

Journey to Life



A report on the missional health of The Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory

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This report has been prepared on the basis of a set of recently produced Territorial NCD reports. Specific references will be made throughout to the accompanying “Summary Guide” and progress report entitled “*The Salvation Army UK Territory 2+*”. Comments are also based upon my 15 years of experience with NCD diagnostics in The Salvation Army context around the world. I also add that I write as a 4th generation Salvationist having enjoyed some of the most traditional of Salvation Army Corps as well as new Salvation Army expressions of Christian community. From a social perspective, I’ve also enjoyed spending time over the years with residents at various Salvation Army rehabilitation centres.

While implicitly referring to it throughout, I will not explain the background of NCD research. Instead, for further information on NCD fundamentals, I recommend the books, “Natural Church Development” (hardcover) and “Color Your World with Natural Church Development”, both by Christian A. Schwarz. I will, however, just mention that having started with a research base of 1,000 churches on all continents, NCD International has now worked with over 65,000 churches across more than 72 countries with Salvation Army involvement being significant larger than many movements in proportion to its size.

Report sample sizes

Well over 100 Corps in the Territory have completed at least one NCD Survey and are included in the accompanying reports. This forms a very reliable sample on which to explore topics and draw conclusions.

The reports that reference progress and change dynamics in the context of the NCD process are based on over 50 Corps who have completed at least two NCD Surveys. Again, a significant sample.

Strength and progress

Since Jesus came full of truth and grace, I will endeavour in this report to present both some of the manifestations of that grace and some of the tougher truths that can be seen through the Territorial NCD profile. There are two main out-workings of grace I’d like to draw attention to:

- The Kingdom principle that The Salvation Army largely redefined when it was raised up by God, is what NCD calls *Need-oriented Evangelism*—expressing the Gospel through the meeting of need so that by all possible means, people will be saved. This trait remains strong in the Territory (and throughout the Army world). While it can (and must!) become even stronger, relatively speaking, it still ranks number one in the Territory among the principles of long-term healthy growth (see the *Summary Guide* page 3).
- The other out-working of grace is the encouraging progress that can be seen among those Corps in the Territory who have completed more than one NCD Survey. This is more than a dry statistical shift in numbers. It is the Kingdom of God more manifest on Earth as it is in Heaven in those places. It is more of God’s love, compassion and power being felt by people within the sphere of influence of those Corps (see the *The Salvation Army UK Territory 2+* pages 9-10).

Reaching the lost

Discussions and action plans for reaching the lost often gravitate towards initial points of contact with those who need Christ or need to return to Him. Clearly this is very important. Nothing else can happen if this step is missing. But NCD research points us towards the evangelistic *pathway* of people and identifying which stepping stones are in place and which ones are missing in their journey to life in all its fullness. It is often mistakenly thought that, of the 8 quality characteristics of NCD, *Need-oriented Evangelism* is the one most associated with numerical growth and the others are just about other aspects of Christian life. This is not true. Every one of the NCD quality characteristics has a strong correlation with long-term healthy growth and therefore represents a unique stepping stone on that journey. Furthermore, whichever characteristic is lowest in a given Corps, Division or Territory is *the* characteristic most limiting the numerical growth at that time, regardless of how strong Need-oriented Evangelism (or any other greatest strength) may be.

Put another way, the capacity for Need-oriented Evangelism in the average Corps (even if still in need of future development) is currently greater than the Corps can make use of because of deficiencies in other areas. Despite the enormous weight of general and Salvation-Army-specific NCD research that underscores this point (and the significant *lack* of people who actually disagree with it), it is still quite difficult to draw attention to it for long enough to bring about the needed balancing change that would lead to profound long-term healthy growth.

The first page of the *Summary Guide* provides a very important, but usually missed, clue in this regard. We see that when it comes to three foundational elements of Kingdom life, *faith* is strongest in the Territory, followed by *service* and finally *fellowship*. Given the understanding that every church or movement in the world must be strongest in something and weakest in something else, a frequent response to this (common) Salvation Army chart is, "Yes, that looks like us." The subtext is, "Fellowship is wonderful, but we must exercise *faith* in *servicing* the world around us." Hard to argue with that!

Looking from the outside in

Consider this, though, from the perspective of an "outsider". How great to experience hands of *service* extended towards you, wanting to meet your needs. Furthermore, imagine coming in contact with a group of people expressing genuine *faith* and the confidence that could make available to you in your own life (Faith = Latin *fides* -> *confidence*). But what then? Drawn towards Christ by this encounter with service and faith, you've edged nearer to the group of people who have shown love to you. But as soon as you join that group (whether formally or in your heart), you suddenly experience that the fellowship *within* the group is not at the same level as the love you experienced when *outside* the group. The decision is then fairly simple and logical. Stay on the outside where you can feel the love!

The "outsider" scenario mentioned above depended upon the primary needs of that person being either service, or faith. What if, however, *fellowship* and not service or faith is the very next thing a person needs on their journey to life. What if their next step would involve dealing with deeper issues within their heart or just having a friend for a season of time while they rest from a phase of intense toiling. Quite simply, they will struggle to find it in most Corps in the Territory.

Some have said that the Army should stick to *its* strengths and let other parts of the wider church exercise *their* strengths in fellowship. In theory this is a great idea. The challenge is that it depends upon a significant level of partnering with other local churches or movements to ensure people don't just fall through the cracks. "Hello dear Anglicans. We know you struggle a little with making initial contact with people in need. Well, we know lots of them. Would you mind taking care of this person? They need some help in dealing with some deeper issues in their life." By all means this kind of partnering should be pursued. However, in most instances it is

simply easier (and as the progress results show, more than possible) for a Corps to just grow in its area of weakness. Either way, if the needs of the lost are to be taken seriously, there is work to be done.

Outward focused Corps

It seems of use to step sideways for a moment to raise here that there is much talk around the Army world (and elsewhere) about “inward” and “outward” focused churches (outward always seen as the morally superior type by those who raise the topic). The major flaw in this dichotomy is that an outward focused Corps *needs* people to stay outside and not come in, because the inside (loving relationships, discipleship, nurturing, etc.) is always something that “we must look into”, but rarely do because the outside is always seen as more important.

In more recent times, some even say this is the superior approach because we don’t want to be an “attractional” church but instead “missional” or “incarnational” or “...”. This is a real problem if genuine, authentic, Gospel-based, Christ-centred community becomes accidentally “attractive” (which of course it is). If attraction of this kind happens, it follows that you would need to tell people to go away and not be attracted by what they are experiencing.

A lot of this “real ministry is away from where you are right now” has been built on the unfortunate rendering of the Great Commission in most English Bibles. We are told to, “Go make disciples...” when the more appropriate rendering would be, “As you go, make disciples...” Seeing the lost saved, discipled and deployed should be done here and there, and not just there.

Contrary to the western mind’s strong desire for either/or understandings, we must embrace the reality that healthy Christian community will be both attractional and incarnational. Not surprisingly, in my work with churches around the world I would say that roughly half need to spend a season of time being a little more inward focused, and the other half a season of time being slightly more outward focused—all for the sake of the lost and found. Radical balance of inward and outward is then the ultimate goal. Perhaps a “transformation-focused Corps” is a better goal than an outward (or inward focused one). In that case, it doesn’t matter *where* it happens. It only matters that people grow in a life of faith, service *and* fellowship.

But I thought NCD said we were good at meeting need...

When speaking about the capacity of a Corps to meet the fellowship needs of the lost, there is sometimes confusion about how they could be scoring reasonably well in Need-oriented Evangelism and yet failing to meet those kinds of needs. This points us to the interconnectedness of the 8 quality characteristics. None of these 8 essential areas exists in isolation. They all support and depend upon each other. One of the most graphic connections we (sadly) get to see is how, on occasion, a minimum factor area in a church has been neglected over a period of time, and then, ultimately caused the rest of the health profile to collapse. This is exactly the same as a person with very well-developed muscles expecting they can go on forever even if they have a bad heart. It just doesn’t work.

Many of these connections are relatively easy to notice. For example, you can see how there would be a relationship between the likes of Passionate Spirituality and Inspiring Worship Services. In a more extensive way, we can make a connection between *need-orientation* (the descriptive attribute that is primarily measured in Need-oriented Evangelism) and all of the other quality characteristics (please see the *Summary Guide* page 3). The strongest positive connection with *need-orientation* (ranked number 1) in the Territorial profile is with Inspiring Worship Service, the area that is ranked 2nd. So, if a person’s greatest *need* is to be *inspired* or to experience *inspiring corporate worship*, the average Corps will meet that need quite well. To a strong, but slightly lesser extent, if a person’s greatest *need* is to have some *effective structure* (ranked number 3) placed around them to bring about some fruitful rhythm in life, they will be quite well served. Moving to the other end of the scale, if a person’s greatest *need* is to be

connected with others in *loving relationships* (ranked number 7) or to deal with feelings and problems and experience personal growth in a *holistic small group* (ranked number 8), they will struggle.

So while, in a *general* sense, the average Corps is quite good at focusing on the needs of people, that capacity peters out when related to the concerns behind the lower end of the NCD profile.

A closer look at fellowship

It would clearly be a gross mistake to claim that The Salvation Army was somehow devoid of fellowship. This is certainly not what the NCD results are saying. It is just that, relatively speaking, fellowship is not as strong as service and faith and is therefore holding back the growth of the Territory at this time. Keep in mind, something will be the least developed at any given time. If not fellowship, what would you rather it be?

Page 2 of the *Summary Guide* helps us gain a more nuanced understanding of what this weakness in fellowship looks like. There are three NCD quality characteristics that span the fellowship area. Holistic Small Groups, Loving Relationships and Empowering Leadership each provide a Corps with a certain dimension of “togetherness”:

- Empowering Leadership which can be described as *working together* comes in 4th out of the 8 quality characteristics. It is the *task-oriented* dimension of fellowship.
- Loving Relationships which can be described as *socialising together* comes in 7th out of 8. It is the *connection* dimension of fellowship.
- Holistic Small Groups which can be described as *growing together* comes in 8th. It is the *transparency* dimension of fellowship.

In practical terms, this means that the old, new or nearly-there members of a Corps will more likely experience fellowship if they are willing, able and invited to perform a *task* in the Corps, than if their primary need is to connect socially with others (Loving Relationships) or to deal with feelings and problems (Holistic Small Groups). However, even fellowship in the form of working together is not all that strong (more on this later).

Digging a little deeper

Let's get a little more specific about the fellowship challenge. Since the overall shape of the Territorial profile is very nearly the same when looking at the whole sample or just those who have completed at least two NCD Surveys, I will base the following more detailed comments on the progress profile since it will help us to aim at where health improvement is heading in the Territory at the hands of those pioneering the needed change. Please see *The Salvation Army UK Territory 2+* page 13. This page shows the current lowest 10 scoring items for those Corps who have done at least two profiles. First, take note that most of the items have a yellow dot above them on the chart indicating that item was also in the lowest 10 for the averaged up first profiles of those Corps. The great news is it indicates, that while still in the lowest 10, progress has been made on all of those items. On the other hand, it does point to these items as longer term cultural sticking points in need of more thorough attention.

I will briefly make some comments about some of them that have a particular affinity to the broader fellowship issue. Keep in mind that the actual responses came from people, not at the fringes of Corps life, but those who are significantly involved. Having said that, as a perspective-expanding exercise, please read the listed items twice. Once just as yourself, a member of the Army, then a second time as a statement from a new person who is having to score that topic low, having been asked to complete the survey after coming deeper into the life of the Corps and encountering the level of fellowship experienced by the long-term members.

Q39. *I can rely upon my friends at church.*

It is not too difficult to see why a relative newcomer to a Corps who had either joined, or was considering doing so, may slip out the back door if even those who have been there together for a long time don't feel that they can rely on each other. Whether it be relying on your friends to be faithful to a task or relying on them to be there when you need them for more personal reasons, this important stepping stone will prove to be a stumbling block for many.

Q49. *I am a member of a group in our church where it is possible to talk about personal problems.*

It is noteworthy that this item doesn't refer to whether you *do* speak about your personal problems, but whether you feel that you *could* if you wanted to. While a person's willingness to open up about things remains a factor, this item raises a question over whether there is an environment in which such transparency would be welcome. Again, most Salvationists can live without it. But what if it is the very next greatest need of a person on the fringe?

Q43. *I know of people in our church with bitterness toward others.*

Conflict is largely inescapable as long as you attempt to stand for something in life. The aim in Corps life or the home lives of soldiers cannot be and must not be to avoid conflict. It is entirely a matter of how you harness the energy behind any conflict and direct it, in as much as it is up to you, towards the purposes of God. Having this item scoring low is a significant concern given the caustic nature of bitterness. The poisonous effect of bitterness on existing members of a Corps is concerning enough without the prospect of newcomers swimming into it and being forced to either choose sides or have relationships with others that are shallow, in an attempt to avoid confrontation. I find it interesting that amongst much parabolic teaching Jesus gave us about the Kingdom of God, one of the most directive and specific procedures he commanded us to follow is the process of conflict resolution outlined in Matthew 18:15. How rigorously is that taught, applied, and modelled?

Q51. *The leaders of our church prefer to do the work themselves rather than collaborate with others.*

Earlier I mentioned that, while somewhat stronger than *socialising together* and *growing together*, the fellowship dimension of *working together* was still not especially strong. This question highlights the point. For the Territory, it is noticeably lower than most other items within the area of Empowering Leadership. This contrast is instructive. Collaboration is often bundled together with the act of delegation. That is the ideal. However, this profile tends to indicate a stronger tendency to delegate than to collaborate. It could be put like this: "I'd love you to be involved in the ministry of the Corps (just as long as I don't have to work too closely with you)." Again, most Salvationists will have learnt to live with this approach and may even prefer it themselves. But what of the newcomer trying to find their feet in ministry, especially if they are likely to be more fruitful in a collaborative team environment? When this question scores low, I sometimes ask a group of leaders to tell me the downsides of collaboration. Their responses come back like lightning. "It takes longer." "You have to listen to dumb ideas." "It doesn't work when you have deadlines." "I don't want to have to vote on everything." The fact that this item made it onto the NCD Survey means that a high result in it correlates with long-term significant growth. So for every concern about collaboration, there are clearly many more upsides. What faulty thinking surrounds the idea of collaboration within the Territory?

Q49. *In my small group we spend lots of time on things which are irrelevant to me.*

This item is both the lowest scoring item in Holistic Small Groups for the Territory as well as the lowest scoring item overall. Some progress has been made, but it is clear that the topic will need to be addressed far more directly if culture is to be changed. In a healthy Corps, you will naturally have people at wildly different stages of their spiritual journey—those who've been on the road for a long time and lots of new people at an earlier stage with all kinds of different life

challenges. This means that group leaders need to become better and better at identifying the unique growth needs of each person so as to stretch them to their potential. If a group (or even all groups) within a Corps are treated largely as a homogenous mass of people, there can be little expectation of seeing transformation, except perhaps within the lives of that very small number of people for whom group discussions and activities are accidentally relevant. When considering this item, it is important to note that it is possible to say that something is irrelevant to you without knowing what *would* be relevant to you. Some respondents may know what would be relevant for them. However, given that personal growth and dealing with deeper inner spiritual issues is not a strong point for the Army, it is safe to say that work on this question should start from the perspective of helping people to think about what kind of discussions or activities would in fact be relevant for them. If you personally were in a small group, what would it be discussing or doing if you were to say that it was highly relevant to your life at this moment?

Q42. I experience the transforming influences faith has in the different areas of my life (profession, family, spare time, etc.)

Even though the area of faith has come in strongest in the Territorial profile when compared to service and fellowship, this faith-related item has come in low. Again, this contrast is instructive. With areas like Inspiring Worship Service coming in higher than Passionate Spirituality, we can conclude that the corporate spirituality of Corps life is generally stronger than the personal spirituality. While not strongly so, it does raise a little red flag for the danger of "Sunday Christianity". Though the evidence would seem to suggest that this is not a conscious or defiant stance by soldiers, but more of a matter of simply not quite knowing how to apply faith to the activities that make up most of their time in the world. While fellowship in worship is relatively strong, it appears the Army is a somewhat lonelier place to be part of when trying to live out the Christian life on the other days of the week. You could try to strengthen this by making the worship services even more powerful in the hope that the afterglow will last a bit longer, but it would be a lot of energy spent for relatively little gain. What are the genuine *fellowships of faith* that meet during the Army week that will strengthen soldiers for the challenges of daily life?

But what will happen to our strengths?

Many people with a reasonable degree of blood and fire in their veins will get nervous with all this talk and potential focus on fellowship, loving relationships, collaboration or holistic small groups. A fear will rise up inside them that we are in danger of, "compromising our calling", "losing our strengths", "ceasing to be the Army", "forgetting about evangelism" etc. Let me address this concern directly.

The theory and practice of NCD over two decades has shown in many ways how the 8 essential quality characteristics of healthy churches of any kind are inextricably linked with each other. As mentioned earlier, we have faced situations whereby churches were simply unwilling to address their minimum factors over a period of time to the point that the downward pressure placed on the church by its minimum factor caused the strengths to collapse. For a positive example of this connectedness, we need look no further than the Territory's own profile (see *The Salvation Army UK Territory 2+* page 4).

We know that *over half* of the Corps (53%) represented in this sample were working on one of the three fellowship-related areas based on their first profile—Empowering Leadership (10%), Holistic Small Groups (29%) or Loving Relationships (14%). We also know that *none* of those Corps were directed by their NCD Survey to give a special focus to Need-oriented Evangelism. So what happened during that period of changed priorities? (see *The Salvation Army UK Territory 2+* page 9.)

We see that all three of those fellowship-related areas increased in quality by four or five points. Great! Perhaps more interestingly and excitingly, Need-oriented Evangelism increased in the same period of time by 6 points. Those other low characteristics were the very areas that were

most holding back Need-oriented Evangelism from getting stronger. This is not an interesting anomaly. This is by far the most common occurrence in NCD practice. Now, allow me to emphasise the point further. The time those Corps spent on trying to improve in those fellowship-related areas did not drop from the sky. It had to be taken from something else. Given every quality characteristic across the profile increased in these Corps, it is clear that redistribution of time and changing of priorities *does not* mean that other areas have to suffer. Quite the opposite! If priorities are changed in order to restore the balance within the essentials of vibrant healthy Corps life, every area, including our greatest strengths, benefit.

What can we expect in terms of growth?

Before moving to some suggestions and recommendations related to the Territorial profile, I would like to touch on the relationship of health and growth in practical terms. As the Army has been involved in NCD for quite some time in various Territories around the world, it is not uncommon to hear polite questions about why we're not seeing numerical growth yet in our particular Corps. In most instances, the answer is fairly simple. The health of the given Corps, while having improved, is not yet at the point we would expect to see significant growth. Health improvement takes time. But I hasten to say, in most contexts it could happen a lot quicker with a greater degree of discipline and adherence to universal principles.

Leaving aside the rate of health improvement for a moment, see *The Salvation Army UK Territory 2+* page 3. It is a projection based on the rate of numerical growth that churches around the world experience within six different levels of NCD Health, starting with the median Corps worship attendance reported to us within the Territory. Please note this is not a *prediction* but a *projection*, meaning that we are not suggesting that any church will experience such a smooth growth curve, mainly because their health is likely to fluctuate during that time for all kinds of reasons. Instead, the chart is intended to highlight the significant difference in the future of a Corps depending on decisions made today about important missional health issues.

Finally, on the topic of growth, it is important to make a comment on the dynamics of salvation versus transfer growth from an NCD perspective. Personally, I don't have an aversion to transfer growth in and of itself. If sheep will be better fed in a different paddock, then that is quite possibly a good thing. I'm especially unconcerned about transfer growth where people end up in a healthier Corps because it will most certainly not be a bed of roses for those making the change. A healthy Corps is one that is full of grace, but it is also one full of truth and iron sharpening iron. It might be more uncomfortable than the church from which they came. Having said that, if all that NCD purports to do as a process only led to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, it should not be taken seriously. So it is heartening to be able to state that one of the traits of churches who move to greater levels of NCD health is that they also shift to an increasing proportion of salvation growth compared to transfer growth. This sets apart a healthy church from the many churches around the world who are growing primarily on the back of consumer-satisfying transfer growth.

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Implementation issues and dynamics

In this section I would like to address some important implementation issues and dynamics that should be considered in the days ahead.

We don't really care (and that's perfectly understandable)

Even if the Territorial NCD profile and all the comments above were seen as a clear sign of the need for action, there is still one very important dynamic that needs to be understood. Thousands and thousands of Salvationists around the world have looked at NCD results similar to these and agreed that, beyond reasonable doubt, we should try to grow in fellowship. The reality is though, that in many cases, this important priority quickly drifts off the table because they don't really care about it. I must immediately follow that by saying this is not intended at all as a moralising statement. It actually makes a lot of sense that the fellowship issue doesn't really matter to them.

If a Corps in the Territory were to be struggling with say, need-oriented evangelism or inspiring worship, you can imagine there would be some significant level of distress and perhaps some sleepless nights for the leadership. These quality characteristics are highly valued in the Army, are part of its very roots, and a major part of why many long-term Salvationists came and have stayed in the movement. On the other hand, strong, deep, intimate fellowship just doesn't matter as much to them personally. We know this, because they continue to attend in the relative absence of it. They know intuitively, or just out of long-term experience, that their life and the life of the Corps will pretty much go on next week without it needing to improve. So, trying to get people motivated to address these issues must not depend upon some kind of intrinsic motivation. It is not within the average Salvationist of today. It must come from outside of them.

In keeping with the agrarian metaphors of the Bible, a Corps is like a particular type of garden. Let's say, in the case of the average UK Corps, it is a full sun garden. The plants that have grown up there, have survived, and in many cases thrived, are full sun plants. We could explore the benefits of having some shade in a garden. While interesting, it is just not a particularly relevant topic for the existing plants. So, in some cases, we note that our NCD profile told us we are lacking shade, and then we just get on with life as we have done for quite some time. If, however, a semi-shade or full-shade plant were to find its way into our garden, perhaps attracted by the vibrancy of the other plants there, it wouldn't take long before the effects of the full sun garden began to show on this new plant. Some might struggle along for a time while others may be fortunate enough to get transplanted before they begin to suffer.

To get Salvationists to engage with the need for more connected, transparent, fellowship, it must be approached as something we need to do *for the sake of the lost*. Simple disciplines of fellowship must be engaged in, even if there feels to be very limited personal benefit (at least in the short term). Providing deep and meaningful fellowship must become a part of every motivational speech and sermon that refers to "reaching the lost". Then, that one third of people whose greatest need right now is deeper fellowship, may find in the local Army Corps a place to flourish in fellowship *and service and faith*.

Officer tenure

As one of the unique aspects of Salvation Army ministry is the Officer appointment system, it makes sense to examine it in the context of Corps health to see if any health-related nuances exist (see *The Salvation Army UK Territory 2+* page 7). When evaluating the relationship between the level of the 8 quality characteristics and the length of time the Officer has been at the Corps, we see a tendency towards a longer tenure being connected with higher quality in each area. A

separate NCD research project based on the Army in Australia revealed that the difference in overall health between Corps where the Officer had been there less than five years versus more than five years revealed a difference of eight points in favour of the longer tenure. That is a very significant difference. Most notably in the UK Territorial profile, the strongest tendency is for a longer stay being connected with higher results in Holistic Small Groups, the least developed characteristic in the Territory. In all such correlations, we must be careful not to draw conclusions about a one-way cause and effect relationship. While we cannot say that a longer tenure *leads to* higher Holistic Small Group results, the relationship is strong enough that some exploration of causation should be entered into. This is a very big topic that should be approached from many perspectives since the implications for health and growth are exceptionally large. For the moment though, here are a couple of thoughts.

The capacity to implement a process like NCD or, more specifically, model and develop deep relationships, will naturally have a connection with how long you have available to do so. Trust and transparency will emerge in a Corps more slowly than other attributes. If the time necessary to settle into an appointment and the time taken to prepare to leave an appointment are removed, the remaining time in most instances is relatively short in relational terms. Even if a particular Officer is deeply committed to fostering deep relationships within a Corps, chances are it will take quite some time just to overcome the lack of expectation, developed over time, of having an Officer active in developing deep relationships. As long as the Officer does X, Y and Z, we've learnt not to look for (or want) more than that. On the basis of this, longer tenures and all that relates to that must be seriously discussed as part of addressing the topic of long-term healthy growth. Though this on its own is inadequate as an answer to the broader issue.

The Salvation Army explosively grew in its earliest days on the back of an apostolic model of Officership. In very general terms, an Officer would initiate a new work, see it get established to a point, and then move on to start another work. Therefore, given the level of growth experienced in that phase (and the level of health that we get a glimpse of through the history books), we cannot say that shorter tenures are incompatible with healthy growth. We must therefore reinterpret the facts of the page 7 correlation chart.

I strongly suggest that this requires a radical rethink of the role of Local Officers and the expectation and responsibility that should sit with them for the long-term healthy growth of their Corps. Reality is that most Corps will "look" more like their mainstay key influencers than their current Corps officer. These relatively small groups of key influencers in every Corps are the ones who have shaped the culture that you see on their NCD profile. They are the constant that transcends the Officer changes that take place in their Corps. Given the only NCD action plans that ever really work are remarkably simple ones, I've not met a group of Local Officers who would be incapable of implementing such steps.

Far from disempowering Corps Officers, this approach allows them to progressively operate closer to their own giftedness, in many instances operating as a specialist of sorts in the given Corps. If this is coupled with a willingness to make appointments increasingly based on the match between an Officer's gifts and the specific minimum factor issues within a Corps, a very powerful team environment can emerge.

Economic realities of mission

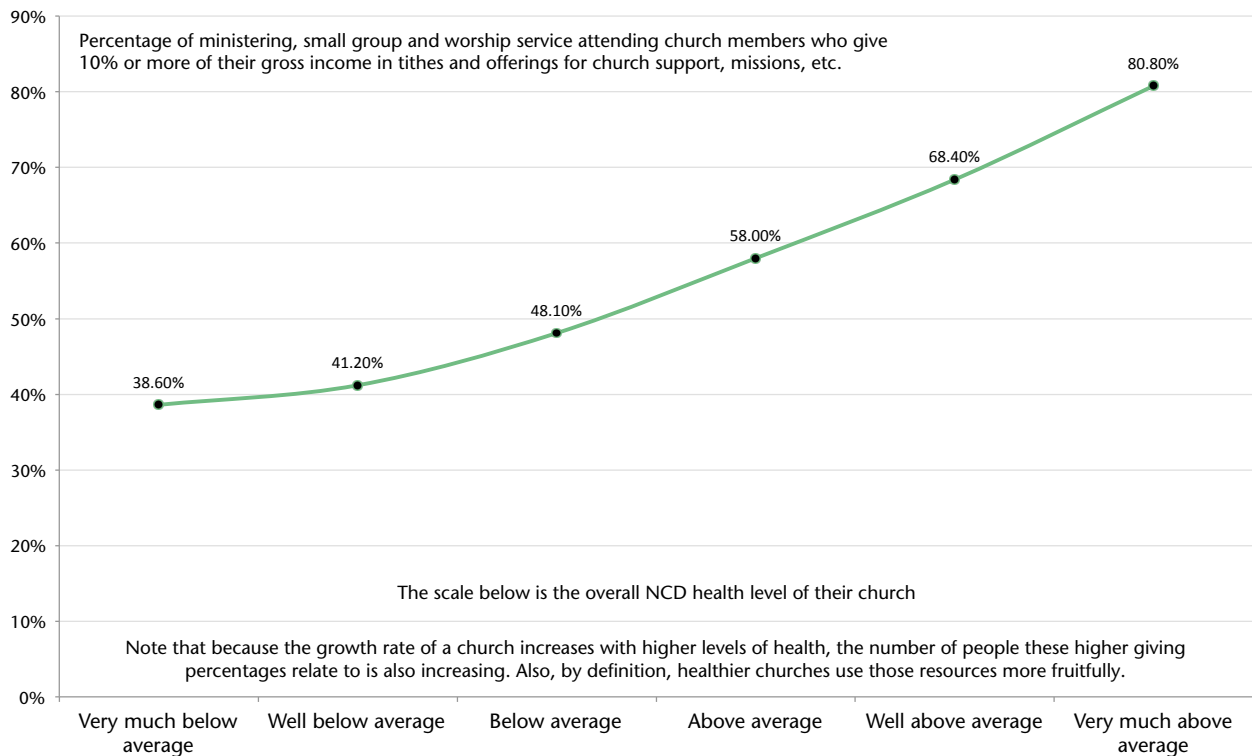
Reaching the lost costs time, treasure and talent. Sometimes very little of it. Sometimes a lot. Much of what I have written above explicitly or implicitly relates to the modified usage of time and talent for the sake of the lost. I would like to briefly address the topic of finances. Nearly any discussion around the price of seeing someone saved will likely end in a statement about the pricelessness of a human soul in the eyes of God. I have no questions there. However, the cost of the *means* of ushering that person into life in all its fullness should be rigorously considered. Time, treasure or talent wasted in one approach is then not available for reaching someone by

another means. The financial costs associated with the NCD process must be subject to this kind of assessment just like any other activity.

The following chart is part of NCD International's attempt to face the financial question head on, both for our own accountability and for the sake of those having to make financial decisions about the process. In summary, it shows the strong connection between the level of health within a church and the level of giving by its members. Leaving aside any of the specifics discussed above relating to the Territorial health profile, this chart can stand alone as a prompt for discussions around finances, stewardship, planned-giving, and the general strong relationship between giving and Corps health.



NCD health and financial giving globally



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Strategic recommendations

I am always reluctant to make strategic recommendations outside of thorough conversations with those who will need to implement them and without the full benefit of knowing what is already in place or being trialled. It is therefore my hope that the following thoughts can serve as a springboard for pursuing very implementable action steps that will both amplify the heart of the Army and broaden its overall capacity for spirit-empowered life-transformation. Most of these suggestions are based on action steps I have been directly involved in or have observed in fruitful NCD implementations. The numbering I use does not necessarily imply a priority order, only a convenient way of referring to the points in discussion.

How can the Territory better resource mission for greater fruitfulness?

1. *Provide training and resourcing in proportion with the most common minimum factors of the Territory*

- Move towards having the time, treasure and talent allocations made by THQ for resourcing mission line up with the percentage occurrence of each quality characteristic minimum factor. For example, at the moment, based on first NCD Surveys, Holistic Small Groups should approach 29% of resource allocation in terms of training and funding.
- Assess Corps' program funding requests on the basis of how the requests line up with their minimum factor issues.

2. *Resource and elevate Local Officer responsibility for Corps health*

- Look for Corps where Local Officer primary carriage of the NCD process could be piloted along with allowing the Corps Officer to function in a more specialist role based on their gifts.
- Provide specific Local Officer training in NCD implementation.
- Review the regulations with a view to Local Officer primary responsibility for Corps health and the accountability structures necessary to support such honour and responsibility.
- Make Officer appointments in light of the capacity of the specific Corps to address its minimum factor deficiencies with or without assistance.

3. *Help Corps to view their NCD Survey results through the eyes of an outsider*

- Give Corps "permission" to not have to feel deeply troubled by their minimum factor weaknesses.
- Talk them through scenarios in which the overall journey of an outsider would be inhibited or even halted by those issues once encountered.
- Help them reflect on instances where those issues may have genuinely caused someone to stumble away from the Corps.
- Work with them to envision the journey of an outsider if those areas were to improve.

4. *Ensure Corps are consistently applying the simplest possible NCD action steps*

- Ensure that Corps don't make the mistake of assuming significant health challenges will require complicated solutions (water to dry ground will make a big difference).
- Encourage them to think simpler if their ideas for action steps could not be initiated in the following few days.
- Work out the one specific question you need to regularly ask a given Corps to keep them on track with their chosen action steps.

5. Help Corps redefine small groups and what could take place without extra time load

- Help Corps recognise that most of them have more small groups (groups that are small) than most churches of similar size and possibly don't need to start any more.
- Help them to consider the simple ways in which everyday issues of faith could be discussed in those many groups.
- Ask them what growth in their particular group's relationships would look like.
- Investigate what, of a practical nature, is done or taught in groups to deal with inevitable conflict in life.
- Show group leaders how to model vulnerability and create an environment in which group members would feel more comfortable to share feelings and problems.

6. Encourage team and group leaders at all levels in the Territory to make group relevancy an everyday discussion topic. For example:

- "What would you be doing in this group if it was also highly relevant for your spiritual growth?"
- "What is the next area in which God might want to stretch you?"
- "What would you like us to do less of in this group to make it a more valuable time for you?"
- "Do you need to either join or start a different group that would be more relevant for where you are at in life?"

7. Address the topic of collaboration in leadership training forums

- Encourage open discussion about the "downsides" of collaboration.
- Teach about the correlation about between collaboration and long-term healthy growth.
- Tease out the upsides of collaboration that outweigh the downsides.
- Model collaboration.

8. Synthesise Territorial reviews in light of NCD principles. For example:

- Determine which reviews may be largely redundant in light of the comprehensiveness of the NCD Survey evaluation.
- Establish which reviews are not truly based on universal principles that apply in every Corps.
- Consider how reviews on giving can be positioned in the context of Passionate Spirituality.
- Consider how building and property views could be considered in the broader category of effective structures (i.e. all structures of every kind that help facilitate mission).
- Work out which other reviews may be enhanced if viewed in the wider context of a particular NCD quality characteristic.

9. Pilot the use of the NCD Survey in residential social centres (e.g. rehabs), given many of them often include all the elements measured by the survey.

- Help Social Centres become more balanced across the NCD quality characteristics in the same way as a Corps.

- Consider what some Corps could learn from the different ways in which a Social Centre lives out various quality characteristics.
- Look for what can be learnt about opportunities for greater mutually beneficial partnerships between Corps and Social Centres.

10. Expand the meaning of “reaching the lost” and its equivalents in Territorial communications

- Monitor and make suggestions regarding Territorial communications to ensure that, “helping the lost experience deep fellowship”, is part of what is heard alongside statements about the need to share faith and offer service.
- Find ways to promote the idea that evangelism is ultimately a process with many steps and phases (and a road on which we all to some extent continue to travel) as opposed to only a moment of conversion.

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Final thought

Reflections on the history, massive growth and life-transformation in the earliest days of The Salvation Army are very inspiring. I’ve seen many people moved to tears when recounting or hearing about those extraordinary days. For some, there is a longing to experience days like that again. For others, that kind of “nostalgia” is met with a patronising grin. Yes, we now live in a very different world. Though it is only a different world in practice, not in principle. The principles of healthy Corps life are exactly the same as they were back then, just as they were in the first century church. The form of things will in many cases need to change, but in others probably not. In my work with hundreds of churches around the world, I have seen no evidence of a starting point for a church or movement that would exclude it from reasonably hoping for and expecting that the best days are yet to come. I’ve seen churches with dreadful starting points move forward dramatically and churches with an average starting point experience a significant foretaste of Heaven. I see no reason, empirically or in practice, why the UK Territory of The Salvation Army should not aim for the highest of principle-based possibilities in the coming days just as the founder did. But keep in mind that the seeds for the slowing of the evangelistic juggernaut that was the early Army were planted in those early days also. So with the benefit of hindsight and all that our predecessors gave to us, we must hope for even more than they ever were privileged to see.

Blessings

Adam Johnstone

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Adam is the director of NCD Australia and a co-director of NCD International where he is principally responsible for resource development and making NCD tools available online. He is the developer of the NCD Result Guides and the NCD Cycle. Adam is currently writing the NCD books for Effective Structures and Inspiring Worship. He began his work with NCD as the NCD coordinator for The Salvation Army Australia Eastern Territory in 1999. He is married to Melinda and has four children, Taylor, Jordana, Lara and Angus. In his spare time he enjoys playing Bass Trombone and mountain bike riding.