

A Guidebook for Conducting Growth & Mission Consultations

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Rationale for Growth & Mission Process

In the past Life & Witness Consultations were used to deal with conflict or issues of structure. The goal of the new Growth & Mission Consultation process is to take a more positive, outward- and future-focused approach in encouraging congregations in their Mission. This will require the Pastoral Relations Committee and Business Committee to conduct their own consultations in situations where conflict or issues of structure arise.

Explanation of Sinek's Model for Developing a Vision & Action Plan

Step 1: Start with the Why – Vision and Values

Why: The "Why" represents the core purpose, cause, or belief that drives an organisation. According to Simon Sinek, it's about answering why the organisation exists beyond just making a profit.

1. **Define Vision:** Vision is the long-term picture of what the organisation ultimately wants to achieve, often linked to an ideal state. Think about the organisation's impact on its customers, industry, or society.
 - Example: "To inspire and enable everyone to live a fulfilling life."
2. **Clarify Core Values:** Values shape how the organisation pursues its vision. They define the organisation's principles and set the tone for its culture.
 - Example: Integrity, Inclusivity, Innovation.
3. **Communicate and Align:** Ensure that all levels of the organisation understand the "Why" and align it with the vision and values. A compelling "Why" gives purpose to the vision and resonates with both the organisation and its audience.

Outcome: The "Why" results in a clear vision that motivates and inspires the team and values that guide behaviour and decision-making.

Step 2: Define the Who – Key Demographics and Relevance

Purpose: Identify specific audiences within the community or congregation that the church will serve, focusing efforts on relevant needs.

- **Identify Key Demographics:** Determine the primary groups the church will engage, such as youth, young families, seniors, or particular needs-based groups.
 - **Example Audience:** Young families seeking community and spiritual support.
- **Determine Areas of Relevance:** Define areas significant to these demographics, like educational programs for youth, support groups for seniors, or community-building activities for families.
- **Set Targeted Goals:** Develop goals tailored to these groups, such as increasing young family engagement by offering family-focused events.
- **Outcome:** Goals and strategies directly addressing the needs of specific community segments, creating more meaningful connections.

Step 3: Execute the How – Action and Tactics

How: The "How" details the actionable steps, processes, and tactics that operationalise the strategy. It's about turning high-level plans into specific, day-to-day actions that drive results.

1. **Create Action Plans:** Break down each strategic objective into specific tasks, assign responsibilities, and set timelines. This can include tasks like implementing new technologies, launching marketing campaigns, or establishing customer feedback loops.
 - Example: "Launch a pilot program in one "who" group as defined in step 2 within six months."
2. **Establish Metrics and KPIs:** Set up key performance indicators (KPIs) that will measure the success of each action. This data-driven approach ensures that the organisation can track progress and make adjustments as needed.
 - Example: "Have 20 people attending the new initiative on a regular basis after one year"
3. **Review, Adapt, and Improve:** Regularly assess the outcomes and iterate as necessary. Continuous improvement should be a part of the organisation's culture to keep aligning with the "Why" and adjusting to any changes in the external environment.

Outcome: A comprehensive, actionable plan with measurable tactics that turn strategy into reality, fulfilling the organisation's purpose.

Putting It All Together

- **Why** (Vision and Values): Establishes purpose and principles, forming the foundation.
- **Who** (Strategy): Provides a focused demographic with clear objectives aligned with the vision.
- **How** (Action and Tactics): Details the execution, ensuring that each step taken aligns with the strategy and fulfills the vision.

By connecting Sinek's "Why" to vision and values, "Who" to strategy, and "How" to actionable plans, organisations can effectively bridge purpose with practical steps, ensuring cohesive and inspired action.

Outline of Growth & Mission Consultation Steps

Phase 1 – Preparation, Data Gathering & Analysis

1. Two months before anticipated Growth & Mission Consultation, send initiate email to Chair of Church Council and any Minister in placement.
2. Ask Business Committee for summary of the congregation's financial position.
3. Select team of 2 or 3 people to conduct G&M consultation.
4. Prepare a summary of key suburb demographics for the team
5. Arrange date for Vision & Action Planning Session with leaders of the congregation at a date to suit the team and congregation
6. Prepare Worship Attenders Questionnaire in both online and word doc forms.
One month before V&AP Session, email the questionnaire to the contact person and ask them to distribute it to the congregation by emailing the link and having paper copies available for those who need them.
7. Two weeks before V&AP session, close the survey and compile results. Distribute results to Team.
8. During that month members of the G&M team visit 1 or 2 worship services, introduce themselves and encourage completion of the survey
9. Meet with Ministry Agent and CC Chair to share information from survey, census data and brief them on plans for the V&AP session

Phase 2 – Vision & Action Planning Session

10. Conduct Vision & Action planning Session
 - i. Facilitator's Notes
11. Ensure Church Council receives documentation of the outcome of the session promptly. Write report of process (including financial considerations) with a copy of the V&AP at the end.
 - i. Growth & Mission Committee to review the report at a meeting or by email.
 - ii. Send report to PRC one week before they meet.
 - iii. Once the PRC accepts the report, return it to the Chair of the congregation's Church Council.

Phase 3 – Action Planning

12. Resource Church Council to complete a detailed Action Plan. Arrange to review in 6 months.

Phase 1- Preparation, Data Gathering & Analysis

1. Initial Email to Congregation

Dear [Chairperson of CC and Minister],

Presbytery would like to conduct a Growth & Mission Consultation with XXX Uniting Church as part of our regular check-in with congregations. We intend the current process to be more efficient and more beneficial to congregations than these consultations have been in the past.

The process involves

- the Growth & Mission team reviewing the data from the Health Report the leaders of the congregation have completed each year,*
- a survey of all attenders of worship,*
- a Vision & Action Planning Day with the congregation's leadership (to either create a Mission Plan for the congregation or review the existing one).*

The team will be led by [person's name]. If there is a Saturday (or Sunday afternoon) that would suit the Church Council and any other relevant leaders, we would like to hold the Mission Planning Day in [Month] this year.

If this raises any issues or questions, please let me know,

Kind Regards,

2. Request to Business Committee

Dear Business Committee,

The Growth & Mission Committee is initiating a Consultation with XXX Uniting Church congregation. Could we please request a summary of the congregation's financial position by [date in 2 months' time].

Thanks,

3. Select team

Two to three people from the members of the Growth & Mission Committee. Give them an approximate time frame (e.g. a month). The team will need to visit one or two congregation worship services and meet to discuss the survey results before the V&AP session.

4. Prepare demographic info about the suburb

Search "Profile ID [suburb name]" in google. You may want to look particularly at age graphs, country of birth, English proficiency, religion, qualifications, and occupation, all compared with the greater Sydney average.

5. Arrange V&AP session date

Consult with the team and leaders of the congregation to find a suitable 3-hour time and day for the Vision & Action Planning session. This will likely need to be on a weekend.

6. Survey Preparation

There are three different versions of the Worship Attenders Survey:

Questionnaire for Congregations – Aug2022

Questionnaire for AMCOMP Congregations – Aug2022

Questionnaire for Merged Congregations – Aug2022

All three are in Word format for printing paper copies, and a master template for each is available in Google Forms for online responses. The basic "Questionnaire for Congregations – Aug2022" Word document is available in Korean and Tongan translations.

For each congregation, it can be helpful to customise:

- Q1 with that congregation's services using either checkboxes (one service) or a checkbox grid (more than one). For each service, you can give options (most/all weeks, a few times a month, about once a month, occasionally).
- Q3 with activities specific to that congregation.

Survey Distribution

In Google Forms, click on the paperclip at the top to "copy responder link", then, email it to the church contact person and ask them to forward it to the church email list. It tends to get a better response if it is in a stand-alone email rather than just included in the congregation email newsletter. Encourage as many people as possible to complete the online version, as it saves us from entering too many paper ones.

Email the Word document to the congregation contact person and ask them to print some copies to distribute to anyone who is not comfortable completing the survey online. Ask them to collect the completed copies and, if possible, scan and email them to the team. If scanning is not possible, arrange to pick them up. The paper copies will then need to be entered into the online survey by members of the G&M team.

7. Close & Collate Survey

Two weeks before the V&AP, close the survey and copy the results into a Word document to share with the V&AP team and the Church Council.

8. Visit Worship Services

During the month between when the congregation is given the survey and the V&AP session, team members should visit a worship service (or a couple). This is to introduce yourself and the process, gauge the capacity of the congregation, and confirm the accuracy of attendance as recorded in the Health Report. If this visit is while the survey is open, this is a good opportunity to ask people to complete it and explain what it will be used for.

9. Meet with Ministry Agent & Chairperson of Church Council

Share information from congregational survey, census data for the suburb and brief them on plans for the V&AP session.

Phase 2 - Vision & Action Planning Day

Allow three hours, including one or two short breaks. Have people seated in small groups around tables. Use a whiteboard up front to record brainstorming responses.

Have introduction, welcome and devotion by Ministry Agent & or CC Chair

Finding Our Why: Vision and Values Discovery

Step 1: Begin with Why

This handout will help you identify the foundational purpose, vision, and values of our congregation. Use this guide to think deeply about why we exist as a church community and what impact we want to have.

1. Reflect on Our Purpose

Think about our church and its role in the lives of individuals and the broader community. Consider these questions:

- **Why did I become part of this church community?**
- **What is the most meaningful experience I've had here?**
- **If I could describe our church in one word, what would it be?**

Write down your thoughts:

2. Share Stories that Reflect Our Why

Often, stories help us understand our core purpose. Take a few minutes to recall and write down a personal story or memory that illustrates why this church matters.

- **What story best shows how this church has impacted me or others?**
- **How has the church helped me grow, or how has it helped the community?**

3. Drafting Our Vision

With our purpose in mind, we can think about what our vision is. Our vision is a picture of what we want to become and achieve together in the future.

Consider:

- **What do we want to be known for in our community?**
- **How would we like to impact others over the next 5, 10, or 20 years?**

Draft your vision statement ideas here:

4. Identifying Our Core Values

Values are the principles that guide how we live out our purpose and pursue our vision. Here are a few examples of values that might resonate with us:

- Compassion

- Community
- Integrity
- Faithfulness
- Service

Ask yourself:

- **Which values do we embody as a congregation?**
- **What values should guide our decisions and actions?**

Write down three values you believe should be central to our church:

5. Group Sharing and Discussion

When we meet, please be prepared to share your thoughts on:

- A personal story that captures our church's purpose.
- Your ideas for our church's vision.
- The core values you think should define us.

Identifying “Who” - demographic & interest groups

Congregations cannot effectively reach out to the broad population of a typical suburb. They will need to identify 3 or 4 specific demographic or interest groups for whom the congregation has a particular passion, desired focus, or existing connection.

Step-by-Step Guide to Identifying Your “Who”

STEP 1: Review Your “Why” and “How”

Before you can identify *who* you're for, revisit these:

- **Why do we exist as a congregation?**
(e.g., “To be a healing presence in our community” or “To grow a Christ-centred, inclusive spiritual family.”)
- **How do we live that out?**
(e.g., “With radical hospitality,” “Through intergenerational care,” or “By listening first.”)

These answers will already point toward your “Who.”

STEP 2: Conduct a Congregational Audit

Reflect on:

A. Who is already connected?

- Which demographic groups currently attend?
- Which local networks are represented in your leadership (e.g. schools, service clubs, workplaces)?

B. What passions and gifts exist in our congregation?

- Do members have skills or training with particular groups (e.g. youth, disability, aged care)?
- What community issues stir strong emotional responses from members?

C. What do we already do well?

- Do we host events that consistently draw a particular group?
- What ministries have organically flourished?

STEP 3: Research the Local Context

Use census data, council reports, or local networks to map your suburb/district. Look for:

- **Key demographics:** Age, family structure, income, language, education
- **Social challenges:** Isolation, housing stress, youth disengagement, etc.
- **Community assets:** Schools, aged care homes, sports clubs, ethnic communities

Ask: **Who is here that we are uniquely positioned to care for or connect with?**

STEP 4: Discern 3–4 Priority “Who groups”

From steps 2 and 3, prayerfully identify **three or four specific “Who” groups** to focus on.

These groups should meet at least two of the following criteria:

- You already have **some connection** with them
- The congregation has **passion** for them
- There is **missional need** in that group
- Your people have **skills or experience** with them

Examples might include:

- Young adults disconnected from church
- Single-parent families
- Retirees in local over-55s villages
- Neurodiverse teenagers
- New Australians from a particular cultural background
- LGBTQIA+ people seeking a faith community

STEP 5: Articulate the Who – with Names and Stories

Give each group a human face. Create “persona profiles”:

Example: “Jess, 35, single mum of two. She works part-time and feels disconnected from her family and past faith community. She’s open to spirituality but suspicious of organised religion.”

This helps your team move from generic strategy to *relational mission*.

STEP 6: Test and Share

- Share the identified “Whos” with the wider congregation
- Ask: Do these feel authentic to who we are? Do we feel called here?
- Listen for resonance and resistance
- Refine as needed

STEP 7: Shape Ministry and Communication Around the “Who”

Once your “Who” is clear, evaluate:

- **Programs:** Are our ministries accessible and relevant to these people?
- **Language:** Does our communication speak their language, not just ours?
- **Worship and welcome:** Are their experiences and identities reflected in our gathered life?
- **Partnerships:** Can we collaborate with organisations already working with this group?

A Final Word: The “Who” Will Change

As your congregation grows, your “Who” may evolve. Revisit this process every 2–3 years, or when major shifts occur in your leadership or context.

Phase 3- Action Planning

To move from a vision and strategy to an actionable plan with actual programs and activities for a Uniting Church of Australia congregation, you can follow a structured process tailored to the context and ethos of the Church.

We expect a thorough Action Planning process will take approximately 6 months to complete. If any of these steps are daunting or the Church Council does not have the resources to complete them alone, please contact the Presbytery Growth & Mission Committee for assistance.

Below is an outline:

1. Clarify Vision and Strategy

- **Reaffirm the Vision:** Ensure that the congregation is clear about its God-inspired vision. Reflect on what the vision means in terms of mission, values, and priorities.
- **Connect with the Basis of Union:** Relate the vision to the Uniting Church's foundational principles, focusing on justice, inclusivity, discipleship, and mission.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Include the congregation, leadership teams, and community in discerning how the strategy aligns with Christ's calling.

2. Assess Context and Resources

- **Conduct a Community Needs Analysis:** Understand the needs of the local community and how the congregation can address them.
- **Evaluate Strengths and Resources:** Identify the gifts, talents, and resources within the congregation (people, finances, property, and connections).
- **Understand Limitations:** Acknowledge any challenges, constraints, or barriers to implementing the vision.

3. Translate Strategy into Goals

- **Define SMART Goals:** Break the vision into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals.
 - Example: "Increase engagement with young families by hosting quarterly family-focused events over the next 12 months."
- **Align Goals with Values:** Ensure each goal aligns with the Church's values e.g. of faith, service, and inclusivity.

4. Develop an Action Plan

- **Identify Key Initiatives:** Create programs and activities that align with the goals. For example:
 - Outreach programs (e.g., community meals, social justice advocacy).
 - Worship innovations (e.g., contemporary services, creative liturgy).
 - Discipleship initiatives (e.g., Bible study groups, faith formation for youth).
- **Assign Responsibilities:** Define roles for individuals or teams for each program or activity.
- **Set a Timeline:** Establish milestones, review points and completion dates for each initiative.

- May need to stop doing some things they are already doing

5. Build Capacity

- **Train and Equip Leaders:** Offer leadership development, training in pastoral care, or workshops on mission and evangelism.
- **Empower Volunteers:** Encourage members to contribute according to their spiritual gifts.
- **Strengthen Partnerships:** Collaborate with other Uniting Church congregations, community organisations, or ecumenical groups.

6. Communicate and Engage

- **Create a Communication Plan:** Share the vision, goals, and action plan clearly with the congregation and the wider community through newsletters, sermons, social media, and events.
- **Encourage Feedback:** Provide opportunities for members to give input and feel a sense of ownership. And adjust appropriately.

7. Implement Programs and Activities

- **Pilot Initiatives:** Start with small-scale programs to test their effectiveness.
- **Monitor and Adjust:** Regularly review progress and adapt as needed.
- **Celebrate Wins:** Acknowledge milestones and celebrate achievements to encourage continued participation.

8. Evaluate and Reflect

- **Assess Outcomes:** Use measurable indicators to evaluate the impact of the programs and activities.
- **Gather Feedback:** Conduct surveys or focus groups with participants and stakeholders.
- **Learn and Improve:** Reflect on what worked well and identify areas for improvement.

9. Sustain Momentum

- **Embed the Vision:** Regularly revisit the vision to ensure alignment.
- **Develop Succession Plans:** Prepare future leaders to sustain the initiatives.
- **Seek Continuous Renewal:** Stay attuned to the Spirit's guidance and remain open to new opportunities.

This structured approach, grounded in faith and prayer, ensures that your vision is transformed into a dynamic and impactful action plan.

Phase 4 - Follow-up

Six months after the Vision & Action planning Session, one member of the team should contact the Church Council to arrange to visit one of their meetings. The aim of this visit is to support the congregation in reflecting on their progress in implementing the Action elements of their Vision & Action Plan (VAP), and how the VAP has been embedded into congregational and council life.

This will discuss the following:

- Progress on the Vision & Action Plan
- Integration of the VAP into Congregational Life
- Challenges or Barriers Encountered
- Support Needs Identified
- Reflections and Recommendations

The Visit should be documented in the Six-Month Follow-Up Report Template, shared with the Growth and Mission committee and saved to the Congregation's Consultation folder. It is only required to be sent to PRC if it requires action on their part.