

Bishop's Message & Columns

How Natural Church Development Works

Synod Strategic Plan Highlights, August 2004

Natural Church Development (NCD) is a research based system that originated in Germany but now has an international acceptance as a tool for improving congregational health. NCD holds an underlying principle that a congregation is a living organic entity, and by focusing on identified life-giving principles, a congregation can become healthier, and often sees growth in membership as a result. Eight quality characteristics have been identified by the research, and when combined with the life-giving principles will lead to better congregational life. There is an assessment tool that surveys the pastor and 30 key leaders to develop a profile of the eight qualities and allows a congregation to focus attention on the lowest quality and increase the capacity of the congregation to do ministry. Coaches will be identified and assist congregations in this process.

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod will begin with six congregations and continue to offer this to others who are interested in future years.

Other current highlights include:

- **2005: A Synod Joined in Prayer:** The Congregational Renewal Team is planning for 2005's emphasis, "A synod joined in prayer." They're working on integrating prayer throughout the Synod Assembly next year, and they're discussing the possibility of creating a synod prayer calendar for 2005.
- **Communications emphasis:** The process of creating a synod-produced bulletin insert with churchwide and synod content has begun. Participants in the July workshops, "Church Communications Made Easier," helped brainstorm how such an insert will take shape.
- **Youth & family emphasis:** Conversations are taking place with the South Dakota Synod involving "Faith Family Style," a model of ministry that emphasizes parents as the primary faith educators of their children.

For more information on the synod's strategic plan, visit www.semnsynod.org and click "Strategic Plan."



Called into God's Marvelous Light

To Be Joyful Witnesses

To Be Christ-Centered Disciples

To Be Strong Leaders