



OPTIONS WHEN PLANNING FUTURE

Congregations often face difficult decisions about their mission and ministry. This is a brief guide to what is available through the Pastoral Relations Team of the Presbytery of South Australia to help in such times.

1. Consultations

- a. **Strengthening Life and Witness:** This is an intensive weekend consultation in which a team from the wider church participates in events in the congregation. The purpose is to bring a helpful outside perspective that affirms the strengths of a congregation. The team may also make suggestions about future possibilities as they listen to the congregation.
- b. **Consultation into the Life and Witness of a Congregation:** This style of consultation often takes place over a slightly longer time frame. Often they are more issue focussed and have a stronger emphasis on naming matters for future resolution.

A major difference between these consultations is the nature of the report with the Strengthening Life and Witness consultation aiming for a short report that affirms strengths. The other style often leads to a more comprehensive report with a number of recommendations for the future. The first aims to be invitational and the second more prescriptive, each has their advantages for a congregation. We recommend the second where we know there is conflict or major issues to be resolved.

2. Vitality of Call

There are both formal and informal versions of this process. The formal one is a consultation led by the Presbytery focussed on the placement of a minister. Placements have their own rhythms with their ups and downs, breakthroughs and setbacks, times of growth and times of grief and loss. In the midst of these normal patterns the Vitality of Call process seeks to reflect on the sense of call that exists between a minister and congregation. A report may make recommendations regarding the extension of a placement, the ending of a placement or suggestions to strengthen the relationship. It is used for **extensions beyond ten years** but can be requested at other times during a placement.

The informal process can be used at anytime by a Church Council and minister. We recommend it as a tool to regularly reflect on the health of relationships in a placement.

3. Financial Consultation

The Pastoral Relations Team has drawn together a team of experienced and well qualified people with financial expertise. When a congregation is seeking to reduce the Full Time Equivalence in a placement PRC may request that the appropriate officers from the congregation meet with a Financial Consultation Team to look at their finances and reflect on their options. Occasionally we have found that an outside perspective can help a congregation test their assumptions about their financial state, maybe leading to different decisions.

4. Mission Planning

Another option would be to work intensively with a member of the Mission Resourcing Team of the Synod to embark on Mission Planning. The purpose of this planning is to gain a sense of a congregation's strengths, the possibilities for missional engagement and to discern God's call for future mission. This is a longer term process and looks to develop a series of mutually agreed upon goals for a congregation.

10 January 2014