



A Planning Guide for Local Churches

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REACH Ontario!

A Planning Guide for Churches

I. INTRODUCTION

God has commissioned all His people—individuals, families and churches—to reach out to the community around them with the life-changing news of salvation. Our mission as a church is to reach out to every person of every background and language in Ontario with a message of hope.

Over the last eight months, our conference team has been working on a strategy which will, when embraced, infiltrate the life of all our churches. The REACH strategy, as outlined in *Ontario Highlights* and presented by the president at meetings for pastors and church officers, is designed to dramatically and positively bring changes to all of our lives, in the way we treat each other, in the way we reach out to the world, and in the way we do business. We are convinced that as you embrace the strategy, it will richly impact your ministry and give it new meaning, purpose and satisfaction.

This planning guide is a reflection of what we have learned through the process of creating a REACH strategy for our conference. It will guide you through the process of creating a strategy for your church, help you avoid pitfalls and keep you focussed on your goals.



What Is the REACH Strategy?

REACH is an acronym for a wholistic strategy for accomplishing mission with excellence. It reflects five enduring values that were voted by the North American Division Executive Committee on October 28, 2011 and provides a common focus for the church at levels.

The Acronym

Revival & transformation:

Connecting with God through public and personal worship

Education for discipleship:

Every youth and adult learning, growing, and becoming more like Christ.

Alignment within the church:

Connecting effectively within our diverse church family

Community outreach & evangelism:

Connecting with our communities—sharing hope and wholeness

Healthy leadership & management:

God's stewards, insisting on personal and church-wide excellence

Embracing Local Vision and Strategies

REACH is not intended to replace nor supersede the vision and strategies the local church has diligently created. Rather, it recognises and readily embraces them and helps to even clarify them, giving them greater prominence and helps the church reach its goals.

Evaluating the Vitality of Your Church (NCD)

How healthy is your church? While it may have many good activities and programmes taking place, has it been carefully evaluated? How will you know when there is improvement in a particular area? In order to measure how well you have reached your objectives, there needs to be a baseline for comparison. It is highly recommended that you lead your church to participate in the Natural Church Development (NCD) assessment, even as you embrace REACH and introduce it to your church. *See Appendix for more information on NCD and its relationship to REACH.*



REACH and Audacious Goals (AGs)

The key to planning for REACH is to set Audacious Goals (AGs) for the five enduring areas outlined above. These AGs direct all the resources of the church in the fulfilment of its mission. They give the church purpose, and members are clear about what their church is determined to achieve.

Planning Committee

Key to planning is a committee comprised of members willing to committed themselves to spend the better part of a year working together to create AGs, strategies and their implementation.

REACH and Mission Statements

A mission statement can easily evolve from carefully derived AGs.

Spiritual Foundation

All planning for REACH must rest securely on a solid spiritual foundation. The first stage in its planning is to thoroughly prepare the congregation spiritually.

II. SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR REACH

Planning for God's church must always be a spiritual experience and not simply an exercise in organisational skill. The church must be led to see the need to prepare itself spiritually for all its plans and activities. While each church is able to make its own preparations, here are some suggestions:



Seek the Lord's wisdom and leading through worship, prayer and fasting

- a. Devote a whole month of prayer and praise for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- b. Designate one Sabbath or another day of the week as a day of fasting with special emphases on the role of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the church.
- c. Allocate time to pray specifically for the church and its leadership as they formulate audacious and mission-oriented plans for the furtherance of God's cause

in the community. This may be done during the mid-week prayer meeting, Friday vespers, Sabbath morning and afternoon services.

- d. Conduct a week-long revival meeting as part of the month of prayer and praise. In addition, a prayer vigil may be held on Saturday night to consecrate the whole church as it reaffirms its commitment to Christ and in the fulfilment of the Gospel Commission.
- e. Organize prayer networks and groups.
- f. Utilize social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. in promoting this prayer initiative.
- g. Encourage families to lift the church in prayer in their morning and evening devotionals.

Rediscover God’s purpose for His church through the study of His Word:

- a. Church pastor(s) to understand the biblical foundation of the REACH concept as presented in this manual.
- b. Pastors to include in their sermonic calendar, particularly during the month-long spiritual preparation, topics that focus on Christ’s method of ministry, the Acts of the Apostles, Pauline example of ministry and mission, the role of the Holy Spirit in the last days, and God’s purpose for His Church.
- c. Conclude this month of spiritual preparation with a communion/consecration service.

“Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.” – Prov. 16:3, NIV

III. THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Selecting the Committee

The numbers of person to be selected for the committee should be determined. It should not be too large that it becomes difficult for meeting arrangements, or too small that there is not enough information flow of ideas. Persons selected should be dedicated to regular attendance and to the completion of the project, at a high standard in a given timeframe.

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Who should sit on the committee?

Members selected to serve on this committee should be carefully chosen. Choose individuals that are passionate about their relationship with God and open to explore different views, perspectives and opinions of others for decision-making. A good committee combination will reflect persons from the categories listed below.



Critical thinkers – persons who filter ideas by constructing a sound judgement base, using principles to process information logically.

Creative thinkers or visionaries --persons who generate new ideas and concepts to increase options (thinking outside of the box).

Analytical thinkers -- persons who process information systematically, usually in a linear, step-wise way, identifying patterns and bringing detail and structure to the information processing. They are thoughtful decision-makers who use a combination of logic, facts and *common sense*.

Solution-generators --persons that address problems creatively, exploring varied perspectives, remedies and options in solving them.

Diverse representatives (diversity, age, gender etc.) -- persons that are of different ethnicity (culture, language, and environments), a range of age --teen to retired, and male/ female representation needs to be included.

The Chairperson

The chair should be a capable facilitator who is an encourager of thought sharing. It does not have to be the pastor or first elder, but it can be. If the chair is not the pastor, the pastor should give him or her unreserved support in moving the process along, and provide guidance throughout the process, especially in the area of alignment of the AGs. He or she should be a dedicated member of the committee.

Job description and Necessary Qualities

The chairperson's primary role is to lead the committee in completing a strategy for the church. He/she should use the printed guidelines provided by the conference for the REACH strategy process. The chairperson should:

Be knowledgeable with a keen understanding of the process and the expected outcomes of each stage.

Be committed to the calling of regular meetings setting goals and timelines, with the objective of a completed strategy formulated in a set timeframe.

Have a clear understanding of the formulating AGs by attending preliminary example session held by the pastor/region ministerium/conference.

Possess the ability to lead the committee through the entire process.

Be committed to the end product, it being an amalgamation of the committee's collaborated efforts, ideas and intent.

Ensures that committee oversees and monitor the implementation of strategies.

Lead committee to evaluate goals and strategies on a regular on-going basis.

Tools Needed

The committee should have a meeting room with the following available for each meeting:

Table and chair set up for ease of writing

Flip chart, whiteboard or similar

Appropriate markers/pens

Assigned scribe/minutes writer – both can be



rotated positions by committee members at each meeting or can be one person consistently.

Computer – for the recording of the meeting of each meeting by an assigned person. This is separate from the scribe who records the discussion changes made on the chalkboard or flip chart during the meeting.

IV. INTRODUCTIONS TO AGs

There is an old African proverb that says, “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there”.

Every church should clearly know where it’s going. It needs not just goals, but *audacious* ones!

Some definitions of Audacious Goal:

A bold vision statement, a daring medium-long term goal to progress towards an envisioned future (Collins and Porras, 1996).

Is BIG yet attainable

It communicates “who, what, and by when (e.g. 5 yrs)

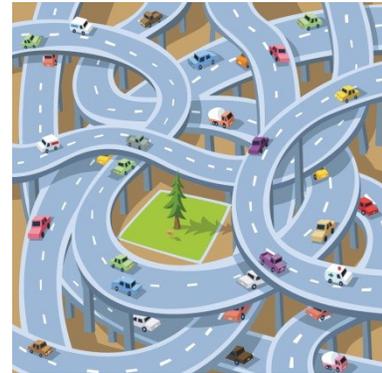
A bold, almost a daring stretch

Innovative and action-oriented

Gripping (compelling, motivates all to action)

Easy to grasp (clear; everyone “gets” it)

May even outlast our ministry



Examples of Audacious Goals (AGs) for Local Churches

In the business world, visionary companies proved to be more successful in comparison with the average ones. Their incredible leap to progress has been inspired and stimulated by their passion to reach their Audacious Goals. In his book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*, James Collins describes how a clear vision could serve as a catalyst in bringing about innovation and success as evidenced in the experience of the following mega-companies:

- Amazon: Every book ever printed in any language, all available in less than 60 seconds. Also: Earth's most customer centric company.

- Boeing: To push the leading edge of aviation, taking on huge challenges and doing what others cannot do.
- Disney: To make people happy. Build Disneyland - and build it to our image, not industry standards. To be the best company in the world for all fields of family entertainment.
- Hewlett-Packard: Become widely influential as a role model social institution and one of the best managed corporations in the world.
- Ford: "Democratize the automobile."
- Google: Organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.
- IBM: Commit to a \$5 billion gamble on the 360; meet the emerging need of our customers.
- Microsoft: "A computer on every desk and in every home, running Microsoft software."
- Motorola: Invent a way to sell 100,000 TVs at \$179.95; Attain six-sigma quality; Win the Baldrige Award; Launch Iridiums.
- Nokia Siemens Networks: Connecting 5 billion people by 2015.
- Sony: Become the company most known for changing the worldwide image of Japanese products as being of poor quality; create a pocketable transistor radio and other innovations where others have failed.
- Twitter: To become "the pulse of the planet."

The church is no exception. God envisions His church to grow and thrive, even more than the abovementioned companies, for the advancement of His cause here on earth. By applying this AG concept, and above all, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, the local church will experience excellence and fruitfulness in ministry and missions as never before, enabling each one to effectively reach out to the community for Christ.

The following are examples of AGs for local churches under each of the REACH core values (Note: some are quantitative, whereas others are qualitative):

Revival and Transformation

“By 2017, the local church will experience an increase in passionate spirituality by at least 50%”

“Our church will experience a revival that results in life-changing transformations”

Education for Discipleship

“By 2017, a 75% increase in the number of people engaged in Christ-centred discipleship will be experienced by the local church”

“By 2015, the local church will become a learning and discipling centre for members of all ages that involves connecting with God, our church family, and the surrounding community”

Alignment within the Church

“Enriched and unified by the love of God, the diverse church family will effectively relate with others to the extent that they will be known as the friendliest church in town”

Community Outreach and Evangelism

“By 2017, at least 40% of members will be actively involved in the life of the community as stewards of the Good News of hope, health, healing, and salvation”

“By 2017, the local church will be able to communicate Adventism’s distinctive message of hope and wholeness to the community”

Healthy Leadership and Management

“As God’s stewards and ambassadors, the local church aims to become the world’s best-run organization as a reflection of God’s ideal for us”

Difference Between AGs and Strategies

An AG is defined as the result which an individual or church desires to accomplish while a strategy is defined as the *method* by which the goal is achieved. Simply put, *AGs* tell you where to go, and strategies help you to get there. AGs are defined by *when, what, who*. Strategy deals with *how*.

Example:

Audacious Goal: By 2017, the local church will be able to communicate Adventism’s distinctive message of hope and wholeness to the community.

Strategies:

1. Conduct two health outreach programs every month in the community that build awareness of our Church and that reach our communities with messages of hope, health, and healing.
2. Collaborate with at least five governmental or non-governmental agencies in implementing humanitarian projects in the community.
3. Provide training, resources, and services to help church members of all ages to connect with their friends and neighbors in the community and to give Bible studies in ways that engage those whom they are trying to reach.

The Importance of Alignment of Leaders in Creating AGs.

“If Christians were to act in concert, moving forward as one, under the direction of one Power, for the accomplishment of one purpose, they would move the world.” – Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 221.

In view of this, the various departments/ministries of the local church are urged to work together in cluster around the five REACH elements.



STRATEGIC VALUE	COLLABORATING ENTITIES (Examples not limited to the Following)	
Revival and Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elders/Deacons/Clerk • Worship Coordinator • Music Ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabbath School • Greeters/Ushers • Prayer Ministry • Media Ministry
Education for Discipleship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathfinders/Adventurers • Sabbath School • Education • Youth • Bible Bowl Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Ministry • Home and School • Spiritual Guardians • Master Guides
Alignment within the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeters/Ushers • Hospitality • Women's Ministry • Disabilities Ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnecting Ministry • Family Ministry • Men's Ministry
Community Outreach and Evangelism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services • Personal Ministry • Media Ministry • Web/Internet Ministry • Discover Bible School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Health Ministry • Bible Workers • Interest Coordinator • VBS • Religious Liberty
Healthy Leadership and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Board • Board of Elders • Deacons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominating Committee • Stewardship • Treasurer/Clerk

V. HOW TO CREATE AN AG BASED ON THE ACROYNM REACH

AGs should be written for one letter in the REACH acronym at a time before moving on to another.

Establish Common Understanding

To effectively write an AG, committee members should have a common understanding of definitions. For example, what do committee members understand by *Revival and Transformation* (R&T)? The chair person will ask questions to stimulate thinking:

“When you think of the term ‘revival’, what do you understand by it?”

Or

“What comes to mind when you think of ‘transformation’ or ‘the transformed life’?”

Brainstorming and ‘writing dirt’

The definitions or understanding of the terms (often referred to as ‘writing down the dirt’) in the form of words and phrases are written on the white board, flip chart, etc., until the committee has a common understanding of what is meant by R&T.

Writing an AG

From the list of words and phrases, attempt to formulate a goal that is considered to be big and audacious.

Questions to Consider in Writing an AG

- a. Is this really a BIG goal for our church? Or is it too small?
- b. Is it realistic? For example, can we reasonably expect to have 100% success when the present situation is 25%?
- c. What about the time-frame? Can it be achieved in the time we planned for?
- d. Is this an AG or a strategy? –There is the tendency to suggest a strategy instead of an AG (a goal speaks about what is to be achieved and when. The *strategy* determines ‘how’ the goal is to be achieved).
- e. What are our resources? Do we have what it takes to accomplish this AG?
- f. What is our present situation? Do we have a standard for comparison?



When there is consensus on wording and phrasing, the AG is complete. If consensus cannot be achieved, leave the AG and move to the next category. Return to the unfinished AG after the others have been completed. It is important that the process moves on and not falter.

Examples of AGs for Revival and Transformation

A. Qualitative AGs

“Our church will experience a revival that results in life-changing transformations”

B. Quantitative AGs

“By the end of 2015, 75% of our church members will enjoy a vibrant and joyful relationship with Christ”

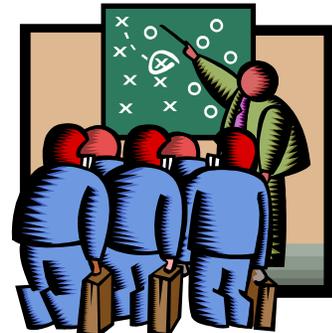
Note that there are two quantities to be considered: The end of 2015 and 75% of the membership. The goal of reaching 75% is to be achieved by the end of 2015. In the qualitative AG above, there is no deadline. Next, the percentage assumes that an assessment of the church has already taken place and will also be repeated by the end of 2015 to determine if the goal has been reached.

Once the AGs have been satisfactorily completed, it is time to begin writing strategies for each. However, as strategies are sought, it sometimes becomes necessary to adjust some AGs.

VI. WRITING AND MANAGING STRATEGIES

Writing Strategies

This is the *how*, the nuts and bolts operation of the church. It is ministry, and strategies need to be thoughtfully constructed to form a plan of action that will best achieve the desired result. This is what is sometimes referred to as a program.



Churches must avoid the common error of planning a program in isolation from an AG. The goal determines the strategy or program. See the examples given above (pages 8&9)

When writing strategies, the following should be considered:

Is there appropriate resource—human and financial—to successfully implement the strategy?

How does this strategy relate to others?

Are we trying to do too many things at one time?

Is this strategy timely? Is the congregation/community ready for this? Should it be preceded by something else?

How does it relate to the AG?

The strategies relating to each AG must be carefully managed and evaluated. As they are evaluated, board and business meetings may serve as occasions to report to the church how the strategies are being managed and whether or not the AGs are being realised.

Managing Strategies

When strategies are properly formulated, they will lead to success. Consider the following:

“WISHFUL THINKING”

Each well formulated strategy must go beyond just looking good on paper. It should get off the ground. Is there a timeline for implementation? Who is responsible?

“MOON HOWLERS”

Strategies must go beyond half-hearted implementation attempts. It's so easy to start strong and simply fizzle out and see members become discouraged. Ultimately, the leadership of the church has the responsibility of ensuring that those responsible for implementing the strategies do so, and are provided with necessary resources.

“ON THE ROAD TO NOWHERE”

Be careful lest all resources are made available to implement a strategy, but the strategy is not correct. Evaluation of a strategy will ensure whether or not it needs to be modified or even abandoned.

“ACHIEVERS”

Share the success stories of your team as well as those of others. Accountability is important, and frequent reports are necessary.

Evaluating Strategies

Regularly, discuss with team members (assistant pastors, Bible instructors, elders, church officers, board members, members at business meetings) and evaluate strategies by seeking answers to the following questions:

Do people really understand it?

Are people really excited about it?

Are we doing what we said we would do and when we said we would do it?

Has it created momentum?

Is this strategy working? Does it need to be changed? Replaced?

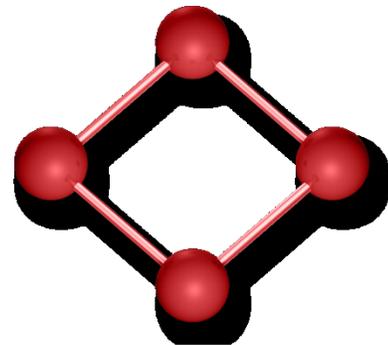
If there is a problem, is it with the strategy or with those managing it?

Share success stories from other places where similar AGs have been implemented. These will encourage the church.

Re-evaluate—test the AG to see if it is really what you can dedicate your energies to for the time period specified.

VII THE PLANNING CYCLE

Implementing REACH in the local church is not something that is done one year and then move onto something else the following year. REACH is a perpetual way of careful planning to reach specific goals that are aligned with the core values of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is a planning cycle that continues in the local church and is not pastor-dependent. It is the programme of the church that continues and outlives the term of a current pastor.



Even after the process of assessing the needs of the church and establishing AGs, creating strategies, implementing them and evaluating them has been completed, changes have already taken place, both in the community and in the church. It is necessary to continue the process, creating a planning cycle.

The church will therefore be constantly, active, relevant and growing, preparing many people for God's kingdom.

VIII APPENDIX

The REACH Ontario Mission & Strategic Vision And the Role of Natural Church Development (NCD)

The REACH Ontario Mission & Strategic Vision is a multi-faceted initiative of the Ontario Conference, in concert with the initiatives of the General Conference, North American Division and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada, to develop a highly intentional, biblical mission and vision, inclusive of strategic plans that will propel the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ontario forward to 2016 (should the Lord tarry).

This REACH Mission and Strategic Vision focuses on five key biblical elements of a growing church organization:

Revival and Transformation

Education for Discipleship

Alignment within the Organization

Community Outreach and Evangelism

Healthy Leadership and Management

As this initiative moves from Conference-wide planning and resourcing of the whole field, to implementation in the local churches, it necessitates a means of assessing a local church's current health, as well as on-going assessment, to gauge the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by each church.

In creating a standard assessment baseline (starting point) for all local churches, Natural Church Development (NCD) was identified as a valuable instrument to assist churches in appraising their current health.

What is NCD?



NCD is an international research project involving 1000 churches in 32 countries on 6 continents, searching for common principles that constitute healthy, growing churches. The research identified eight biblical characteristics.

These characteristics are:

1. **Empowering Leadership**

Leaders of growing churches concentrate on empowering others for ministry. They invert the pyramid of authority so that the leader assists others to attain the spiritual potential God has for them. This corresponds to the *Healthy Leadership and Management* in the REACH Vision.

2. **Gift-based Ministry**

God, in His sovereignty, has bestowed gifts for ministry on each of His followers. The role of church leadership is to help members identify their gifts and integrate them into appropriate ministries. When Christians serve in their area of giftedness, they generally function less in their own strength and more in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, ordinary people can accomplish the extraordinary! This corresponds to *Education for Discipleship, Healthy Leadership and Management* and *Alignment within the Organization* in the REACH Vision.

3. **Passionate Spirituality**

The primary questions: Are the members in this church spiritually 'on fire'? In other words, do members live committed lives and practice their faith with joy and enthusiasm? Passionate spirituality is the result of engaging in spiritual disciplines such as: prayer, Bible study, worship, solitude, spiritual retreats and much more. And the result is a vibrant relationship with Christ.

This corresponds to *Revival and Transformation*, as well as *Education for Discipleship* in the REACH Vision.

4. **Effective Structures**

It is crucial that the Church has functional structures. Leadership and management in the Church must continually evaluate the effectiveness of the Church's structures and systems, making any improvements necessary for optimizing all aspects of operation and ministry. Effective structures will result in growing and sustainable ministry.

This corresponds to *Healthy Leadership and Management* and *Alignment within the Organization* in the REACH Vision.

5. **Inspiring Worship Service**

Services may target Christian or non-Christian, traditional or non-traditional, their style may be liturgical or free-flowing, their language may be "churchy" or sensitive to societal changes. The most significant question is: Do the participants find the worship to be an 'inspiring experience'? Whenever the Holy Spirit is truly at work (and the Spirit's presence is not merely presumed), there will be a noticeable effect upon a worship service and the worshippers.



People who attend inspiring services indicate that they have had fresh encounters with God, and that going to church is fun.

This corresponds to *Revival and Transformation* in the REACH Vision.

6. Holistic Small Groups

Holistic small groups go beyond discussing Bible passages, to making life-impacting application of the Bible's message to daily life. Such groups are a natural place to build community with one another and God, to serve and reach out to those in their neighbourhood and city, to equip each other in the faith and engage as partners to help one another grow in their walk with Christ, and finally, to raise up new leaders.

This corresponds directly to *Education for Discipleship*, but effective holistic small groups actually integrate *all five elements* of the REACH Vision.

7. Need-Oriented Evangelism

The key to church growth is to focus evangelistic efforts on the questions and needs of those we are seeking to reach. The Church must intentionally engage people in the basic areas of Faith, Family, Fitness and Finance. We must train and involve members in serving others' needs and sharing their relationship with Jesus with them. This may include community service activities, personal growth seminars (health, relationships, finances, etc.), special seasonal outreach worship services especially targeting guests and harvest events, such as evangelistic series. An intentional evangelistic process connects with people where they are, as Jesus did, and then bids them, "follow Jesus."

This corresponds to *Community Outreach and Evangelism* in the REACH Vision.

8. Loving Relationships

NCD research indicates that healthy, growing churches possess a measurably higher love quotient than stagnant or declining ones. The love quotient is determined by how much members actually "like" fellow members, and how much time they spend with one another outside of official church-sponsored events. Loving relationships result in members sharing life together. The atmosphere of the church is a grace-saturated family, where there is a culture of mutual nurturing, rather than a spirit of critical judgment. Members truly want the best for one another, and are willing to do whatever it takes to help each other achieve it. And members love others into the church. Such characteristics are fostered by Christ-centred, Spirit-filled, loving relationships.

This corresponds to *Revival and Transformation, Education for Discipleship* and *Community Outreach and Evangelism*.



As the Ontario Conference launches the NCD as an initiative to help churches regularly assess their health and growth, the local church is encouraged to order the NCD Survey through the North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI) or through NCD Canada. The Ontario Conference will reimburse the cost of the annual survey at up to 50% of the church's paid receipt, once the Conference has received a copy of the church's survey results. The results of the survey will assist churches in identifying audacious goals and strategies to increase the three NCD characteristics with the lowest score.

Using the quality index developed by Natural Church Development, a church that scores above 65 in all eight characteristics is likely a healthy church and has over a 99% probability of being a growing church. Churches that score less may also be growing churches, however, apart from these eight principles growth is not as certain.

As the Ontario Conference aligns with the local churches in advancing these biblical, healthy growth principles, the Church will flourish, the Lord's kingdom will expand and the Lord's Church in Ontario will be the beautiful Bride He so longs to come back for.

