



Assessing the Health and Vitality of congregations and faith communities in the Presbytery of WA

This document seeks to establish some objective criteria which can be used by a congregation or faith community to assess where they might sit on the spectrum of Thriving, Surviving, Vulnerable or At Risk congregations or faith communities and to assist the Presbytery to provide appropriately targeted support and resources to assist wherever possible.

In developing these categories, we acknowledge with thanks the assistance of Rev Cannon Dave Males (Church of England UK) for allowing the Presbytery to take guidance and inspiration from the document entitled: 'Parish Health and Vitality Toolkit' © and acknowledge copyright and ownership of the original document resides with Rev Cannon Dave Males. His toolkit suggests that parishes can be placed in the following four categories:

- **Thriving** (missionally strong and financially sustainable)
- **Surviving** (financially healthy but missionally static or weak)
- **Vulnerable** (missionally strong but financially weak)
- **At Risk** (declining missionally and financially)

While retaining these four categories, the Presbytery of WA has modified the criteria used to determine which category congregations and faith communities belong in by including signs of Congregational Vitality, alongside those of Missional Engagement and Financial Viability.

So the definition the Presbytery of WA is using for these four categories is as follows:

- **Thriving** Strong on Congregational Vitality, Missional Engagement and Financial Viability
- **Surviving** Strong on Financial Viability but is weak on Congregational Vitality and/or Missional Engagement
- **Vulnerable** Strong on Congregational Vitality and Missional Engagement but is weak on Financial Viability
- **At Risk** Weak in Congregational Vitality, Missional Engagement and Financial Viability

In developing the criteria for the attached toolkit, the Presbytery has drawn on the decision of the March 2024 Presbytery meeting which outlined the requirements of congregations as set out in the Basis of Union and the Regulations.

Congregations and faith communities are encouraged to use these criteria as a self-assessment tool. No matter which category you place yourself in, the Presbytery is able to provide targeted help to assist you, so we encourage congregations and faith communities to forward their self-assessment to the Pastoral Relations Committee at pmpastoral@wa.uca.org.au along with a copy of your Congregational Annual Report to your AGM. This tool can also be used by Presbytery committees to assist their conversations with congregations.

We hope that this will allow some guidance for objective assessment and honest conversations within congregations and between congregations and the Presbytery to discern the best way forward and how Presbytery can best assist congregations and faith communities.

Tool for Assessing the Health and Vitality of congregations and faith communities in the Presbytery of WA

1. Congregational Vitality

- Worship is held at least once a week.
 - Yes / No (If less than weekly, what is the frequency?)
 - **Answer:**

- Holy Communion is celebrated at least once a month.
 - Yes / No (If less than monthly, what is the frequency?)
 - **Answer:**

- Average attendance at worship is over 30 people.
 - Yes / No (What is your average attendance at worship?)
 - **Answer:**

- Over the last 2 years, has worship attendance been growing?
 - Yes / No (If no, has it been stable or declining?)
 - **Answer:**

- At least 10 children or young people under 20 regularly participate in church life.
 - Yes / No (If yes, how many children or young people are involved?)
 - **Answer:**

- Regular children's and youth ministry activities are held.
 - Yes / No (If yes, please specify activities.)
 - **Answer:**

- Regular Bible Studies or other activities (Alpha, home groups, study series) to help members grow in faith and discipleship are held.
 - Yes / No (Please name what faith formation groups you have.)
 - **Answer:**

- In the last 2 years, how many:
 - Baptisms have been conducted?

- **Answer:**

- Confirmations have been conducted?

- **Answer:**

- New members received on transfer from another church?

- **Answer:**

- Members have died or left the congregation?

- **Answer:**

- Do you have a team of competent lay members who are providing leadership?
 - Yes, we have a strong leadership team.
 - Yes, we have a lay leadership team, but it is struggling.
 - No, one or two people are providing most of the leadership.

- Church Council meets regularly and carries out its responsibilities under the Regulations.
 - Yes / No

- Congregation has appointed a member of Presbytery and actively engages in wider church activities.
 - Yes / No

- Congregation seeks opportunities to work collaboratively with other UCA congregations and faith communities.
 - Yes / No (Please list the congregations and faith communities you are collaborating with.)
 - **Answer:**

2. Missional Engagement

- Congregation has an up-to-date and approved Mission Plan
 - Yes / No (If Yes, what date was your Mission Plan last updated?)
 - **Answer:**

- Congregation is providing opportunities for sharing the gospel with others and leading them to faith and Christian discipleship.
 - Yes / No (Please specify what activities you are providing.)
 - **Answer:**

- Fresh Expressions of church or new church plants have been established.
 - Yes / No (Please specify what Fresh Expressions or church plants you are sponsoring.)

- **Answer:**

- Congregation is actively engaged in providing services to those in need in the local community.

- Yes / No (Please specify services provided.)

- **Answer:**

- Congregation supports national and international mission programmes (Frontier Services, Christmas Bowl, Uniting World, TEAR Fund, National Disaster Relief, etc.)

- Yes / No (Please specify mission programmes supported.)

- **Answer:**

- Congregation is working in collaboration with other congregations or organisations on mission activities.

- Yes / No (Please specify what other congregations or organisations you are collaborating with on mission activities.)

- **Answer:**

3. Financial Viability

- Income from offerings is growing.

- Yes / No (If No, are offerings stable or declining?)

- Answer:**

- Offerings are sufficient to cover ongoing costs without drawing from reserves.

- Yes / No (If No, what amount is being withdrawn from reserves annually?)

- Answer:**

- Congregation has a minister in placement.

- Yes / No (Please specify if full or part-time.)

- Answer:**

- Congregation employs other staff (administration, mission outreach, children or youth ministry, etc.)

- Yes / No (Please specify how many and hours of work per week.)

- Answer:**

- Property is being well maintained (all maintenance requirements of the Property Inspections of 2019 and 2024 have been completed).

- Yes / No (If no, specify which maintenance has not yet been completed.)

- **Answer:**

- Property is appropriately insured according to a property valuation done within the last year.

- Yes / No

- Contributions to Mission and Service giving are being maintained or increased.

- Yes / No

- Congregation is able to repay any debts it has?

- Yes / No (Please specify the amount of debt.)

- **Answer:**

- Congregation is generating income from its property or other activities.

- Yes / No (If generating income from property, how much and is this from rental of a manse or church or commercial property?)

- **Answer:**

- Congregation has adequate reserves to cover the costs of any emergency that may arise (such as a major item of maintenance).

- Yes / No (Please indicate the amount held in reserves.)

- **Answer:**