

The Discovery Process

Discovery is a process designed to facilitate the renewal of vision and ministry in the local church. Its goal is that: *Each local church will be a dynamic spiritual-social presence relevant to its community acting as Christ's agent of reconciliation and hope.*

Discovery is unique to the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches. It was initially developed as a tool to meet the needs of the many "rural" churches in our constituency but has since evolved into one that will help instill new life into any congregation that wishes to use it.

The Background to Discovery

The Discovery process emerged from and is directly linked to the Rural Church Study that was conducted in our Convention as a result of concerns voiced at the 1987 Assembly about struggling rural churches. Focused studies were undertaken by the Home Mission Board resulting in several recommendations to Convention. Discovery was then developed as the vehicle for implementing those recommendations among the churches.

Discovery is unique in that it does not attempt to provide programmatic answers to churches. Instead, trained personnel are made available to help churches assess their ministries and discover for themselves an effective pathway to new vision, life, and focus in reaching their Kingdom potential.

The Philosophy of Discovery

Several key concepts encapsulate the basic philosophies behind the Discovery process.

The first is a local church focus. Discovery is based on the belief that Jesus is active in the life of the local congregation to "build his church" (Matthew 6:18). In addition to the Holy Spirit, he has given the church pastoral leadership and gifted people. Together these three resources enable the ministry of sharing the love of Christ with a broken world and making disciples of all nations (Matthew 22:37-40; 28:18-20).

A second concept is that of vision. Discovery is primarily a redevelopment/renewal process leading to a new vision for the church. It is built on the belief that before a congregation can develop an intentional ministry plan, it must have a vision for where it is going. Vision comes from the Lord, is articulated by the leadership, and owned ("caught") by the congregation.

A third concept is uniqueness of situation. Since each congregation is unique, Discovery is designed to help them find and develop their own unique vision. Consequently, the pathway to that vision is also unique. No one process fits all situations.

Fourthly there is the concept of self-assessment. Discovery is not a program that is brought to the church as a solution for their need. It is, rather, a process that facilitates the congregation assessing their church in several areas with the view to determining the best pathway toward a renewed vision.

Overview of the Discovery Process

There are four stages to the Discovery process: Preparation, Assessment, Recommendations, and Implementation.

Stage 1: Preparation

Inquiry

- A pastor or the leadership of a church expresses interest in Discovery.
- Information is sent to the inquirers (eg., a Pastor's Packet or brochures) or the same information conveyed via e-mail, phone conversation or by other means.

Leadership Information Meeting

- The pastor or leadership requests participation in Discovery or requests a meeting with someone to further explain the process.
- Either way a date would be set at this point for an evening Leadership Information Meeting. The formal and informal leadership of the church can be invited to this meeting.
- A Discovery representative will attend the Information Meeting with the following agenda:
 - Formally explain the Discovery process
 - Formally facilitate a discussion focussed on the issues outlined in the "Discovery Readiness Worksheet".
 - Outline to the leaders the financial obligations of the process.
 - Answer any questions from the group.

Church Preparation

Assuming that the leadership and/or church has decided to proceed with Discovery, the Pastor and church leaders will be required to sign an agreement that they will work to prepare the church for Discovery by taking the steps outlined in the following points.

- The pastor and church leaders will mobilize intercessors, set up prayer groups, and challenge the church to be praying about this process.
- The Pastor will challenge the church with four consecutive Sunday sermons (two is acceptable, but four is preferable if a vision and climate for this process is to be present in the church) on the theme of church health and growth using the eight characteristics of a healthy church as a basis for the sermons.
- The Pastor will determine a list of "core members" who fit the criteria for the survey to be conducted.
- Upon confirmation of the prayer groups/emphasis being set up and the sermons being preached, a date would be set for the survey to be conducted in the church.
- A Discovery facilitator will be assigned by the Provincial Coordinator in consultation with the Pastor.
- A date would then be set for the Discovery Assessment Day (must be at least three weeks after the survey is conducted and returned to the facilitator).

- The DAD date would be announced and promoted with the congregation being challenged to attend.

Stage 2: Assessment

Survey

- The church survey will be conducted and completed forms sent to the facilitator.
- The Pastor will complete the Pastor's Survey and send it to the facilitator.
- The facilitator will enter the data into the "Core 4" software and e-mail the file to NCD Canada for processing in preparation for the Discovery Assessment Day

Discovery Assessment Day (DAD)

- The facilitator will conduct the one-day DAD (9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) comprising the following basic assessment modules:
 - Church Stereotypes
 - The Nature and Functions of the Church
 - Characteristics of a Healthy Church
 - Survey Report and Analysis
 - The Life-Cycle of Congregational Development
 - Dreams
- The facilitator will leave taking with him/her a record of the discoveries made by the church for inclusion in the Report Card to the church.

Stage 3: Recommendations

Report Card

The facilitator will, within three weeks of the Discovery Assessment Day, complete and send to the pastor and leadership of the church a Report Card containing the following:

- Summary of the congregation's self-assessment relating to the Functions of the church (with any comments deemed to be helpful to the church).
 - Summary of the discussions surrounding the Eight Quality Characteristics of church health.
 - The analysis of the church survey.
 - Summary of the congregation's self-assessment relating to the Life Cycle of Congregational Development with recommendations about the pathway to be taken to a renewed vision.
 - A list of the Dreams that were articulated in the Dream session.
 - Any discernments, observations, or issues that the facilitator noted while conducting the sessions.
 - Recommendations and suggestions by the facilitator on next steps to be taken by the church.
 - A resource information packet on the area of church health found (through the survey) to be most lacking in the church.
- A copy of the basic Report Card will be forwarded to the Saint John office, and a copy to the respective Regional Minister for information.

Stage 4: Implementation

- Upon receipt of the report Card it will be the church's responsibility to take any next steps or initiatives in implementing the recommendations of the facilitator.
- If necessary, and if requested by the church, the facilitator will be available for a follow-up meeting with the Pastor, leadership board, or the congregation to help interpret or further explain the Report Card as it is being processed. If at all possible the respective Regional Minister will also attend this meeting.
- If necessary, and if requested by the church, the facilitator will be available as a resource person to help in setting up any future workshops or seminars deemed necessary for implementation of the recommendations.

How to Become Involved

For more information about the Discovery process for your church, please contact our office:

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