

Vision For Mission

Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod
2006



Vision For Mission

Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod

“In our changing world, in response to the imperative of the gospel and our experience of God’s grace, we are called to share with God in transforming the world.”¹

“Through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people’s attention and awaken faith; he calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules, and renews them as his Church.”²

Preface

During the year 2002, the Synod Leadership Team embarked on a process of reflection and consultation that resulted in the development of the document, *“The Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod Intentional Mission Strategy... A future with Heart and Soul.”* The document was understood to be a “navigational framework” designed to assist the Synod Leadership Team, and others, as they determined their agenda and focussed their resources.

In 2004 – 2005 the Synod Leadership Team, along with the members of the Synod Mission Advisory Forum and a number of other people engaged in various aspects of the church’s ministry and mission, worked together to vision new ways of being church.

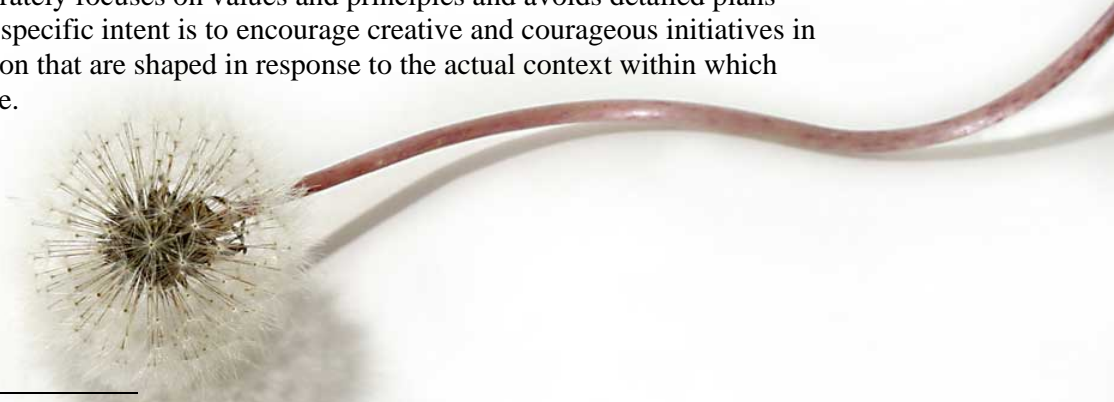
Believing that God is already in the world, and is calling us to live the Gospel in word and action in that world, our work was undertaken in response to three key questions:

- What kind of world is God calling us into, as bearers of God’s Good News?
- How do we engage with God in this world, in obedience to God’s call?
- What resources will we need in order to respond to God’s call?

The outcome of our work to this point in time is the Vision for Mission set out below. This Vision deliberately focuses on values and principles and avoids detailed plans and blueprints. Its specific intent is to encourage creative and courageous initiatives in ministry and mission that are shaped in response to the actual context within which they will take place.

¹ Assembly Strategic Planning Unit, Uniting Church in Australia, 2000

² The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 4



The key themes of this Vision

The church of the future will be different to the church of today

Mission is always contextual

The unity of God's people and the development of strong communities committed to risking the way of Jesus

Encouraging new ventures in ministry and mission

Flexibility in our structures, planning processes, decision-making and mission initiatives

Strong, focused and intentional leadership

Priority in the application of our human and material resources to those aspects of our ministry and mission consistent with the Vision

Emphasis on the ministry of the whole people of God

The ecumenical vision of the *Basis of Union* that calls us to ministry and mission with other churches.

The imperative of the Gospel

We believe that the biblical witness reveals a God who loves us unconditionally and invites us into a life-changing relationship.³ We see this reality most clearly and powerfully revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.⁴ As Christians, our identity is determined, and our purpose is defined, by the relationship we share with him.⁵

We receive through scripture and tradition the imperative to communicate this good news with others, wherever and whenever we can, though always sensitively and respectfully.⁶ It is our deep desire that others will come to know Christ for themselves, put their relationship with him at the centre of their lives, become active participants in some part of the Christian community and committed to public witness and service in the name of Christ.⁷ This Vision is dedicated to that purpose.

³ John 3:16, II Corinthians 5:17, II Corinthians 3:12-18

⁴ John 14:8-11, Hebrews 1:1-3, John 1:1-18, I Corinthians 1:26-31, Philippians 2:5-11

See also *The Basis of Union*, 1992, paragraph 3

⁵ John 14:15-24, John 15:1-17, John 13:1-20, Matthew 28:18-20

⁶ I Peter 3:13-17, II Corinthians 5:11-21, Romans 10:14-17, Acts 8:26-40, Acts 17:16-34

⁷ Acts 2:37-47, Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16. See also *The Basis of Union*, 1992, para 6

Guiding values and principles

The Uniting Church “risks living the way of Jesus”.

We are a “pilgrim people”⁸, called by God to be a fellowship of reconciliation and an instrument through which Christ transforms the world.⁹

We constantly seek to discern, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, where God is calling us and leading us as we bear witness in, and seek to serve, the world for which Christ died.

We are committed to God’s transformation of the Church and understand that the viable future will be different to the Church as we know it.

Living this adventurous life of faith will mean fragility, tension and risk, but will also be characterised by openness and flexibility.

We are committed to journey in partnership together, valuing our theological and spiritual diversity and celebrating our oneness in Christ.¹⁰

The Church is focused, purposeful and proactive about creating space for thinking and planning for our mission and ministry.

We value generosity, hospitality, inclusiveness, community, justice, compassion, evangelism, stewardship and ecumenism, and these gospel values inform and guide our thinking, planning and action.¹¹

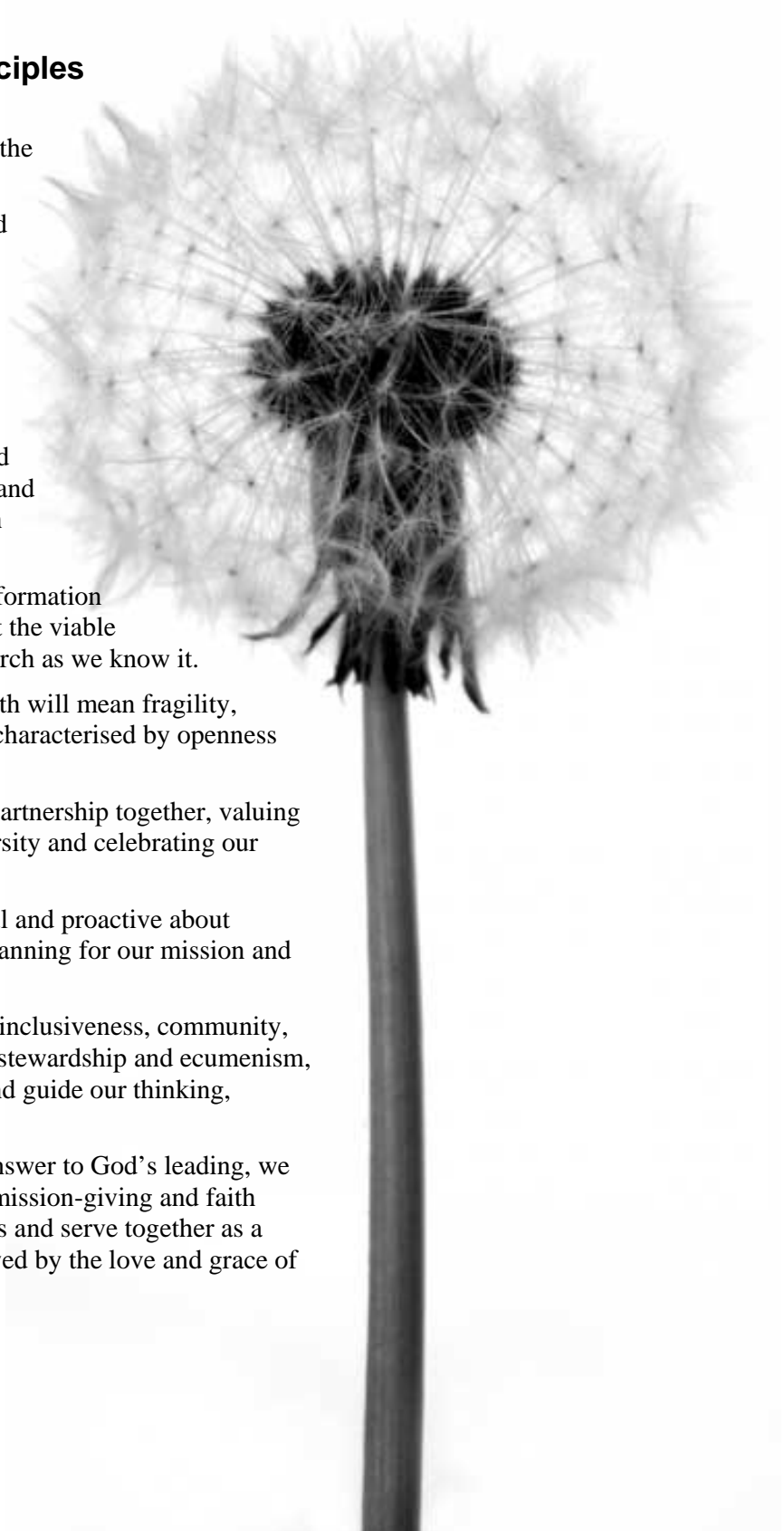
As we seek to be the Church in answer to God’s leading, we will be open and transparent, permission-giving and faith focused. We will worship, witness and serve together as a people called, forgiven and renewed by the love and grace of God.

⁸ The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 3

⁹ II Corinthians 5:18-21, John 17:20-26

¹⁰ The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 13

¹¹ II Corinthians 8:1-15, Acts 2:43-47, Acts 4:32-37, Acts 10:34-48, Colossians 3:12-17, I Corinthians 13:1-13



We understand that in order to truly be the church we must look out beyond our existing structures and fellowship groups to the world around us, a world in which Christ is already fully and actively present, and into which he calls us to be his faithful and courageous disciples.¹² Therefore, we must endeavour to understand that world as well as we possibly can, recognising how incredibly complex, confusing, disturbing and confronting that world can be. It is a world in which no one way of sharing the gospel will ever be fully adequate or appropriate.

We are committed to support, and work with, the indigenous people of Australia (and the UAICC in particular), in accordance with the covenantal relationship into which we have entered, and with members of the various migrant-ethnic communities who have made Australia their home;

We affirm the commitment of the Uniting Church, at the time of its inauguration, “to enter more deeply into the faith and mission of the Church in Australia, by working together and seeking union with other churches,”¹³ and will therefore actively seek for ways in which we can pursue a greater degree of ecumenical partnership and share more closely in worship, witness and service with the members of other Christian churches.¹⁴

We also affirm the commitment of the Uniting Church in the Basis of Union ‘to seek special relationships with churches in Asia and the Pacific’.¹⁵

In a spirit of faith, hope and love we dream an emerging future church in which there will be some elements of our worship, witness and service that are familiar and much that will be new and different.

We dream a future with “heart and soul” in which, individually and corporately, we will be prepared to let go of everything that hinders our commitment to respond to the way in which the Spirit leads us, so allowing Christ to “bring into being what otherwise could not exist”,¹⁶ and “looking for a continuing renewal in which God will use our common worship, witness and service to set forth the word of salvation for all people.”¹⁷

¹² Matthew 28:18-20, John 20:19-23, Acts 1:6-9

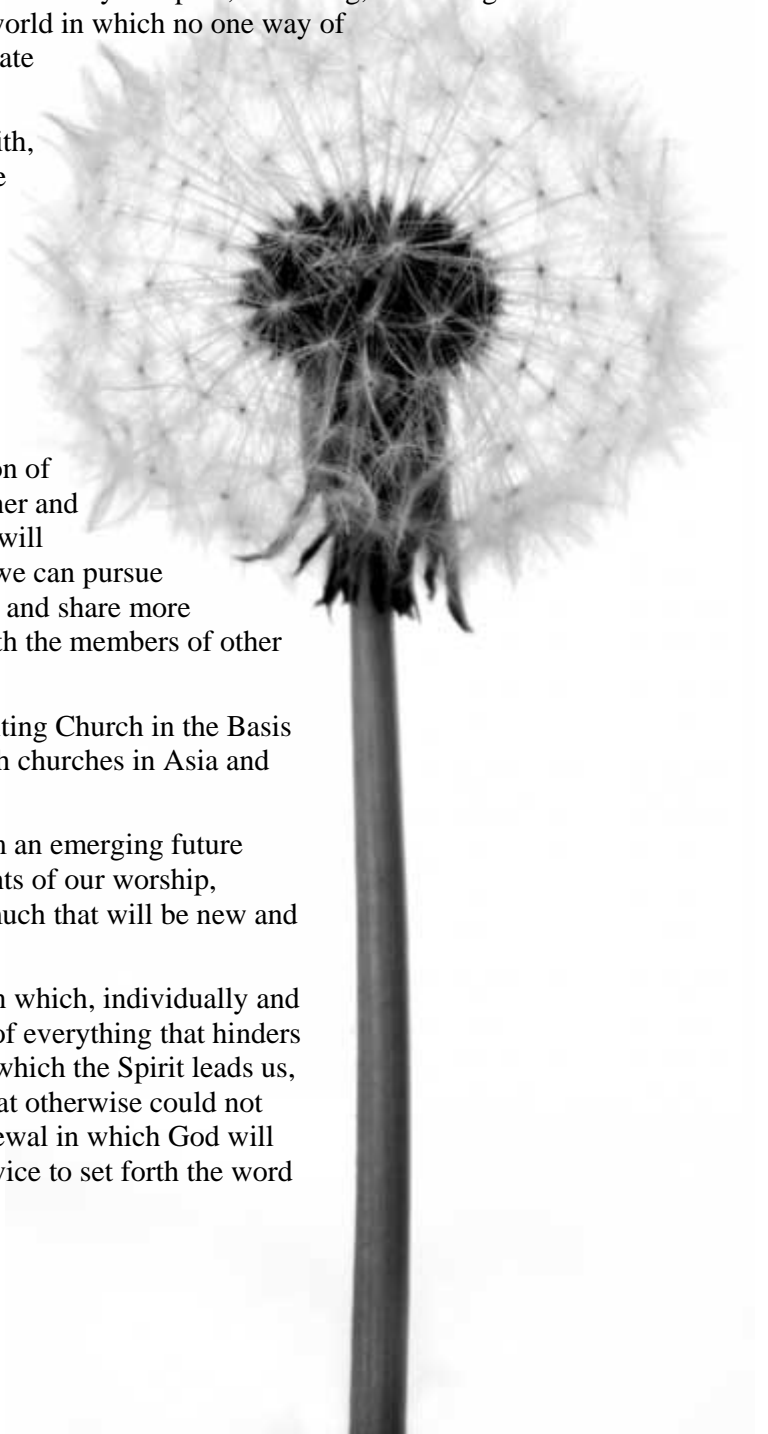
¹³ The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 2

¹⁴ The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 18

¹⁵ The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 2

¹⁶ The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 3

¹⁷ The Basis of Union, 1992, paragraph 1



The Queensland Synod's Commitment to Vision for Mission

Every minister, every congregation and faith community, every presbytery, every committee, council, board and task group, the Synod Departments and all the service agencies and institutions associated with the work of Uniting Care, every school and college (including the Theological College), all Synod staff and those elected to serve the Uniting Church in Queensland in positions of leadership, along with the Synod in Session, will regularly and vigorously evaluate their work, their policies, their decisions and actions in the light of this Vision and the values that inform and guide it, and in reporting to the church will give particular attention to the manner in which this is being accomplished.

In seeking the realisation of the Vision we will:

- identify existing congregations, faith communities and other activities of the church that are already functioning effectively in a manner consistent with the Vision, and offer such ongoing support as they may require in order to further develop their ministry and mission
- recognise, affirm and continue to support those aspects of our ministry and mission that we believe to be essential, even though they may not be, or ever can be, financially self-sufficient.



We also commit ourselves as a church to the establishment, development and nurture of new ventures in ministry and mission that clearly demonstrate a commitment to the values and objectives of the Vision, with particular regard to:

- Developing initiatives in ministry and mission with a focus on cultural or common-purpose groups
- Using relational approaches to evangelism that equip people to actively share their faith in Christ in appropriate and intentional ways
- Providing opportunities specifically designed to help people grow in their faith and become active disciples of Christ
- Making significant connections, and intentionally building relationships, with individuals and groups in the wider community in a variety of settings
- Establishing new congregations or faith communities and supporting them in whatever ways are necessary to ensure their continuing growth and effectiveness
- Encouraging and supporting new and innovative approaches to ministry and mission, particularly where these are undertaken collaboratively, ecumenically, or by groups and teams of people
- Maximising the use of owned properties, including shared use by congregations/faith communities, other agencies of the church, community groups and other Christian denominations.
- Exploring the potential advantages of renting property.
- Considering creative alternatives to the employment of fulltime persons.
- Continuing to develop and support initiatives in community service that pursue justice for, and enhance the quality of life of, the aged, the poor, the homeless, the refugee, those with a disability, and other disadvantaged people in our society.
- Offering continuing training, formation and support for those evidencing the personal qualities, skills, maturity and spiritual gifts for leadership that are essential for the realisation of the Vision.
- Attending to generational differences and allowing for youth and early adults to embrace, and participate in the realisation of, the Vision in ways appropriate to their experience, giftedness, and preferences for the manner in which things are done.



In support of these initiatives we will:

- give priority, in the application of our human and material resources, to those missional activities that are clearly dedicated to the fulfilment of the Vision, and are consistent with its values and principles
- review our structures and decision-making processes in order to make them less complicated and more flexible, and address our management systems with a view to empowering both individuals and groups to pursue the realisation of the Vision in a framework of transparency and accountability
- develop and maintain effective and efficient systems of information technology, communication and media relations that will help to enhance our ministry and mission, create a positive public understanding and awareness of what our church represents and achieves, share stories of what is happening across the church in the realisation of the Vision, and develop a greater sense of connectedness and unity within the church
- give particular attention to the biblical and theological education and formation of all the members of our church, encouraging and supporting their growth in Christian discipleship and their capacity to bear witness to the Gospel in the life of the world. To that end we will prepare men and women for the specified ministries of the church in a manner that will equip and enable them to undertake this task as a matter of priority
- help the members of our Church to be deeply involved in Mission in their local communities and to support the mission of the Church through Uniting Church International Mission, Uniting Church Overseas Aid and in other ways.



6. Implementing the Vision

In order to implement this Vision, the Synod (under the oversight of the Synod Leadership Team) will:

- consult with the Presbyteries as to how best they might be resourced and supported as they seek the realisation of the Vision within their areas of oversight
- encourage the continued growth and development of key networks of congregations, faith communities and agencies, and the formation and support of new networks as these may be required
- respond to requests and/or opportunities to establish, support and give oversight to new ventures in ministry and mission that are consistent with the Vision but do not readily fit within our existing structures
- in relation to its own areas of responsibility, continue to pursue the key strategies outlined in the *Intentional Mission Strategy (a future with Heart and Soul)*, endorsed by the 24th Synod in May 2004.
- actively pursue both immediate and long-term strategies to ensure that resources, both human and material, will be available for the realisation of the Vision.
- explore with other churches the ecumenical possibilities of sharing the Vision and look for ways in which it may be realised together
- undertake regular and efficient collation of information, statistics, and other data that will assist in the first instance, in identifying situations in which a strategic missional response is required, and then in the thorough and effective ongoing assessment and evaluation of any ventures that have been implemented.

Energising and Resourcing the Vision for Mission

*In our changing world,
in response to the imperative of the gospel
and our experience of God's grace,
we are called to share with God in
transforming the world.*



Intentional Resourcing of Mission Initiatives

The 'Vision for Mission' articulates a commitment from the Synod to intentionally resource "the establishment, development and nurture of new ventures in ministry and mission that clearly demonstrate a commitment to the values and objectives" outlined in the document.

There are already many examples within the Uniting Church in Queensland where the people of God have found new ways of responding to their local mission context. To encourage the rest of the Church it is important that these stories are shared so that together we might learn from the experiences of others.

The resourcing of new mission initiatives will take many forms. They will include: prayer; networking; encouragement; people exercising their gifts (paid and volunteer); financial, intellectual, property and other forms of support. While many potential new mission ventures will not necessarily require financial resources to develop and grow, others will. It is important therefore that the 'resourcing' of new mission ventures is seen in the broadest context and that appropriate and flexible 'resourcing packages' are available to assist those who will be engaged in the mission activity.

To this end an initial Synod funding allocation of \$2 million will be made available as an expression of the Church's commitment to assist these new mission initiatives to grow and develop (Mission Initiatives Fund). This seed funding will be in addition to the funding for current Mission and Service activities of the Church.

The Synod Leadership Team (the SLT) will be working in collaboration with other Councils of the Church to seek ways of freeing up further additional resources to add to this initial funding allocation in the years to come.

A Mission Resource Consultant will work in collaboration with a small team (Mission Initiatives Facilitation Team) and together they will (where appropriate) offer support in facilitating the establishment, development, nurture, and evaluation of mission initiatives across the wider Church.

The Mission Resource Consultant will also assist in facilitating many new mission initiatives through organising collaborative effort throughout the Church.

The Mission Initiatives Facilitation Team and the Mission Resource Consultant will sponsor funding recommendations from the Mission Initiatives Fund to the SLT who will make decisions concerning funding and other resource allocations.

The Department for Financial and Property Services is engaged in a process of reviewing three existing mission support funding mechanisms. The SLT believes it would be appropriate for this review to include a focus on how some of these funds might be geared towards resourcing the 'Vision for Mission'.

Mission Initiatives Facilitation Team

It is envisaged that the Mission Initiatives Facilitation Team will have the following roles:

- To act as a reference panel for the Mission Resource Consultant providing: support, counsel, ideas and a point of review.
- To build networks of groups engaged in new mission initiatives to share experiences and encourage and support these initiatives.
- To work with the Mission Resource Consultant to discern the suitability of applications for support from the New Mission Initiatives Fund with particular reference to the alignment with the Vision for Mission. To prepare recommendations to the SLT for approval.
- To consider feedback, reports and recommendations from the process of evaluation of new mission initiatives and to determine future action.
- Through networking across the Church (Congregations, Presbyteries and Agencies) to encourage individuals and groups within the Church to explore new ways of responding to the Vision for Mission.
- To approve of funding allocations within delegation where timing does not allow for an approval through the SLT.
- To utilise transparent processes in selecting mission initiatives for subsequent recommendation to the SLT for approval.
- To delegate one of their number to provide feedback to any person(s) or groups who have made submissions to the Mission Initiatives Fund.
- To engage in a regular process of self evaluation (as to process, outcome and composition of the team) of the Team and report on this evaluation on an annual basis to the SLT.
- To meet with the SLT and other Council's of the Church (as appropriate) to provide input and feedback about new mission initiatives

The Team will be composed of the following members:

Ex-officio	Moderator, General Secretary, and Vision for Mission Advocate (who shall not be a voting member).
Members	Six persons appointed by the SLT with recognised gifts in creative ministry and leadership. One person should have recognised business and financial planning skills. At least one member shall be living outside of the South-east corner of Queensland.
Period of appointment	Initially the term will be for either one or two years with half the group being considered for re-appointment after the first year. The SLT will consider recommendations from the Team as to new membership.

Flexibility in Structure

Two of the key themes identified in the 'Vision for Mission' are:

- The church of the future will be different to the church of today.....
- Flexibility in our structures, planning processes, decision-making and mission initiatives

One of the guiding values underpinning the 'Vision for Mission' states:

- “We are committed to God’s transformation of the Church and understand that the viable future will be different to the Church as we know it. Living this adventurous life of faith will mean fragility, tension and risk, but will also be characterised by openness and flexibility. We are committed to journey in partnership together, valuing our theological and spiritual diversity and celebrating our oneness in Christ.”

Unfortunately the experience of some creative initiators and leaders of new mission ventures within our church has been that the structure and institutional rigidity of parts of the Uniting Church has stifled, rather than encouraged, new mission initiatives.

The 'Vision for Mission' identifies a number of significant priorities. It includes commitments to “review our structures and decision-making processes in order to make them less complicated and more flexible, and address our management systems with a view to empowering both individuals and groups to pursue the realisation of the Vision in a framework of transparency and accountability”.

For its part in implementing the 'Vision for Mission', the SLT is committed to ensuring that the Mission Initiatives Facilitation Team and those involved in implementing new mission ventures across the Synod receive support and encouragement from the structures and institutions within the Church.

The SLT is also committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in their stewardship of the financial and other resources of the Uniting Church.

Planning, Evaluation and Accountability

The ‘Vision for Mission’ calls all councils, groups and members of the Uniting Church to “regularly and vigorously evaluate their work, their policies, their decisions and actions in the light of this Vision and the values that inform and guide it and in reporting to the church will give particular attention to the manner in which this is being accomplished.”

Mission Partnership Agreement

It is proposed that all new mission initiatives supported by the Mission Initiatives Fund will enter into a Mission Partnership Agreement (the Agreement) that builds in suitable planning and evaluation processes from the earliest phase. For some initiatives, funding might be sought to assist in meeting training expenses for a group engaged in a mission initiative. In cases such as this, the Agreement may be limited. For other mission initiatives the Agreement will be more extensive.

The Synod Leadership Team will review different forms of relevant Agreements.



Evaluation

There is a wide range of research about different processes or techniques of planning and evaluation. The important thing is that the style, process and extent of planning and evaluation are appropriate for the mission initiative.

The Funding Partnership Agreement will be worked through by the Mission Resource Consultant in collaboration with the group that is seeking support. Each Agreement will be tailored to the individual circumstances. However, the following areas would normally be considered:

1. Description of the mission initiative.
2. Congruency of the mission initiative with the Vision (particular emphasis to Section 4).
3. The roles of the various partners, including the responsibilities of the key personnel.
4. An action plan – how is the initiative going to be implemented.
5. What consultation has been undertaken both within and outside the Church?
6. Description of the anticipated evaluation process including: outputs; outcomes; changes (most significant change evaluation process) expected from the initiative. Depending on the nature of the mission initiative and the most appropriate form of evaluation there would likely be a specification of:
 - Performance Indicators and timeframes
 - Key milestones and or review dates
 - Evaluation processes and timelines to be utilised including outlining the responsibilities of the various partners in data collection.
7. Anticipated length of time that support is required from the Mission Initiatives Fund. How the initiative will become financially viable or potential alternative funding sources found. If necessary what would be the strategy to withdraw in the event that alternative funding cannot be found.
8. Identification of risks (if any) and how they will be managed.
9. A statement of commitment to share the story (hopes, successes, disappointments and learning) with the Church.

It is intended that the Mission Resource Consultant will develop a Kit to assist people and groups within the Church in the development of new initiatives and in seeking access to resources or funding support from the New Mission Initiatives Fund.

Priorities of Funding Support

The 'Vision for Mission' anticipates some of the criteria that will be used in determining a priority for financial support from the New Mission Initiatives Fund. These are:

Developing initiatives in ministry and mission with a focus on cultural or common-purpose groups

Using relational approaches to evangelism that equip people to actively share their faith in Christ in appropriate and intentional ways

Providing opportunities specifically designed to help people grow in their faith and become active disciples of Christ

Making significant connections, and intentionally building relationships, with individuals and groups in the wider community in a variety of settings

Establishing new congregations or faith communities and supporting them in whatever ways are necessary to ensure their continuing growth and effectiveness

Encouraging and supporting new and innovative approaches to ministry and mission, particularly where these are undertaken collaboratively, ecumenically, or by groups and teams of people

Maximising the use of owned properties, including shared use by congregations/faith communities, other agencies of the church, community groups and other Christian denominations

Exploring the potential advantages of renting property

Considering creative alternatives to the employment of fulltime persons

Continuing to develop and support initiatives in community service that pursue justice for, and enhance the quality of life of, the aged, the poor, the homeless, the refugee, those with a disability, and other disadvantaged people in our society

Offering continuing training, formation and support for those evidencing the personal qualities, skills, maturity and spiritual gifts for leadership that are essential for the realisation of the Vision

Attending to generational differences and allowing for youth and early adults to embrace, and participate in the realisation of, the Vision in ways appropriate to their experience, giftedness, and preferences for the manner in which things are done".

More guidance relating to priorities for funding will be provided in the Information Kit to be developed.

Conclusion

The 'Vision for Mission' together with this proposed infrastructure strategy to energise and resource the Vision, provide a further way of responding to God's call to engage in God's mission in our changing world. This initiative does not displace the strategy of the Synod articulated in "A Future with Heart and Soul" or the important ongoing work of the Church. It is intended to add to it. It is offered as a new, hopeful initiative to support and encourage new forms of ministry and mission.



