



Uniting Church in Australia
Presbytery of Western Australia



Mission Planning Handy Guide

Updated October 2025 – PDF/Word version

For an easy to use web version of this handy guide and more resources, head to unitingchurchwa.org.au and find the “Mission Planning” page (under Congregation Hub > Congregation Resources)

G'day! This tool helps congregations in the Uniting Church WA create or renew a Mission Plan.

Mission planning is an essential process for every congregation. It is about prayerfully discovering and re-discovering the way your congregation is called to join in God's mission in the world.

Each congregation starts from a different point—some are beginning fresh, others are renewing or revising their plans, and some have already developed vision and strategy through a different process.

If your congregation or church council has not previously engaged in mission planning in some form, or thought much about the idea of *joining in God's mission*, we encourage you to check out the videos on UCWA website and have a conversation with our Presbytery Minister Mission (pmmission@wa.uca.org.au). Additional information and resources will be added to this site in the near future.

As you proceed, remember that mission planning is not a “tick box” exercise. A polished document at the end of the process is not the point. Aligning ourselves with God's plan and purpose for our congregation is what this is all about. We hope this resource helps you with that journey!

“We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps” (Proverbs 16:9)

God Bless,

Thrive Mission Committee

Let's get started!

Overview of the Mission Planning Cycle

Mission planning has three phases. Each includes both reflection and practical steps. You will **Discern** together, **Dream and Decide**, and finally, **Do & Review**.

Here is a snapshot of the overall process:

Discern

- **Prepare:** Pray together, listen to Scripture, and commit to the process. Clarify your timeline. Identify who will resource you.
- **Gather:** Gather information about your congregation and your community. ‘What has shaped us?’ ‘What are the strengths & needs around us?’
- **Listen:** Pay attention to God, to one another, and to your neighbours. Use prayer days, surveys, round tables discussions or interviews.

➡ *Output: A shared picture of who you are, where you are, and what you’re hearing.*

Dream & Decide

- **Visioning:** Dream big. Imagine what your church looks like at its best and what God might be saying. Run “dreaming sessions” and break out of routine thinking.
- **Measuring:** Be realistic. Consider people’s availability, finances, property, and partnerships. What opportunities excite you? What barriers may hold you back?
- **Focusing:** Bring dreams and realities together. Choose a few clear goals and first steps. Write an action plan that includes responsibilities, resources, and a timeline.

➡ *Output: A clear and achievable mission plan, rooted in prayer and vision.*

Do & Review

- **Implement:** Start! Take action, try new things, and learn as you go. Celebrate successes and be honest about challenges.
- **Review:** Reflect on what you’ve done. Ask: *What worked well? What needs changing? Where do we sense God leading next?*

➡ *Output: A renewed cycle of action, learning and discernment.*

Your mission plan will be formed by a summary of each one of the above steps. There is a checklist at the end of this document.

Initial considerations

Before you begin, consider the following...

1. Where are we now?

This will depend on your previous engagement with mission planning.

- **If you've never done mission planning** → Start at '*Discern*', the beginning of the planning cycle outlined below.
- **If you're renewing an old plan** → Begin with the '*Review*' step (page 11) and then consider which steps you should return to. This will most likely be the '*Dream and Decide*' movement but revisiting '*Discern*' can also be valuable.
- **If you already have a vision/strategy or have engaged in a different visioning/planning process** → Look at the outline on the previous page, and consider which steps you can fast track as a result of work you've already done.

2. Choose Your Approach

WHO will be involved this process and at what level. While your whole congregation will have input at various points, in many contexts a smaller group must take responsibility for driving the planning process (church council, or even a subcommittee). And who will *compile* this plan by documenting a summary of each step.

WHEN will you complete your plan. Set clear expectations and timeline for the leaders. The planning you engage in can be done at a few levels: **Streamlined** (eg. a few meetings, one simple survey, and a short written plan) or **Deep dive** (eg. multiple workshops, detailed data, SWOT analysis, budgets, and community engagement). Both approaches are valid, and you should choose what is appropriate given your size and capacity.

3. Pray!

Whether you are reviewing, improving or starting from scratch with your mission plan, commit yourselves to pray and seek the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit in this process. Who are some people you could ask to engage in intentional, consistent prayer during this process?

Ready to begin?

*The pages below to help you in each of the steps you have chosen to engage with. May God lead you in this journey, and... **enjoy!***

If you haven't already, agree on the approach you are taking in this process, including the points at which you will pause and pray both together and individually, for example a prayer retreat, a week of prayer with your congregation, a prayer roster.

- Spend time listening to/watching content on mission and mission planning together
- Read and reflect on scriptures such as Matthew 28:16-20
- Think about who you need to resource you on this journey, for instance, leaders from within the congregation, Thrive Mission Committee, Presbytery Minister (Mission) or independent consultants.
- Make a realistic timeline of what you need to achieve and when you hope to achieve it
- Is there previous work you've done that you need to review before proceeding?

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Page 4 of 14

2. Gather

What information can you gather about your congregation's identity, purpose and context (ie. the local community it is situated in)?

Here are some suggestions:

- National Church Life Survey report (Thrive can assist you with doing an NCLS survey)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics – details of the community including how many UCA people are included in the census for your local area, local demographics and living arrangements. <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/>
- Local Government – make an appointment with your community development officer to find out about their priorities. What can you learn about your community, its strengths, its nature, its needs.
- Local history – what has your community been known for in the past?
- Local church history – Where has your church come from as a community of faith? This is not for nostalgia but to get a sense of what has shaped the congregation over the years.
- What has your church *inherited* in terms of identity, purpose, and context? Is this still relevant? How deeply does it find expression? Does it need to be honoured or celebrated? Does it need to be maintained or let go? How does this inform decisions about legacy?
- Church attendance data, details of church property and information of key people in the congregation, including those being paid as well as volunteers.
- Numbers of people served by the church, which includes attendance at various programmes, not just Sunday morning attendance.
- Financial information in an easy-to-understand format
- What other churches are there in your vicinity and what are they doing?

Space for notes & reflections:

Remember to compile what you gather (or a summary of it) for your final mission plan using the template provided or in a separate document.

3. Listen

Listen for God's voice, the voices of your neighbours and your neighbourhood, and to each other.

Here are some ways you could do that:

- Set aside special times when you can pray about the future of the church.
- Consider a day when people can drop into the church during the day to pray.
- Set up prayer stations around the church with information about the ideas that have been gleaned over the years, and information about the local community and its needs.
- Do some surveys, using Survey Monkey (or similar) as an online survey and also a paper version for those who prefer.
- Prepare a survey that you can use in your neighbourhood, then hold a barbecue, fete, or market day. Make it an enjoyable day but make good use of it to listen to what people think about the church.

Space for notes & reflections:

Compile a summary of what you've heard for your final mission plan (on the template provided or in a separate document).

A suggestion: You're now at the end of the "discern" phase, and should have a clearer picture of your identity, purpose and context. But before you jump into "Dream and Decide" it can be helpful to find some common language to move forward with. From what you've discovered, what are a handful of core **values** we hold as a congregation? How would we express **why** we exist in one concise statement. If you don't already have these (a mission statement and core values) it can be helpful to clarify these before proceeding.

5. Measuring

Measure your capacity as honestly and pastorally as possible; considering the people and resources you have.

Consider the following:

- How ready and available people are to be involved in mission, partnership opportunities and the physical resources of finance and property.
- Spend time working at becoming clearer about the costs and opportunities. Develop a budget that is realistic as well as visionary.
- Consider the barriers in the way and how they may be overcome. Thrive may be able to connect you with congregations who have wisdom from previous attempts at similar plans.
- Some congregations find it useful to do a SWOT analysis, looking at your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
- Has your congregation considered a Seed, Feasibility or Future Mission Fund grant to help resource your mission, or the feasibility of mission ideas:
https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/presbytery-synod/synod/future_mission_fund/ Also, there may be community grants, for example from your local government or LotteryWest you can apply for.

Space for notes & reflections:

Remember to compile a short summary of this step for your final mission plan (on the template provided or in a separate document)

Space for notes & reflections:

[illegible]

6. Focusing (continued)

Action plan templates

Template option 1:

OBJECTIVES (3-5) <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	STRATEGIES <i>What do we want to do?</i>	TACTICS <i>How will we do it?</i>		
		What	By Who	By When
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Template option 2:

Milestone / Outcome / Goal	What to figure out	The next steps	Who is responsible	How to measure success	Notes
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

7. Implementing

It's time to get started!

While planning is extremely important, there is danger in spending years talking and ultimately never starting anything. So get started!

Don't be afraid of making mistakes. Sometimes failure is the best tool for re-focusing and finding a better way forward. It's an opportunity to learn and start again.

Here are some ideas to help you stick at it:

- Get your team together regularly to talk, eat together, plan and pray. If you generally meet together for other business anyway (eg. a church council) try and set aside time in your regular meetings, or every few meetings, to ensure you're progressing
- Create short videos to share with your congregation or take lots of photos and share them, asking people to pray with you and for you, and to support the plan wherever they can.
- Share these on your Facebook page or website and with the Presbytery to encourage others.
- Share the good things that are happening in your Sunday services!
- Be honest about the challenges and what opportunities the challenges may open. Use these opportunities to refine your project and planning.

If resources are hindering you from implementing your plan, speak to Thrive or the Presbytery Minister Mission about how we or the Mission Resourcing Committee can assist you.

Space for notes & reflections:

[illegible]

What should our final plan include?

Here's a checklist to make sure you've compiled a full mission plan:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Prepare | Summarise how you prepared, prayed and began the journey of mission planning (you may include from your original plan if you are only "revising" this time) |
| ☐ Gather | Document what you gathered about your <i>identity, context and purpose</i> . <i>Eg.</i> What you do, who makes up your congregation, the resources you have, history, values. Demographics and data about your local neighbourhood and community, and how this helps you understand the nature of the community and how it affects the local church. |
| ☐ Listen | Share what you did during the mission planning process to hear the views of your congregation and the wider community about your future direction. <i>Eg.</i> details of survey results, insights from scripture, themes that emerged in prayer times and discussions. |
| ☐ Visioning | Summarise what goals emerged for future mission and how these were shared. Tell us about your dreams for the long term as well as shorter-term goals that may be stepping stones towards the larger dream. |
| ☐ Measuring | Summarise how you measured what you have and what you can do including SWOTs, budgets and other records from this step. |
| ☐ Focusing | Your mission plan needs to be something that anyone can look at it in the future and see clearly what is anticipated, how those goals will be achieved and who is responsible for implementation. Bring your goals and actions together into format that is easily accessible and can be used to help the congregation, your ministry team or anyone else to get a snapshot of where you are heading. (Use one of the templates if helpful) |
| ☐ Implementing and Reviewing | Remember, this is a living document. Include a review date and keep notes on your implementation to include when you review your mission plan. |

Sample mission plans can be found on the [web version of this handy guide](#)

Mission Plan Template

Download an editable word document of this template at unitingchurchwa.org.au on the “Mission Planning” page (under Congregation Hub > Congregation Resources)

Prepare: A summary of how you prepared, prayed and began the journey of mission planning

Insert here

Gather: Include what you gathered about your identity, context and purpose.

Insert here

Listen: What you did to hear the views of your congregation and the wider community.

Insert here

Visioning: Summarise what goals emerged for future mission and how these were shared.

Insert here

Measuring: Summarise how you measured what you have and what you can do.

Insert here

Focusing: Your final action plan (using one of these templates or another preferred structure)

OBJECTIVES (3-5) <i>What do we want to achieve?</i>	STRATEGIES <i>What do we want to do?</i>	TACTICS <i>How will we do it?</i>		
		What	By Who	By When
1				
2				
3 (etc.)				

Milestone / Outcome / Goal	What to figure out	The next steps	Who is responsible	How to measure success	Notes
1					
2					
3 (etc.)					

Implementing & Reviewing: A review date/schedule and space to keep notes as you do & review

Insert here