



NCD *Story* Guide

Whynot Local Church

March 2021

Themes

| Change in rank | Rank | Themes |
|----------------|------|--------------------------|
| 0 | 1 | accountability |
| +3 | 2 | good organisation |
| +1 | 3 | learning |
| | 4 | relevance |
| | 5 | self-awareness |
| | 6 | compassion |
| | 7 | pastoral care |
| | 8 | intimacy |
| | 9 | faith-stretching |
| | 10 | hope |
| | 11 | reconciliation |
| | 12 | vision |
| | 13 | nurture |
| | 14 | everyday-faith |
| | 15 | teamwork |
| | 16 | inspiration |
| | 17 | God-consciousness |
| | 18 | welcoming |
| | 19 | creativeness |
| | 20 | joy |
| | 21 | multiplication |
| 0 | 22 | prayer |
| -2 | 23 | affirmation |
| -1 | 24 | releasing |

Comes more naturally to us



Comes less naturally to us

Quality Characteristics

| Quality Characteristics | Rank | Change in rank |
|----------------------------------|------|----------------|
| Holistic Small Groups | 1 | 0 |
| Gift-based Ministry | 2 | |
| Empowering Leadership | 3 | |
| Effective Structures | 4 | |
| Passionate Spirituality | 5 | |
| Loving Relationships | 6 | |
| Need-oriented Evangelism | 7 | |
| Inspiring Worship Service | 8 | -4 |



Story Guide Instructions

By way of preparation for your ongoing NCD results discussions, **please read through the explanations and charts on the following pages.** The guide is laid out for group discussion, but you can also read it on your own and ask yourself the various questions, while imagining the responses others are likely to give. While your first pass through the guide is to help you establish your personal response to the results, the following points will help you relate your ideas to the ideas of others along the way.

The importance of this guide in the hands of storytellers

Healthy churches depend on different parts of the body working together, so the NCD process works best when unique, complementary contributions are encouraged. Throughout this guide, the work of relationally minded storytelling leaders from your team is especially important. This is because a group of people sitting down to analyse survey results can often forget that **the responses given are entirely based on deeply personal church life experiences.** Under the protection of anonymity, people opened their hearts and told their stories through their survey responses. This guide will help highlight these real, everyday experiences from church life — stories that form the background of your results. For those working through this guide, **the challenge will be to re-tell those stories without fear of rebuke or pressure to have the “right” answers straight away.**

Seeing the whole story

While working with this guide on your own, the results will prompt you to recall experiences and stories. However, as you increasingly work through the process with others, you will need to remain open to seeing the whole story as others bring their experiences, analysis and practical realities to the discussion. In the end, **your greatest challenge will be in learning to tell the story of your church as a whole, and not just particular episodes you feel strongly about.** Fortunately, NCD is a process based on continuous, relatively short, cycles of development. It will never be too long before either, others involved in the process finally come to accept the stories you see so clearly played out, or that you will grow to see an even bigger, clearer picture. In the meantime, **encourage all involved to convey their experiences as passionately and colourfully as possible.**

If facilitating group discussion...

It may be that your pastor has asked you to facilitate group discussion on this NCD Story Guide. If so, when you gather to discuss the results, (in consultation with your pastor or survey facilitator) **you will need to have arranged for the relevant pages to be available to the rest of the group** either on paper or on a screen. The PDF file can simply be displayed in full screen mode on most computers connected to a projector.

Be sure to visit ncdchurchsurvey.org/cycle-starters to download and print off a few copies of the Cycle Starters relating to the challenge topics highlighted on page 15.

The times suggested for each topic are based on moving through this guide in about two hours. You will need to adjust these timings to suit the time available. Facilitation discussion prompts start on the next page.

My Story Guide Checklist

Check off the following points along the way as you work through the process. I have...

- ☐ worked through this guide thinking about my own responses
- ☐ prayed that God would speak through and beyond our results
- ☐ passionately and colourfully depicted stories from our results
- ☐ invited others to sharpen my perspective on our church
- ☐ initiated a Cycle Starter action plan in response to the results
- ☐ met with others to progressively refine my Cycle Starter plan



1. What comes naturally to us... and what doesn't?

Prior to discussion, spend some time in prayer as a group earnestly inviting God to speak to you through the results.

If facilitating discussion, spend just a few minutes getting feedback on your church's Summary Guide and the questions contained in it.

Then, refer the group to the front page of this Story Guide while you read to them or summarise the following explanation.

Our church is a community of stories. Every week we listen to and tell stories through words and body language of what our church and the Christian faith mean to us. This guide provides a window into those stories that matter most for the long-term growth of our church. As we will see, some of the stories make for great reading, while in others we have perhaps lost a page or two. Let's together look for clues about the present chapter.

Looking for the story

The front page shows key themes measured by the NCD Survey. All of these themes have a strong relationship to the long-term healthy growth of our church. The themes at the top of the list are the ones that come more naturally to us as a church, especially its elected leaders and key influencers. At the bottom are themes that do not come as naturally to us... yet.

The front page also shows the eight essential quality characteristics of church life in rank order for our church. As you look at the highest and lowest quality characteristics for our church, you may notice some obvious connection points with the highlighted themes adjacent to them. There may also be some adjacent themes that do not seem to be as automatically associated with that quality characteristic. This is because the combination and order of the themes is completely unique for our church and serves to indicate the culture that has been developed over time. As we look further into each theme, many of the links between them and the quality characteristics may well become more apparent.

It is important to celebrate the highest themes with the church body and together be thankful to God for our strengths. On the other hand, our church's story is that the lowest quality characteristic and lowest themes are limiting its long-term healthy growth to the greatest extent right now.

Ask any of the following questions that you feel might be helpful in order to stimulate discussion (Limit this discussion to 5 minutes to allow time for the more detailed pages.)

- What is your very first impression of the highest quality characteristic and highest themes for our church? (Let them know you will go into more detail shortly.)
- Given every church in the world has lowest themes and a lowest quality characteristic, are there aspects of church life that you would rather see at the bottom of our lists? If so, which ones?
- Which aspects surprise you in their ranking?
- What headline could you give to our current church story when you contrast the highest and lowest themes or quality characteristics with each other? (Remind the group that these are just first impressions and to feel free to speculate. This is not yet the time for deep analysis.)

If it is taking some time for discussion to get going or if you have some personal observations about the front page that have not yet been shared, share them now. When finished, move to point 2.

My thoughts and questions



2. What is the experience of our church?

If facilitating discussion, refer the group to page 5 while you read to them or summarise the following:

These are the eight quality characteristics of healthy growing churches. They emerged from the research of NCD International which now encompasses more than 60,000+ churches from 70 countries across all continents. Each characteristic has a strong connection with long-term healthy growth. This involves 1. connecting the unchurched with a church and 2. providing a healthy enough Christian environment that people would want to stay or, for some individuals, be sent by that church to start or develop other healthy churches. Whichever characteristic is least developed in a church is limiting all of this happening to the greatest extent right now.

Our church's results for the eight quality characteristics are shown on this page in comparison to our church's overall NCD average. At the left of the chart are the characteristics that are currently helping growth in the quantity (size) and quality (health) of Christian community in our church. To the right are the characteristics that at this point in time present the greatest barriers to growth in both quantity and quality.

Imagine a person moving toward our church community starting their journey on the left side of the chart. As they move closer, there will be aspects of church life that are attractive and make them want to join, or feel like they belong. For example, that person will in some way experience our [name your highest quality characteristic on the left] and that may help them on their journey.

However, if you imagine these bars on the chart as stepping stones, at some point on the journey there will be a greater likelihood that people will stumble and fall away. This will be most dramatic when they come to need, perhaps early or later on, [name your lowest quality characteristic on the right] as they most certainly will at some point in time.

If asked what a given quality characteristic is about, explain that they will become clearer as some of the specific questions are looked at on the following pages. You could also mention the following as ways of understanding the primary concern behind each quality characteristic...

Empowering leadership: Are leaders focused on equipping believers for ministry?

Gift-based ministry: Are tasks distributed according to gifting?

Passionate spirituality: Is the spiritual life of members characterised by passion?

Effective structures: Do the various structures support healthy growth?

Inspiring worship service: Are worship services inspiring experiences for members?

Holistic small groups: Do the small groups address the life issues of their members?

Need-oriented evangelism: Are the evangelistic activities related to actual needs?

Loving relationships: Are the relationships in the church Christ-like?

Ask any of the following questions that you feel might be helpful in order to stimulate discussion (Limit this discussion to 10 minutes to allow time for the more detailed pages).

- What is the experience of our church for the “average” regular attender?
- What is or would be the experience of our church for an outsider? How might they respond to the message that the life of our church “broadcasts”?
- If this page belonged to another church and they asked us for help to become healthier, what questions would you ask them? What might we expect to experience in such a church if we went to visit?

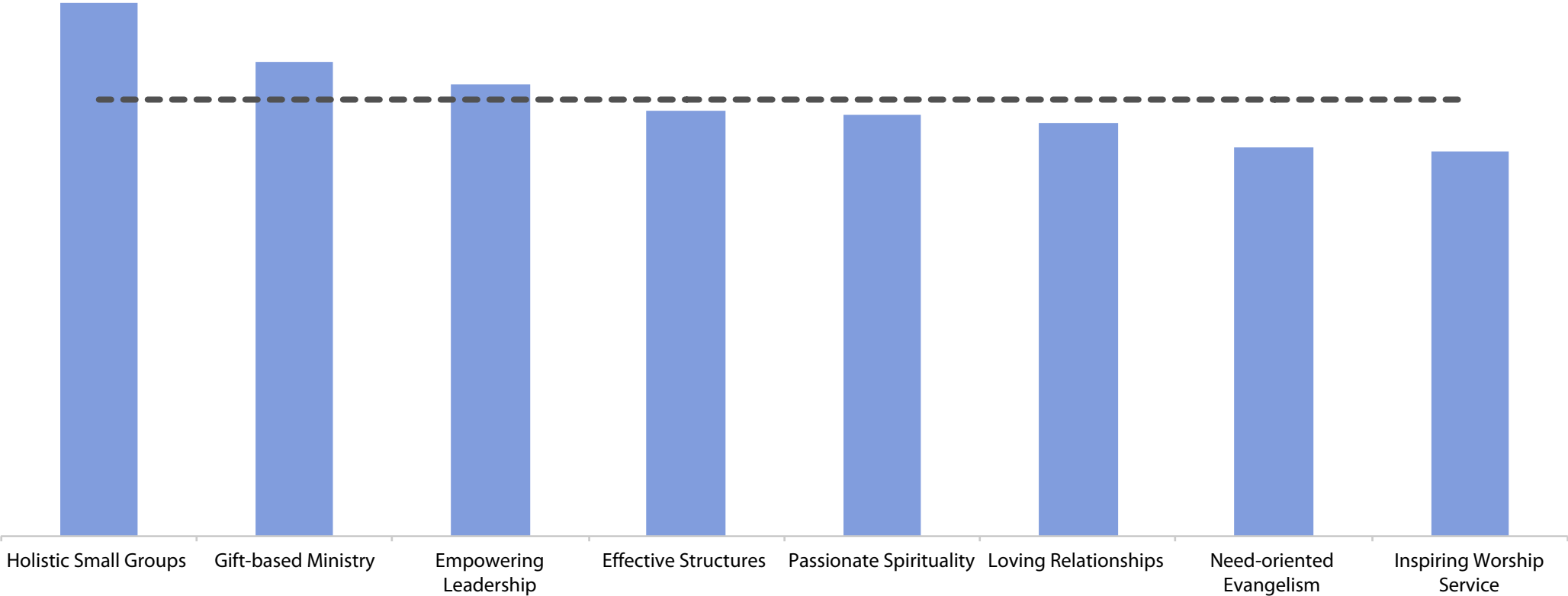
If you have some personal observations about this page that have not yet been shared, share them now. When finished, move to point 3.

My thoughts and questions



What is the experience of our church?

----- Our church's overall average





3. Our highest themes

If facilitating discussion, refer the group to pages 7-9 while you read to them or summarise the following:

These pages give us some very specific clues about why these themes rate as our highest. We need to celebrate these themes and affirm the people who have established these as strengths in the church. Beyond that, we should thank God for allowing us to partner with him in developing these areas and for bringing growth to his church when areas like these and the others listed on the front page of the guide are best developed.

The abbreviation in brackets at the end of each question indicates which quality characteristic the question is most closely associated with. For example (EL) is Empowering leadership.

Also, as the questions appear exactly as they were presented to the survey participants, you will notice some questions may have (neg) after them, indicating that they are negatively phrased. Such questions help to pick up nuances of the church story that can't be picked up through a positive wording of the same idea. The results for these questions should be interpreted the same as for all other questions: the higher up the graph the healthier.

Keep in mind that the result you see represents the story as the average survey participant views it. Some people will have responded more positively and some more negatively. So with any given question, you can ask yourself "why did a sample of our people collectively respond as positively or negatively as they did when faced with exactly these words? What feelings or experiences did they recall?"

Ask any of the following questions that you feel might be helpful in order to stimulate discussion. Even though there are lower scoring questions towards the right hand side of these top themes, **ensure the discussion stays focused on the strengths that these themes point to in church life.** (Limit this discussion to about 5 minutes per theme to allow time for discussing the lowest themes.)

- As a church, what is our experience of [name the top theme]?
- What activities and experiences of church life come to mind that reflect this theme?
- Who are the people behind the development of these high themes?
Are any in the room? How and when could we affirm them?

Repeat the above questions for each of the highest three themes. If you have some personal observations about each page that have not yet been stated, share them before going to the next theme. When finished, read the following and then move to point 4.

Following this gathering, keep thinking about our church's strengths in these key theme areas and share your experiences and perceptions with each other and others in the church. This will naturally help continue to keep these areas strong.

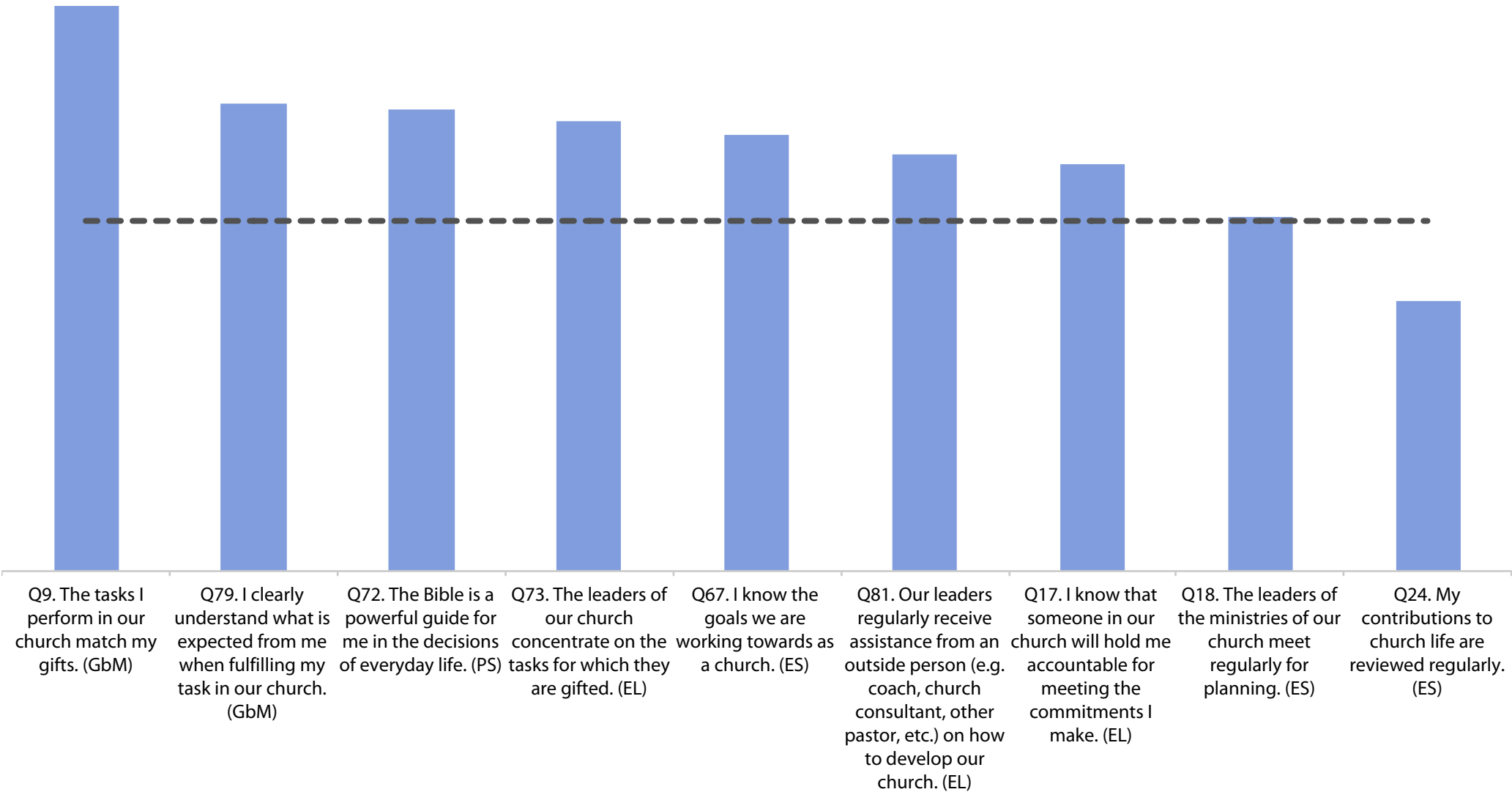
My thoughts and questions



As a church, what is our experience of accountability?

Out of 24 themes, this one ranks number **1**

----- Our church's overall average

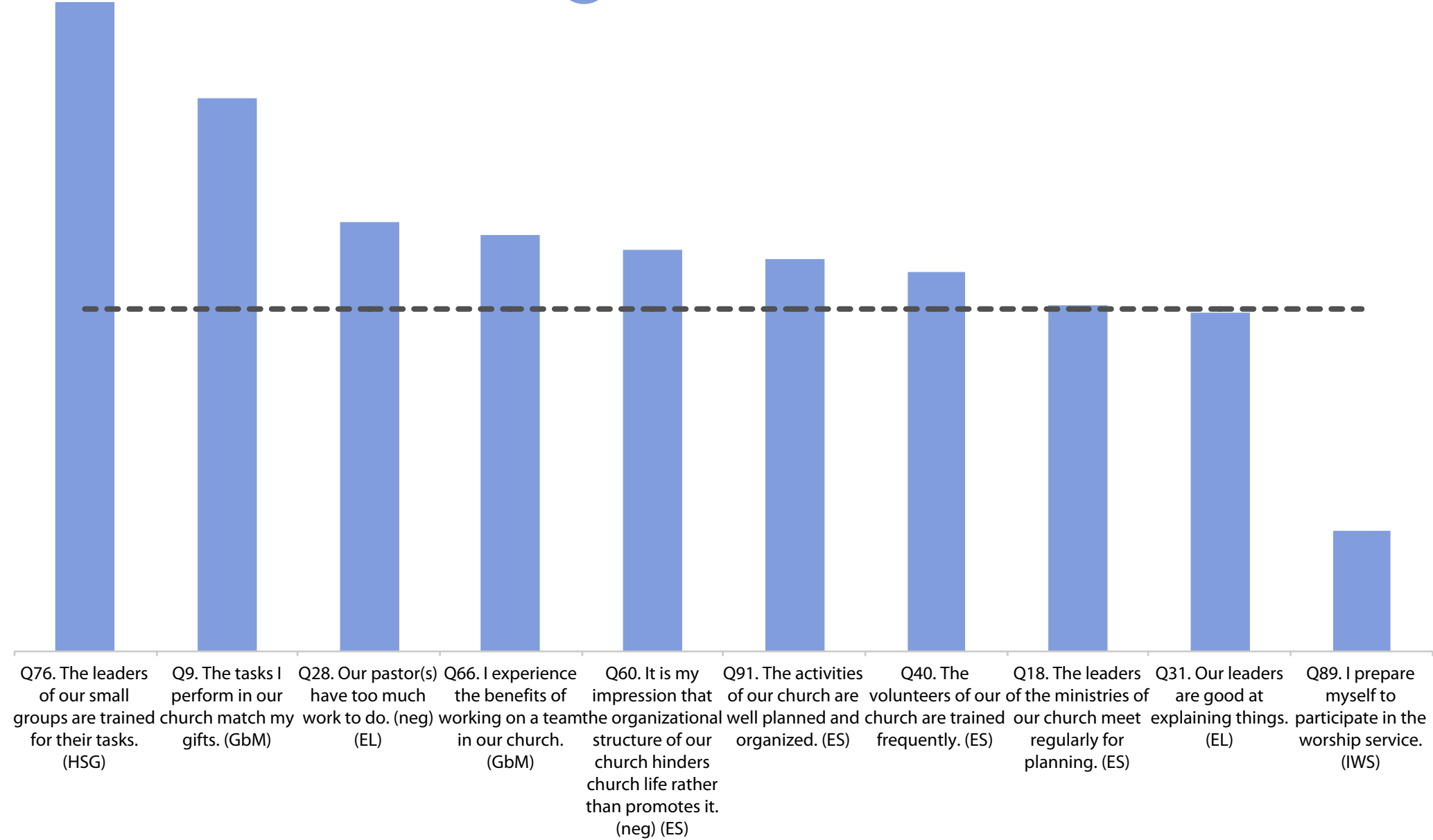




As a church, what is our experience of good organisation?

Out of 24 themes, this one ranks number **2**

----- Our church's overall average

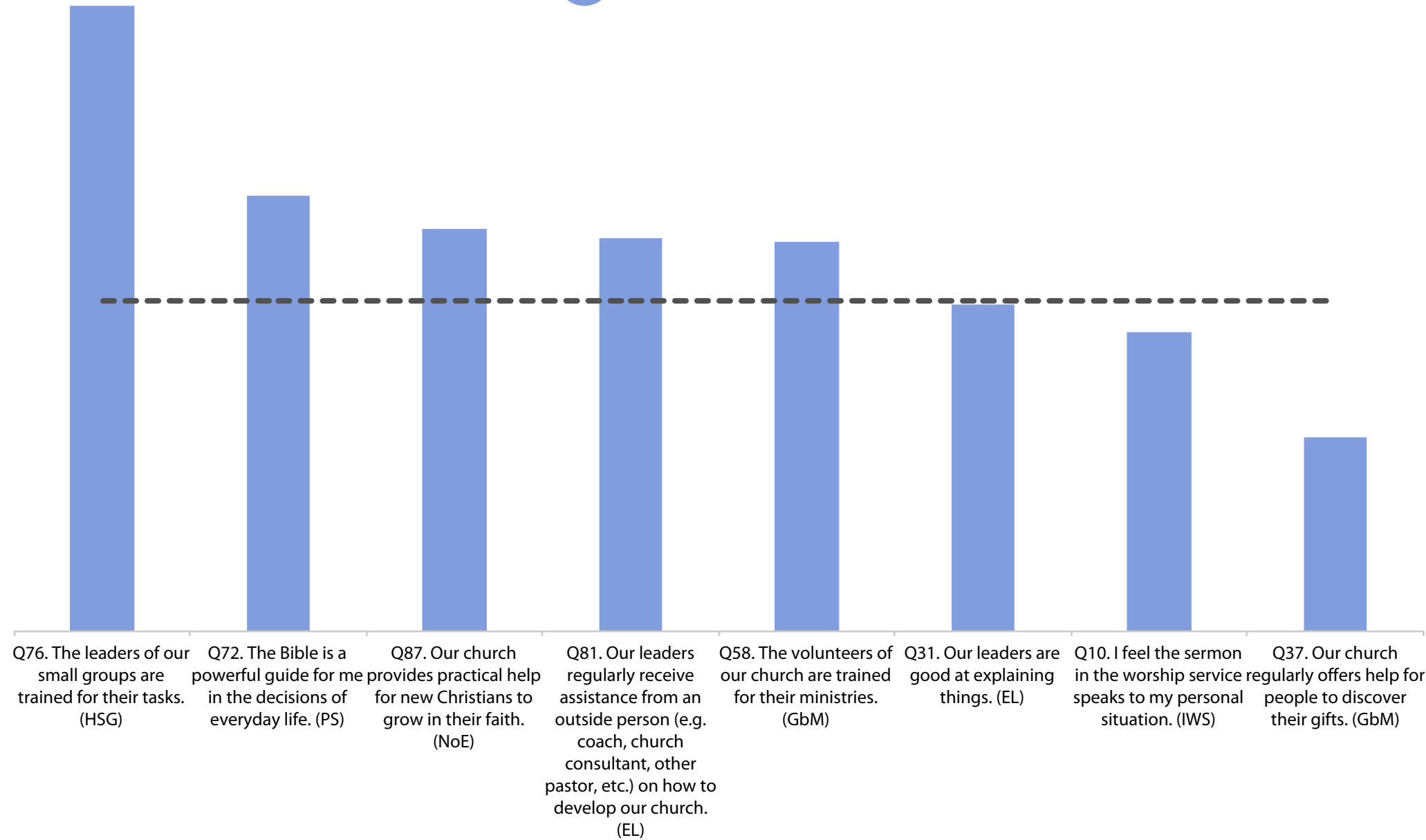




As a church, what is our experience of learning?

Out of 24 themes, this one ranks number **3**

----- Our church's overall average





My thoughts and questions

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

- [illegible]

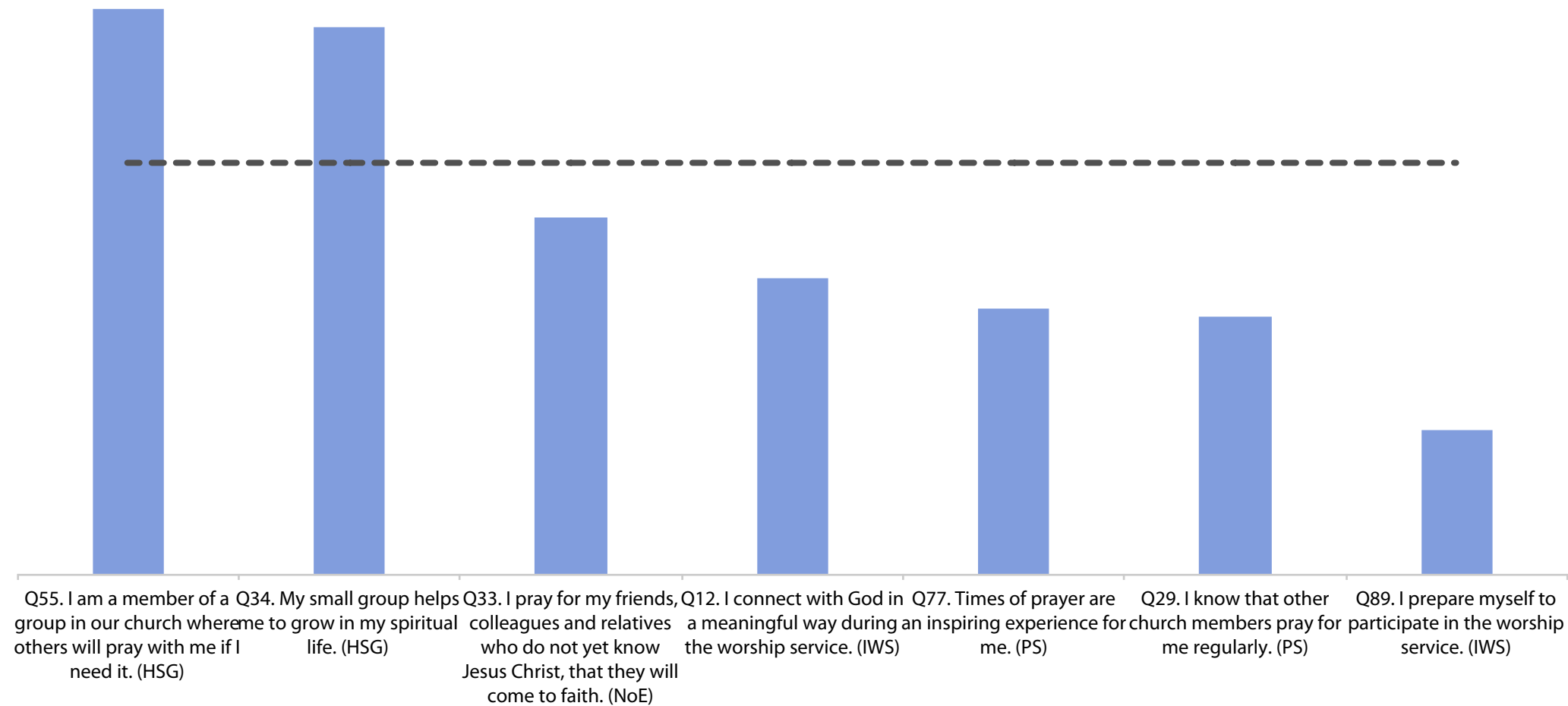
[illegible]



As a church, what is our experience of praying?

Out of 24 themes, this one ranks number **22**

----- Our church's overall average

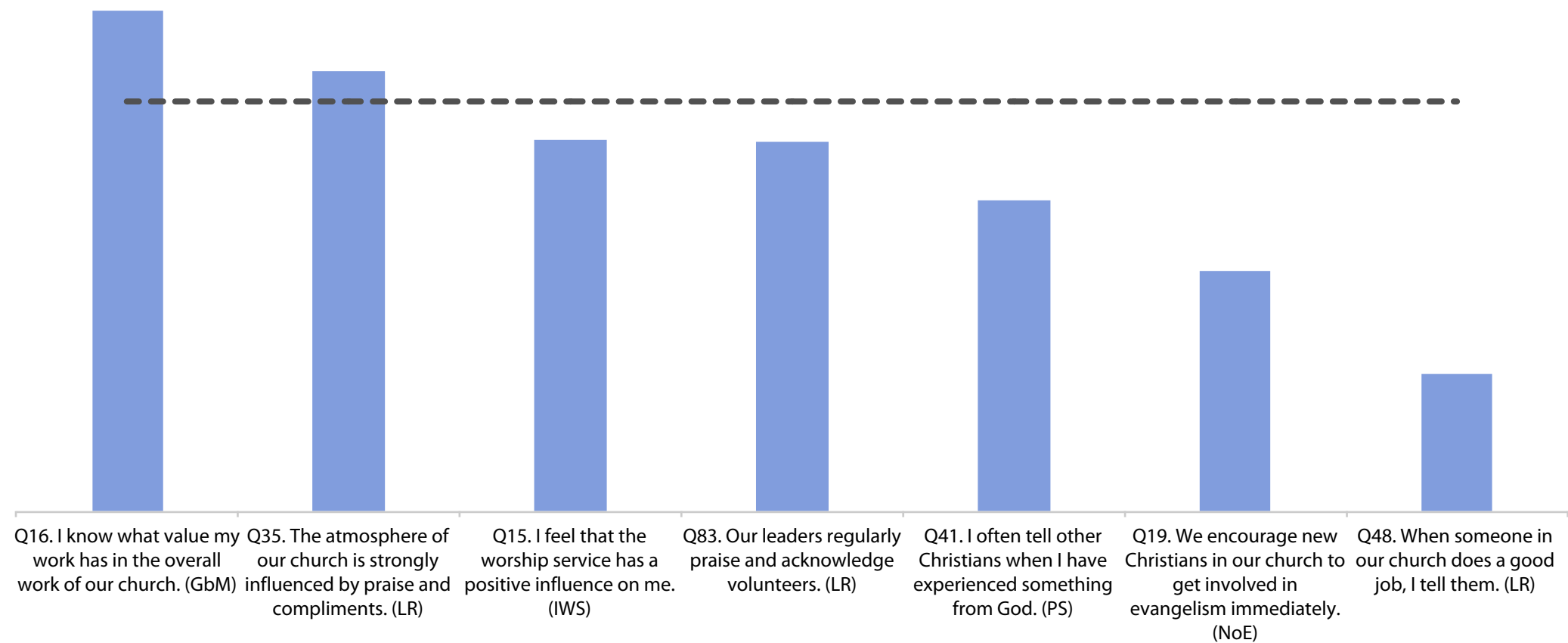




As a church, what is our experience of affirming?

Out of 24 themes, this one ranks number **23**

----- Our church's overall average

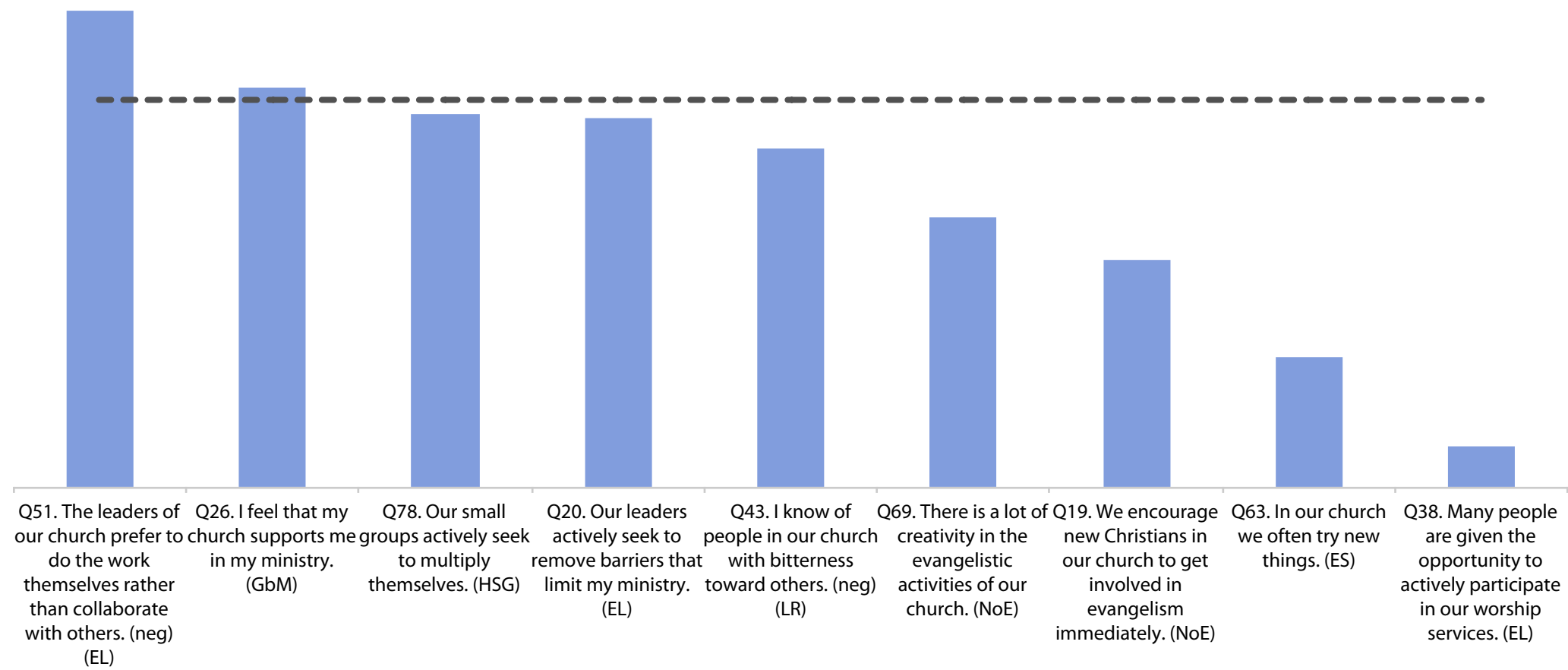




As a church, what is our experience of releasing?

Out of 24 themes, this one ranks number **24**

----- Our church's overall average





S. My Cycle Starter Plan

If facilitating discussion, **be sure you have downloaded and printed off a few copies of the Cycle Starters** relating to the challenge topics highlighted on page 15.

www.ncdchurchsurvey.org/cycle-starters

Refer the group to the spiral diagram on page 15 while you read to them or summarise the following:

Having begun to understand a little bit about the challenges holding us back as a church by looking briefly at our lowest Summary Guide area, our lowest quality characteristic, and lowest three themes, it is time to make things practical. The reality is that no individual Christian or Church can come to understand their least developed areas purely through discussion.

With reference to the spiral diagram on the page, we must accept that these areas are low because to varying degrees: our planning in these areas is not focused; our doing is underdeveloped; our experience of these areas is limited or negative; our perception of the need or priority of these areas is foggy; our objective testing of them has been lacking; and our understanding (even despite these discussions) is limited.

Because of the cyclical nature of growth, we should not and must not expect to be able to instantly “fix” these challenges. We can move forward quite quickly (as many churches do), but only if we are prepared to cycle these issues thoroughly and consistently.

Having completed the NCD Survey (test phase) and this time of discussion, it is likely that we are now at a higher level in the understand phase of the cycle. Over time, we must go to an even higher level of understanding and will do so as we continue the process, which for now means we must engage in some very simple planning, doing, experiencing, perceiving and further testing in everyday church life.

As you look at the listed challenges facing us, which one beyond reasonable doubt do you feel most convicted about right now and need to explore a little further?

Be prepared to share your chosen challenge topic to get things started. If anyone has difficulty choosing between options, remind them that for now, it is only a starting point for experimentation. When everyone has nominated a topic, hand out the relevant copy of the Cycle Starter sheets to each person and proceed with...

Cycle Starters have been developed to help us begin exploring these topics in a more practical way. As the name suggests, these ideas are for getting us started and may or may not reflect where we end up in terms of action plans. They are helpful because, just like it takes an extra push to start a car rolling, starting to make progress on minimum factor issues within a church can sometimes use some extra help. These do not represent a comprehensive list of all that could be done in these challenge areas. You can feel free to write down another idea straight away. Otherwise, please take a moment to read the instructions at the top and put a number 1 next to the first Cycle Starter plan you will attempt.

Again, if necessary, remind the group that for now, it is only a starting point for experimentation. When everyone has selected a plan, ask if anyone would like to nominate the plan they have chosen or if there were any insights that came to mind just as a result of reading the options. **Be prepared to share your own initial Cycle Starter plan or reflections if appropriate.** When sharing has finished...

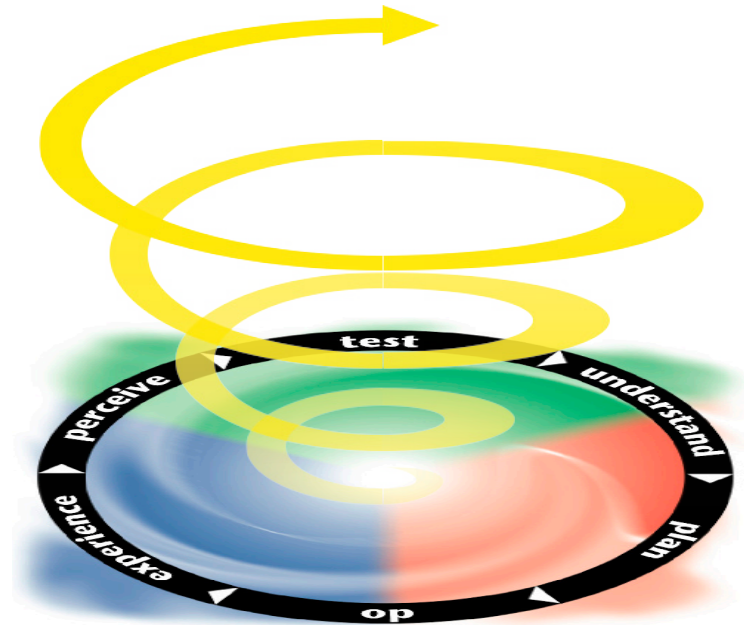
Please begin working on your Cycle Starter plan as soon as possible. As part of our next meeting to further discuss our results, with the help of the cycle stage questions on the diagram, we will review each other's progress.

Close the meeting as you feel led and be sure to lock in a date for discussing the Status Guide (if appropriate) and reviewing everybody's Cycle Starter progress. **See the “Cycling together” instructions on page 16 of this guide.**

To those who request them, after the meeting **distribute copies of this guide and, if appropriate, the remaining guides.**



My Cycle Starter Plan



Our current challenges

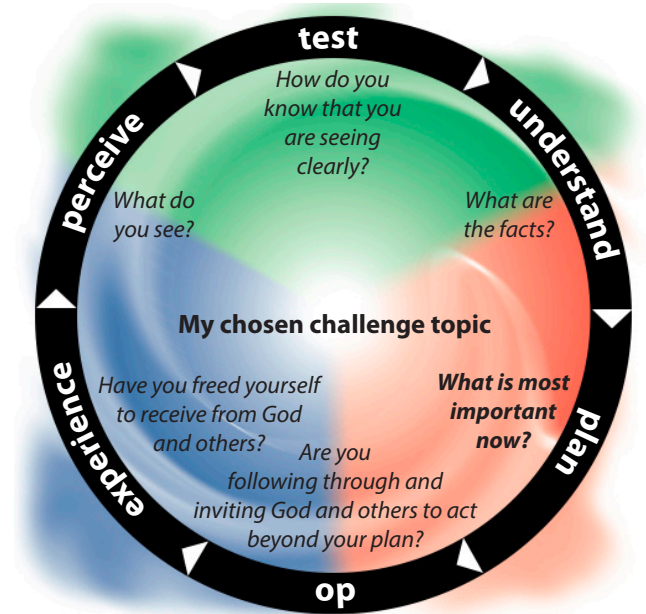
Faith

Inspiring Worship Service

releasing

affirmation

prayer



"Opening the front door" & "Breathing in"

**Beyond reasonable doubt,
which of the above do you personally
need to explore further
for the sake of your church?**

www.ncdchurchsurvey.org/cycle-starters



Cycling together

Cycling together to explore your church's current challenges simply involves **following the instructions on any given Cycle Starter sheet**. However, if you are facilitating Cycle Starter discussions in a group (which should happen each time your group gets together to consider your church's results, starting at your very next meeting), here are some suggestions.

If facilitating discussion, refer the group back to their personal Cycle Starter sheets while you read or summarise the following...

A growth cycle discussion simply involves putting your Cycle Starter sheet on the table and inviting others to ask the cycle questions starting at the Do stage, with the aim of helping them to move to a higher level on the growth spiral. If a person would like to talk through deeper personal issues with the group, we should make time for that. Otherwise, each person should move through his or her cycle questions in just a few minutes. So, who'd like to go first?

If helpful, you can expand slightly on the questions for the group.

Do: *Are you following through and inviting God and others to go beyond your plan? Are you actually doing what you said you would do while recognising you can't do it all alone and need the help of others?*

Experience: *Have you freed yourself to receive from God and others? Have you given yourself the time and space to experience what has emerged from putting your plan into action?*

Perceive: *What do you see? What do you think happened (whether you like it or not) as a result of putting your plan into action?*

Test: *How do you know that you are seeing clearly? What means have you used to check you are being objective about your observations?*

Understand: *What are the facts? What can you now state about your chosen challenge topic that is beyond reasonable doubt?*

Plan: *What is most important now? If not the same plan, what refined or completely new plan is now a priority for your challenge topic?*

Creative questioning

Feel free to **invent and ask other questions** that relate to each of the cycle stages. The aim of the discussion is to help each other move through each stage of the cycle in an open, honest way and to ensure that everyone finishes with a simple, concrete revised plan for their next cycle until you meet again.

Be sure to **lock in a date for your next round of cycle discussions** (and discussing your next NCD Result Guide if appropriate).

Some will of course be more diligent than others with their personal growth cycle. It is important to **keep encouraging those faithful few**, because often, once others see the fruit that begins emerging in their lives, a very motivating Godly jealousy develops.

Anywhere... anytime... with anyone

Typically, for the sake of momentum, such discussions should take place at least monthly. However, **greater cycle discussion frequency will bring about far more rapid and consistent progress**.

Eventually, asking the cycle questions of other key influencers will be a natural part of everyday conversation. Until then, it will be important that designated cycle meetings take place. These meetings could be at the start of a leadership meeting, as part of a small group gathering, with a friend over lunch, or even as part of family dinner time discussions.

In short, **cycle discussion can take place anywhere, anytime, with anyone**. Though, your initial survey result group should at least meet a few times as a group until they are into the rhythm of consistent cyclical growth.

Connecting back into your results

In these initial cycle meetings, it will be important to **keep your NCD Result Guides on hand** in order to review your results with the benefit of fresh experiences and increased understanding.

For those interested, let them know that the Strategy Guide discussion will include broadening the process to include the wider church.