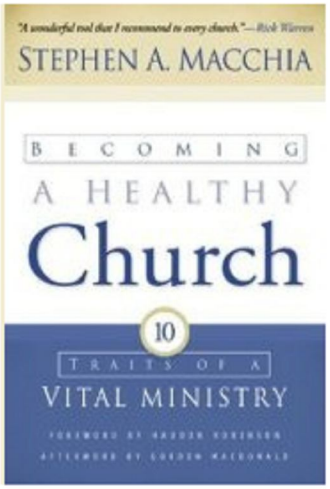

www.leadershiptransformations.org/characteristics-of-a-healthy-church.htm

Characteristics of a Healthy Church

Characteristics of a Healthy Church - Introduction

What are the characteristics of a healthy church? What does a healthy church look like today? Is it one with strong preaching? A great choir? Lots of wealthy executives in the pews? An effective Sunday school program? A thriving missions program?

The list of 10 characteristics of a healthy church we've compiled are the result of several years of field testing and two major surveys with over 2,000 churches and individuals. What will knowing the characteristics of a healthy church do for you? As a pastor or church leader, these ten traits will give you an approach that will revitalize your ministry!

With very few exceptions - and regardless of the race, gender, denomination, age, number of years as a believer, responsibility in the church (pastor, ministry leader, or laity) - the basic rank order of the ten characteristics held constant. Demography, attitudes, behaviors, affiliations, etc. did not appear to make a difference in how respondents rated these characteristics. They were ranked as follows:

Ten Characteristics of a Healthy Church	**Mean Score** (Nine Point Scale)
1. God's Empowering Presence	8.78
2. God-Exalting Worship	8.43
3. Spiritual Disciplines	8.31
4. Learning and Growing in Community	8.21
5. A Commitment to Loving and Caring Relationships	8.19
6. Servant-Leadership Development	8.02
7. An Outward Focus	7.90
8. Wise Administration and Accountability	7.56
9. Networking with the Body of Christ	7.03
10. Stewardship and Generosity	6.94

Even though this order is slightly different from how we originally ranked the ten characteristics of a healthy church, we gained a key insight from the research. The data suggested that the respondents related to the ten characteristics across three basic levels. These levels are unique in their orientation and represent varying degrees of importance and relevance. In order of their relative strength, these levels have been defined as follows:

Level 1: How I Relate to God

God's Empowering Presence

God-Exalting Worship

Spiritual Disciplines

Level 2: How I Relate with My Church Family

Learning and Growing in Community

A Commitment to Loving and Caring Relationships

Servant-Leadership Development

Level 3: How My Church Ministers and Manages

An Outward Focus

Wise Administration and Accountability

Networking with the Body of Christ

Stewardship and Generosity

1. **God's empowering presence**
   The healthy church actively seeks the Holy Spirit's direction and empowerment for its daily life and ministry (Romans 8:16, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children").
2. **God-exalting worship**
   The healthy church gathers regularly as the local expression of the body of Christ to worship God in ways that engage the heart, mind, soul, and strength of the people (John 4:23, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks").
3. **Spiritual disciplines**
   The healthy church provides training, models, and resources for members of all ages to develop their daily spiritual disciplines (James 3:17, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven if first of all pure, then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere").
4. **Learning and growing in community**
   The healthy church encourages believers to grow in their walks with God and with one another in the context of a safe, affirming environment (Romans 14:19, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual

edification").

5. **A committment to loving and caring relationships**

   The healthy church is intentional in its efforts to build loving, caring relationships within families, between members, and within the community they serve (I John 3:16, "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers").

6. **Servant-leadership development**

   The healthy church identifies and develops individuals whom God has called and given the gift of leadership and challenges them to become servant-leaders (Ephesians 4:16, "From Him (Christ) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work").

7. **An outward focus**

   The healthy church places high priority on communicating the truth of Jesus and demonstrating the love of Jesus to those outside the faith (Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost").

8. **Wise administration and accountability**

   The healthy church utilizes appropriate facilities, equipment, and systems to provide maximum support for the growth and development of its ministries (Luke 16:11, "So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?").

9. **Networking with the body of Christ**

   The healthy church reaches out to others in the body of Christ for collaboration, resource sharing, learning opportunities, and united celebrations of worship (John 17:23, "May they (the church) be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me").

10. **Stewardship and generosity**

    The healthy church teaches its members that they are stewards of their God-given resources and challenges them to sacrificial generosity in sharing with others (2 Corinthians 9:6, "Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously").

Taken from *Becoming A Healthy Church* by Stephen A. Macchia, Baker Books, 1999/2006.