

Parish Development Framework

For use in Parish Reviews

June 2008

Parish Reviews seek to measure a parish's progress against the Healthy Congregations matrix for Mission Vision, Capacity and Achievement. Mission Vision is measured through four aspects of vision: outward focus, sense of direction and involving leadership and relationships with the wider church Mission Capacity is measured through four aspects of ministry: worship, faith, a strong sense of community, newcomers and numerical growth Mission Achievement involves both evaluating any existing goals and setting new goals for the future.

Contents

1. Introduction to Healthy Congregations	pg 2
2. The Parish Review Process	pg 4
3. The Parish's Mission Vision	pg 7
Outward Focus	
Sense of Direction	
Involving Leadership	
Relationships with the Wider Church	
4. The Parish's Mission Capacity	pg 13

Worship Strong Sense of Community A Lively Faith Newcomers and Numerical Growth

5. Mission Achievement

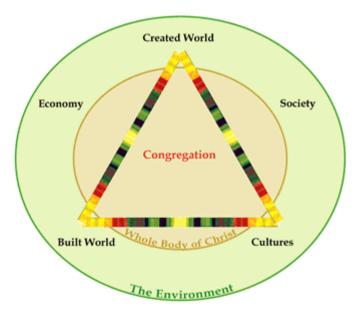
Evaluation of Existing Goals Goalsetting: Setting of New Goals pg 19

1

Healthy Congregations

For their terms of reference, congregational reviews use the description of a healthy congregation detailed below. This has been recently developed by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand in recognition that developing healthy congregations is vital for the future direction of the Church. Congregational reviews are seen as a means of assisting congregations to maintain and increase their levels of congregational health as they make Christ known in their context to the wider community.

Health is concerned with wholeness and right relationships. Health in a congregation depends fundamentally on a healthy relationship with God who secured a relationship with us in Jesus Christ. That relationship does not depend on how we perform but we live within that relationship, listening, receiving, thanking and responding to the love God lavishes on us.



The central triangle represents a congregation. A healthy congregation is made up of imperfect people of different ages, sexes, personalities and cultures held together by the Spirit of God.

The inner circle (light brown) represents other members of the body of Christ - the extended family of the church - locally, nationally and beyond.

The outer circle (green) represents the wider environment of the world in which we live. It includes the social economic and political situation, the physical environment (both natural and developed) and various cultures.

The following features have been identified as indicators of a healthy congregation. Congregations and other bodies within the church are encouraged to further develop these concepts for their mission and context. The Health of a congregation may be judged by looking at the quality of the four dimensions of health - relationships with God, with the wider environment, with the wider church and within its own life. A healthy congregation has:

- An *outward focus* among leaders and attenders in their concern for evangelism and wider community care. There is a readiness to discuss matters of faith with others, to act with Christ where there is a need and to invite others to church. The congregation behaves as a good steward of creation (the created and built worlds) and works with others for justice and peace, being with those with whom Jesus identifies.
- *Healthy relationships with the wider church* locally, nationally and beyond. The congregation will participate in mission and share activity at these levels.
- A sense of direction. Attenders perceive their congregation as having a definite sense of direction and purpose.
- *Worship* that is true to God, *enhancing of life*, promotes growth in faith, is *relevant* to the cultures/contexts in which we live, and is *inviting* to people unfamiliar with church.
- *A lively faith.* Healthy congregations tend to have higher levels of attenders growing in their faith or experiencing moments of conversion or faith commitment. Among attenders there are high levels of devotional activity such as prayer and Bible reading.
- A strong sense of community among attenders embracing all generations, different cultures and diverse ways of being human creating a sense of belonging, managing conflict, and working towards reconciliation, healing, and renewal. High levels of involvement in small congregational groups will be evident but will not exclude participation in activities in other communities and settings.
- An involving leadership. Leadership has a strong sense of vision for the mission of the congregation to which attenders are committed. Leadership is inspiring and purposeful yet puts a priority on listening to attenders' ideas and encouraging them to discover their gifts and use them. Those with roles receive adequate levels of support.
- *Newcomers and numerical growth.* Healthy congregations are more likely to be attracting and holding newcomers, retaining young adults and growing numerically. For congregations whose mission is in the many places/contexts in which its members live through most of the week the indicators of health include the outcomes of their activities and the ways the local congregation provides support.

The Parish Review Process

The Reviewers

It is recommended each presbytery/UDC select 2-3 reviewers for each parish review. This spreads the workload more evenly across the parish reviewers who, as volunteers, are undertaking reviews on their own time. Those selected for reviews should have some experience with review processes. They should also have good communication skills, the ability to recognize group dynamics and manage conflict and to handle sensitive matters discreetly.

The Review

Step One – Setting Expectations

First, reviewers should meet with the minister(s) and church council to discuss the review and ascertain what the parish hopes to gain from the review. At this stage the reviewers should check that the parish understands the review process to be followed. This is a good opportunity to allay any fears or anxiety about the process. This is also the time to tailor the review for any issues the parish has already identified.

Step Two – Gathering Information

The reviewers should try to gather as much 'background' information as possible on the parish such as the last 'visitation' report, annual reports, parish profile, planning/goal-setting documents the parish has been working on and accounts. The reviewers should also look at the context the parish is in such as community profile (demographics, other community groups, community issues etc). The leadership team and members of the congregation may be asked to fill out a 'self-review' form (see below). Finally, the reviewers attend a variety of parish events and services to observe it 'at work'.

Step Three – Feedback

The information gathered in step two is used to build a picture of the parish, its context, weaknesses and strengths against the Parish Development Framework. This is then 'fed back' to the parish for consideration. While this can be done in a group discussion, care needs to be given to the dynamics of a particular parish. If there is obvious tension or a history of conflict it may be better to speak to parish members and office bearers 'one-on-one'.

Step Four – The Future

Once the parish knows 'where it is' the next step is to determine where it wants to go. The group discussions at step 3 are especially useful for this. Realistically, most parishes will want to build on the work they are doing towards creating a lively faith and numerical growth. However some parishes may want to branch out with new goals. Reviewers need to guide parishes here to ensure their goals are achievable.

Step Five – The Report

The final step is for the reviewers to present a final report to the parish, which it in turn presents it to the presbytery. Although reports will differ widely depending on the parish and its particular context, as a minimum the report should contain:

An executive summary

- •The mission vision and passion that this parish holds (Mission Vision)
- The capacity of the parish to reach this vision (Mission Capacity)
- •The achievements the parish has made to date (Evaluation of Mission Achievement and Goalsetting (see below))

- ■Spiritual and mission reflection i.e. where the parish will go next
- An action plan (agreed to by the parish and reviewers) setting out what the parish will do in the next five years to achieve its vision.
- Support required by presbytery in order to achieve vision.

Whilst it is important that the parish and reviewers reach a consensus on the report being presented to presbytery, at the same time reviewers need to facilitate a culture of growth within the church. However, where extreme conflict arises that cannot be resolved, or consensus cannot be reached despite numerous discussions with the parish, the reviewers are strongly encouraged to refer the matter to presbytery so that a pastoral intervention, such as mediation, may be attempted.

Congregational Self-Review Form

The General Assembly has agreed that it wishes to see healthy congregations. A parish review is an external review to help a congregation measure its vision and progress towards being a healthy congregation. The following features have been identified as indicators of a healthy congregation. Please comment on how you feel your congregation measures up to these indicators.

1 Healthy relationships with the wider environment are shown by an **outward focus** among leaders and attenders in their concern for evangelism and wider community care. There is a readiness to discuss matters of faith with others, to act with Christ where there is a need and to invite others to church. The congregation behaves as a good steward of creation (the created and built worlds) and works with others for justice and peace, being with those with whom Jesus identifies. **How we see ourselves:**

A healthy congregation has healthy relationships with the **wider church** – locally, nationally and beyond. The congregation will participate in mission and share activity at these levels. **How we see ourselves:**

3 A sense of direction. Attenders perceive their congregation as having a definite sense of direction and purpose. How we see ourselves:

Worship that is true to God, **enhancing of life**, promotes growth in faith, is **relevant** to the cultures/contexts in which we live, and is **inviting** to people unfamiliar with church. **How we see ourselves:**

A lively faith. Healthy congregations tend to have higher levels of attenders growing in their faith or experiencing moments of conversion or faith commitment. Among attenders there are high levels of devotional activity such as prayer and Bible reading. **How we see ourselves:**

A strong sense of community among attenders embracing all generations, different cultures and diverse ways of being human – creating a sense of belonging, managing conflict, and working towards reconciliation, healing, and renewal. High levels of involvement in small congregational groups will be evident but will not exclude participation in activities in other communities and settings. **How we see ourselves:**

7 An involving leadership. Leadership has a strong sense of vision for the mission of the congregation to which attenders are committed. Leadership is inspiring and purposeful yet puts a priority on listening to attenders' ideas and encouraging them to discover their gifts and use them. Those with roles receive adequate levels of support. How we see ourselves:

Newcomers and numerical growth. Healthy congregations are more likely to be attracting and holding newcomers, retaining young adults and growing numerically. For congregations whose mission is in the many places/contexts in which its members live through most of the week the indicators of health include the outcomes of their activities and the ways the local congregation provides support. **How we see ourselves:**

Aspects of a Parish's Mission Vision

Description of Aspect of Mission Vision	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development		Advanced Level of Development	
Outward Focus			-		
Leaders and attenders demonstrate concern for evangelism and wider community care;	Congregational goals tend to be about single ideas, what is popular right now or what benefits the congregation most.	Congregational leaders understand the importance of outward focus for relevance to the community and therefore future-proofing of the church.		Understands the life-giving nature of community facing vision and uses it for the vitality and future-proofing of the church and the surrounding community.	
Generally there is a readiness to discuss faith with others, to act as Christ leads and to invite	Attenders find faith difficult to discuss and to put into practice. Few invitations to church are extended to others	Attenders and leaders have good understanding of the mission, vision and key goals of the parish and their role in reaching out.		Can locate outward looking vision within the context of the group's previous history and future dreams about their outward focus.	
people to church; Congregation exercises good stewardship displayed towards community and creation;	Low levels of energy, enthusiasm and motivation are shown towards issues wider than the local parish. The environment is not a concern for attenders and seldom features in preaching/worship	Leadership within the church can build community facing vision, but require outside help to achieve it. Attenders and/or leaders can give leadership and support to community in area of own strengths or interests.		Locates the specific, local vision within the <i>missio dei</i> and the reign of God. Creates parish goals from the chosen vision and develops steps to achieve an effective connection with the	
Works with others towards justice and peace, are with those with whom Jesus identifies.	Behaviour of leaders and attenders contradicts their vision or expressed ideas about evangelism, stewardship or justice and peace.	Demonstrates commitment to achieve parish goals regarding an outward focus towards the community and creation, justice and peace.		Parish lives an outward facing vision; is a vision bearer; their being and behaviour inspires others to catch and move towards the vision and towards Christ.	

Description of Aspect of Mission Vision	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development	Advanced Level of Development	
Sense of Direction				
Attenders and leaders share a strong sense of where the parish is headed; Attenders and leaders are able to articulate clearly the mission statement for the parish Attenders and leaders are able to participate in the process of change of direction at different levels of the faith community.	Attenders and/or leaders are happy with the status quo. Congregation is unconscious of the direction of the parish or are uninterested in it. Leaders initiate changes ad hoc without consultation or understanding their potential effects. Leader's decisions are made with little reference to any parish goals. Leaders show disinterest in negative responses to change including blaming those who resist or critique any change in direction of the parish	Leaders and attenders understand need for shared sense of direction and are working towards gaining consensus. Leaders and attenders understand the change process and role of the change agent(s) within it. Leaders consciously act as change agents. Attenders are invited to participate in decisions on the future direction of the church. Leaders and attenders plan together to facilitate change in some areas of the church system, in line with an agreed future direction. Attenders can articulate the goals which have been set by the leadership, though consensus decision-making with the attenders.	Understanding of and commitment to the direction of the parish is widespread among leaders and attenders Leaders and attenders actively encourage each other to discern and discuss the future of the parish. Leaders and attenders model the changes they seek in the parish. Leaders take responsibility for emotional and relationship issues throughout the discernment and change process without blaming or scapegoating people. Leaders and attenders support those anxious about change and those leading change. Leaders and attenders give permission to one another to make mistakes when working towards developing a future sense of direction. Goals are clearly articulated and plans developed to achieve them, including budgets, if necessary changing methods of budgeting to reflect mission priorities	

Description of Aspect of Mission Vision	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development	Advanced Level of Development	
Involving Leadership Leaders seek to influence rather than direct attenders; Leaders are inspiring and purposeful, keeping attenders enthusiastic and involved; Leaders set priorities in consultation with attenders; Leaders track progress and works with others to ensure targets are met. Leaders are supported	 Leaders: make decisions on little information or in isolation without regard for the big picture or for how others feel about issues. often fail to give clear direction to staff and volunteers seldom inspire attenders, create little enthusiasm and work without a guiding purpose. request action from the church council(s) without communicating goals and objectives. make decisions independently. priorities are unclear, planning skimpy. react negatively towards ideas put forward by attenders. 	 Leaders: can name the direction and objectives of the parish and describe the link with overall goals. make recommendations and build consensus around these provide opportunity for others to ask questions and suggest ideas. take into consideration others' skills, abilities and readiness when delegating tasks, responsibility and accountability. are able to plan own work and use time well. keep attenders informed of progress. create confidence amongst attenders 	 Leaders: involve key people at all levels, in decision making process to gain their support. set clear goals, guide the work effort, inspire the team to continually improve. openly recognise achievement and those who try to effect change. empower attenders with authority, accountability and resources to achieve responsibilities, make decisions and solve problems. are willing to coach and mentor attenders to improve. systematically plan a course of action for themselves and attenders to make sure goals are met. are able to anticipate problems and make contingency plans. in creative and innovative ways, 	
by attenders			keep the big picture before the people who will carry it out.	

Description of Aspect of Mission Vision	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development	Advanced Level of Development	
Relationships with the Wider Church The parish is able to participate in mission and other activities within the Church at local, national and international levels; The parish has a good relationship with other denominations within its community.	Congregation Is passive, apathetic or reactive towards national Church issues, and towards regional church groupings or goals. Leaders do not leader congregational responses to General Assembly or Presbytery discussion documents. Low level of awareness of the structures of the wider Church including the General Assembly. Intolerant of other denominations in community – sees them as a threat to numerical growth. Disinterested in issues outside of the parish context. Does not meet financial commitments at regional or national level.	Organises and presents own perspective effectively at presbytery and General Assembly level. Expresses ideas clearly and concisely to other parts of the Presbyterian church. Supports and uses general Assembly resolutions and programmes Listens and responds to the wider church. Aware of differences in theology and is aware of own preferences in these areas. Complies with requirements from the regional and local level. Meets financial commitments at regional and national level. Shows recognition of the importance of co-operation with other churches and groups in achieving mission goals.	Congregation presents own perspective in appropriate language and style so that others are persuaded to consider alternative viewpoints. Creates ways of effectively communicating the parish's message to the wider church, can coach other churches in this process. Members of the parish actively contribute to regular regional and national activities and structures. Leaders and attenders are able to work with people from different theological standpoint and can help better communcation in this area. Give over and above the requirements to projects at regional, national and international levels. Maintains helpful and effective mission connections with other local denominations, uses these relationships to increase its own community facing mission.	

Summary of Mission Vision

Low Level of Development	Tasks to do	Average Level of Development	Tasks to do	Advanced Level of Development	Tasks to do
				•	
	Low Level of Development				

Aspects of a Parish's Mission Capacity

Description of Aspect of Mission Capacity	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development	Advanced Level of Development	
Worship				
Worship is true to God,	Sermons are ambiguous and confusing – ideas not clearly expressed	Leaders and music-leaders work together to plan worship.	Leaders able to develop services geared for different audiences.	
enhances life, promotes growth in faith and is relevant to the parish's	Grammar/language/concepts incorrect or inappropriate for the audience.	Leaders use appropriate terms and language for the audience.	Leaders actively seek advice and feedback on worship from attenders and adjust style as needed in a way	
context.	Communication is ineffectively targeted at the actual audience.	Leaders use appropriate images and concepts for the audience	consistent with the gospel Leaders able to explain complex	
	Leaders unable to read audience response and so adapt the message/presentation style to a more	Leaders watch for responses to worship from the audience	concepts clearly using appropriate terms for the audience.	
	effective style.	and adapt accordingly	Develops messages that reconcile different viewpoints.	
	Services lack structure, making them confusing and unclear.	Worship expresses good theology which is true to God in accessible ways.	Innovation is applied to communication of different kinds in worship without	
	Music selected bears little resemblance to themes elsewhere in the service.	Attenders are coming to faith as a result of attending	losing the gospel. Leaders adjust worship times and	
	Services lack coherence and flow.	worship.	formats to meet congregational needs and the direction of the parish.	
	Few people are showing growth in faith through attending worship	Preaching connects with the local context and with concerns in people's lives.	Use of others besides ordained leaders is innovative and creative	
		A variety of people are involved in worship in different ways	Worship inspires attenders to Christian action in their local context	

Description of Aspect of Mission Capacity	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development	Advanced Level of Development
	Development Needs of others are only rarely noticed. Congregation finds the way in which personal issues affect people's response and work hard to grasp. Parish allows itself to be negatively affected by personality clashes and trivial arguments. Encouragement or recognition, and praise of accomplishment are rarely given. The importance of managing relationships for the benefit of the entire parish is rarely considered. Conflict is not managed		DevelopmentLeaders build confidence in success by communicating high expectations of others and confidence in their ability to meet genuine need.Leaders encourage others by recognising contributions made and the strength and potential of people from different backgrounds and experiences.Individuals show active concern/sensitivity toward other's feelings and problems.Perceptiveness towards others' situations is valued.Close, supportive relationships exist between attenders, leaders
	well. A negative culture exists in the congregation, mistakes are punished harshly and publicly. Congregation is visibly intolerant to particular groups in society.		The community is enabled to recognises 'unhealth' and is led to respond to it in helpful ways.

Description of Aspect of Mission Capacity	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development	Advanced Level of Development	
Lively Faith				
Congregation has a high level of attenders growing in their faith or experiencing moments of conversion or faith commitment. Among attenders there are high levels of devotional activity such as prayer and Bible reading	 Few people have taken the next step (baptism, confirmation, becoming a leader, etc.) in their faith journey over the last 3-5 years. Information about taking a further step of faith or encouragement to do so is seldom given. Provision of Bible reading guides, or prayer methods is seldom made Few small groups meet for prayer, bible study or discussion. Attenders depend on the weekly worship service and the ordained leader for their spiritual and personal growth 	A noticeable number of people are making faith commitments of different types. Making of commitments is celebrated and encouraged Attenders support each other in making commitments. Informal mentoring between attenders frequently happens. Attenders are provided with means by which they can be helped with regular Bible reading and prayer. Regular devotional time each day is encouraged and modeled by attenders and leaders Small groups encourage bible study on an occasional basis. Some awareness exists that more than a weekly corporate connection with God is important.	The atmosphere of the parish is 'bubbly' and enthusiastic about God and how God is working in the faith community. More leaders than only the ordained ministry are offering spiritual leadership and encouragement. People are intentionally mentored before, during and after making faith commitments Faith commitments are celebrated and valued. Attenders are committed to regular Bible reading and prayer and also seek other ways of maintaining and deepening their personal faith Groups are regularly offered for Bible study and prayer as well as spiritual input of other kinds and are well attended. The congregation has an ongoing trust that God is the author and finisher of their faith all through the week. Attenders value praying for and talking to non-believers about their Christian faith.	

Description of Aspect of Mission Capacity	Low Level of Development	Average Level of Development		Advanced Level of Development
Newcomers and Numerical Growth			•	
Congregation attracts and holds newcomers, retaining young adults and growing numerically. The mission of the congregation is seen as happening in the many places/contexts where its attenders live most of the week Mission activities meet their desired outcomes and are supported by the local congregation.	Congregational size is declining People are choosing to leave in order to attend another church. Congregation is ageing because younger people are leaving or not joining the church. Mission is considered to be only happening overseas and some support is made of this	Congregational size is holding its own and/or slowly increasing. Newcomers are attracted to the church Newcomers are welcomed initially. Young adults are present in the congregation. An understanding is developing that 'mission' is how church members live out their faith during the week. Some interest is shown in finding out what the needs of the community are.		The congregation(s) is (are) known by word of mouth as an attractive and welcoming church. Newcomers frequently arrive, are welcomed systematically and integrated efficiently into small groups. Young adult are present and active within the congregation. Community needs are/have been researched and appropriate mission responses are made. Congregational members are intentionally and actively supported in their role as mission agents where they live and work. Mission is carefully planned and carried out in a sustainable manner. Goals are clear and are routinely achieved Congregation actively supports mission in the community with time, effort and money.

Summary of Mission Capacity

Aspects of Mission Capacity	Low Level of Development	Tasks to do	Average Level of Development	Tasks to do	Advanced Level of Development	Tasks to do
Worship						
Strong Sense of Community						
A Lively Faith						
Newcomers and Numerical growth						

Evaluation of Mission Achievement

Where parish mission goals exist, use the next two pages to evaluate progress in recent time. If no mission goals exist, move straight to goal setting (In both cases photocopy more pages where necessary)

Existing Mission Achievement Goals	What has been achieved?	What helps and/or hinders this to happen?	What did you learn in achieving this goal? What can you do differently?	What gives energy, and/or what drains energy?	What aspect from the framework have you developed in pursuing this goal?

Existing Mission Achievement Goals	What has been achieved?	What helps and/or hinders this to happen?	What did you learn in achieving this goal? What can you do differently?	What gives energy, and/or what drains energy?	What aspect from the framework have you developed in pursuing this goal?

Goalsetting

Mission Achievement Goals set in consultation with the parish at this review.	What is to be achieved?	What will help this to happen? What could hinder this happening?	What needs to be learned or will be learned in achieving this goal? What ways can it be done differently?	What can generate energy for this goal? What might sap energy during achieving this goal?	What aspect from the framework will probably be developed in pursuing this goal?	Is this a new goal or an old one needing more work (Why?) or an extension of a previous goal? (Why?)
New Goal #1						
New Goal #2						