews, a focus group strategic visioning session, and the researcher as participant observer.

#### *Natural Church Development Assessment*

Schwartz and Schalk (1998) use the metaphor, “Effective therapy depends on accurate diagnosis” (p. 9) to illustrate the need for his quantitative survey as a starting point for natural church development. “Natural church development is based on the most comprehensive research project ever conducted on the causes of church growth – more than 1000 churches in 32 countries on all 5 continents were studied” (Schwartz and Schalk, 1998, p. 7).

Schwartz and Schalk (1998) suggest churches can use the NCD assessment to:

- help your church discover its critical factor for the development of the church and its current situation.
- focus limited resources (human, financial, etc.) at the critical points.
- identify your church’s strengths and weaknesses.
- save time and eliminate the risk of an inaccurate analysis.
- apply a scientific and exact process developed by social scientists.
- provide you with an outside perspective – how does your church compare with other churches? (p. 11)

Using an existing, proven instrument negated the necessity of a pilot study or test run of the survey questions. The NCD survey “complies with international statistical standards

for validity and reliability” (Direction Ministry Resources Assn., 2001, p. 3). In implementing the NCD Assessment I carefully followed the guidelines NCD lays out for selection of participants and implementation of the survey, to maintain the instrument’s validity and reliability.

Schwartz and Schalk (1998) recommend completing another assessment in six to twelve months to see how the identified minimum factor has developed over time, and identify a new minimum factor (p. 13). NCD refers to this cyclical approach as the Quality Growth Cycle...their proposed cycle is: prepare for the NCD survey, do the survey, analyze the survey results, establish goals and action plan, implement and monitor the progress, evaluate and repeat the survey and the cycle. (Direction Ministry Resources Assn., 2001, p. 11). This cyclical approach suggested by NCD closely parallels the “look, think, act” routine Stringer (1999) suggests for action research (p. 18).

The researcher entered data collected from the NCD survey (minus identifiers) into software provided by NCD and forwarded the file to The International Centre for Leadership Development and Evangelism to analyze the data against the results of thousands of church worldwide, and adjust the data for Canadian norms.

#### *Focus Group / Purposive Sample Interview*

The second phase of this inquiry was the administration of face-to-face purposive sample interviews using open-ended questions. I implemented these interviews in a focus group setting to a purposive sample group of five participants from the original NCD study. “The focus group interview is essentially a group version of the face-to-face interview... such groups normally involve a *target sample* or *purposive sample* of informants brought together to discuss the phenomenon in which the researcher is



interested” (Palys, 2003, p. 161). This focus group took place following the return of the results of the NCD (quantitative) survey, with questions developed based on areas of concern that arose from the NCD results (see Appendix B). Palys (2003) tells us, “face-to-face contact typically provides two things: higher response rates and the chance to both clarify ambiguities or misunderstandings and monitor the conditions of completion” (p.151). In composing the open-ended questions for the interviews, I followed the guidelines laid out by Palys (2003) to watch the literacy rate and vocabulary used in the questions, and try to anticipate possible ambiguities in the questions and instructions to avoid misunderstandings. (p. 151). The interview was comprised of five questions aimed at confirming or disconfirming the NCD results and obtaining a greater depth of response than the previous quantitative survey was able to convey. I took great care to minimize bias and avoid ambiguity, acronyms, and meaningless responses (Palys, 2003, p. 187). I conducted a test run of the questions before administering this survey, as Palys (2003) warns,

There are *always* things you take for granted without recognizing, and there are *always* surprises you never even considered when constructing the questionnaire. The time to catch these difficulties is *before* you commit major resources to duplicating the questionnaire or to time spent interviewing (p. 187).

The researcher also employed multiple recording methods during the focus group interviews to ensure accurate recording of opinions, suggestions, and recommendations. Two independent scribes provide written notes of the conversation; and the session was video taped to ensure accuracy. These focus group interviews triangulated with the data from the NCD survey and the researcher’s field notes (participant observer) to form a more complete and accurate organizational profile to provide to the staff and board for use in the strategic visioning session.

### *Focus Group / Strategic Visioning Session*

The third phase of this project involved the presentation of the organizational profile to the staff and board of BVCC, and leading them through a strategic visioning session based on that profile. The literature supports this re-visioning, as Bennis and Nanus (1985) state that vision “must be constantly evaluated for possible change in the light of new circumstances” (p. 109). And Malphurs (1999a) says, “over time, the vision must be renewed, adapted, and adjusted to the cultural context” (p. 133). The compiled organizational profile provided the information needed to form a new corporate vision of the preferred future of the organization. I worked with the board and staff to develop a number of recommendations for the development of an action plan that works towards the expressed goal of church growth.

Similarly to the first focus group this session was recorded by two independent scribes, and was video taped to ensure accuracy. These records will be kept under lock and key for a period of not less than two years following the study, and then be destroyed.

### *Participant Observer*

As a participant observer in this action research project I kept field notes of interactions and conversations with, and observations of, the congregation, staff and church board throughout the duration of the project. I was forthcoming to the congregation regarding my role as participant observer in this action research project. Palys (2003) says, “To the extent that the researcher’s status as an observer is honestly presented, ethical concerns about deception or lack of informed consent are minimized. And to the extent that the researcher acts as a participant in the setting, reactivity is often

reduced because, as a participant, he or she more quickly fades into the group” (p. 214). My high visibility within the organization and the relationships I had established during my tenure at BVCC allowed me to solicit opinions and viewpoints from a variety of people in the congregation, and allowed access to numerous events, gatherings, and functions of the organization. Palys cites Lofland and Morgan as saying, “part of being a social scientist is to interact with the phenomena we wish to understand” (Lofland cited in Palys, 2003, p. 214). “We seek direct evidence from the world that bears on the theoretical issues that we deem – or that emerge as – important, and observation is a way to gather such data” (Morgan cited in Palys, 2003, p. 214).

I ensured the trustworthiness of the data collected through my observations by establishing and maintaining strong working relationships with the participants. Glesne (1999) says, “When a large amount of time is spent with your research participants, they less readily feign behaviour or feel the need to do so” (p. 151).

The scope of this major project ended with the presentation of an organizational profile to the church staff and board, and the strategic visioning session (focus group setting) based on the results of this project. Goal setting, creation of an action plan, and implementation of the recommendations generated would be the next logical steps in the action research process. Re-implementation of a NCD assessment in one year’s time would begin the next major cycle of action research.

#### Project Participants

The action research team for this project consisted of: Mike Schuster, Pastor of Worship & Arts, Bow Valley Christian Church; Rick Scruggs, Senior Pastor, Bow Valley Christian Church (sponsor); and Dr. Bernie Potvin, PhD. (supervisor).

In order to maintain the validity and reliability of the NCD instrument, the action research team selected participants for the NCD Assessment phase of this project in accordance with the protocols established by Natural Church Development. Participants included the Pastoral staff (yellow questionnaires), and thirty-four volunteer workers in the church (green questionnaires) (Appendix A). NCD suggested selecting congregational participants based on the following criteria:

“1) The pastor considers them to be actively involved at the very center of church life. 2) They have a regular task in the church. 3) They are a member of a small group in the church (a cell group, Bible study group, ministry team, etc.)” (Schwartz and Schalk, 1998, p. 12).

After establishing a list of participants, I invited them to attend an information meeting and provided them with a copy of *The ABC's of Natural Church Development* (Schwartz, 1998) booklet, which outlines the process and purposes of gathering this information. The booklet summarizes the most important principles of natural church development, and underlines the importance of a church profile. Average reading time for this booklet is about twenty minutes.

At the meeting participants received information regarding the NCD assessment and this research project, had an opportunity to ask questions, signed a consent form (see Appendix C), and completed a NCD questionnaire (see Appendix A).

The focus group / purposive sample interview phase of this action research project involved five participants from the NCD assessment selected by the action research team. Participants for this phase received a personal invitation to attend an evening session for the express purpose of participating in a focus group interview.

The focus group / strategic visioning session involved the church board and pastoral staff.

I based my field notes as participant observer on interactions with members of the congregation, staff, and board who had signed informed consent forms. Stringer (1999) tells us, “Participation in research contexts also provides research facilitators with opportunities to engage in interviews and conversations that extend the pool of information available” (pp. 72-73).

### Ethical Issues

In performing research involving human subjects it is incumbent on the researcher to maintain the highest of standards of ethics, and use only approved research methods. Royal Roads University (RRU, 2004) has established an ethics policy that addresses principles, practices and procedures to guide and ensure that all research projects under the sponsorship of the university conform to ethical standards (p. 3). They divide this policy into eight sections.

#### *Respect for Human Dignity*

“We have a *humanistic obligation* to treat people with dignity and to safeguard their interests” (Palys, 2003, p. 81). BVCC is a relational organization. As an internal consultant/researcher, I was very careful to safeguard these relationships, and minimize any damage that could result from people expressing honest opinions.

#### *Respect for Free and Informed Consent*

All participation in this project was voluntary, and the church staff, board, and all participants in the NCD assessment signed an informed consent agreement (see Appendix C). I administered the NCD assessment and focus group sessions in face-to-face group settings. Each session began with a verbal explanation of the project and its possible

implications, and provided opportunity for questions before having participants sign the consent form.

### *Respect for Vulnerable Persons*

This project did not involve adults of diminished mental capacity, or minor children. All participation was voluntary with informed consent.

### *Respect for Privacy and Confidentiality*

Palys (2003) reminds us it is the researcher's responsibility to take precautions to respect confidentiality, and warns that threats to confidentiality:

arise most commonly when multiple people are being interviewed in one setting – a given organization, community, or family... researchers must be very careful not to say anything to any one person that another person told them. This may sound very simple, but guarding against it requires considerable vigilance (p. 91).

Because BVCC is a close-knit group with many extended family and long-term relationships, I was careful to remain professional in my consultation and simultaneously collegial and approachable with all parties involved. I extended this sense of caution to my sponsor, colleagues, and participants in this research project, as, “everyone who is involved in research...shares the ethical responsibility to ensure that the rights and interests of research participants are protected” (Palys, 2003, p. 102). I did my best to clearly express to my sponsor, staff, church board, and research participants the expectations of us all in this regard.

### *Respect for Justice and Inclusiveness*

I did not encounter any major issues in the area of justice and inclusiveness, as we kept the congregation informed as to the progress of the project, and mechanisms were already in place for open feedback and communication with church staff and board members.

*Balancing Harms and Benefits / Minimizing Harm / Maximizing Benefit*

Palys (2003), speaking about ethical considerations of research says, “the choice that resides at the beginning of any research project is whether to do the research at all” (p. 81). This choice was easy, as this project arose from a suggestion by the sponsoring organization. Palys (2003) goes on to say that there is “a *scientific obligation* to do research in the best way we know how” (p. 81). In the case of this project, I believe that to include the work of Christian Schwarz (1998) and his system of Natural Church Development (NCD). The creation of this organizational profile and subsequent work on strategic visioning towards church growth has enormous potential benefit to the sponsoring organization. I minimized potential harm by assuring the highest standards of personal respect and confidentiality, and adhering to ethical standards of research as prescribed by Royal Roads University.

Study Conduct

In accordance with the proposal submitted and approved by Royal Roads University, the researcher divided this study into three distinct phases.

The first phase of research involved the implementation of a Natural Church Development Survey to all pastoral staff and 34 congregational members of the sponsoring organization. The research team decided to survey the entire pastoral staff and form a composite pastoral survey rather than surveying the senior pastor only, as we felt it would provide a more accurate organizational profile, increase the sense of ownership among staff members, and provide focused discussion points for staff meetings. The minimum requirement of congregational members specified by NCD to maintain statistical validity is 30 people. The survey was administered in a group setting to allow

for a detailed explanation of the procedure, what the results would be used for, and to allow equal opportunity for questions and answers. The researcher contacted and invited forty-nine people to participate in the survey before confirming thirty-four people who could attend. The research team believed a margin of ten percent or more was necessary to ensure the minimum number of participants (30) would attend the meeting. Following the meeting the researcher entered the results of the pastoral and congregational surveys into NCD's "Core 4" software, and sent the data to the Willow Creek Centre for Leadership Development to be processed.

The second phase of research involved a purposive sample focus group interview to confirm or disconfirm the findings of the survey. Five congregational participants were selected from the original sample group and invited to a focus group meeting where they had the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions regarding the overall health, strengths, and weaknesses of the organization.

The third phase of research involved a strategic visioning session in a combined meeting of the church board and staff. The researcher was able to present the findings of the study including information gathered from the survey, focus group, and as a participant observer in the preceding months. The group was then able to begin a discussion regarding the desired future of the organization, the current organizational profile, and how to begin to bridge the gap between the two.

In addition to these three phases, the researcher was involved in the organization throughout this study as a participant observer, having weekly contact and discussions with staff members, board members, and congregants of the sponsoring organization. The researcher also had the opportunity to address the entire congregation in early January



(before the survey) to relate the importance of organization vision, explain the concept of strategic visioning, and introduce the pending research project. BVCC held a public information evening in June, inviting congregants to hear the results of the NCD survey and the research project.

## CHAPTER FOUR – ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Study Findings

The Natural Church Development (NCD) Assessment is divided into eight quality characteristics, as detailed in the NCD Methodology section of the literature review. My findings will report 1) the relative health of each of these characteristics in relation to other characteristics, and compared to other Canadian churches. 2) a comparison of the current profile to BVCC's previous (1999) profile. 3) an internal assessment of each quality characteristic. 4) trends and patterns that appear within and across quality characteristics and in comparison to the previous (1999) assessment.

It is important to understand that the results of the NCD study are expressed in standardized scores against Canadian norms. They are not percentages.

The statistical model is as follows.

- The “average” church will score 50: above 50 means above average health and below 50 means below average health.
- 70% of churches score between 35 and 65.
- Scoring 65 or higher puts your church in the top 15% of churches.
- It is possible to get less than zero and more than 100.  
(Schalk, Campbell, & Johnstone, 2004, p. 2)

The graphed results for negatively phrased questions are reversed on the charts to allow for direct comparison to positively phrased questions.

In BVCC's current (2005) profile all eight characteristics ranked above 50, meaning BVCC is above the Canadian average (with an overall average of 62.5) in all eight quality characteristic areas. Therefore, discussions of BVCC's overall weaknesses are in relation to the organization's strengths, and not in relation to other Canadian churches. The weakest areas for BVCC in this assessment were “Need Oriented

Evangelism” (54), and “Gift Oriented Ministry” (57); and while both characteristics were above Canadian average, they ranked substantially lower than the other characteristics in this profile, making them BVCC’s “minimum factors”. BVCC had three areas that ranked in the top 15% of Canadian churches, Functional Structures (65), Loving Relationships (65), and Holistic Small Groups (72), making them BVCC’s “maximum factors”. Figure 1 shows the overall rankings of the eight quality characteristics in BVCC’s 2005 profile.

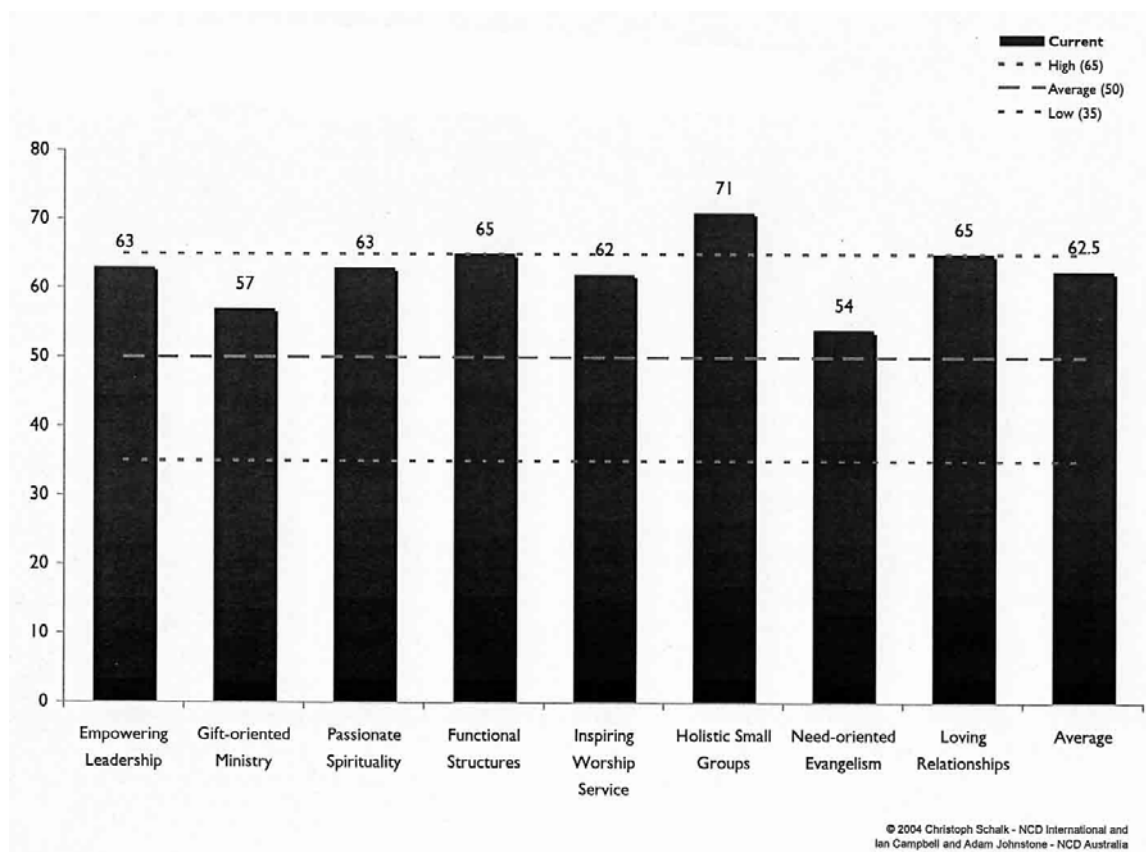


Figure 1. Current Profile Graph 2005. (used by permission).

### *Empowering Leadership*

The overall characteristic score for Empowering Leadership (63) shows relative health in this area. These overall results have remained relatively constant from the 1999 assessment. An internal assessment of this area shows three responses (out of eight)

scored slightly under the Canadian average. Individual questions regarding leadership having inspiring optimism (48) (a drop of 13 from the previous assessment); seeking help (47) (a drop of 21 from the previous assessment); and having too much work to do (48) (an increase of 16 from the last assessment) all scored slightly below Canadian average. However, the overall characteristic score (63) indicates this remains an area of strength for BVCC in comparison to its other characteristics and the average of other Canadian churches.

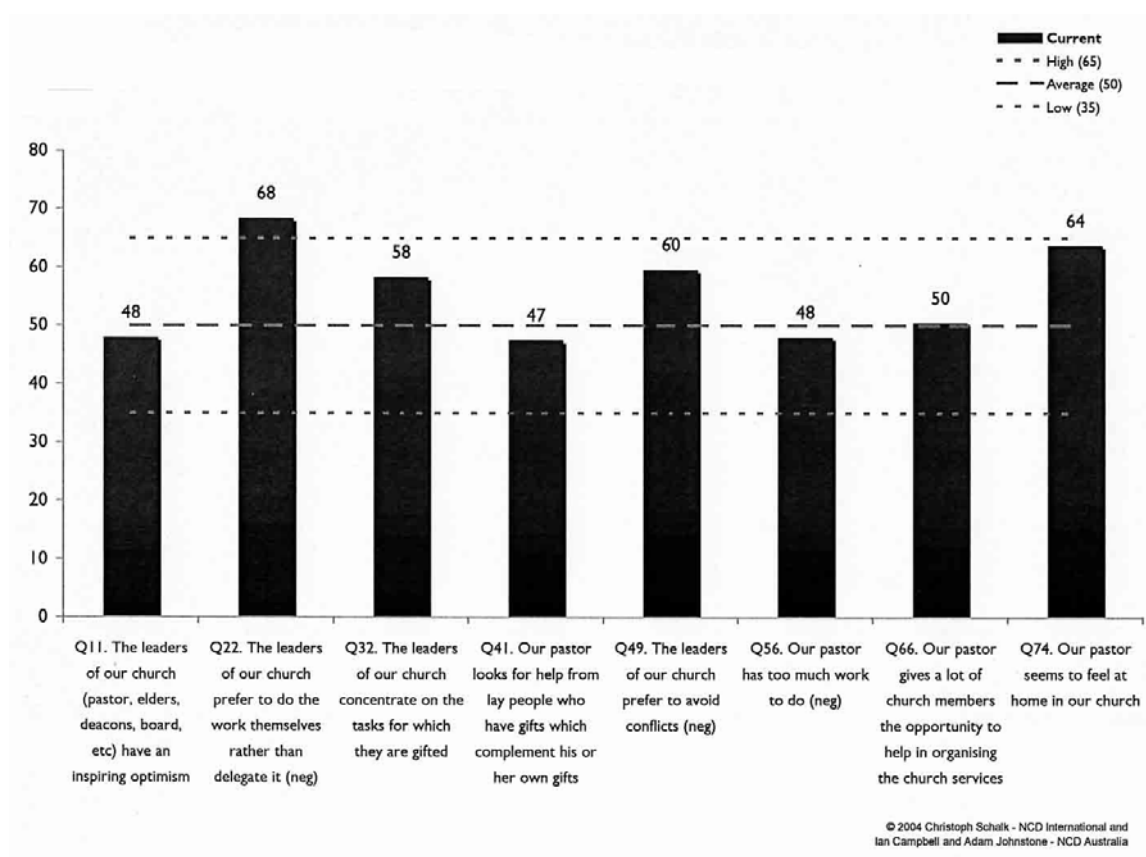


Figure 2. Empowering Leadership Graph 2005. (used by permission).

### *Gift-Oriented Ministry*

The overall characteristic score for Gift-Oriented Ministry (57) shows an area of relative weakness for BVCC, even though it scores above Canadian average. This area is

one of BVCC's current "minimum factors". There has been a dramatic overall drop of 34 points in this area in comparison to the 1999 assessment. There was a drop in the individual scores of six out of seven questions in this area. The most significant drop was a 36 point drop in response to the question regarding the alignment of tasks performed with a person's gifting. This is an indicator of one of the major trends revealed by this assessment (see trends section below). It is also important to note that while the overall score in this area has dropped, two scores (68's) remain high in this area revealing pockets of relative strength in this area, namely, the enjoyment and challenge of tasks in the church. (see figure 3).

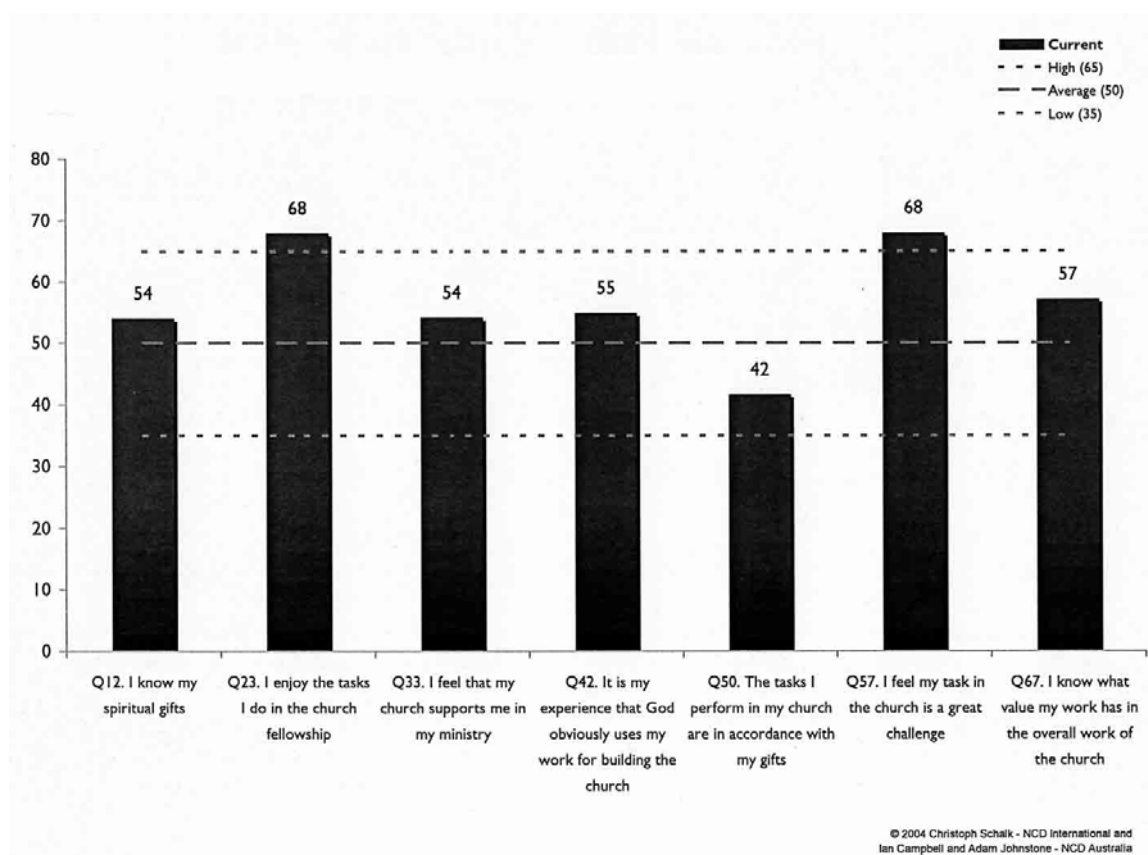


Figure 3. Gift-Oriented Ministry Graph 2005. (used by permission).

*Passionate Spirituality*

The overall characteristic score for passionate spirituality (63) shows relative health in this area. These overall results have seen a slight increase (+5) from the 1999 assessment. An internal assessment of this area shows only one question (out of 13) with a ranking slightly under Canadian average. The largest increases over the last assessment are in individual Bible reading (+13) and an attitude of thankfulness (+18).

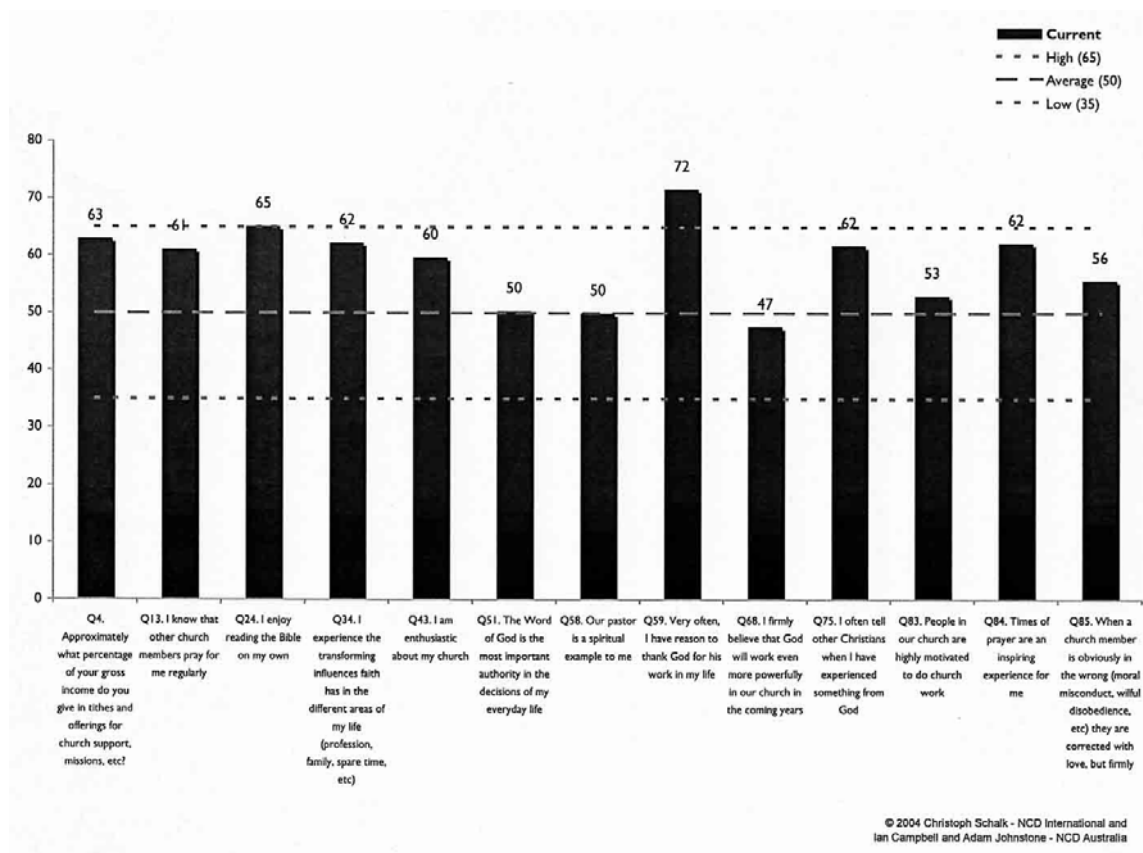


Figure 4. Passionate Spirituality Graph 2005. (used by permission).

### Functional Structures

The overall characteristic score for Functional Structures (65) shows relative health in this area. While these overall results have seen a slight decrease (-7) from the 1999 assessment, a score of 65 places BVCC in the top 15% of Canadian churches in this area. An internal assessment of this area shows that while the overall score saw only a

moderate change, there was a great deal of volatility in the individual questions in comparison to the previous assessment. Most changes were in the six to thirteen point range, with only two of the nine questions scoring significantly higher than the last assessment. (see figure 5).

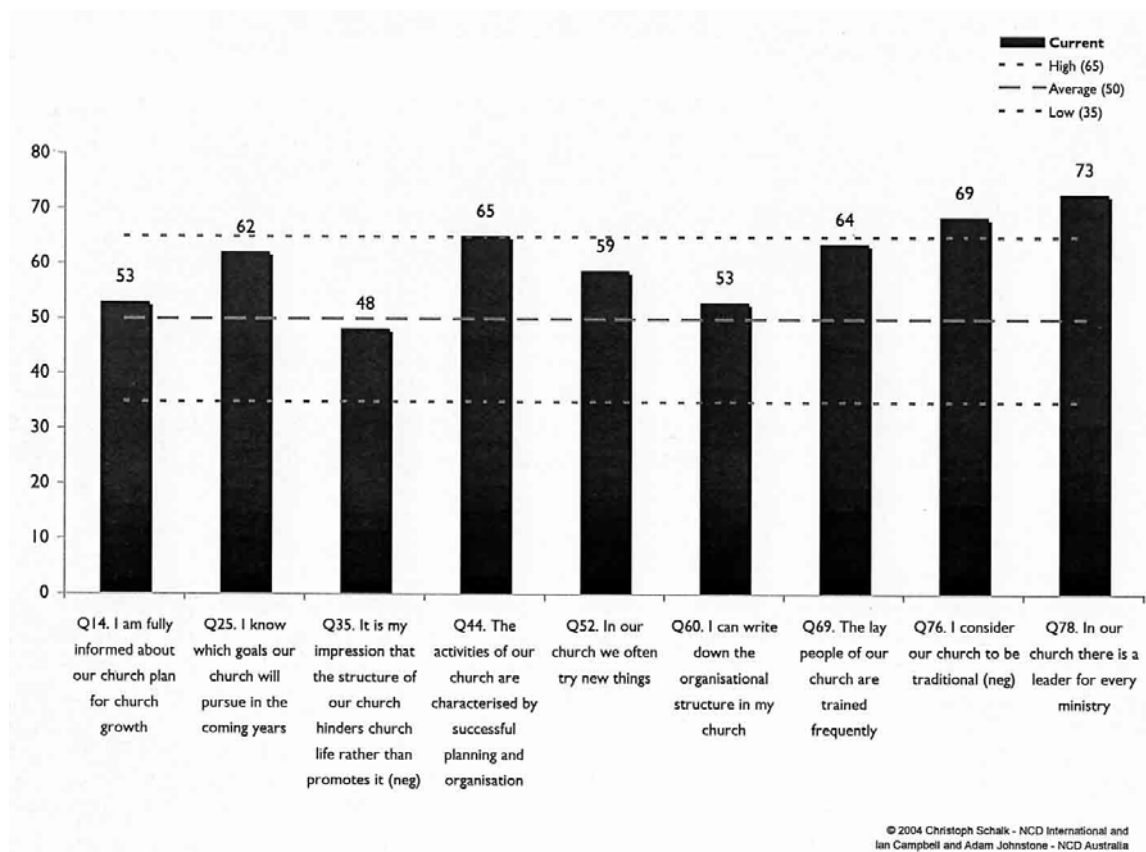


Figure 5. Functional Structures Graph 2005. (used by permission).

### *Inspiring Worship Service*

The overall characteristic score for Inspiring Worship Service (62) indicates relative health in this area. These overall results have remained constant from the 1999 assessment. An internal assessment of this area shows only one question ranking under Canadian average, but it is significantly below all other responses in this area, and with a score of 41 is one of the lowest three scores in the entire survey. This question, “I’m

often bored in the worship service” (phrased in the negative) has experienced a dramatic drop of 22 points since the previous assessment. At first glance it seems to contradict the strongest ranked question in this area, which spoke of the worship service as being an “inspiring experience” (65). This result warrants further scrutiny. (see figure 6).

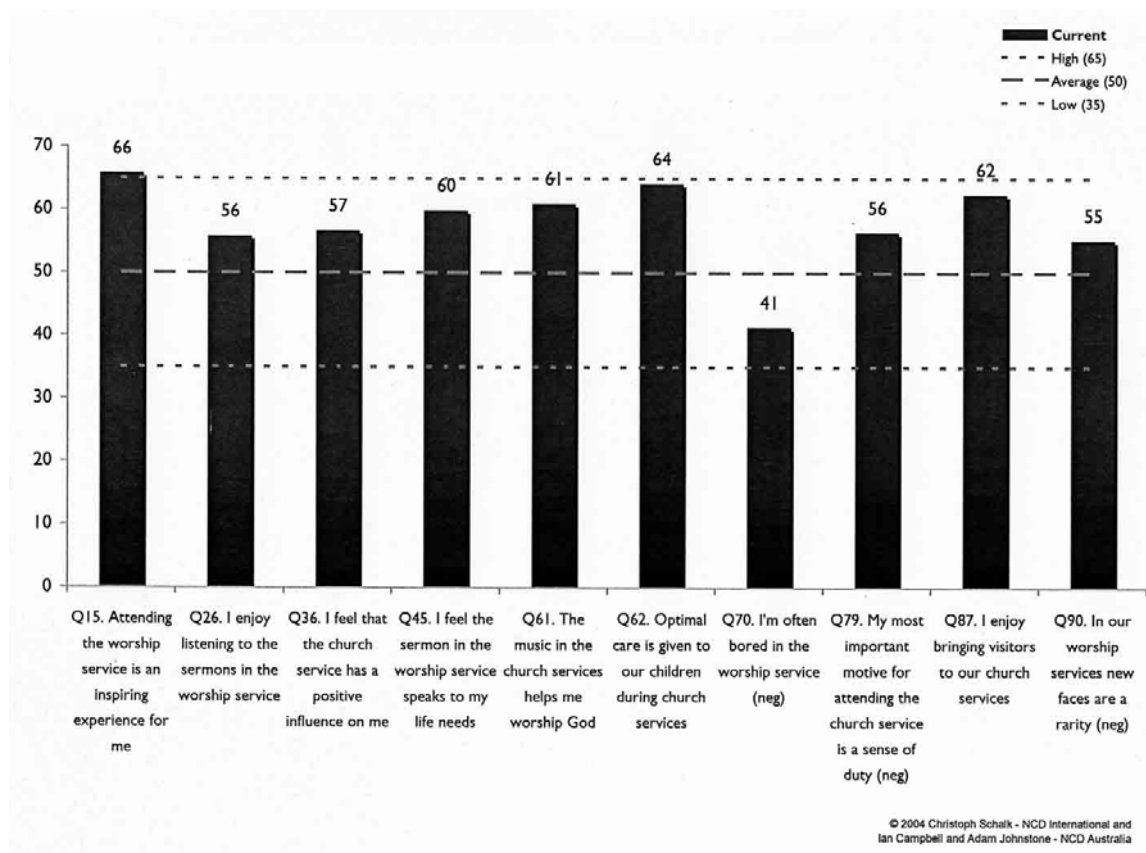


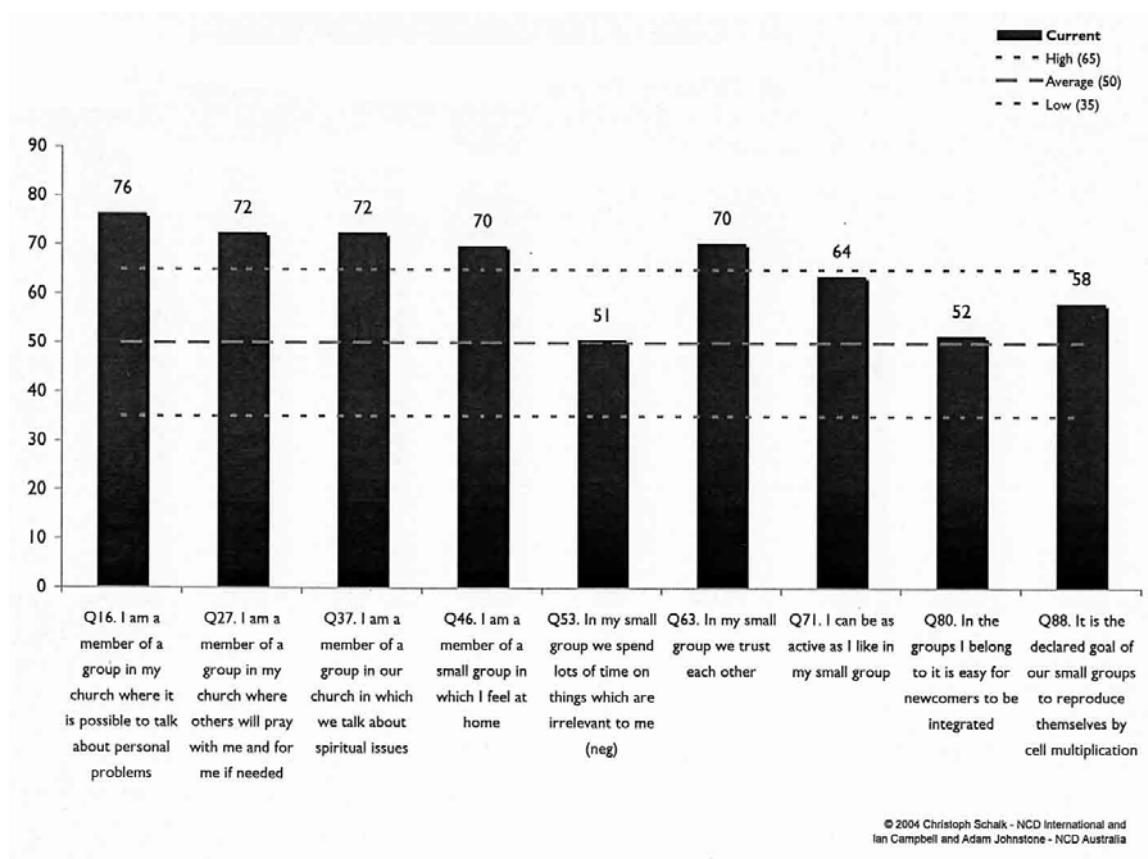
Figure 6. Inspiring Worship Service Graph 2005. (used by permission).

### *Holistic Small Groups*

The overall characteristic score for Holistic Small Groups (71) is the highest in the entire survey, and shows health in this area compared to other characteristics in the BVCC assessment, and in comparison to other Canadian churches. While all nine questions in this area were ranked above Canadian average, the overall results in this area



have decreased 13 points from the 1999 assessment, but remain very strong in comparison to the Canadian norms. One reason for this significant drop in comparison to other Canadian churches is the rise in popularity and success of small groups in Canadian churches over the past five years. So, while statistically we have more people involved in small groups than every before, so do other Canadian churches (Spate, D., personal communication, March 15, 2005). An internal assessment of this area shows most individual questions increased since the previous assessment, however, there was one question that showed a dramatic decrease. A 20 point drop was recorded for the question dealing with small group reproduction. While this characteristic is still above the Canadian average (58), this perception should be addressed to ensure the continued strength of this area. (see figure 7).



*Figure 7. Holistic Small Groups Graph 2005. (used by permission).*

### *Need-Oriented Evangelism*

The overall characteristic score for Need-Oriented Evangelism (54) shows an area of relative weakness for BVCC, even though it scores above Canadian average. This area is one of BVCC's current "minimum factors", in fact, it is the lowest score on the current assessment, and was the minimum factor of the previous (1999) assessment as well. An internal assessment of this area shows significant gains (+ 9 to 15 points) in four of the questions over the 1999 assessment, and a decrease of 9 points on one item. The lowest score on the entire survey (37) was recording in this area on a question regarding how we approach new people who come to our church. The areas of friendliness, openness, and hospitality are perceived areas of relative weakness; these findings were confirmed in the focus group session.

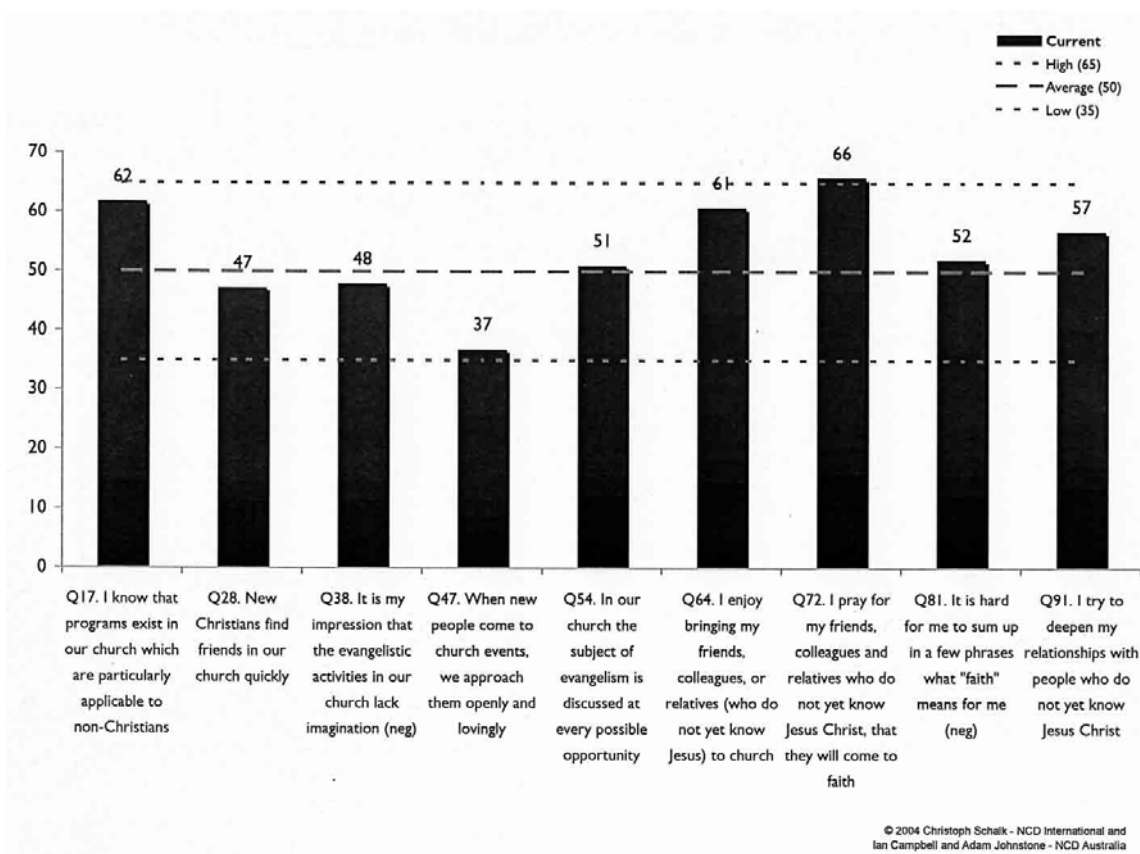


Figure 8. Need-Oriented Evangelism Graph 2005. (used by permission).

### *Loving Relationships*

The overall characteristic score for Loving Relationships (65) shows relative health in this area, a score of 65 places BVCC in the top 15% of Canadian churches in this area. All questions except one in this area are at or above Canadian average. These overall results have remained relatively constant from the 1999 assessment. An internal assessment of this area shows significant gains in most questions (5 out of 9) since the 1999 assessment, including questions regarding sharing praise and compliments. The most dramatic change was a decrease of 35 points to a question regarding keeping silent rather than endangering the peace, plunging the results for that question to a score of 41, the second lowest score on the entire survey.

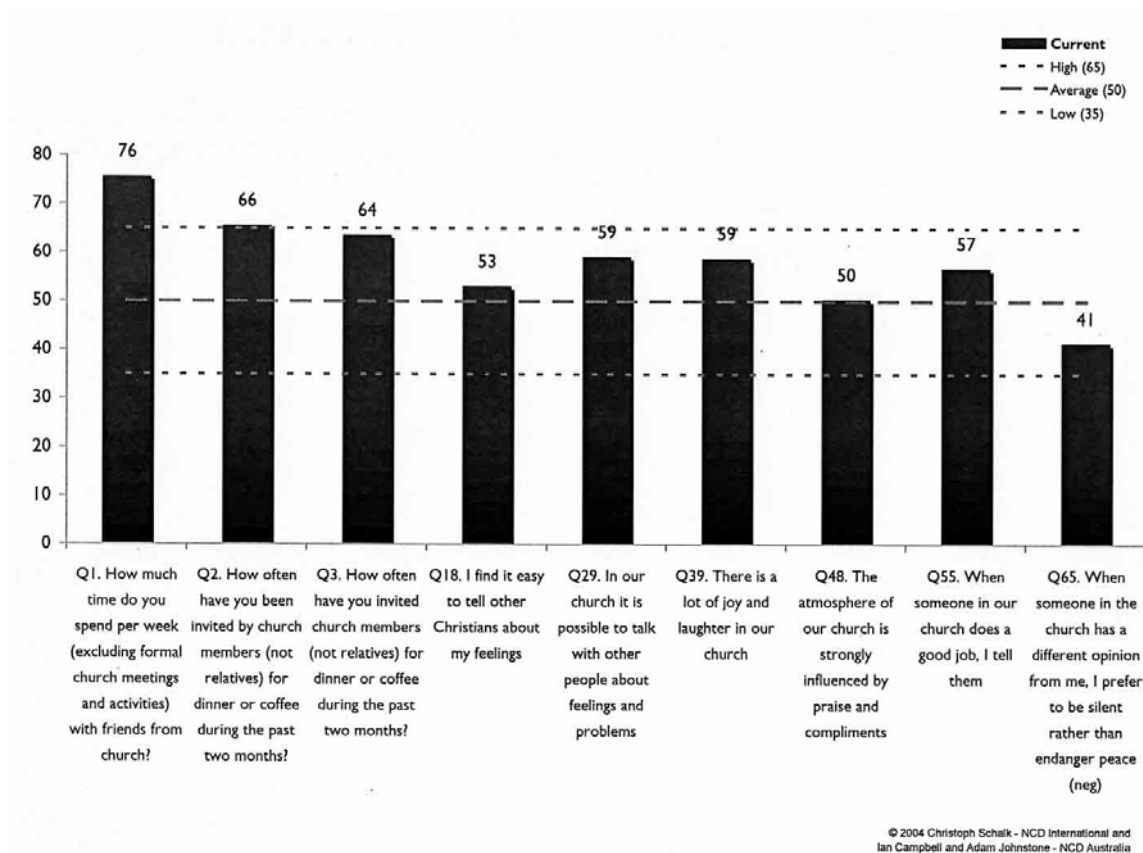


Figure 9. Loving Relationships Graph 2005. (used by permission).

## Study Conclusions

### *Matching of Gifts to Ministry.*

The Maximum Factor from BVCC's 1999 assessment (Gift Oriented Ministry – 91) became one of the minimum factors in the 2005 assessment (Gift Oriented Ministry – 57). This represented the highest degree of change between the two profiles, with a radical drop of 34 points. All other overall characteristic changes were in the range of 0 – 13 points. A need to help people identify what their gifts are, and develop those gifts by engaging them in an appropriate ministry is a theme that appears throughout the survey (Gift-Oriented Ministry, Empowering Leadership), and was identified as an area of weakness in the focus group. This high degree of change in gift-oriented ministries may

be attributable to a heightened awareness of and appreciation for spiritual gifts at the time of the first survey (ranking of 91), and a substantial change in church demographics since that assessment, including a merger with a Chinese congregation and the replacement and addition of several staff members. Developing a widespread understanding of individual's spiritual gifts and the value of practical application of those gifts in ministry should help to engage members of the congregation, leading to a healthier church.

*Friendliness, Inclusiveness, and Hospitality.*

BVCC's current "minimum factor" is in the area of Need-Oriented Evangelism. The lowest score on the survey, and two of the lowest five are in the area of friendliness towards new people (these two questions were in the previous assessment's lowest ten as well). There is a pattern of questions regarding friendliness, inclusiveness, and hospitality scoring relatively low across different characteristics, including the areas of Loving Relationships, Need-Oriented Evangelism, and Holistic Small Groups; and these findings were confirmed in our focus group session. BVCC is not a particularly friendly congregation, and this may be a difficult cycle to break as the reasons for these perceptions are varied. Busyness, fear, complacency, and discomfort with the increasing size and diversity of our congregation ranked high among reasons for this perceived unfriendliness. People tend to retreat to a small circle of friends and acquaintances, choosing the familiar and comfortable over the risk of welcoming and including strangers. This pattern is widespread - transcending age, culture, and gender. The size of the congregation also prohibits any degree of accountability for attendance or participation, or the ability to easily check on individual's well being; again underscoring the importance of connecting as many people as possible with small groups.

### *Multiplication of Small Groups.*

One of BVCC's greatest strengths is in the area of Holistic Small Groups, our "maximum factor". Five of the top ten responses on the entire survey occurred in the area of Holistic Small Groups. A sense of belonging, ability to talk about spiritual and personal issues, building trust, and feeling "at home" all ranked high. These findings were confirmed by our focus group, who also attributed much of the organizational success of BVCC to our high functioning small groups. Information is disseminated and many projects and activities are mobilized through our small group network. Small groups help facilitate the other programs of our church. One caution in the area of Holistic Small Groups is the question regarding small group reproduction (a drop of 20 points since the previous survey). The survey and the focus group indicate some groups have become complacent and inward focused. The literature suggests regular restructuring of small groups, a move towards becoming more welcoming and inclusive, and then as groups become larger - small group multiplication through cell division should be the declared goal of our small groups. This issue is reflective of the friendliness and openness factor detailed above, and should be addressed in order to keep this area of strength working positively for the organization.

### *Strengths to Capitalize On.*

Some of the most positive changes from the previous survey were in the areas of encouragement and thankfulness, and the positive shift in attitude regarding bringing visitors to church services. Capitalizing on these strengths, along with some concentrated effort to improve in the weaker areas listed above should contribute to a healthier

organization and provide favorable conditions to support and encourage growth for BVCC.

### Scope and Limitations of the Research

The scope of this research project did not complete one full cycle of action research, as it ended with the first strategic visioning session with the church board and staff. To complete the cycle the leadership of BVCC need to continue to meet to develop a new vision based on the organizational profile presented; establish new goals, and implement new ideas (possibly modifying or introducing programs). The next cycle of action research would begin in one or two years time with a reassessment, and the creation of a new organizational profile.

This is a study of one particular church at one particular moment in time, and while the model of assessment to strategic vision may be applied to other organizations, the profile created by this study cannot.

A further limitation of this project was the use of a survey. When using a survey the researcher only gets answers to the questions they ask, and while in this research project the inclusion of a focus group did allow for more depth of discovery, the conversation still revolved around the agenda set by the researcher.

The survey and focus group did not establish truth and fact, but dealt with people's opinions and perceptions of the organization's current reality. Each individual's construct of that reality is influenced by his or her own experiences inside and outside of this organization.

In order to maintain the validity of the established survey instrument, participants for this study were selected according to parameters specified by the NCD methodology,

The study did not include the opinions or perceptions of visitors, adherents, people who have left the church for various reasons, or subjects not considered to be core to the ministries of the sponsoring organization.



## CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

### Study Recommendations

In forming recommendations from the research, the researcher has chosen to view the results of this study through five lenses – those of the stakeholders of Bow Valley Christian Church. Those lenses are: the congregation (members or adherents), the staff, the church board (elders), the community at large, and the curriculum (biblical principles). These stakeholder lenses parallel the lenses commonly used to view public education (students, parents, staff, community, and curriculum).

#### *The Congregation*

In addressing the concerns raised in the research regarding friendliness, inclusiveness and hospitality, I recommend church members and adherents be continually encouraged and provided with opportunities to connect and form meaningful relationships with each other. This includes structured and unstructured opportunities to practice and develop friendliness and hospitality. Everyone in the organization needs to be encouraged to invite people to church events, programs and services. People in the congregation with gifts in the hospitality area (matching gifts to ministry) need to be encouraged to move into leadership positions in creating these opportunities, and move the congregation towards becoming more welcoming and inclusive.

According to the survey results and the focus group sessions, the area of Holistic Small Groups is our undisputed strength as an organization. I recommend BVCC capitalize on that strength by working with small groups leaders to encourage their members to invite new people into their small groups, identify and train new leaders, and multiply their groups by cell division.

### *The Staff*

In light of the research concerns regarding the matching of gifts to ministry, and the fact that over half of the present staff of BVCC came on board following the 1999 assessment, I believe a good starting point would be to consider examining and possibly restructuring the staff portfolios to match areas of giftedness to areas of responsibility. This should increase organizational efficiency, and is an excellent way for the church leadership to “model the way” they want the congregation to respond in regards to their areas of giftedness. The staff should work with the board to create a position focused on identifying and matching peoples giftedness to current ministry opportunities in the church, and providing opportunities for congregational interaction, particularly the welcoming and inclusion of new attendees.

The staff should also have a role to play in the facilitation of small group multiplication. Staff members should work towards identification and training of new small group leaders, and have those leaders in place at key times in the year when major restructuring of groups occurs.

Staff could also enable better relationships in the congregation (friendliness, inclusiveness, and hospitality) by providing programming for mid-sized and common interest groups in the church (e.g. young married couples, parents of teens, and “empty nesters”). Properly implemented and advertised, these programs could also be appealing to the community at large, and act as an outreach tool (need-oriented evangelism). The staff should also consider taking advantage of their regular meetings to provide each other with a higher degree of accountability in the area of evangelism in each ministry area.

### *The Board*

The scope of this research project did not complete one cycle of action research, and it is the primary recommendation of this researcher that the church board meet (possibly with the staff) to continue the discussion of the formation of a new organizational vision based on the profile created. Programming (and possibly staffing and elder's portfolio) adjustments should be made to respond to identified areas of need and concern. The board should consider the addition or re-assignment of a staff member who could focus on the areas of hospitality, identification of spiritual gifts, and matching people's gifts to ministry areas in the church in order to shore up areas of perceived weakness revealed in the research. Once the board establishes short-term goals and objectives based on the revised organizational vision, they should hold the staff to a high level of accountability in reaching those goals.

### *The Community*

It is difficult or impossible to make recommendations directly to the community, as they are unknowing stakeholders in the mandate of BVCC. The research does suggest our church should continue to find ways to be a positive member of the community in which it resides, and to see things from a community perspective. BVCC could raise its community profile by participating in wider community events, collaborating with other community organizations, and developing events and programs that respond to the community's needs.

One of the strengths revealed in this study is people's willingness to invite others to church events. BVCC needs to capitalize on this strength in regards to friends, neighbors, business or school acquaintances, and the community surrounding BVCC.

Events and programs that are culturally relevant and “seeker friendly” should be developed and advertised, and BVCC should strive to keep its Sunday services culturally relevant and inclusive to people at various stages of their spiritual journey.

#### *The Curriculum (biblical principles)*

The Bible is our authority on forming and maintaining loving relationships, and the importance of using spiritual gifts to build up the church. While adhering to biblical principles, the leadership of BVCC needs to find new and creative ways to share these truths with the congregation and community to encourage, motivate, and inspire a new vision for identifying and developing people’s spiritual gifts, and reach out to the un-churched community and new attendees in love.

#### Organizational Implementation

The fundamental purpose of this project was to create the possibility of positive organizational change at BVCC. These positive changes should move the organization closer to its vision of it’s ideal future, and closer to it’s stated mission of “Making more and better disciples” (BVCC website, 2004, home page, ¶1). (used by permission). The primary changes required of stakeholders to implement these recommendations are as follows:

#### *The Congregation*

The congregation needs to move further out of their “comfort zone” to connect with new attendees; and invite their friends, neighbors, and acquaintances to church. More time investment in building positive relationships may also be required.

#### *The Staff*

The staff needs to work on discerning in which areas they can spend their time, energy, and resources for the greatest gain (leverage points). The staff may also have to be open to changes in responsibilities and job description, and become more narrowly focused and intentional in reaching established goals.

#### *The Board*

The board will have to invest some time and energy in meeting to establish the new vision and goals, and become more narrowly focused and intentional in reaching those goals. They will also have to provide rigorous accountability for the church staff in working towards the established goals. Implementation of new programming may also have an impact on facilities and expenditures.

#### *The Community*

The community would have to become comfortable with more interaction with the church. There would have to be more openness to the church becoming involved in community affairs, and a part of community life.

#### *The Curriculum*

The Word of God remains constant. In this case, scriptural truth would serve the implementation of the established goals by bringing a sense of authority, if the board was diligent in establishing their goals using Biblical principles.

#### *Implications of Ignoring Recommendations*

If the organization does not move forward on the recommendations of this study the consequences could include stagnation, lack of community impact, loss of vision, and lack of growth for the organization.

### Implications for Future Research

The researcher believes BVCC should repeat a NCD study in 12 – 24 months time. This would allow the organization to measure its progress towards its new vision, and establish a new “minimum factor” on which to focus.

There are nuggets of information within BVCC’s current organizational profile that are of particular interest to specific ministry areas. These should be discussed at staff meetings, and pastoral staff and lay leadership responsible for those areas should be encouraged to conduct focus group sessions within their areas to expand on that information, and to identify areas of concern and areas of strength to be capitalized on.

Other churches within BVCC’s sphere of influence have expressed interest in conducting similar studies, and the researcher will work with them to develop their own organizational profile and work through the strategic visioning process, or help train and equip people within their congregations to complete such a study.

On a much wider scale, the success of this and other projects involving the NCD Assessment in churches imply to the researcher a need in the area of public education for the creation of an assessment instrument to measure the health of a school organization. This would be an enormous undertaking, but could have an incredibly positive long-term effect on school districts, local schools, and the well-being and success of students.

## CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

### Research Project Lessons Learned

The journey I have been on for the last two years left an impact on me that will last a lifetime. I have grown personally in several areas of my life and learned valuable lessons directly and indirectly as a result of my research project, career decisions, and the general stress and pressure of long days and increased workload. The primary lessons I have learned on this journey fit into a few categories.

The more I read, the less I feel I know. Never before have I spent more time and focused energy reading (and re-reading) than I have during the research for this project. Even when I believe I am “saturated” on a particular topic, I soon stumble upon more information that expands, challenges, or alters my perception on my previous reading. It is a good reminder that learning is a lifelong journey, and that I should speak with humility in areas where I think I do have knowledge.

Organizations change very slowly. The book knowledge of the time it takes to achieve organizational institutionalization (Fullan, 2001) became real to me through this research project. In an increasingly transient society it becomes less and less likely that the positive changes a leader initiates will ever reach the stage of institutionalization. Much energy, enthusiasm and commitment is required to keep organizations heading in a positive direction.

Sometimes passion is not enough. My own energy, passion and enthusiasm doesn't always translate into other people becoming engaged. Unless people already possess some measure of intrinsic motivation towards a task or effort, and some degree of

shared vision, it is very difficult to sway or motivate people through charisma, passion and energy alone.

Even in higher education, the relationships are as important as the content. Numerous roadblocks and speed bumps along the journey were the result of my becoming too task oriented, and not spending enough time and energy on the relationships involved. Some of the best life-lessons learned, and some of my biggest regrets on this journey are in the area of relationships.

Leadership is accomplishing things through other people. This may seem too basic a concept to be included in a master's thesis, but it was (and is) an important lesson that I am learning along the way. It has required a major shift in focus, attitude, and at times slight compromises in quality, but pouring myself into the development of other's abilities has also been rewarding.

Time management is a valuable skill. While I found it personally impossible to achieve any semblance of balance in my life during these past two years, I have learned to become a better time manager (and it helped). In hindsight, I do not believe the completion of this degree in two years while maintaining a full-time job and a healthy family life was a reasonable objective. I was often stretched far beyond my capacity and felt I was compromising in all areas of my life, not living up to my own standards. Without the unwavering support of my family, employer, and colleagues, I would have likely abandoned this pursuit along the way.

I learned the value of reflection. I suppose it is slightly ironic that an in-depth study of vision and strategic visioning resulted in a profound appreciation for the art of reflective thinking. I have learned that you must understand the past in order to build a



better future. Reflective thinking played an invaluable role throughout my studies in making sense of and assimilating new information, in maintaining a sense of purpose and progress towards my goals, and it now plays an important role in my decision making process. Reflective thinking is an art, and I had the opportunity to learn it from true masters.

This journey did not take me where I thought I would go, but I would not trade my experiences along the way for any other path. My studies, my classmates, and my new career opportunities have enriched my life. I believe I have grown personally and have learned practical life-lessons that I could not have learned any other way. The completion of this thesis and degree is not the end-point in my journey of life-long learning, but I think I owe it to myself to take a break. I am going to the castle.

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## Appendix A

## Questionnaire for Lay People

(Canadian English Edition #2.1, Permission to Photocopy is Granted)

This questionnaire will help us discover the strengths and weaknesses in our church. It is important that you answer *all* of the questions by filling in the blanks or by marking one of the indicated boxes. When you come to a question in which none of the responses match your opinion, please choose the response that corresponds *as closely as possible* to your opinion. Think about our church and how it looks from your point of view at present.

The questionnaires are evaluated anonymously. Your answers will be treated absolutely confidentially. Do not write your name on the questionnaire. Please return the completed questionnaire to the person from whom you received it. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. How much time do you spend per week (excluding church meetings) with friends from church?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 hour      <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 hours<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2 hours      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 5 hours<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 3 hours         </p> <p>2. How often have you been invited by church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all      <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 5 times<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 time      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 5 times<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 3 times         </p> <p>3. How often have you invited church members (not relatives) for dinner or coffee during the past two months?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Not at all      <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 5 times<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 time      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 5 times<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 3 times         </p> <p>4. Approximately what percentage of your gross income do you give in tithes and offerings for church support, missions, etc.?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1%      <input type="checkbox"/> 6-9%<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1-4%      <input type="checkbox"/> 10%<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> About 5%      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10%         </p> <p>5. How many friendships do you have with other church members?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> None      <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 20<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2      <input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 30<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10         </p> | <p>6. Have you ever been a member of another church since you became a Christian?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No         </p> <p>7. How long have you been a Christian?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year      <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 20 years<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2 years      <input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 30 years<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5 years      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30 years<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10 years      <input type="checkbox"/> No indication possible         </p> <p>8. How many friendships do you have with non-Christians?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> None      <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 20<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2      <input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 30<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 5      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 30<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10         </p> <p>9. Has your church publicly announced a goal for the number of congregational members you would like to have by a given date?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No         </p> <p>10. Approximately how much time do you spend in prayer each day?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 minutes      <input type="checkbox"/> 46 to 60 minutes<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 10 to 20 minutes      <input type="checkbox"/> 61 to 90 minutes<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 30 minutes      <input type="checkbox"/> 91 to 120 minutes<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> 31 to 45 minutes      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 120 minutes         </p> |
|--|---|

To what degree is the following statement true? . . . (For each question, circle one answer only.)	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
The leaders of our church (pastor, elders, etc.) have an inspiring optimism.	0	1	2	3	4	11
I know my spiritual gifts.	0	1	2	3	4	12
I know that other church members pray for me regularly.	0	1	2	3	4	13
I am fully informed about our church plan for church growth.	0	1	2	3	4	14
Attending the worship service is an inspiring experience for me.	0	1	2	3	4	15
I am a member of a group in my church where it is possible to talk about personal problems.	0	1	2	3	4	16
I know that programs exist in our church which are particularly applicable to non-Christians.	0	1	2	3	4	17
I find it easy to tell other Christians about my feelings.	0	1	2	3	4	18
Our church is known in our community as a place where everyone is welcome.	0	1	2	3	4	19
People in our church are appreciated for the work they do with other community groups.	0	1	2	3	4	20
I would call myself a happy and contented person.	0	1	2	3	4	21
The leaders of our church prefer to do the work themselves rather than delegate it.	0	1	2	3	4	22
I enjoy the tasks I do in the church fellowship.	0	1	2	3	4	23
I enjoy reading the Bible on my own.	0	1	2	3	4	24
I know which goals our church will pursue in the coming years.	0	1	2	3	4	25
I enjoy listening to the sermons in the worship service.	0	1	2	3	4	26
I am a member of a group in my church in which others will pray with me and for me if needed.	0	1	2	3	4	27
New Christians find friends in our church quickly.	0	1	2	3	4	28
In our church it is possible to talk with other people about feelings and problems.	0	1	2	3	4	29
I enjoy my life (profession, family, spare time, etc.).	0	1	2	3	4	30
I consider it improper to plan and organize spiritual things.	0	1	2	3	4	31
The leaders of our church concentrate on the tasks for which they are gifted.	0	1	2	3	4	32
I feel that my church supports me in my ministry.	0	1	2	3	4	33
I experience the transforming influences faith has in the different areas of my life (i.e. profession, family, spare time, etc.).	0	1	2	3	4	34
It is my impression that the organizational structure of our church hinders church life rather than promotes it.	0	1	2	3	4	35
I feel that the church service has a positive influence on me.	0	1	2	3	4	36
I am a member of a group in our church in which we talk about spiritual issues.	0	1	2	3	4	37

To what degree is the following statement true? . . . (For each question, circle one answer only.)	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
It is my impression that the evangelistic activities in our church lack imagination.	0	1	2	3	4	38
There is a lot of joy and laughter in our church.	0	1	2	3	4	39
I intentionally lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle.	0	1	2	3	4	40
Our pastor looks for help from lay people to complement those areas in which he is not gifted.	0	1	2	3	4	41
It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church.	0	1	2	3	4	42
I am enthusiastic about my church.	0	1	2	3	4	43
The activities of our church are characterized by successful planning and organization.	0	1	2	3	4	44
I feel that the sermon in the worship service speaks to my life needs.	0	1	2	3	4	45
I am a member of a small group in which I feel at home.	0	1	2	3	4	46
When new people come to church events, we approach them openly and lovingly.	0	1	2	3	4	47
The atmosphere of our church is strongly influenced by praise and compliments.	0	1	2	3	4	48
The leaders of our church prefer to evade conflicts.	0	1	2	3	4	49
The tasks I perform in my church are in accordance with my gifts.	0	1	2	3	4	50
The Word of God is the most important authority in the decisions of my everyday life.	0	1	2	3	4	51
In our church we often try new things.	0	1	2	3	4	52
In my small group we spend lots of time with things which are irrelevant to me.	0	1	2	3	4	53
In our church the subject of evangelism is discussed at all possible opportunities.	0	1	2	3	4	54
When someone in our church does a good job I tell them.	0	1	2	3	4	55
Our pastor has too much work to do.	0	1	2	3	4	56
I feel my task in the church is an enjoyable challenge.	0	1	2	3	4	57
Our pastor is a spiritual example to me.	0	1	2	3	4	58
Very often, I have reason to thank God for His work in my life.	0	1	2	3	4	59
I could write down the organizational structure in my church.	0	1	2	3	4	60
The music in the church services helps me worship God.	0	1	2	3	4	61
Optimal care is given to our children during church services.	0	1	2	3	4	62
In my small group we show trust towards one another.	0	1	2	3	4	63
I enjoy bringing my friends, colleagues, or relatives (who do not yet know Jesus) to church.	0	1	2	3	4	64

To what degree is the following statement true? . . . (For each question, circle one answer only.)	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
When someone in our church has a different opinion from me, I prefer to be silent rather than to endanger peace.	0	1	2	3	4	65
Our pastor gives a lot of church members the opportunity to help in organizing the church service.	0	1	2	3	4	66
I know what value my work has in the total work of the church.	0	1	2	3	4	67
I firmly believe that God will act even more powerfully in our church in the coming years.	0	1	2	3	4	68
The lay people of our church are trained frequently.	0	1	2	3	4	69
I'm often bored in the worship service.	0	1	2	3	4	70
I can be as active as I like in my small group.	0	1	2	3	4	71
I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet have faith in Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith.	0	1	2	3	4	72
I attentively observe world events through the media.	0	1	2	3	4	73
Our pastor seems to feel at home in our church.	0	1	2	3	4	74
I often tell other Christians when I have experienced something from God.	0	1	2	3	4	75
I consider our church to be too traditional.	0	1	2	3	4	76
There should be a high degree of cooperation among churches in a community.	0	1	2	3	4	77
In our church there is a leader for each ministry.	0	1	2	3	4	78
My most important motive for attending the church service is a sense of duty.	0	1	2	3	4	79
In the groups I belong to it is easy for newcomers to be integrated.	0	1	2	3	4	80
It is hard for me to sum up in a few phrases what faith means for me.	0	1	2	3	4	81
Our church does something about hunger in the world.	0	1	2	3	4	82
People in our church are highly motivated to do church work.	0	1	2	3	4	83
Times of prayer are an inspiring experience for me.	0	1	2	3	4	84
When a church member is obviously in the wrong, (moral misconduct, willful disobedience, etc.) this is corrected with love, but firmly.	0	1	2	3	4	85
Our church facilities (owned or rented) serve our ministries well.	0	1	2	3	4	86
I enjoy bringing visitors to our church services.	0	1	2	3	4	87
It is the declared goal of our small groups to start new groups by dividing themselves.	0	1	2	3	4	88
It is possible to be a devoted servant of God and simultaneously enjoy life.	0	1	2	3	4	89
In our worship services new faces are a rarity.	0	1	2	3	4	90
I try to deepen my relationships with people who do not yet have faith in Jesus Christ.	0	1	2	3	4	91



## Questionnaire for the Pastor

(Canadian English Edition #2, Permission to Photocopy is Granted)

It is important that you answer *all* of the questions by filling in the blanks or by marking one of the indicated boxes. When you come to a question for which none of the responses match your opinion, please choose the response that corresponds *as closely as possible* to your opinion. Think about your church and how it looks from your point of view at present.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Church name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

3. City / Prov / Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Church phone number: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Church fax number: ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Your gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

9. Your highest level of education:

☐ Theological Studies ☐ Bible School ☐ Training on the job ☐ Other

10. Denomination: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Number on church membership roll: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Type of community where church is located:

☐ Rural ☐ Urban/Metropolitan City ☐ Other

13. What year did you become pastor of this church? \_\_\_\_\_

14. At present, there is an average of \_\_\_\_\_ adults attending church services every week.

15. At present, there is an average of \_\_\_\_\_ children attending church services every week.

16. During the past five years the average adult attendance at your primary worship service was:

1 yr. ago: \_\_\_\_\_ 2 yrs. ago: \_\_\_\_\_ 3 yrs. ago: \_\_\_\_\_ 4 yrs. ago: \_\_\_\_\_ 5 yrs. ago: \_\_\_\_\_

17. Have you planted daughter churches? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

19. Have you given church members to daughter churches during the past five years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

20. If yes, what year(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

21. If yes, how many members? \_\_\_\_\_

22. In our church we have \_\_\_\_\_ church services per week.

23. In our church there is a total of \_\_\_\_\_ small groups (home Bible studies, prayer groups, etc.)

To what degree is the following statement true? . . . (For each question, circle one answer only.)	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
Our church services attract visitors.	0	1	2	3	4	24
I have a written, formulated plan for the next steps of our church growth.	0	1	2	3	4	25
Our church has specialized ministries for new believers.	0	1	2	3	4	26
I consider it dangerous to worry too much about "feeling comfortable" in the church fellowship.	0	1	2	3	4	27
The people who attend our church are a good cross-section of the community we serve.	0	1	2	3	4	28
Concerning my personality, I prefer to act on the spur of the moment without over-planning.	0	1	2	3	4	29
I expect the lay people of my church to always comply with my decisions.	0	1	2	3	4	30
For us, it is more important that a person attends a small group than the church service.	0	1	2	3	4	31
I enjoy being in the community where I live.	0	1	2	3	4	32
I enjoy church work.	0	1	2	3	4	33
The volunteer lay leaders of our church are trained for their ministries.	0	1	2	3	4	34
The leaders of the ministries of our church have frequent meetings (i.e. at least once per month) for discussion.	0	1	2	3	4	35
The leaders in all ministry areas are trained for their tasks.	0	1	2	3	4	36
I know which individuals in our church have the gift of evangelism.	0	1	2	3	4	37
I know about the personal problems of the core lay people.	0	1	2	3	4	38
Our music leaders stay current with church music developments.	0	1	2	3	4	39
I intentionally lead a healthy and balanced lifestyle.	0	1	2	3	4	40
The planting of new churches is an important goal for us.	0	1	2	3	4	41
I personally do not like church statistics very much.	0	1	2	3	4	42
We keep a record of the total number of congregational members attending services every week.	0	1	2	3	4	43
When a lay person takes over a task, we give a written description of the task.	0	1	2	3	4	44
In our church the tasks are assigned without setting a time limit.	0	1	2	3	4	45
Before or after church services, we offer opportunities for fellowship.	0	1	2	3	4	46

To what degree is the following statement true? . . . (For each question, circle one answer only.)	Very great extent	Great extent	Average	Hardly	Not at all	
Our church concentrates its activities on one or more clearly defined ministry target group of people.	0	1	2	3	4	47
Sometimes we develop special tasks for certain people corresponding to their gifts.	0	1	2	3	4	48
When a new person comes into our church services they can stay anonymous if they want to.	0	1	2	3	4	49
The most important task for every Christian is to be evangelistically active.	0	1	2	3	4	50
When churches want to grow, it is absolutely necessary for them to set growth goals concerning the number of congregational members.	0	1	2	3	4	51
I would rather act intuitively or spontaneously than to make plans.	0	1	2	3	4	52
When someone adapts their preaching to be sensitive to the cultural context of non-Christians they water-down the gospel.	0	1	2	3	4	53
Love cannot be learned.	0	1	2	3	4	54
I am sure that God wants our church to grow.	0	1	2	3	4	55
My work is regularly discussed and assessed by an "outside assistant" (i.e. church counselor, pastor colleague, etc.).	0	1	2	3	4	56
In the long term we are concerned that lay people take only those tasks for which they are gifted.	0	1	2	3	4	57
We have leaders for the individual ministries in our church.	0	1	2	3	4	58
Our church reacts to change with skepticism.	0	1	2	3	4	59
In our church we consciously promote the reproduction of small groups by dividing them.	0	1	2	3	4	60
The church leadership supports individual Christians in their evangelistic engagement.	0	1	2	3	4	61
It is important for me to regularly express praise and acknowledgement to the lay people.	0	1	2	3	4	62
I am disturbed that, in my area of responsibility, people without Jesus Christ are lost for eternity.	0	1	2	3	4	63
I am the type of person who likes to do it all by myself.	0	1	2	3	4	64
The church leaders (elders, deacons, board, etc.) actively support evangelization and building up the church fellowship.	0	1	2	3	4	65
The leaders of small groups or ministries each have apprentice leaders.	0	1	2	3	4	66
We set great importance on integrating newly converted people into evangelistic work.	0	1	2	3	4	67
I feel that church work is a burden.	0	1	2	3	4	68
The maintenance of relationships with individual church members is more important for me than planning or organizing activities.	0	1	2	3	4	69

70. How much time do you spend by yourself in prayer each day?

- ☐ 0 Less than 10 minutes  
☐ 1 10 to 20 minutes  
☐ 2 21 to 30 minutes  
☐ 3 31 to 45 minutes  
☐ 4 46 to 60 minutes  
☐ 5 61 to 90 minutes  
☐ 6 91 to 120 minutes  
☐ 7 More than 120 minutes

71. How long have you been a Christian?

- ☐ 0 Less than 1 year    ☐ 4 11 to 20 years  
☐ 1 1 to 2 years    ☐ 5 21 to 30 years  
☐ 2 3 to 5 years    ☐ 6 Longer than 30 years  
☐ 3 6 to 10 years    ☐ 7 No indication possible

72. How many friendships do you have with non-Christians?

- ☐ 0 None    ☐ 4 11 to 20  
☐ 1 1 to 2    ☐ 5 21 to 30  
☐ 2 3 to 5    ☐ 6 More than 30  
☐ 3 6 to 10

73. The music style of our church can be described as follows: (check all that apply)

- ☐ 0 Modern  
☐ 1 Traditional  
☐ 2 With organ  
☐ 3 Without instruments  
☐ 4 With percussion instruments  
☐ 5 Worship songs  
☐ 6 Songs with an evangelistic message  
☐ 7 Spontaneous  
☐ 8 Planned

74. Our church has publicly announced a goal for the number of congregational members we would like to have by a given date.

- ☐ 0 Yes  
☐ 1 No

75. My leadership style can be described best as: (check all that apply)

- ☐ 0 Authoritarian  
☐ 1 Partnership  
☐ 2 Democratic  
☐ 3 Task-oriented  
☐ 4 People-oriented  
☐ 5 Goal-oriented  
☐ 6 Serving  
☐ 7 Relationship-oriented

76. Which of the following slogans would describe you best? (check all that apply)

- ☐ 0 Evangelical    ☐ 5 Charismatic  
☐ 1 Fundamentalist    ☐ 6 "Third Wave"  
☐ 2 Liberal    ☐ 7 Politically engaged  
☐ 3 Liturgical    ☐ 8 Other  
☐ 4 Pentecostal

77. Which of the following would you identify as your spiritual gifts? (check all that apply)

- ☐ 0 Leadership    ☐ 4 Pastoral service  
☐ 1 Faith    ☐ 5 Teaching  
☐ 2 Counseling    ☐ 6 Evangelization  
☐ 3 Organization

78. What percent of your congregation use their gifts for building up the church?

- ☐ 0 Less than 10 percent  
☐ 1 10 to 25 percent  
☐ 2 26 to 40 percent  
☐ 3 50 percent  
☐ 4 60 to 80 percent  
☐ 5 More than 80 percent

79. What percent of your congregation is integrated into small groups?

- ☐ 0 Less than 10 percent  
☐ 1 10 to 25 percent  
☐ 2 26 to 50 percent  
☐ 3 51 to 75 percent  
☐ 4 More than 75 percent

(used by permission).

## Appendix B

### From Assessment to Strategic Vision

#### Focus Group Questions

1. Of the eight characteristics in the NCD Assessment, which do you feel is BVCC's area of greatest strength?
2. How do you think we could capitalize on that strength?
3. Of the eight characteristics in the NCD Assessment, which do you feel is BVCC's area of greatest weakness?
4. How could BVCC improve in that area?
5. Do you have any suggestions on how overall church health could be improved at BVCC?

## Appendix C

## Free and Informed Consent Form

### From Assessment to Strategic Vision

A research project by

Mike R. Schuster

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a

Master of Arts in Leadership and Training from Royal Roads University

**Project Sponsor:** Rick Scruggs, Senior Pastor, Bow Valley Christian Church

**Project Supervisor:** Dr. Bernie Potvin, Ph.D.

You are being invited to participate in the above entitled action research project, whose purpose is to create an organizational profile of Bow Valley Christian Church that can be used by the church staff and board for strategic visioning towards church growth.

You may be asked to participate in one or more of the following research activities:

a) Natural Church Development (NCD) Assessment – this will involve:

- Reading a short description (booklet) detailing the key concepts of the Natural Church Development methodology. (approximately 20 minutes).
- Attending an evening session to hear a brief presentation, question and answer session, sign a letter of informed consent, and complete a NCD Assessment. Surveys will be anonymous. (approximately 60 – 90 minutes).

b) Focus Group Purposive Sample Interviews

You may be asked to participate in a focus group interview to confirm / disconfirm the results of the NCD Assessment. Information at this focus group session will be recorded (video) for use by the researcher. The purpose of recording this session is to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. In addition written data will be collected to capture thoughts and comments expressed during the session. Loss of anonymity will occur for members of this focus group. All members of this group will be asked to maintain confidentiality of the events and discussions in this session.

c) Strategic Visioning Session (Focus Group) of the Church Staff and Board

Church staff and board members will be invited to participate in a strategic visioning (focus group) session where they will be presented with an organizational profile of BVCC, background information regarding church growth principles, strategic visioning, and the NCD methodology. This session will begin the process of strategic visioning towards church growth for BVCC. This session will be recorded (video) to assure accuracy of data collected. Loss of anonymity will occur for members of this focus group. All members of this group will be asked to maintain confidentiality of the events and discussions in this session.

d) Discussions, Conversations, and Observations by the Researcher

I will be soliciting feedback of all research participants, staff, and board members throughout the duration of this project. Observations, comments, and opinions will be recorded in a research journal for use by the researcher in the creation of a final report.

Where appropriate the information and comments will be summarized in anonymous format in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual unless specific agreement has been obtained beforehand. The participant's names will not appear on any documentation available for public viewing. This information will be held in strict confidence by the researcher and will only be seen by private transcribers, research assistants and the Major Project supervisor affiliated with Royal Roads University.

A copy of the final report will be housed at Royal Roads University and be publicly accessible.

Prospective research participants are not compelled to take part in this research project. If an individual does elect to take part, she or he is free to withdraw at any time with no prejudice. Similarly if employees of BVCC or other individuals elect not to take part in this research project, it will not affect their employment or advancement.

Your signature below informs that you give your free and informed consent and understanding of the above conditions for your willing participation in this project and that you have been provided with the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researcher.

Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D



## How to use Profile Plus

### 1. Essential Reading to Use Profile Plus Effectively

#### 1.1 Why this resource?

Your church is a dynamic, living organism whose health is constantly changing. All actions in your church at every point in time, especially decisions by leadership, result in the church's health improving or declining. No matter how healthy your church is there are always areas for improvement. Profile Plus provides a comprehensive and clear picture of church life so you can track that dynamic change and stay focused on current and emerging health issues.

Growing the church is a partnership with God. Profile Plus helps you fulfill your role of identifying existing and potential barriers to health. Regular, accurate identification of barriers, and taking effective steps to remove them, maximizes the potential for ongoing growth.

#### 1.2 The Profile Plus numbers

The statistical scale for all Profile Plus graphs is the same as the one used for the basic profile graph of the eight Quality Characteristics. The results are standardized scores, not percentages, based upon a standardization for your country that is updated annually. The result for each question can be directly compared with the results for all other questions. The statistical model is as follows.

- The "average" church will score 50; above 50 means above average health and below 50 means below average health.
- 70% of churches score between 35 and 65.
- Scoring 65 or higher puts your church in the top 15% of churches. This shows a high degree of health.
- Scoring 35 or less places your church in the lowest 15% of churches.
- It is possible to get less than zero and more than 100.

#### 1.3 Recognise strengths and weaknesses are relative

For a proper perspective on the health of individual scores, you must compare them with the results for the rest of the country and not just the other results in your profile. Do this using the scale on the left side of the page (see 1.2 above).

For example, you may score 53 for "New Christians find friends in our church quickly" while all other results for Need-oriented Evangelism are over 65. On this comparison alone, you may conclude: "We are no good at helping new Christians find friends". A comparison with the rest of the country shows such a conclusion to be untrue.

#### 1.4 Negatively-phrased questions

All questions on the Profile Plus graphs are taken directly from the questionnaire. However, the questionnaire includes some negatively-phrased questions to achieve statistical accuracy. The *graphed results* for these questions have been reversed on the Profile Plus graphs so that they can be compared directly with the graphed results of positively-phrased questions. Negatively-phrased questions are identified by a (neg).

In reading these results, you may wish to rephrase the question by adding a "not" (or equivalent phrasing). If that is too difficult, remember this: the higher the result, the healthier it is.

#### 1.5 Avoid trying to do your own calculations

It is not possible to average the results for questions related to a characteristic and generate the overall result for that characteristic. There are two main reasons for this.

- For reasons of anonymity, the results for individual questions exclude the pastor's questionnaire(s).
- The results do not include the contributive weightings of each question towards the overall result for a characteristic.





### 1.6 Line graphs

Some graphs use a line format so it is easier to compare multiple profiles and identify trends. The lines connecting individual dot points are not statistically relevant.

### 1.7 Accuracy

Completed profiles are regularly added to the database in your country and a new national standardization is issued by the Institute for NCD every year. This ensures the ongoing statistical accuracy of all detailed analyses.

The anonymity of the survey process also contributes to accuracy because respondents feel that they can say exactly what they think.

## 2. Getting the Most from Profile Plus

The principal function of Profile Plus is to help you accurately identify existing and potential barriers impeding healthy growth.

### 2.1 Where to begin

The most helpful information regarding the key health issues is found in the following five pages:

- Cover page - containing summary information
- 'Quality Characteristic Current Profile'
- 'Current [Minimum Factor]'
- 'Current Highest 10'
- 'Current Lowest 10'

Having focused on the principal issues raised in these pages, particularly with respect to the Minimum Factor, the other graphs can be used to bring further insight into the information found in the above five pages and for addressing other specific ministry areas.

### 2.2 Suggested method of interpretation

The following is a proven method for interpretation. It involves placing individual results within the context of the whole profile and identifying unique issues by exploring connections between questions.

1. Look within a *Quality Characteristic*. Examine the results for a *Quality Characteristic* and ask questions such as:
  - "Why is this result high and that result high?"
  - "Why is this result low and that result low?"
  - "Why is this result low but that result high?"
2. Look across *Quality Characteristics*. Use these same questions to draw connections between results across *Quality Characteristics*, revealing issues and barriers not evident from looking at each *Quality Characteristic* on its own. (The graph *Current Lowest 10* is helpful here.)
3. Look for trends. If the church has done two or more profiles, additional graphs are provided showing historical trends. These comparative graphs highlight:
  - the immediate impact of actions taken to remove specific barriers;
  - longer term barriers (eg. cultural factors) not clearly evident in a single profile; and
  - potential or emerging barriers.
4. Look for strengths. The *Current Highest 10* graph highlights the ten areas where the church is healthiest. Celebrate these and consider them in plans to address the Minimum Factor.

### 2.3 All activity impacts health

If you have done two or more profiles, Profile Plus shows you the effect on the church's health of all activity in the church since the previous profile, whether you actively addressed the Minimum Factor issues or not. The 'Change' charts, in particular the *Highest 10 Changes Previous to Current* and *Lowest 10 Changes Previous to Current*, are helpful in this regard.



### 3. Copyright, presentations, confidentiality and disclaimers

#### 3.1 Copyright

Profile Plus © 2004 Christoph Schalk – NCD International and Ian Campbell & Adam Johnstone – Direction Ministry Resources (NCD National Partner, Australia)

NCD questions © NCD International

#### 3.2 Presenting this report publicly

You may screen this report directly through a data projector. Open the file in Acrobat Reader. Select the 'View' menu, then 'Full Screen'. Use the up and down arrows on your keyboard to select the desired graphs.

#### 3.3 Confidentiality

This report may only be used by the church whose data it contains or by the denominational leaders or the NCD coach who requested it on behalf of the church. Its contents are not to be revealed publicly without the express permission of the church concerned.

#### 3.4 Publication or presentation of results

No part of this report may be reproduced in magazines, newsletters, journals, books or websites, or presented in a public forum, without the written permission of the church and the relevant NCD National Partner.

#### 3.5 Publication of NCD questions

This report is based on the NCD Survey questions devised and compiled by the Institute for Natural Church Development International, also known as NCD International. These questions may not be reproduced in any form outside of this report.

### 3.6 Decisions based on this report

The church whose data appears in this report has sole responsibility for:

- ensuring that the most up-to-date Profile Plus report is being used;
- determining who has access to it;
- ensuring that all who do have access read its contents accurately;
- all conclusions drawn from the report and
- the consequences of any actions taken as a result of drawing those conclusions.

### 4. Questions?

If you have any questions, contact (i) your NCD Coach or (ii) the person in your denomination or movement who has responsibility for NCD or (iii) the person who supplied you with the NCD Survey results.

If this is not possible, contact the NCD National Partner in your country.

Contact details can be found on the NCD International website – [www.ncdnet.org](http://www.ncdnet.org).

At this website you will also find:

- additional information about NCD resources, research and coaching
- NCD news, videos and case studies from around the world
- answers to Frequently Asked Questions about NCD
- eNCDline - the Natural Church Development online magazine

Please do not directly contact the authors of Profile Plus or the Institute for Natural Church Development International. If your questions cannot be answered at the local level, they will be passed on by your NCD National Partner.

Should you require more than a brief consultation on the contents of this report, please be prepared to negotiate a fee for the services provided.

We trust that you and your church will be blessed as you use this NCD tool for releasing the potential for healthy, sustainable, 'all by itself' growth.

**Christoph Schalk – Institute for NCD International**  
**Ian Campbell & Adam Johnstone – NCD Australia**