

Church Health

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Defining, Measuring and Achieving
Church Health

Heartland Baptist District

Characteristics of Church Health

The mission of the Heartland Baptist District is to expand the Kingdom of God by developing healthy churches that partner together in reproducing disciples, leaders, and churches. In its most concise form, the purpose of the District is to develop healthy churches. Heartland's staff and board commit themselves and all the resources of the District to nurturing health in local congregations.

In order to accomplish this mission, the District must have a working definition of a "healthy church." What are the marks of church health? What are we looking for in churches that indicate a high degree of health? How do we know the District has helped in the achieving and maintaining a high degree of health? By what criteria do we measure health?

Many have listed their characteristics of church health. There is no existing divinely inspired list. What follows will not change that fact. What follows represents the characteristics of health the Heartland Baptist District has chosen to guide its efforts to assist churches in achieving and maintaining high levels of congregational health. They are the marks of health for which the District is willing to be held accountable for helping develop in its member churches.

The leaders of the Heartland District are willing to be held accountable for nurturing this particular constellation of health indicators because they are biblical and strategic. While not an exhaustive list, they are strategic characteristics. We believe the greater a congregation's health in these areas, the greater their impact.

The Mission

The Heartland Baptist District's Mission is:

"To expand the Kingdom of God by developing healthy churches that partner together in reproducing disciples, leaders, and churches."

In its most concise form, the purpose of the District is to develop healthy churches. In order to accomplish its mission the District leaders will focus on three areas of church health. They are reproduction, ministry partnership and community impact.

Three Facets of Church Health

Reproduction

Healthy churches partner together in order to reproduce disciples, leaders and churches. God's plan from creation has been reproduction. In the Garden, he commanded Adam and Eve to reproduce after their own kind. He made all living things with the capacity to reproduce. His expectation is that Christians will "reproduce" Christians by speaking and living the Gospel among all people. The Early Church spread as churches birthed churches in other communities and among other cultures. Therefore, the Heartland District uses ***Reproduction*** as the most prominent measure of health.

Ministry Partnership

“Independent” churches are not found in the New Testament. Neither are merely “associated” or “affiliated” churches. The New Testament model is **interdependence**. Churches learn from each other, help each other, add their strengths to the strengths of others to accomplish God’s purposes. No one church can independently accomplish God’s entire plan. Since interdependence is demonstrated in partnership, the Heartland District includes ***Ministry Partnerships*** in its short list of health indicators.

Community Impact

Someone once said, “The American church measures its success in nickels, noise and numbers.” To the extent this is true, we stand indicted. The internal measures of church life (stewardship of money, ministry activity and participation) are worthwhile and even important things to measure. They are partial indicators of a church’s effectiveness. The typical criteria used in most American churches measures only what happens “inside the walls,” – inside the church. How many came? What did they do while they were here? How much did they give while they were here?

The New Testament church measured its success “outside the walls.” On Pentecost they counted how many from the community came to faith in Jesus. The value of leaven was measured not in the container but in the loaf. Salt that lost its saltiness before being spread around was deemed useless. The light was to shine on the hill for all to see, not under the bushel for a few to use. The leaders of the Heartland District intentionally declare a bias for ***Community Impact*** by listing it as their third and final measure of health.

The Covenant

The Biblical concept of “covenant” conveys commitment and effectiveness. One of the more common forms of Biblical covenant is “If you..., I will...”

The staff and board of the Heartland Baptist District wishes to enter into this kind of covenant with you and your church. If you will pursue health in these areas of congregational life and ministry, the District will commit to resourcing you for reproduction, effective ministry partnerships and community impact.

Healthy Church Covenant

Reproduction

The foremost demonstration of church health is reproduction.

Therefore we are committed to resource your church for reproduction.

- ***The Reproduction of Disciples***

To effectively birth, nurture and multiply disciples.

- ***The Reproduction of Leaders***

To effectively identify, mentor and mobilize reproducing spiritual leaders.

- ***The Reproduction of Churches***

To effectively engage in planting healthy churches among all people groups in the Heartland and around the world.

Ministry Partnerships

The Biblical model of community is working together.

Therefore we are committed to promote, facilitate and model mission partnerships in the local community, the Heartland, the BGC and the larger Christian church.

Community Impact

The church is called to be salt and light.

Therefore we are committed to heighten your church’s effectiveness as a transformational influence in all the communities God calls you to serve.

Measurement

How can we measure reproduction, ministry partnerships and community impact? Measuring spiritual health presents a formidable challenge, formidable but not impossible. God's Word cites measurements of health.¹

Jesus often described the signs of spiritual health he desires in his followers.

- "They will know you are my disciples by your love for one another."²
- "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."³
- "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."⁴
- "First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."⁵

In His Word, God values the impact of health observed.

- Paul reminds us we are letters, written on hearts known and read by everybody.⁶
- Paul noted the church at Thessalonica had "become a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia..." and that "the Lord's message rang out from" the church at Thessalonica so their faith in God had become known everywhere.⁷
- James asked, "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."⁸
- Paul encouraged, comforted and urged the church at Thessalonica to live lives worthy of God, who called them into his kingdom and glory.⁹
- Peter admonishes us to "live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us."¹⁰
- John records God's measurement of the relative health of the seven churches of Revelation.¹¹

Reliable measurement is essential if you to assess your relative health and if the Heartland District is to know how to best nurture you. Just as our list of characteristics was not divinely inspired, neither are these particular measurements. But again, they comprise the yardstick the Heartland District has chosen to give a helpful reading of health to both the congregation and District leaders.

¹ The Scriptures listed below are suggestive rather than exhaustive and represent a small number of potential texts.

² John 13:34

³ Mark 9:35

⁴ Luke 6:27-28, Matthew 5:43-48

⁵ Luke 6:42

⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:2

⁷ 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8

⁸ James 3:13

⁹ I Thessalonians 2:12

¹⁰ 1 Peter 2:12

¹¹ Revelation 1-3

Healthy Church Measurement

Reproduction

The foremost demonstration of church health is reproduction. You are committed to effectively birth, nurture and multiply disciples. The HBD is committed to resource you for success in the reproduction of disciples. Therefore together, we will measure:

- The birthing of disciples by conversions and baptisms.
- The nurturing of disciples by changed lives (Growth in Godliness / Christ-likeness / Fruit of the Spirit) and by the existence of a system that helps you identify and use your spiritual gifts.
- The multiplying of disciples by evidence of God's power and by the extent to which Christians are reproducing Christians.

You are committed to effectively identify, mentor and mobilize reproducing spiritual leaders. The HBD is committed to resource you for success in the reproduction of leaders. Therefore together, we will measure:

- How many potential leaders you have identified in the past year.
- How many leaders you are currently mentoring in leadership.
- How many leaders have been mobilized for leadership in the past year.
- How many vocational ministry leaders have you raised up in the past ten years.

You are committed to effectively engage in planting healthy churches among all people groups in the Heartland and around the world. The HBD is committed to partner with you for success in planting churches. Therefore together, we will measure:

- The ways in which you are partnering in church planting.
- The number of church plants in which you are currently partnering.
- The total number of missionary churches you have assisted in birthing.

Ministry Partnerships

The Biblical model of community is working together. You are committed to form ministry partnerships that help accomplish God's plan in your local community, in the Heartland, the Baptist General Conference and throughout the world. The Heartland Baptist District is committed to encourage and assist you in establishing and maintaining ministry partnerships. Therefore together, we will identify and measure:

- The purpose of your ministry partnerships.
- The effectiveness of ministry partnerships in accomplishing your shared mission.

Community Impact

The church is called to be salt and light. You are committed to being a transformational influence in all the communities God calls you to serve. The HBD is committed to help you heighten your effectiveness as a transformational influence. Therefore together, we will measure:

- The ministry risks you have taken in order to make a difference for Christ.
- The reputation your church has in your neighborhood.
- The degree to which you know the needs within your community.
- What has changed in your community as a result of your prayer and activity?

The Self-administered Church Health Questionnaire

In order to help you measure your relative health in each of these areas, the Heartland District will provide a questionnaire for use in your church. After answering the questions, discuss those answers and assess your own health. You may share the results with the Heartland District staff in order to solicit their partnership in increasing the health of your church. The HBD will seek to be prepared to assist you through consulting, networking, resourcing and training.

Church Health Questions

For Ministry Year _____

Reproduction of Disciples

1. Through the ministry of our church and the witness of our people we have seen _____ people come to saving faith in Jesus Christ.
2. _____% of our people either led someone to faith in Christ or was a primary instrument in leading someone to faith in Christ in the past year.
3. We baptized _____ people this past year, including _____ children and young people and _____ adults.
4. _____ young people and adults took our spiritual gifts inventory this past year. Of that number, _____ are currently engaged in ministries that reflect their gifting and passion.

Reproduction of Leaders

1. We identified _____ potential leaders in the past year.
2. We are currently mentoring _____ leaders and potential leaders.
3. We have mobilized _____ new leaders in the past year.
4. We have launched _____ new ministries under the leadership of a new ministry leader's direction in the past year.
5. In the past 10 years our church has raised up _____ vocational ministry leaders.

Reproduction of Churches

1. We are partnering in church planting in the following ways:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
2. We are currently involved in _____ new church plants.

3. In the history of our church, we have either birthed or assisted in birthing _____ new churches in the Heartland Baptist District or elsewhere in the United States.
4. In the history of our church, we have assisted in birthing _____ new churches internationally through our mission support.

Ministry Partnerships

List your ministry partnerships; state the purpose (including outcomes or goals) for the partnership; and finally the actual results of that partnership for the past year. These may include local partnerships with individuals or organizations, partnerships with the HBD and BGC and your partnerships with the missionaries you support.

Ministry Partnership	Purpose of Partnership	Kingdom Outcomes Resulting from Partnership
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Community Impact

1. During the past year, _____% of our people actively participated in community service projects, charitable organizations or community-based ministries.
2. During the past year our church sponsored or hosted _____ community service/ministry events
3. This past year our leaders did the following in order to assess our church’s reputation in the community.

4. This past year our leaders did the following to assess the needs of our community in order to shape our decisions about community outreach services and ministries.

5. During the past year our church initiated the following community-based services/ministries.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

6. During the past year our church supported or participated in the following community-based services/ministries.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.

7. The following community groups used our church facility in the past year.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.
- f.
- g.
- h.
- i.
- j.

8. Through our church or the people of our church, the following financial/material resources were made available to our community.

9. During the past year our community experienced the following changes:

- a. Our divorce rate went from _____% to _____%
- b. Our overall crime rate went from _____% to _____%
- c. Our teen pregnancy rate went from _____% to _____%
- d. Our percentage of couples living out of wedlock went from _____% to _____%
- e. The availability of pornography went from _____ to _____ outlets
- f. Services to the poor, homeless, mentally ill, sick, elderly and imprisoned were increased in number and quality _____ Yes _____ No

Examples of Community-based Ministry Opportunities

Sponsor Highway Patrol check of infant seats and their installation

Once a week community meal

The Banquet – non-profit food program

Fund raisers for Right-to-Life,

Community Benevolent Events

Car Care Clinic

Carpenter's Hands – community repair and construction

Halloween Alternative Event

Habitat For Humanity

Polling Location

Voter Registration

Prisons and Jails

Volunteer

 Meals on Wheels

 Firefighters

 Nursing Homes

 Hospitals

 Mentoring

 Big Brother – Big Sister

Foster Care

Hospice Care

School Boards