

The Seven Marks of a Healthy Church

Robert Warren, *Healthy Churches Handbook*, London: CHP, 2004

Mark 1: energized by faith

Rather than just keeping things going or trying to survive

- *worship and sacramental life*: move people to experience God's love
- *motivation*: energy comes from a desire to serve God and one another
- *engages with Scripture*: in creative ways that connect with life
- *nurtures faith* in Christ helping people to grow in, and share, their faith

Mark 2: outward-looking focus

With a 'whole life' rather than a 'church life' concern

- deeply rooted in the *local community*, working in partnership with other denominations, faiths, secular groups and networks
- passionate and prophetic about *justice and peace*, locally and globally
- makes connections between *faith and daily living*
- responds to human need by *loving service*.

Mark 3: seeks to find out what God wants

Discerning the Spirit's leading rather than trying to please everyone

- *vocation*: seeks to explore what God wants it to be and do
- *vision*: develops and communicates a shared sense of where it is going
- *mission priorities*: consciously sets both immediate and long-term goals
- able to call for, and make, *sacrifices*, personal and corporate, in bringing about the above and living out the faith.

Mark 4: faces the cost of change and growth

Rather than resisting change and fearing failure

- while embracing the past, it dares to take on *new ways of doing things*
- *takes risks*: admits when things *are* not working, and learns from experience
- *crises*: responds creatively to challenges that face the church and community
- *positive experiences of change*: however small, are affirmed and built on.

Mark 5: operates as a community

Rather than functioning as a club or religious organization

- *relationships*: are nurtured, often in small groups, so that people feel accepted and are helped to grow in faith and service
- *leadership*: lay and ordained work as a team to develop locally appropriate expressions of all seven marks of a healthy church
- *lay ministry* the different gifts, experiences and faith journeys of all are valued and given expression in and beyond the life of the church.

Mark 6: makes room for all

Being inclusive rather than exclusive

- *welcome*: works to include newcomers into the life of the church
- *children and young people*: are helped to belong, contribute and be nurtured in their faith
- *enquirers* are encouraged to explore and experience faith in Christ
- *diversities*: different social and ethnic backgrounds, mental and physical abilities, and ages, are seen as a strength.

Mark 7: does a few things and does them well

Focused rather than frenetic

- *does the basics well*: especially public worship, pastoral care, stewardship and administration
- *occasional offices*: make sense of life and communicate faith
- *being good news* as a church in its attitudes and ways of working
- *enjoys what it does* and is relaxed about what is not being done.