

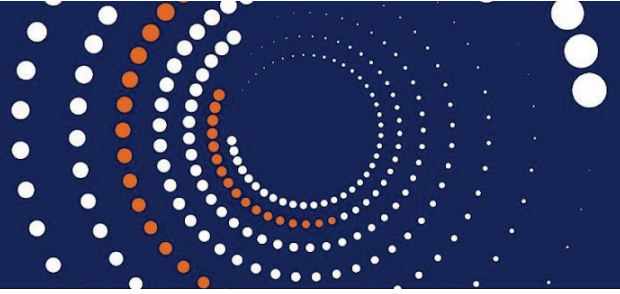
# COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

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After taking part in a *Church Life Survey*, churches are encouraged to use their results to reflect and plan for the future. This Comprehensive Planning Process is one option to help churches to develop a vision or mission focus and the detailed action steps to turn it into a reality.



# Comprehensive Planning Process Outline

## 4–6 long sessions spread over 3–4 months

The Comprehensive Planning Process is designed to help churches to develop a vision or mission focus and the detailed action steps to turn it into a reality. This process can involve several meetings but can provide churches with an exciting and well-grounded sense of direction.

### Who this process is for

The comprehensive planning process is designed to help churches arrive at a vision for the future and to develop action steps that will enable the vision to become a reality. To be ready for this planning process you will need:

- enthusiasm to look for and enhance life in your church over a period of a few months
- good working relationships among your leadership team
- people to carry forward the process.

### The basis for this planning process

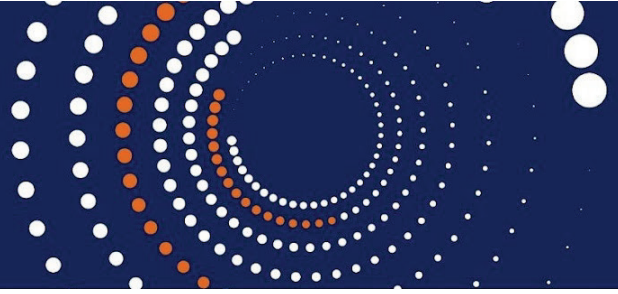
The planning process outlined here owes much to the approaches to missional and pastoral planning which have developed in Australian churches over the last thirty years. It also draws significantly on the innovative approach to organisational change and planning known as *Appreciative Inquiry*. Among many good planning methodologies available for churches, the *Appreciative Inquiry* approach has the most in common with our belief that planning should be about the search for life.

*Appreciative Inquiry (AI)* was developed in the 1980's by David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Cooperider and his colleague Diana Whitney describe AI as:

...a strategy for purposeful change that identifies the best of “what is” to pursue dreams and possibilities of “what could be”. It is a co-operative search for the strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system, those factors that hold the potential for inspired, positive changes (Cooperrider and Srivasta, 1987).

In this search for life, the *Appreciative Inquiry* approach assumes that every community or organisation has strengths, good news stories and times of success on which it can build. The task of the *AI* approach is to uncover them, share them and use them as springboards for the future.

As such, *Appreciative Inquiry* is a significantly different approach to traditional forms of planning which focus on problem-solving. *AI* focuses on a desired future built on strengths of the past and present. By contrast, problem-solving attempts to analyse deficits, identify root causes, then fix problems or correct errors. *AI* doesn't ignore problems; it faces them squarely. But its perspective is that underlying every problem is the desire for life that is not being fulfilled. Accordingly, *AI*'s focus is on finding the sources of life that can fulfil such desires.



While the process here draws on *Appreciative Inquiry*, it does not follow the full *AI* approach or use all its terminology. *AI* usually has four phases: Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver. The first phase of our Comprehensive Planning Process follows the *AI* Discover phase fairly closely, but our other three phases, while they have things in common with *AI*, are structured differently from the typical *AI* process. This is not because we feel there are difficulties with *AI*. Rather, it is partly that our approach better suits churches as they make use of the NCLS data in planning and partly that we are aware that there are few facilitators in Australia who have had training or experience in using *Appreciative Inquiry*.

### **Are we prepared for the Comprehensive Planning Process?**

A short questionnaire has been provided to assist you in deciding whether your church is ready to undertake the Comprehensive Planning Process. The Planning Preparedness Questionnaire (p.7) is designed to help you assess your local church's capacity and commitment – your “preparedness” – for engaging in an intentional, results-oriented planning process. It will help you to determine whether such an approach is practicable and viable for you at this time.

### **How much time is required?**

To make the most of this approach requires the equivalent of four days of planning sessions. There are two main alternatives for the way this can be conducted:

- over 4 weekend days spread over 3–4 months, or
- over 2 weekend days for the Searching for Life and Visioning for Life phase and 4 evening sessions for the Realising the Vision and Sustaining New Life phase.

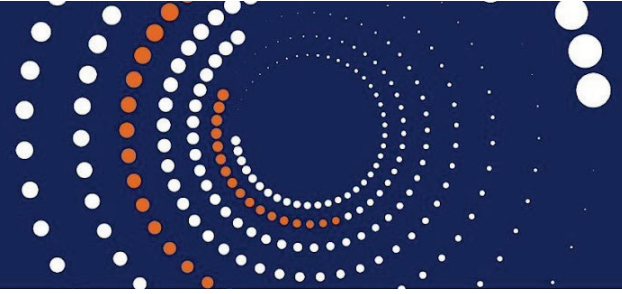
You will need to give people at least two months' notice that these sessions are coming so they can block out the days or evenings in advance. It is vital that as many members of the church as possible be involved. A general invitation at church followed up by personal invitations from the minister, pastor or priest and/or leadership team is best. This means asking someone after church or phoning them and following up with a letter.

### **Appoint a facilitator**

A facilitator will be needed to lead the process. This should be someone who is a person of prayer, is comfortable with facilitating groups and does not bring vested interests to the process. For the sake of independence and freshness of approach, there can be an advantage in having someone from outside the church. Possible facilitators include teachers, managers, leaders from other churches, and strategic planners. A point of contact for finding an appropriate person is your denominational mission planning or pastoral planning office.

A facilitator for the planning process will need to have:

- Well developed group process skills
- Good knowledge of planning techniques
- Familiarity with the NCLS research and resources
- Capacity to enable a positive group atmosphere
- Ability to include theology and spirituality into the planning process



## Appoint a planning team

A planning team will be needed to prepare for the sessions and to analyse and reflect on the results of each session. With the exception of very small congregations, this team should have about six members and be composed of people who are in leadership, in touch with a broad cross-section of church attenders and have good organisational skills. Gender balance is also important.

In nominating the team, the parish council, or whoever has the task, should ask the question “Who are the key stakeholders in this process?” and ensure that the team members have links to those stakeholders. Overall, the team members will need to have the confidence and support of the church leaders. Without the backing, both public and private, formal and informal, of people such as the minister, pastor or priest, associate ministers and church councillors, the process will go nowhere and yield little of consequence. So start only when this confidence and support is locked in. Because of the nature of the tasks and the significance of the planning process for the local church, it may be that the parish council or equivalent body is best qualified to be the planning team.

## Who should be involved in the planning process?

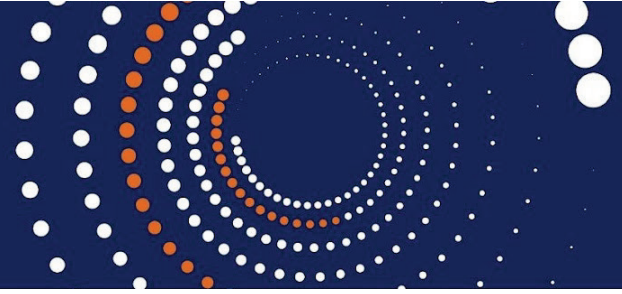
The short answer is everyone in the church! Over the course of the process, everyone should know that it is happening, be invited and encouraged to participate, be kept informed of progress and be involved in accepting the results. Only a few may be involved every step of the way, but all should feel that they have been a part of the process and have contributed to its outcomes.

This is vital if the process is to be broadly owned by people across the church. Otherwise, implementing the results of the process will not be taken up with the energy and dynamism needed to give the maximum yield. How to achieve maximum involvement is a question that requires a long answer. It will depend on the overall state of the church in terms of the way people participate in groups and events as well as what you have learned from experience about what will work in your situation. One communication medium to make the most of is email. An email bulletin sent to church attenders after each session and inviting response to the Planning Team is an excellent way of enabling people who were not able to make it to the meeting to feel that they are still part of the process. A variety of strategies that spring from creative thinking will be needed to capture people’s interest and energy.

## Session outline

There are four main phases in the planning process. Each phase is covered by one full day’s session of meeting together. Of course, extra time is needed for the Planning Team to prepare the sessions.

**Session 1 – Searching for Life:** The aim of this session is to identify sources of life for the church. Through interviews and storytelling, people remember significant past achievements and periods of excellence at the church. When was the church community functioning at its best? What happened to make those periods of excellence possible? By telling stories, people identify factors that have made a contribution to peak experiences – such as leadership, relationships, values, mission activity, or a particular approach to church worship.



**Session 2 – Visioning for Life:** The aim of this session is to stimulate the collective imagination to envision an attractive future which builds on the strengths already identified. Visioning exercises are used to draw out desired pictures of the future. Then a consensus begins to emerge about a future that is seen as a call across the church community. This consensus comes through dialogue and a willingness to listen to the Spirit working in the church community as a whole.

**Session 3 – Realising the Vision:** People draft the community structures and strategies needed to achieve the vision. It is a process of establishing roles and responsibilities, developing strategies, forging institutional linkages and mobilising resources to achieve the vision. New projects will be developed and initiated.

**Session 4 – Sustaining New Life:** The church puts in place processes to communicate, monitor and evaluate the plan as it is implemented. It also decides when and how it will know when aspects of the vision have been achieved and when to carry out evaluation.

### Getting ready

Much of what you will be doing through this planning process is like the strategic planning that happens in any organisation. People in the corporate world, for example, would recognise most of the steps we have taken so far and much of what is to come. Looking at survey data, assessing readiness to plan, discovering strengths, visioning and developing strategies are part and parcel of everyday life for businesses. What they would not recognise is the theological foundation and impetus to our planning. The search for life in a church community is ultimately the search for the presence of Jesus Christ and the creative Spirit of God. Drawing on this source of life is intended to orient the church community in mission. This sets the planning processes in a fundamentally different realm from strategic planning in other organisations.

Before entering into the planning process, it is valuable to pause for a time of reflection about what it is to be an authentic local church. So we offer two short processes, one on the mission of the local church and the other on core values. These are additional to the main sessions.

### Theological reflection on mission

This reflection can occur over an afternoon or evening session. It can be led by the church's minister, pastor or priest, by a theologian or by another minister, pastor or priest whose insights the congregation respects. The content of the session will focus generally on discovering and communicating the life of Christ in mission. The specific content will emerge through discussion between the session leader and the planning team. Some themes that may be helpful to explore include:

- the interplay of the images of creation and life in Genesis and the Gospel of John and their meaning for us as disciples in mission
- how the life of Christ is expressed in the local church, and the value of NCLS Core Qualities in pointing to that life
- the mission of the local church in bringing life to the surrounding community and beyond
- St Paul's understanding of spiritual gifts and our call to use our gifts in service
- the nature of the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer.





The session is best opened up to all church attenders as a way of stimulating interest in the planning process and encouraging input from across the congregation. This will also enhance ownership of the final plan that emerges from the overall process. Thus the session should be publicised throughout the congregation and people should be personally invited.

At the session, a member of the planning team explains the place of theological reflection in the context of the overall planning process. Those gathered are then led in prayer for the session. The minister, pastor or priest's input is then offered, while those present are given opportunities to reflect on and explore its relevance to the church.

After the session, a brief summary is prepared for the church bulletin and key points are carried forward into the visioning phase.

### **Core values discernment**

Some churches have also found it worthwhile to specifically articulate the Christian values which underpin their church life and mission. This is not essential to the planning process here, as there are many values already inherent in the NCLS Core Qualities or in specific survey questions. But we include it here in view of its potential benefit.

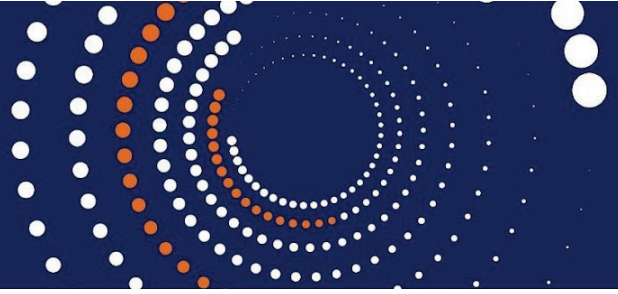
Core values can be defined as the constant, passionately held, biblical core beliefs that drive ministry (Malphurs, 1999, 83). Core values are those constants that underpin a church's ministry no matter what changes may be occurring to vision, personnel or programs. In the church at Jerusalem, for example, the first Christians "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching...to fellowship...to the breaking of the bread...and prayer" (Acts 2:42).

Such values, then, are foundational motivators of church life; they are what drives individual behaviour and communal mission. St Paul highlights this when he says, "It is the love of Christ that urges us on" (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Our research suggests that failure to fully live out values can weaken the confidence that attenders have in their churches. The degree of congruence between a church's stated values and its priorities and activities leads to greater commitment to the vision of church (Hughes and Bellamy, 2004).

Where leaders and church attenders fail to fully live out stated values, disillusionment and passivity can result. For instance, it is much harder to create enthusiasm for evangelism in a congregation where the leaders do not model evangelism in their own lives, where the issue is rarely discussed and where other aspects of church life always seem to have a higher priority.

If your planning team sees benefit in identifying core values as part of getting ready for planning, then the team can undertake a "Core Values Audit". There are planning resources available which contain Core Values Audits (e.g. Malphurs, 1999; Robinson, Smith et al, 2004).



# Planning Preparedness Questionnaire

## Introduction

**This is a short questionnaire to assist you in deciding whether your church is ready to undertake the comprehensive planning approach.**

The *Planning Preparedness Questionnaire* is designed to help you assess your local church's capacity and commitment – your “preparedness” – for engaging in an intentional, results-oriented planning process. It will help you to determine whether such an approach is practicable and viable for you at this time. It will also highlight gaps that may need to be filled before undertaking such planning. You will find the *Planning Preparedness Questionnaire* overleaf.

## Completing the Planning Preparedness Questionnaire

You will be asked to give an assessment of your church's situation by answering “yes” or “no/ not yet” to a series of statements. While the preferred response for each question is typically “yes”, the key to this exercise is to address, as honestly as possible, the reality at your church that is highlighted by each statement. In an extreme situation a church might yield “no” answers to all statements in the Questionnaire. But “no” answers can help to develop a clear picture of important organisational issues that need to be addressed.

There can be a temptation to respond to the questions in relation to the way we wish things to be rather than the way they really are. Equally, there can be a temptation to assess the church too harshly, finding reasons to answer “no” despite the preponderance of evidence that suggests a “yes” response.

The test of your answer should be: “Can I point to any evidence that supports a ‘yes’ response?” Evidence is the key. If someone was to ask you to justify your “yes” response, you should be able to point to an example. A “yes” response does not suggest perfection – just that a certain practice, quality, resource or attitude is demonstrably and evidently present.

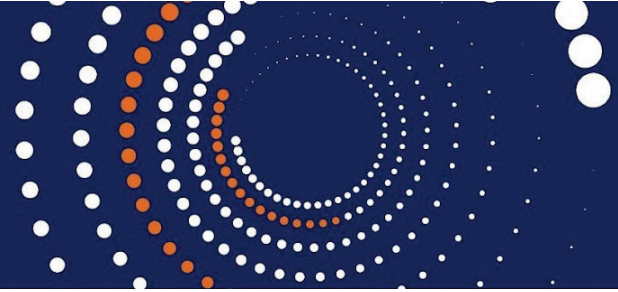
The questionnaire also allows for “not yet” responses, because you may believe that while a “yes” response is not currently justified, a “no” response is too final or exclusive. This would particularly be true where there is evidence of some improvement but not enough to justify a positive assessment of preparedness.

So, what do your “yes” and “no” responses reveal?

- *Available resources:* First, each response provides its own insight into church resources.
- *Strengths and weaknesses:* Second, the responses enable you to build a list of areas of current strength as well as areas for attention and development.
- *Preparedness for planning:* Finally, and of most importance in considering whether a comprehensive planning approach is feasible, the responses build a picture of how well prepared your church is for a planning process.

Obviously, you will need to make the final decision about your readiness for this planning process. But, as a general guideline, if you answer “yes” to less than two-thirds of the questions, the longer and more intensive planning process may represent too great a challenge for your church community at this time.

The process of completing the Planning Preparedness Questionnaire may of itself be useful in thinking through some issues that could be addressed in your church.



# Planning Preparedness Questionnaire

## Are the following statements true of your church at this time?

If so, tick the “Yes” column. If not, tick the “No/Not Yet” column. Answering “yes” to 10 or more of these statements suggests that your church is sufficiently prepared to undertake a comprehensive planning process. You may need to discuss these statements with others at your church to confirm your answers.

	Statements about your church	Yes	No / Not Yet
1.	There is, on balance, an openness to change and a willingness to build on the good things happening in the church by trying new initiatives in mission and ministry.		
2.	There are people who can provide creative thought, critical analysis and good organisational skills and who may be willing to serve on a planning committee.		
3.	There are people who have demonstrated ability and who may be willing to conduct some basic information gathering and convey the results to the church.		
4.	The church’s minister, pastor or priest is committed to promotion and involvement in a planning process that will involve broad consultation, will last three to four months and may lead to significant new initiatives.		
5.	The church’s leadership council is committed to promotion and involvement in a planning process that will involve broad consultation, will last three to four months and may lead to significant new initiatives.		
6.	The church is not dominated by leadership cliques.		
7.	There is a willingness among leaders to be inclusive and to encourage broad participation, so that people feel ownership of, and are energised by, the process.		
8.	There are good working relationships between the church’s leaders and other ministry leaders and an absence of serious ongoing conflicts between key people.		
9.	There is a willingness among leadership to question the status quo, to look at new ways of doing things, to ask hard questions, to face difficult choices and to make decisions that are best for the church community.		





## Planning Preparedness Questionnaire cont.

	Statements about your church	Yes	No / Not Yet
10.	There is a critical mass of church attenders who can be mobilised to participate in several large group planning sessions.		
11.	There would be a commitment to providing adequate resources to complete the planning process as designed, for example, staff time, planning team time, budget for the process (for facilitators, printing, meeting, catering, etc).		
12.	There is a recognition of the value of, and an openness to, input from information sources beyond the church community.		
13.	There are no current major planning processes under way with which a new planning process would clash.		
14.	There are no other programs or major issues that would draw energy and focus away from the planning process.		
15.	There is a deeply felt belief that the time is right for this process and a willingness to prayerfully seek God's guidance.		

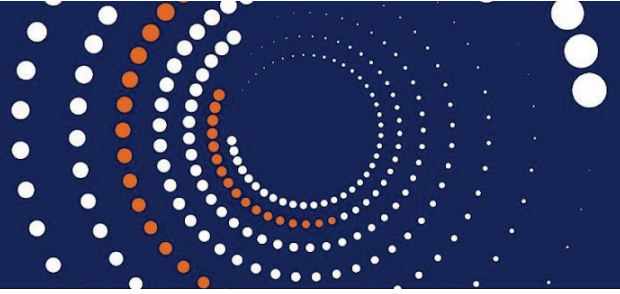
## Choosing the Option for You

### Answering “yes” to 10 or more statements:

Your church appears to have most of the resources in place and the commitment needed to pursue the comprehensive planning process.

### Answering “yes” to less than 10 statements:

Your church may not be ready to pursue the comprehensive planning process at this time. You should address issues raised in this questionnaire before undertaking the planning process. Alternatively, you may wish to consider another planning process at this time.



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Getting Prepared – Facilitators’ Notes

# Theological Reflection on Being the Church

## Introduction

Much of what you will be doing through this planning process is like the strategic planning that happens in any organisation. People in the corporate world, for example, would recognise most of the steps we have taken so far and much of what is to come. Looking at survey data, assessing readiness to plan, discovering strengths, visioning and developing strategies are part and parcel of everyday life for businesses.

What they would not recognise is the theological foundation and impetus to our planning. The search for life in a church community is ultimately the search for the presence of Jesus Christ and the creative Spirit of God. Drawing on this source of life is intended to orient the church community in mission. This sets the planning processes in a fundamentally different realm from strategic planning in other organisations.

Before entering into the planning process, it is valuable to pause for a time of reflection about what it is to be an authentic local church. So we offer two short processes, one on the mission of being the local church and the other on core values. These are additional to the main sessions.

## Theological Reflection on Being the Church

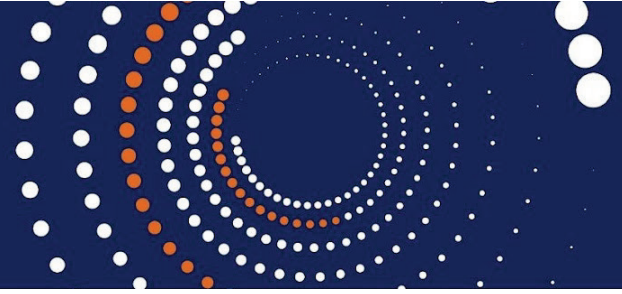
Before entering into visioning about the church we might become, it is valuable to pause for a time of reflection about what it is to be an authentic local church. This can be done in several ways:

- through the preaching program of your church
- through study groups
- in an open session over an afternoon or an evening.

The notes here are offered to guide the third option of a session of theological reflection.

## Session Aim

To explore some of the theology of being a local church in order to discern key characteristics which can guide the community as it plans what it will become in the future.



## **Before the Session**

The Planning Team invites someone to provide a theological input and also to facilitate discussion among community members. The invitation should be made as early as possible to enable time for the person to prepare. The content of the session should emerge in dialogue with the team about the aims of the planning process. Some areas that it may be helpful for the session to explore are:

- the interplay of the images of creation and life in Genesis and the gospel of John and their meaning for us as disciples in mission
- how the life of Christ is expressed in local church and the value of the core qualities in pointing to that life
- the mission of local church to its surrounding community and beyond
- St Paul's understanding of gifts in community and our call to use our gifts in service.

The session is best opened up to all community members as a way of stimulating interest in the planning process and input from around the community. This will also benefit ownership of the plan which emerges from the overall process. Thus the session is publicised widely throughout the community and the team personally invites people who are likely to have an interest.

## **At the Session**

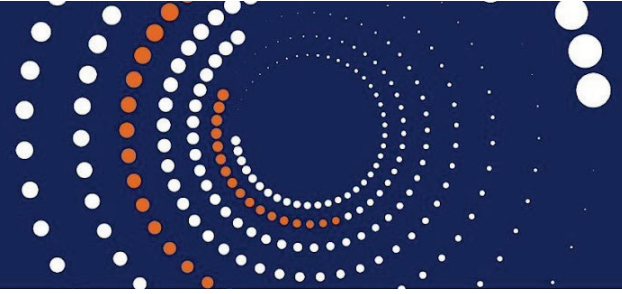
A member of the planning team welcomes the presenter and explains the place of the reflection in the context of the overall planning process.

Some opportunities for small group discussion could be offered with the aim of identifying key theological principles, of being church, which the group would like to see underpinning plans for the future. The results of group discussions could be written up on butcher's paper and commonalities identified by all participants. These common principles can then be offered to the community as ongoing reference points for the planning process.

The session concludes with thanks for the input and facilitation of the theologian or minister and with prayer to the Spirit for continuing guidance of the process.

## **After the Session**

A brief summary of the session is prepared for the church bulletin and the key principles are printed for use in the subsequent Visioning session.



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Getting Prepared – Facilitators’ Notes

## Core Values Discernment

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### Core Values Discernment

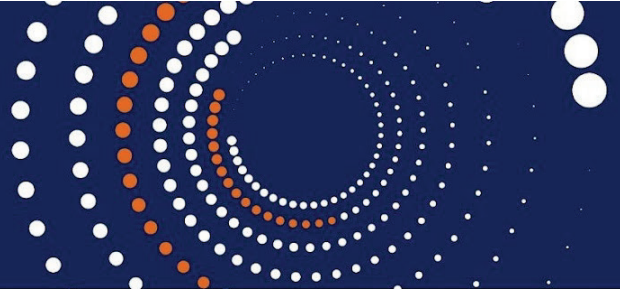
Some churches have found it worthwhile to specifically articulate the Christian values which underpin their church life and mission. This is not essential to the planning process here, as there are many values already inherent in the NCLS Core Qualities or in specific survey questions. But we include it here in view of its potential benefit.

Core values can be defined as the constant, passionately held, biblical core beliefs that drive ministry (Malphurs, 1999, 83). Core values are those constants that underpin a church’s ministry no matter what changes may be occurring to vision, personnel or programs. In the church at Jerusalem, for example, the first Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching... to fellowship...to the breaking of the bread...and prayer” (Acts 2:42). Such values, then, are foundational motivators of church life; they are what drives individual behaviour and communal mission. St Paul highlights this when he says, “It is the love of Christ that urges us on” (2 Corinthians 5:14).

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Where leaders and church attenders fail to fully live out stated values, disillusionment and passivity can result. For instance, it is much harder to create enthusiasm for evangelism in a congregation where the leaders do not model evangelism in their own lives, where the issue is rarely discussed and where other aspects of church life always seem to have a higher priority.

If your planning team sees benefit in identifying core values as part of getting ready for planning, then the team can undertake a “Core Values Audit”. There are planning resources available which contain Core Values Audits (e.g. Malphurs, 1999; Robinson, Smith *et al*, 2004).



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 1 – Searching for Life

## Facilitators' Notes

As indicated in the NCLS Book, *Enriching Church Life*, we assume that every church community has times of vitality in its story and that every congregation has a wellspring of life which offers energy, creativity and hope for the future. This session begins the process of searching for that life, identifying the key sources of life which the community can nourish and utilise as springboards into a vision for the future.

### Session Aim

The aim of this session is to identify sources of life for the church through interviews, storytelling and group discernment. It begins with interviewing people about 'the best' of their experiences in the church community. It then proceeds to group reflection on the strengths of community life which emerge from the interviews and from the NCLS Profile.

### Before the Session

- The Planning Team meets with the facilitator to consider the process outlined here and to decide whether it suits the church community and whether the Interview Protocol needs adaptation (see *'Discovery Interview' Worksheet*).
- The Planning Team decides when to hold the session – it needs a whole day or two afternoons or evenings.
- The Planning Team decides who to invite – a broad representation of the community and its ministry groups is best. People should be asked to RSVP so that interview pairs and group composition can be arranged beforehand.
- When acceptances are received, the Planning Team decides who will be paired for the interviews and who will be in each group.
- The usual catering, room set up and photocopying arrangements are put in place.

### At the Session

The Chairperson of the Planning Team welcomes everyone and introduces the facilitator. The Chairperson outlines the aim of the whole planning process and how it will unfold in the community. The facilitator then introduces the day's session and the specific aim of discovering key sources of life on which to build future plans.

### Prayer

Before the session begins invite people into prayer for the planning process and pick up the themes of life and Jesus as the source of life – the story of the Good Shepherd can be useful (John 10:1-11).





### **Step 1 – Discovery Interviews**

This is a time of sharing stories of the best of people’s experiences in the community, what have been their high moments and what they have come to value most. The facilitator explains the value of the interviews and outlines the process. In pre-arranged pairs, participants interview each other for around 45 minutes. (see *Interview Worksheet*)

### **Step 2 – Group Reflection on the Interviews**

The interview partners join two other pairs to make a group of six people who share the fruits of the interviews. Each person takes turns to briefly share key points in the story they heard, mentioning inspiring quotes or images. Story points are recorded on butcher’s paper.

Then the group reviews each story to determine the “sources of life”. Why did these high moments occur? Underlying the experience, what community gifts, common practices, traditions, relationships or structures enabled the experience to be one of the best in church life? The story points are recorded on one side of the butcher’s paper and sources of life on the other. (see ‘*Step 2: Group Reflection*’ *Worksheet* and ‘*Example of Group Write-up from Step 2*’ *Sample*)

### **Step 3 – Group Reflection on NCLS Profile**

After a break, all hear from a member of the Planning Team who presents a summary of the Church Life Profile results and reflections which the Team has had to date on what the overall data is revealing about the community.

The small groups of six then reconvene to reflect on the results. The aim, once again, is to use them as a means of looking for sources of life. The group takes some individual time to review a summary sheet which has been provided by the Planning Team. The group identifies one Core Quality from each of the three NCLS dimensions to consider what those qualities are saying about the life of the community. First the group takes note of the fact that a low score does not necessarily indicate a weakness in community life. It may do, but the score could also be due to the community intentionally putting less priority on that area for a time.

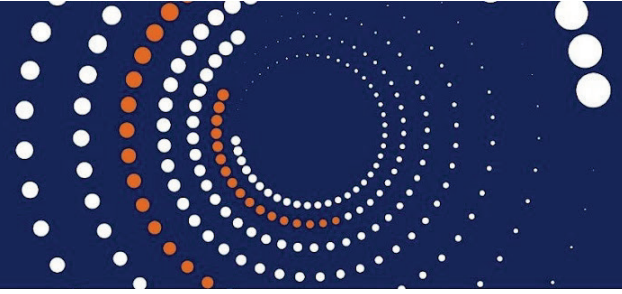
Guiding questions for the group are:

- Are the results what we expected or are there surprises?
- What do we think are the factors producing these scores?
- How does what we have heard in the interview stories match up with what we see in these scores?
- What are the sources of life within the high score qualities, what is there that we can build on?
- What are the sources of life within the low score qualities, what is there that we can build on?

(see ‘*Step 3: Group Reflection on NCLS Profile*’ *Worksheet*)

The group then identifies key Core Quality strengths and records them alongside the sources of life already recorded. Points of common ground are highlighted with arrows leading from the Core Quality strengths to the sources of life (see ‘*Example of Group Write-up from Step 3*’ *Sample*)

The principal sources of life are then individually written down on coloured cardboard stars (see ‘*Star*’ *Worksheet* and *print out on A3 or make your own stars*).



#### **Step 4 – Reporting and General Discussion**

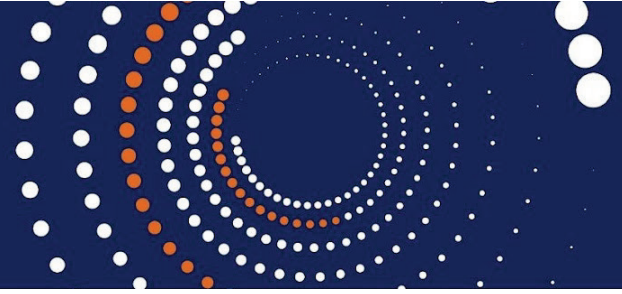
The sheets which were used to record the points from discussion are put up around the room for all to see. The sources of life stars are also put up on a wall all together. Everyone gathers together again and a member from each group tells their chosen story of ‘the best’ in church life and what they have discovered about the sources of life from those stories and the Core Quality results.

As the reports are given, a couple of designated people arrange the stars in clusters which reflect common themes. Then there is general discussion about what is standing out as common perceptions of core life sources within the community.

The facilitator invites nominations for the five core life sources which people believe should be the essential foundations on which to build the future. It is likely that after the discussion so far consensus will emerge fairly readily. If not, voting can determine the top five.

#### **After the Session**

The five core life sources are written up and published in the church bulletin and/or sent out to community members by email. They form the basis for nurturing life in the community through a shared vision, so are carried forward into the forthcoming visioning process.



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 1 – Searching for Life

## Worksheet – Step 1: Discovery Interviews

### Discovering our church community at its best

#### Appreciative Interviews

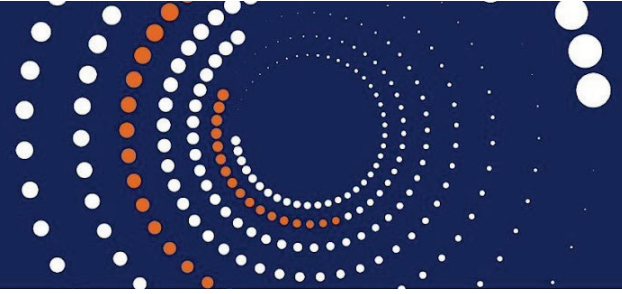
Reflect individually for five minutes on the questions below which are related to the three dimensions of the NCLS Core Qualities. Working with a partner, take turns to interview each other, using the questions as a guide. Please note your partner's responses, as we will share the highlights in a small group.

1. I'd like to hear about your **beginnings** in this church community. What attracted you to this local church? What were your initial impressions of church life and mission here? What impressed you most about what you first discovered?
2. What has been your **most life-giving experience** in this church community? Think of a time when you felt most alive, most inspired, challenged, or spiritually engaged. Remember the feeling. Tell the story of how this came about: what you were doing, what happened and who contributed to this experience.
3. The life of the church community is influenced by those who give leadership to it and enable a shared vision for the future. Recall a time when you experienced **true Christian leadership** in this local church. Tell the story of what happened, who was involved and how it unfolded.
4. The local church becomes visibly life giving to the world when it **focuses beyond itself** to care for others, to stand up for the vulnerable, to bear witness to the faith and to seek out and welcome those on the fringe. Recall a time when you have felt uplifted by such activity, whether you were involved yourself or not; it may have been an individual act or an initiative of the whole church community. Tell the story; what was the issue, who was involved and what happened?
5. Looking **towards the future**, if you could transform this church community in any way you wished, what three things would you do to enhance its life and vitality?

#### Interviewer Guidelines

You have 45 minutes each for the interviews. Encourage your partner to tell his/her story, draw them out with your sincere curiosity and positive energy. Take some notes and be listening for key insights and images. Some possible questions to draw on more of the story:

- Tell me more about that
- Why was that important to you?
- Tell me more about your energy; what kept you motivated?
- What was your contribution?
- How has the experience changed you?

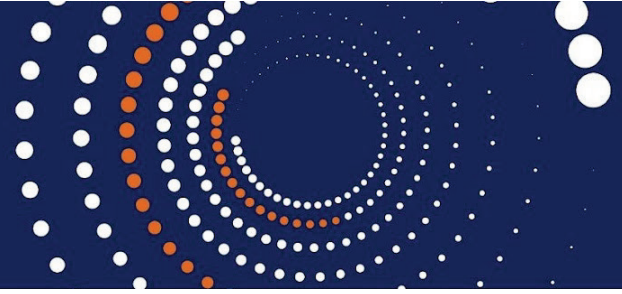


## Comprehensive Planning Process

### Session 1 – Searching for Life

#### Sample – Step 2: Examples of Group Write Up

Story Points	Sources of Life
<p><b>Terry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the homeless guys we met on the soup van run went with us to the local Council where we put a case for low cost accommodation subsidies. We told the story at Sunday worship.</li> </ul>	<p>Our engagement of issues of poverty and justice in our local community continually stretches and energises us.</p>
<p><b>Deborah</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The group experience of preparing for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday was uplifting.</li> <li>The baptisms and rituals with water touched everyone.</li> </ul>	<p>Our Easter ceremonies and Pentecost retreat take us to the core of who we are together and renew us as a community every year.</p>
<p><b>Sally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six people have joined our community since participating in the Alpha course – and two of them have started dating!</li> </ul>	<p>Our use of the Alpha course continually yields blessings.</p>



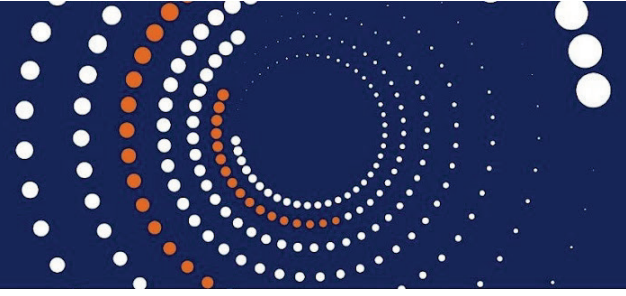
# Comprehensive Planning Process

## Session 1 – Searching for Life

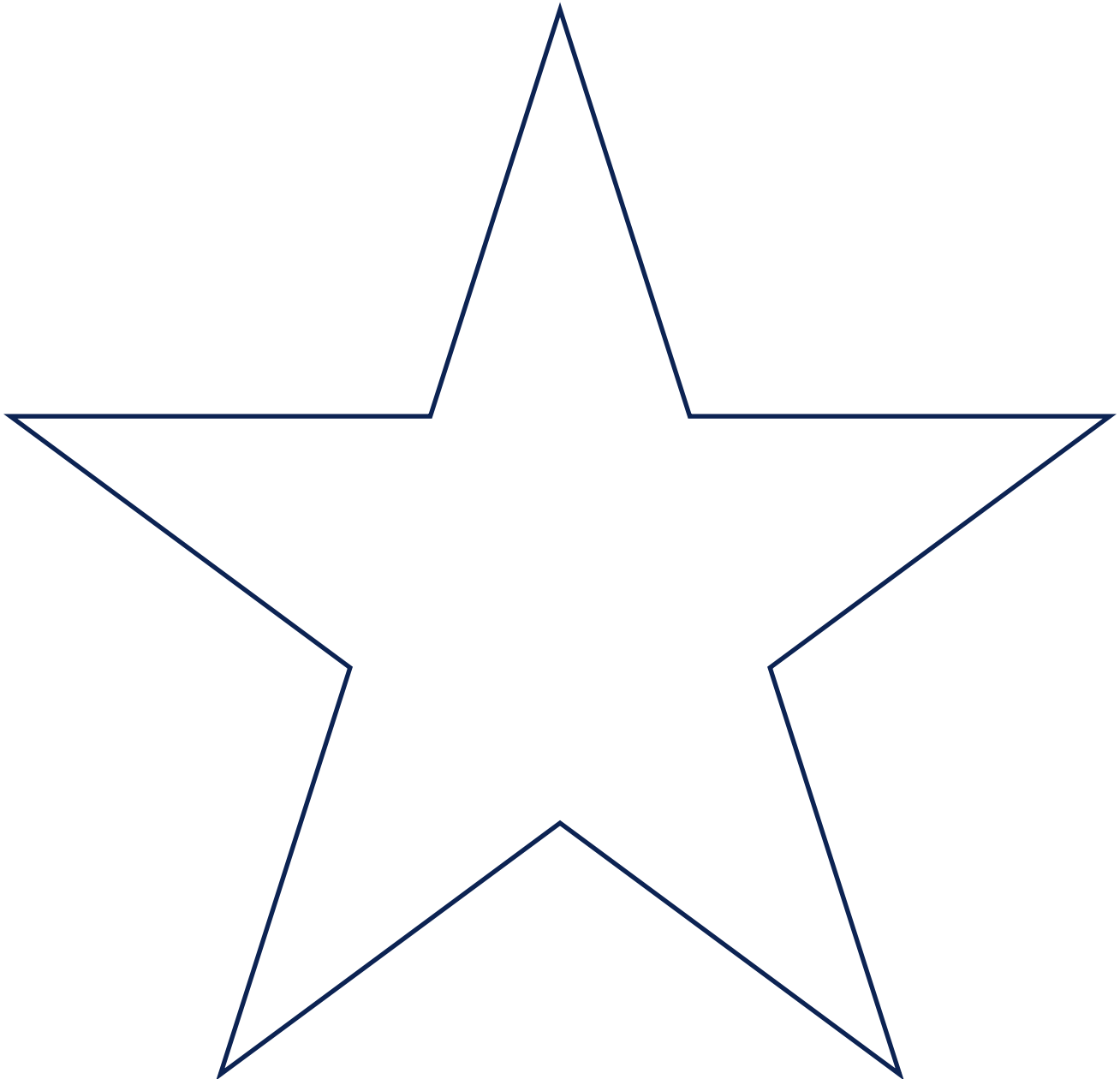
### Sample – Step 3: Examples of Group Write Up

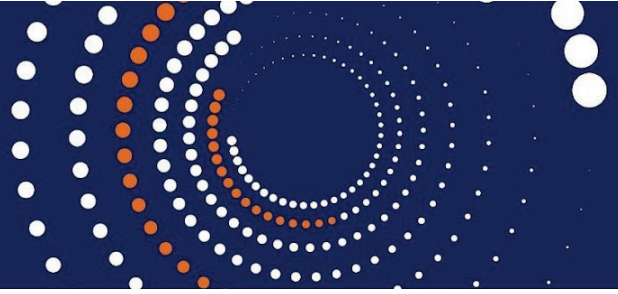
Story Points	Sources of Life	Core Quality Strengths
<p><b>Terry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of the homeless guys we met on the soup van run went with us to the local Council where we put a case for low cost accommodation subsidies. We told the story at Sunday worship.</li> </ul>	<p>Our engagement of issues of poverty and justice in our local community continually stretches and energises us.</p>	<p><b>Service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed core group and some new young people spend time each week with people who live on the streets</li> <li>Regular use of resources for denominational social justice council</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deborah</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The group experience of preparing for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday was uplifting</li> <li>The baptisms and rituals with water touched everyone.</li> </ul>	<p>On Easter ceremonies and Pentecost retreat take us to the core of who we are together and renew us as a community every year.</p>	<p><b>Worship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good pool of worship planners</li> <li>Musicians are appreciated and attend training days</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six people have joined our community since participating in the Alpha course – and two of them have started dating!</li> </ul>	<p>Our use of the Alpha course continually yields blessings.</p>	<p><b>Faith</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enthusiastic leader couples</li> <li>Great support from the pastor</li> <li>High quality resources</li> </ul>





**Comprehensive Planning Process**  
**Session 1 – Searching for Life**  
**Worksheet – Star**





## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 2 – Visioning for Life

## Facilitators’ Notes

Visioning involves a leap forward in the imagination to picture the sort of faith community we can create with God’s help. Searching for such a vision involves a shared experience of the imagination, letting ideas and dreams run free to paint a picture of a future that we want to create together. It needs to be detailed as well: what will actually be happening, what will people see and experience when they come to our church, how will the surrounding community experience our outreach in mission?

In this session a structured exercise is used to stimulate imaginative ideas and utilise knowledge of practical realities in painting a picture of the future that we want to create. Visioning starts with individual images of the participants, looks for commonalities in the array of the images which emerge and moves towards a broad picture of the future to which all feel drawn. Sometimes, though, there can be an inspiration from one person that captures people’s imaginations straight away and it just takes off. We need to stay tuned for the movement of the Spirit in this way.

### Session Aim

To stimulate the creative thinking of people and enable them to pool ideas for the future which, when sifted through, become a shared vision of community life in five years’ time and which give a sound basis for action to make that future a reality.

### Before the Session

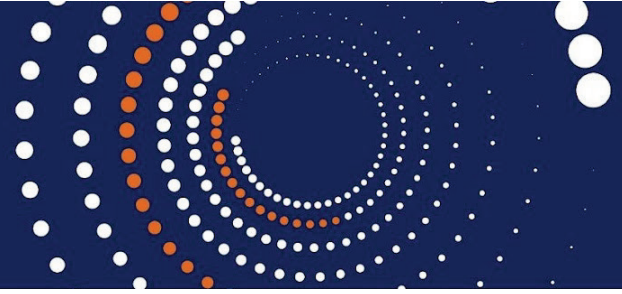
Members of the Planning Team invite a facilitator to lead the session and decide how broad to invite participation. Usually, visioning is the phase in planning which will most benefit from having as many people as possible from the community come together in the one place. There is just something that happens in terms of energy and creativity when a large number of people participate in visioning. Because it is the centrepiece of any plan, it is also important for ownership that people can look back and say: “The vision that is guiding us now, we framed together”. So, as a general rule, the wider the invitation the better and personal invitations to those involved in community groups and ministries are essential.

The planning team will need to work with the facilitator to select a visioning exercise that is suited to the church community.

Two possible exercises are offered here, but there are many others. Most facilitators would have access to a range of these exercises. (*A Power Point presentation for the Visioning session is available. It can be adapted by the facilitator.*)

Those who are attending the visioning should receive at least a week in advance:

- a summary of the NCLS core quality results.
- an outline of the key sources of life discerned in the Searching for Life session.
- a list of the key principles identified in the theological reflection, if a separate session was held.
- a summary of the three wishes that people expressed in their interviews in the Searching for Life session.



## Visioning Exercise A – News Headlines

### Timing

A visioning process takes at least an afternoon or an evening and you will get most out of it if you set aside a day. The facilitator will need to look at each step in this process and time it according to the overall time available.

### Materials

Butcher's paper or large whiteboard, coloured markers, box of coloured adhesive dots, 4 sheets with newspaper banner 'Christian Herald' at top of each sheet, one for each participant (see *Samples*).

### Introduction and prayer

The Chairperson for the day welcomes people and calls on a pre-arranged person to lead the group in a time of prayer.

Through prayer people place themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and open themselves to the imaginative wisdom of assembled participants. The prayer time might use some ritual which helps people connect with each other around the stories of high moments in the life of the community which have already been shared. It might also use a scriptural story which prompts images of a desired future for the community to begin to emerge. A useful story, for example, is that of the disciples who meet Jesus on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:12-14). Participants can place themselves within the scene, walking along talking about Jesus, feeling the surprise of recognition and their "hearts burning within them", then perhaps asking Jesus about his desires for their church and waiting in quiet to see what response rises up within them.

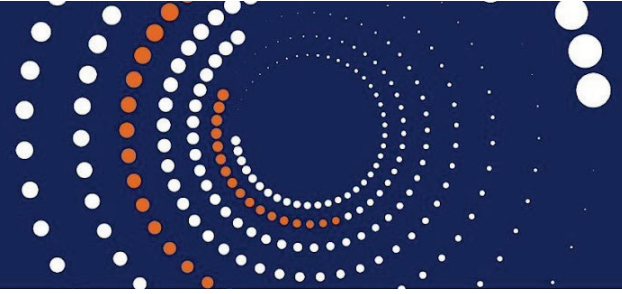
### Individual reflection

In light of their prayer together and the preparation they have done, the facilitator invites people to take time to reflect on their desired future for the community. They should recall the stories of what has been 'the best' in the community and what has most given life. These are things to be taken into the future and nourished in new ways. Holding all this, what is people's picture of what will be happening in the church in five years' time? How will the life of Christ be expressing itself? What ministries will there be? How will leadership be exercised? What will worship look like? What outreach will there be in the community?

These questions should be approached with creative imagination and the same confidence that the disciples had when they stepped out in faith after Pentecost. The Greek word often used about the disciples is that they had *parrhesia*, a certain boldness which prompted them to take risks and to speak the truth without fear. St Paul says: "Since then we have such a hope, we speak with great boldness" (2 Corinthians 3:12).

People can jot a few notes for themselves to assist when they are sharing their images.

The facilitator asks them now to think of themselves as journalists visiting the community 5 years hence, looking for a story about the events that are happening. If they were to write such a story, what would be the headline? Each person spends time thinking of a headline then writes the headline in large letters on a sheet which has been given out and has a heading 'Christian Herald'. Underneath the headline, they write just a few points that would be in the story (see *Samples*).



### **Sharing the news**

The headlines and points are then posted at the front of the room on a board or wall so that all can view them. In silence, people read the headline posters. When all have had the chance to read the posters, the facilitator invites questions of clarification.

After all are clear on what the various visions are proposing, the facilitator invites discussion of three of the headline posters which seem to represent generally desired futures (which three can be decided by nominations from the floor and a quick show of hands). Discussion points can be:

- what is attractive about this vision?
- will it nourish life in the community?
- does it reflect *parrhesia*?
- will it meet the heartfelt desires of church attenders?
- is it realistic and achievable?

### **Drawing the future together**

At the end of the discussion, the facilitator invites the participants to choose 5 elements, from the headline posters which were discussed, that they would like to see in a vision for the church. Each person is given 5 coloured adhesive dots and places one on each of their preferred elements. People are encouraged to look for the shared wisdom which is emerging in the exercise and cast their votes accordingly.

When all have voted and the most favoured elements are counted, those elements are gathered together in the one space and others are moved aside. It is not necessary to have 5 elements – there may be more or less depending on how the votes cluster. It may be advisable to check in with the group as to the achievability of the vision once the elements go beyond 5.

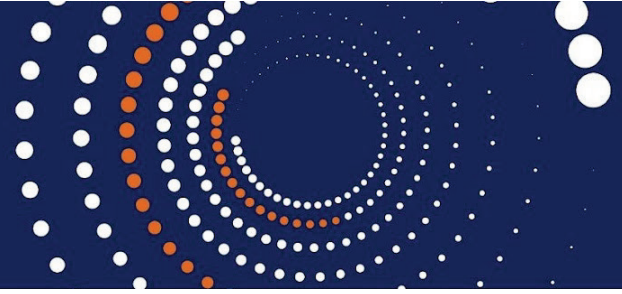
The chosen elements are then gathered or written together on butcher's paper or on the whiteboard.

### **Affirming the vision**

The group is invited to first take in the gathered elements in silence, then to express their assent to this being the vision for the area of community life by singing an 'Amen' or 'Alleluia' or by some other means which is appropriate to the group.

### **After the Session**

The shared picture which emerges from the visioning is drawn together and crafted into an inspiring statement by a small team who have good literary skills (*see the examples of Vision Statements*). The vision is then shared with the whole community, preferably via a presentation at weekend worship.



## **Visioning Exercise B – Awakening with a Dream**

### **Introduction and prayer**

The Chairperson for the day welcomes people and calls on a pre-arranged person to lead the group in a time of prayer. Through prayer people place themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and open themselves to the imaginative wisdom of assembled participants. The prayer time might use some ritual which helps people connect with each other around the stories of high moments in the life of the community which have already been shared. It might also use a scriptural story which prompts images of a desired future for the community to begin to emerge. A useful story, for example, is that of the disciples who meet Jesus on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:12-14). Participants can place themselves within the scene, walking along talking about Jesus, feeling the surprise of recognition and their “hearts burning within them”, then perhaps asking Jesus about his desires for their church and waiting in quiet to see what response rises up within them.

### **Individual Reflection**

In light of their prayer together and the preparation they have done, the facilitator invites people to take time to reflect on their desired future for the community. They should recall the stories of what has been ‘the best’ in the community and what has most given life. These are things to be taken into the future and nourished in new ways. Holding all this, the facilitator invites people to begin dreaming with words such as the following:

Let’s imagine that you go into a sound sleep and when you awaken it is ten years into the future. A decade has passed. It is the year 2016. Visualize our parish and our diocese... as you really want the Church to be – living the fullness of life to which Jesus calls us. Many positive things have happened – some changes are miracles. The world, the Church and our parish have begun to change in ways that reflect everything you have always hoped for, believed possible and imagined.

Now you awaken. You go out into the parish and get a panoramic view. You are happy with what you see. It’s the kind of parish you most want to be part of. Share highlights of what you see. What is happening that is the same? What is new? What is better? What has changed? How do you know it is better? Give as much descriptive detail as you can.

Jot down your answers to the following questions.

- What is it like?
- What do you see?
- What do you hear?
- What do people experience?
- How does the parish feel different to you?
- What images stand out to you and tell you something exciting has happened?
- How are people working and ministering together?

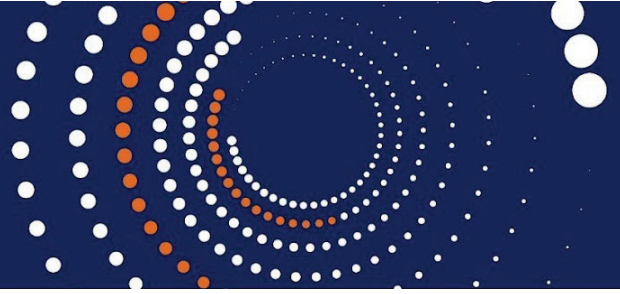
### **Go around one at a time and share your dreams in table groups**

- “I have a dream...”
- Speak in the present tense, as if it is already happening.

### **Capture the most compelling themes from these Dream reflections in your group into a narrative statement to share with the group.**

- Express it in the present tense as if it is already happening.





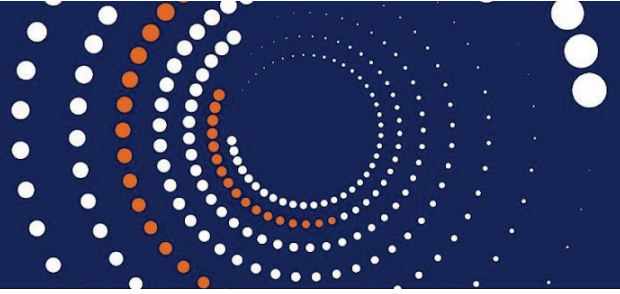
**Choose a creative way to present your dream(s) to the assembly as if it is happening now.**

- Your group will have 3-5 minutes to give their presentation.
- Have fun! Be creative and present a compelling image of what's possible.

*Examples: A TV special, news report, magazine cover story, a work of art, song, poem, skit, interview, picture...*

**Presentation of dreams from small groups – Be creative! Have fun!**

**Reflect in the full group on the emerging shared dreams, key themes and threads that can become part of a shared vision for the future.**



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 2 – Visioning for Life

## Sample

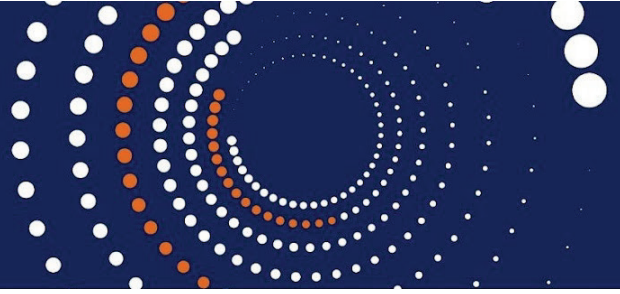
Single Issue

### **Christian Herald**

#### **St Jude's Second Home for Young Families**

Parish has integrated program to embrace and nurture families with young children.

- Creche and Sunday School at worship
- Wednesday inter-church toddlers' group and coffee club
- Rotating group dinner (early!) in homes with sharing on Christian parenthood



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 2 – Visioning for Life

## Sample

# Vision Statements

The statements below are from churches in Australia and the U.S.A. They are of varying length and style, but all present a picture of a future to which the church aspires and from which specific goals can be derived.

### Church of All Nations, Carlton, Victoria

In following Jesus Christ, we, the Church of All Nations, strive to encounter the Spirit of God and to act in solidarity with the Spirit in the world. In so acting we are called to:

#### Proclaim God's Word

By preaching, teaching, sharing life stories and through the development of personal relationships, we seek an encounter with Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God. In this encounter we become aware that we and others are claimed by the risen Christ as people who belong to God.

#### Embody God's Love

By the quality of our relationships we seek to be used by God to express God's love in the world. With Jesus, we listen to the needs of others and seek to respond as 'neighbours', fellow travellers along the way.

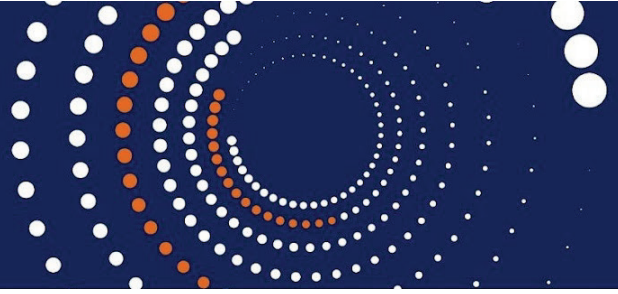
#### Enact God's Justice

By our commitment to the restoring of relationships between people we act out the justice of God. This involves standing with those who are oppressed and seeking creative and purposeful responses to injustice. We will use whatever tools God gives us to bring about those changes which lead towards the harmony of God which we hope for.

As a community of Christian faith we live in the tension between seeking out what we are called to be and being what we are, a forgiven, loved and loving people.

The Congregation aspires and is committed to:

- being flexible and responsive to people's needs for spiritual growth and development.
- recognising and responding to people's needs in worship.
- attempting to hear people of all ages and conditions, young and old, rich and poor.
- being a church that cares for people as individuals, in a non-sexist, non-racial way.
- developing an indigenous people focus to foster a deeper understanding of indigenous culture and beliefs.
- supporting people in various cultural backgrounds and being particularly aware of the difficulties faced by refugees and oppressed people.
- supporting people in their various vocations and helping them to explore what it means to be Christian.



- being a community of faith which exists not for its own sake but for the sake of God, and to equip God's people in Carlton.
- encouraging congregational members to undertake to learn more about theology and to develop an understanding of the importance and meaning of worship.
- initiating approaches to and developing links with other churches in the Carlton area.
- to be a public voice for the people and UC in Carlton.
- encouraging students and young adults to participate in the life of the congregation.

### **Sacred Heart Parish, Tampa, Florida**

To accomplish our mission, to build upon the foundation first established in 1860, and to perpetuate our Roman Catholic heritage in Tampa, the parish strives to accomplish the following:

- to provide parishioners, visitors and members of the downtown community with a place of worship, praise, and meditation that is maintained and preserved for future generations.
- to offer spiritual, economic, and emotional support to the poor and others in need by sharing our gifts of time, talent, and treasure.
- to educate our children at Sacred Heart Academy within a loving and nurturing community which maximizes their spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development as children of god.
- to support a variety of religious educational programs for children and adults.
- to recognize and support the work of the Franciscans as they administer the sacraments, and pastor and guide the community.
- to foster a spirit of genuine welcome and hospitality for the benefit of all.

Inspired by our mission, we commit ourselves to this vision.

### **St Luke's, Clovelly, South Australia**

At St. Luke's Clovelly we are seeking the power of the Holy Spirit to become the type of church which is described below

#### **Worshipping**

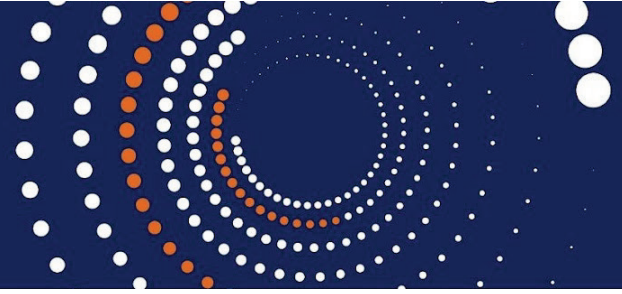
- a church where worship encompasses all activity of our life.
- a church that praises the greatness of Gd and helps people to enter the throne room in humble adoration
- a church that provides a worshipful atmosphere where the Holy Spirit is always welcome and his gifts may operate.

#### **Having a servant heart**

- a church that seeks to serve as Christ did in dying to self.
- a church that sees ministry as humble servanthood.

#### **Growing, serving & caring**

- a church that brings its members into vibrant discipleship.
- a church where people discover their gifting and abilities and a sphere to use them.
- a church that equips, trains and releases people into ministry.
- a church that encourages tithing and generous giving.



### **Healing ministry**

- a church that ministers to the total person.
- a church that moves in physical and emotional healing.

### **Prayer**

- a church that enters into intimacy with the Lord.
- a church that prays over all its needs.
- a church that prays for the needs of one another.
- a church that intercedes for the lost.
- a church that goes on prayer walks.

### **Outreaching**

- a church that proclaims God's word to the lost.
- a church that conducts on-site seminars and workshops.
- a church involved in school evangelism.
- a church moving in street & community based evangelism.
- a church that provides healing and prayer ministry.
- a church that ministers compassion to the disadvantaged.
- a church that uses spiritual and natural gifts prophetically.
- a church involved in the discipling of new believers.
- a church involved in equipping and empowering for service.

### **Teaching**

- a church that encourages personal growth.
- a church that organises its joint activity on biblical principles.
- a church committed to teaching the bible and the Christian faith to all age groups and to all levels of understanding.
- teaching that transforms thinking, attitudes and actions.

### **Holy Angels Parish, Indianapolis, Indiana**

Holy Angels will offer Catholic worship experience, emphasizing the Holy Eucharist, the Word through scripture and uplifting homily, and a vibrant music ministry.

Holy Angels will reflect the cultural experiences and values of its predominantly African American congregation, while being open and welcoming to all visitors and members.

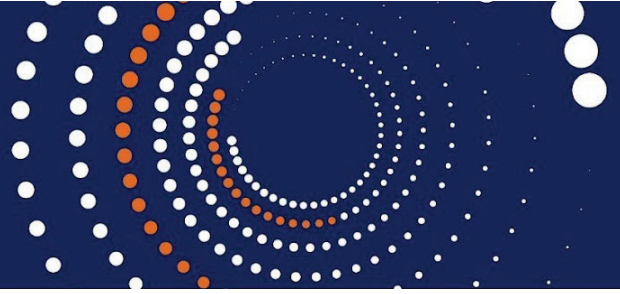
Holy Angels will provide and maintain buildings, facilities, and grounds, which are aesthetically pleasing, liturgically appropriate, and otherwise welcoming to members and guests.

Holy Angels will minister effectively to all ages and stages of its congregation, with an emphasis on ministering to our youth and involving our youth in our ministries.

Holy Angels will live the Afrocentric ideals of village and extended family, offering fellowship, nurturing, and support to its members and neighbors.

Holy Angels will be a beacon of Christ's presence in our neighborhood and in the larger community, responding to the needs of our brothers and sisters, welcoming visitors, evangelizing His message, and reaching out to all in concrete programs of Christian fellowship and service.



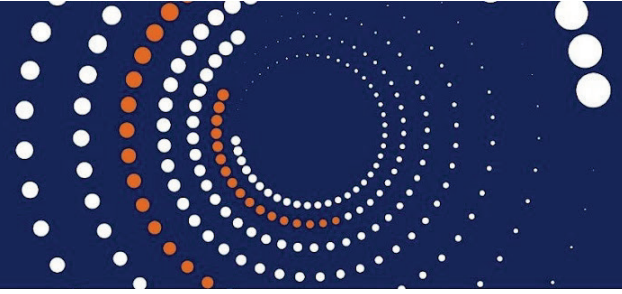


Holy Angels will provide spiritual growth opportunities outside of Sunday worship, including fellowships based upon faith sharing and Bible study.

Holy Angels will continue to support and partner with its school, seeking to reinforce and to expand our commitment to learning in a Christian, Afrocentric environment for youths from our own parish and from the surrounding community.

Holy Angels will be a good steward of God's material gifts, encouraging a tithing congregation, seeking creative ways to grow our financial foundations, and using our resources for the good of parishioner and neighbour alike.

Holy Angels will live its values and vision, to grow its parish family and to ensure its continued role in Building the Kingdom in the near northwest side of Indianapolis.



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 3 – Realising the Vision

## Facilitators' Notes

Every vision needs an action plan to make the desired future a reality. The action planning we recommend consists of two parts:

- (a) identifying practical goals and strategies
- (b) redesigning the structure and systems of the community.

*(The facilitator may make use of the PowerPoint for this session)*

**Identifying Goals:** Goals are the specific points we want to get to that will achieve our vision. They are targets for the accomplishment of the various parts of the picture. Effective goal statements:

- specify an outcome
- are time bound
- point to definite action
- can be evaluated

For example, if part of the vision for 5 years' time pictures new forms of outreach to people who are marginalised in the local community, two goals might be:

1. By October this year, at least 3 community leaders will have undertaken our denomination's social outreach training program
2. By March next year, with other local churches, we will have developed a program of awareness about issues for asylum seekers in our local community which will include sessions by asylum seekers. *(see Goal Statement Sample)*

**Identifying Strategies:** Strategies answer the old biblical question: "What then shall we do?" (Luke 3:10). They are what we actually do to achieve the goals, the action steps which take us from where we are now to our desired future. Strategies ensure that tasks are allocated to particular people or groups, that there are clear timelines and that necessary resources are indicated. If goals are the targets, strategies are the arrows we launch to reach them.

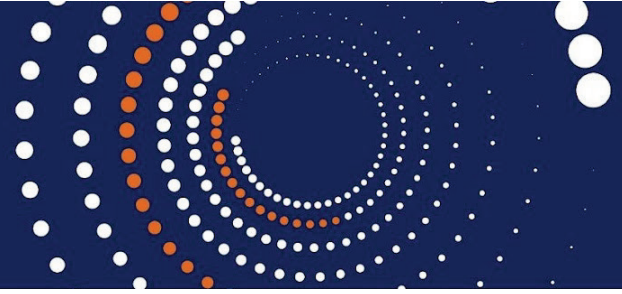
So taking the two examples of goals given above, strategies for them might be:

1. In February this year the congregational leadership group sets aside funds for the social outreach training program; identifies three people to undertake the program; and personally invites them to take part on behalf of the community.
2. In June next year, the minister approaches other local ministers and the regional asylum seeker project to initiate dialogue on needs in our local area and opportunities for collaboration. *(see Strategy Sample)*

### Before the Session

Members of the Planning Group meet to examine the Vision Statement and define what the different goal areas might be, i.e. which are the areas which need targets and action to achieve them. They then decide who in the church community would have the gifts to work on action planning in these areas. Those people are then grouped together in *Action Teams* with up to three goal areas allocated to each group.

Again the people are invited personally to be part of the small groups. The goal areas for each group are then sent to the members with a request that they reflect before the session on possible goals for their areas and on strategies that will achieve the goals.



## During the Session

### Prayer

The session begins with prayer which includes some reflection on the experience of the visioning process.

### Step 1 – Goal setting

The facilitator outlines the place of goals and strategies in the overall plan and invites participants into a practical exercise based in their knowledge of the way plans get off the ground in a sustainable way in the church community.

The pre-arranged *Action Teams* divide up to consider the goal areas allocated to them. The members of the group take the first goal area and table the goals which each wishes to suggest. The whole group looks for commonalties first and refines the goal suggestions which seem closest. Members ensure that the criteria for good goal statements are covered.

Other suggestions are then considered and members work towards consensus on whether these goals will help achieve the picture desired in the vision.

Group members then proceed to the next goal area in the same way. During the discussion, possible strategies or action steps will inevitably arise as part of testing how realistic the goals are. These strategies are noted and referred to later when the strategies are being defined.

Each of the goals is written on a separate slip of paper. When the small group discussions are completed, members from each of the groups place the goal slips up on the wall of their meeting room under the goal area heading.

### Step 2 – Sharing the goals

All the goal areas and suggested goals are placed on the wall so that members of all the groups can see the goal areas of the vision together. The whole group then examines each of the goal areas and suggested goals and, as people proceed from one goal to the next, place a question mark against any goal they wish to clarify or challenge.

Each goal with a question-mark is then discussed briefly and, in the light of clarification or challenge, the goal is refined or removed altogether. The question-marks are changed into a tick if the goal remains in some form.

The whole group then looks at the total set of goals and asks “Is there anything missing that ought to be included to achieve our vision?” When all agree that there are sufficient goals to achieve the vision, the goal-set is accepted.

### Step 3 – Strategies

Group members now return to their small groups to propose and examine strategy ideas using the same procedures as for the goals. Similarly, those strategy proposals are brought back to the whole group which examines and refines them as it did with the set of goals.

## After the Session

The goals and strategies are written up as part of the developing overall plan along with the Vision. They are utilised by the Planning Team in the next step of examining the organisational structures and systems of the community.



# Comprehensive Planning Process

## Session 3 – Realising the Vision

### Sample

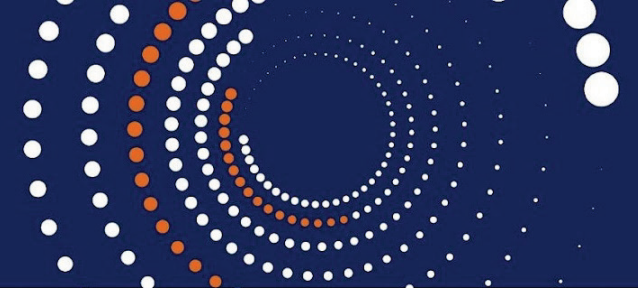
## Goal Statement Examples

Goals are the specific points we want to get to that will achieve our vision. They are targets for the accomplishment of the various parts of the picture. Effective goal statements:

- specify an outcome
- are time bound
- point to definite action
- can be evaluated

Below are some examples of Vision elements and goals that have been developed from them.

Vision Element	Goal Statements
We will undertake new forms of outreach to people who are marginalised in our local community	1. By October this year, at least 3 community leaders will have undertaken our denomination’s social outreach training program.
	2. By March next year, with other local churches, we will have developed a program of awareness about issues for asylum seekers in our local community which will include sessions by asylum seekers.
We will deepen our own faith in order to be active witnesses to the good news	1. By Easter we will have trained six people to be scripture discussion group leaders.
	2. By next Pentecost we will have conducted two open sessions on evangelisation in everyday life and prepare for them by addressing the topic in sermons.
We will embrace families of all configurations enabling all to feel they are integral to our community life	1. During 2017 we will undertake a program to support and include solo parents in community activities.
	2. By the end of 2017 our Pastoral Care Team will have visited all widows in the parish and identified those who need ongoing support.



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 3 – Realising the Vision

## Sample

# Strategy Examples

Strategies are what we do to achieve set goals, the action steps which take us from where we are now to our desired future. Strategies ensure that tasks are allocated to particular people or groups, that there are clear timelines and that necessary resources are indicated.

Below are some examples of Vision elements, goals and strategies that have been developed from them. When all elements of the Vision are worked through like this, they constitute the completed community plan.

Vision Element	Goal Statements	Strategy	Who Responsible	By When
We will undertake new forms of outreach to people who are marginalised in our local community.	1. By October this year, at least 3 community leaders will have undertaken our denomination’s social outreach training program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Set aside funds for the social outreach training program and reserve three places.</li> <li>b. Three people identified to undertake the program and personally invited to take part on behalf of the community.</li> <li>c. The three trainees receive support during the program and are asked to report on its value.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congregational leadership group</li> <li>Congregational leadership group</li> <li>Congregational leadership group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>End February</li> <li>End March</li> <li>End October</li> </ul>
	2. By March next year, with other local churches, we will have developed a program of awareness about issues for asylum seekers in our local community which will include sessions by asylum seekers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The minister approaches other local ministers and the regional asylum seeker project to initiate dialogue on needs in our local area and opportunities for collaboration.</li> <li>b. Small group formed to establish and publicise the awareness program.</li> </ul>	Minister	End August





Vision Element	Goal Statements	Strategy	Who Responsible	By When
We will deepen our own faith in order to be active witnesses to the good news.	3. By Easter we will have trained six people to be scripture discussion group leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Personally invite people to undertake training with the Minister and deacon until six agree.</li> <li>b. Deacon sources program from Theological Union.</li> </ul>	Faith education group  Deacon	End October  New Year
	4. By next Pentecost we will have conducted two open sessions on evangelisation in everyday life and prepare for them by addressing the topic in sermons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Theologian invited to conduct two sessions.</li> <li>b. Prepare two sermons and complementary liturgies.</li> </ul>	Faith education group Minister and Worship group	Easter End April
We will embrace families of all configurations enabling all to feel they are integral to our community life	5. During 2023 we will undertake a program to support and include solo parents in community activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Personal invitations to specific functions.</li> <li>b. Childcare facilities provided at parish functions.</li> <li>c. Recognition in prayers during worship of the demands on solo parents.</li> </ul>	Minister Pastoral car group Worship group	Throughout 2023
	6. By the end of 2023 our Pastoral Care Team will have visited all widows in the parish and identified those who need ongoing support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Planning process undertaken to guide visitation so that it is sensitive and discerns needs.</li> <li>e. Team of visitors identified and briefed on visit conduct.</li> <li>f. Visitations and report back to Congregational Leadership Group.</li> </ul>	Pastoral care group  Pastoral care group  Pastoral care group	End February  End March  End October



## Comprehensive Planning Process

# Session 4 – Sustaining a New Life

## Facilitators' Notes

### Sustaining Change

To complete the planning process, this final session aims to ensure that the plan is communicated and celebrated well, that people learn and adjust as it is implemented, and that its impact on community life is evaluated.

### Before the Session

The vision, goals and strategies should be widely circulated in the community. Members of the community could be invited to be in touch with the Planning Team to express their support and say how they might be able to contribute to putting the plan into action.

Invitations to the final session are sent out to people who have been able to attend some of the previous sessions. Having been participants is an appropriate criterion for this session as it assumes first-hand knowledge of what has happened to date. Around 20 participants for the session is a good number. Those coming should read carefully through the plan beforehand.

Members of the Planning Group meet to decide who in the church community would have the gifts to work on planning four areas: communications, monitoring, evaluation and celebration. Three to five people would be needed for each area and would form teams at the session. Their briefs are as follows:

The *Communication Team* is to construct a set of strategies for enabling the whole community and people in the local area to know about the plan and for many to be drawn into it. The task is to communicate widely in the short term and as the plan unfolds over coming months. The team is to consider the resources and skills available in the community particularly with regard to artistic gifts in communication and to those who have technological skills.

The *Monitoring Team* is to develop a set of points and procedures that will assist implementation of the plan and review its progress. Specifically, the team is to:

- identify ways that people implementing the plan can be supported, affirmed and easily access community leadership if they are encountering difficulties
- set review points at appropriate intervals when progress towards goals can be checked and adjustments to the plan made which take account of changing circumstances.<sup>1</sup>
- examine ways that review can take place which taps into what is happening without burdening people who are volunteering their time (e.g. by asking for long reports)
- consider what ongoing services and resources of NCLS might assist implementation and refinement of the plans as it proceeds (*see NCLS website or contact the office for details of what NCLS offers*)

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the questions that would guide review moments would be: Of the goals we set, which have been realised so far and what is the progress towards others? What are the helps and hindrances we have found in working on the goals? Are the goal timelines realistic? How have our strategies worked in practice? – Do we need to refine some or add new ones? How has the commitment of people stood the test of time and do we have the right mix of skilled people to achieve our goals?



The *Evaluation Team* is to set a timeline and process for evaluating the difference the plan has made to the community after it has been in operation for the intended time and/or a significant number of the goals have been achieved. The principal aim will be to gather the lessons learned and incorporate them into the next round of planning. One form of evaluation that can be helpful after a year or so is an NCLS update survey. This survey focusses on in depth measuring of core qualities of most importance to your church.

The *Celebration Team* is to plan a worship service in which to formally present the plan to the congregation, celebrate and give thanks for the planning process, and commission key people who are to carry the plan forward.

## **At the session**

### **Prayer**

The session begins with prayer which picks up an aspect of the vision and the change it will make to the community.

### **Step 1 – Community feedback**

In the whole group, people share how they are feeling about the plan now that it is largely done and circulating in the community. Any responses heard to the plan or further ideas it has sparked are also shared.

### **Step 2 – Team Briefing**

The facilitator then invites participants to form the four teams for the main work of the session: a communications team, a monitoring team, an evaluation team and a celebration team. Their briefs are revisited for clarification.

Each of these teams then proceeds in the way that the previous Innovation Teams pursued their tasks. Similarly, the whole group considers the product of their work and refines it as was done in the Realising the Vision session.

When whole group refinement is complete and these final plans are agreed upon, the session closes with prayer of thanksgiving and, if suitable, followed by a meal together.



# Comprehensive Planning Process

## Special Session for Leaders

## Redesigning Church Community Structures

## Facilitators' Notes

Bringing the vision to life will naturally become the major focus of church activity over the next few years. It is therefore worth examining whether the way the church is structured will support the goals and strategies that aim to make the vision a reality. Questions to consider include:

- Is there the right mix of ministry groups?
- Do we have the right sort of leadership structure for the church community we wish to create?
- Are the communication processes between ministry personnel and leadership of a high quality?
- Are there sound policies in place that guide staff and volunteers?
- Are meetings held with the right frequency and are they well run?

It is best if this session is undertaken by members of the Planning Team and the church leadership. It needs a thorough knowledge of the way the structures and systems within the church operate. The process also has some sensitive aspects, in that it will examine roles that people in ministry and leadership play and could suggest changes to those roles and the relationships between them.

It is also valuable to examine who the church relates to beyond itself and who it might partner with to help bring the vision into being. The church has all sorts of relationships – local community, denominational, commercial – and there are often key people in those relationships who will catch the spirit of the vision and wish to join in working towards it.

One way of examining the structure of internal organisational elements and external relationships is to create a Design Possibilities Map<sup>2</sup>. The map has a brief statement of the Vision in a central circle, a list of elements of the formal structures of the church in a second circle, and a list of the key external relationship in the outer circle. A copy of this map can be found attached.

### Step 1 – Elements Brainstorm

Members of the Planning Team and Leadership Body gather together as a group. The communal vision is summarised in a few words and written in the inner circle of the Design Possibilities Map. All then brainstorm the internal organisational elements and the key external relationships which may have a bearing on how the vision is implemented.

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<sup>2</sup> This framework and the process outlined come originally from work by David Cooperidder and Jane Watkins and have been developed by James Ludema, Diana Whitney, Bernard Mohr and Thomas Griffin in their book *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit* (2003). The structure of the map has been changed slightly for the purposes here.



## **Step 2 – Redesign**

Individuals then indicate, by putting their initials on the map, which elements and relationships (up to three altogether) they would like to work on so that it will serve the purpose of the vision. People then form small groups around areas of common interest and work in those groups to design suggested ways forward for the elements and relationships. The key questions for the groups are:

- What new forms of organisation are needed to bring about our vision?
- What kinds of external relationships and partnering will most support our work towards the vision?

The groups will need to be both imaginative and sensitive, the latter especially because there will be people in existing roles, most probably in the room at this time, who will be affected by the proposed changes! So ideas that affirm and build up the work of those people will be best received and, where significant change is necessary, adequate and respectful explanation should be offered.

## **Step 3 – A New Map**

When the various groups present their redesigned elements and relationships, the whole group gives feedback and make adjustments. Then either consensus is sought or, if easier, voting takes place on elements of a new map which will better serve the vision. People are then allocated to the various responsibilities that need to be undertaken for changes to be made, and timelines for those changes are put in place.

## **After the Session**

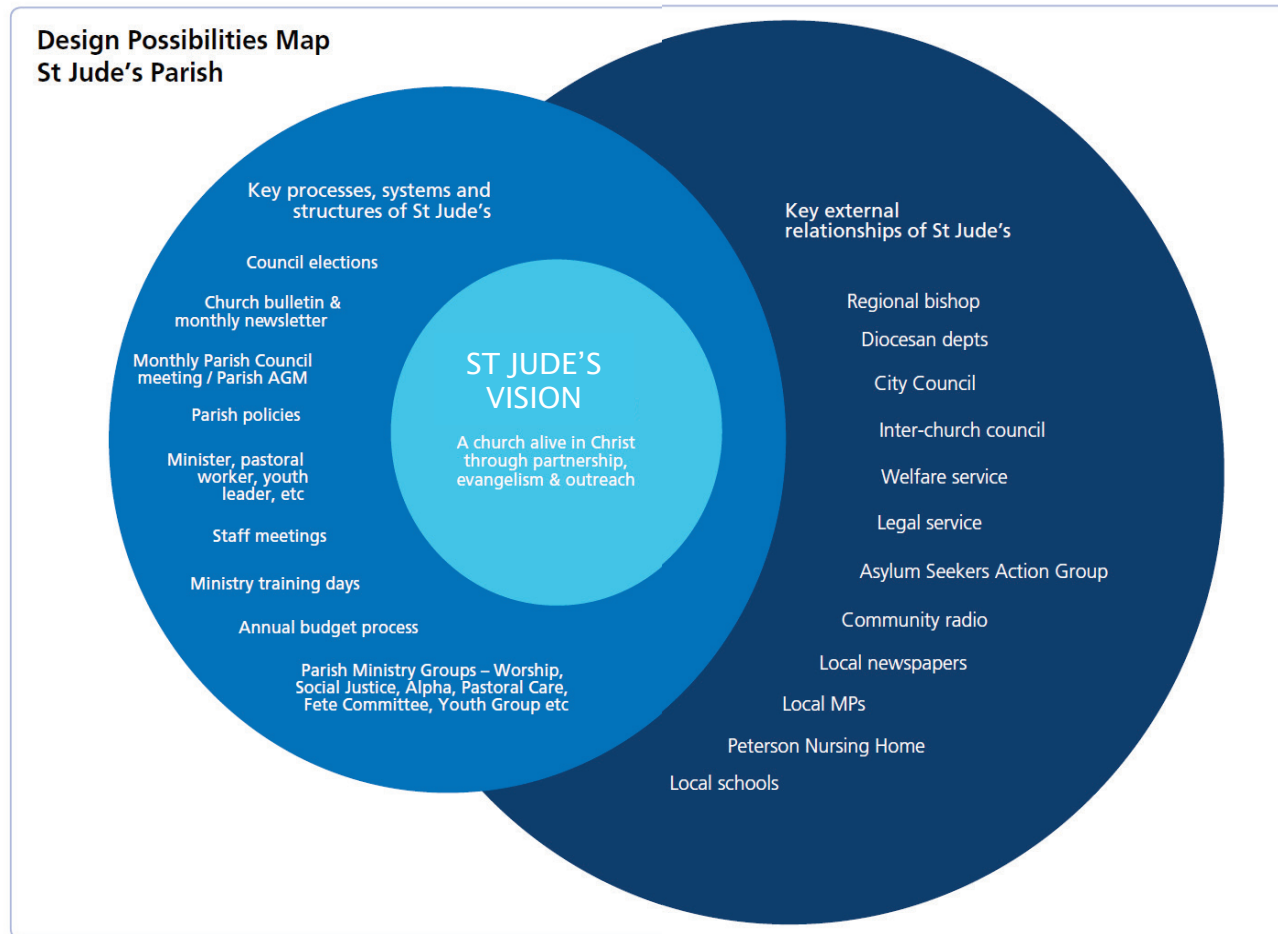
A small group is delegated to write up the new structures and relationships and those responsible for leading changes and their timelines. The new structures and relationships are then shared gradually with the people affected to seek their response. Possible changes to the status quo are related closely to progress towards the vision. The responses are considered by the Planning Team, which makes final recommendations to the leadership body.

## **Sample Design Possibilities Map attached**





## Sample – Design Possibilities Map<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> This framework and the process outlined come originally from work by David Cooperidder and Jane Watkins and have been developed by James Ludema, Diana Whitney, Bernard Mohr and Thomas Griffin in their book *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit* (2003). The structure of the map has been changed slightly for the purposes here.