



Future planning for congregations

Congregations often face difficult decisions about their mission and ministry. This brief guide provides an outline of the assistance available through the Pastoral Relations and Mission Planning Team as congregations engage in future planning.



1. Consultations

There are two main consultation processes utilised by the Pastoral Relations & Mission Planning Team:

- **Strengthening Life and Witness:** This is an intensive weekend consultation in which a team from the wider Uniting Church SA participates in events with the congregation. The purpose is to bring a helpful outside perspective to affirm the strengths of a congregation. The team may also make suggestions about future possibilities as they listen to the congregation.
- **Consultation into the Life and Witness of a Congregation:** This style of consultation often takes place over a slightly longer time frame. These consultation sessions are often 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 produced after the consultation has taken place. The Strengthening Life and Witness consultation aims to provide a short report that affirms the congregation's strengths, and aims to be invitational. The other consultation style often leads to a more comprehensive, prescriptive report with a number of recommendations for the future. Each consultation process and report has advantages for a congregation. The Pastoral Relations & Mission Planning Team recommends the second consultation option where a congregation is facing a conflict or where there are major issues to be resolved.

2. Vitality of Call

There are both formal and informal versions of the Vitality of Call process, which each deal with placements in congregations.

The formal process is a consultation led by the Presbytery, and is 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 or conclusion of a placement, or suggestions to strengthen the relationship. It is used for extensions beyond ten years, but can also 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 qualified people with financial expertise. When a congregation is seeking to reduce the Full Time Equivalence (FTE) in a placement, the Pastoral Relations & Mission Planning Team may request that the appropriate officers from the congregation meet with a Financial Consultation Team. This team will look at the congregation's finances and reflect on their options. The Pastoral Relations & Mission Planning Team have found that an outside perspective can often help a congregation test their assumptions about their financial state, which may then lead to different decisions.

4. Mission Planning

Mission planning provides an opportunity for congregations to work intensively with a member of the Pastoral Relations & Mission Planning Team. The purpose of this planning is to gain a sense of a congregation's strengths, to explore possibilities for missional engagement, and to discern God's call for future mission. This is a longer process and looks to develop a series of mutually agreed upon goals for a congregation.

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