A WORKSHEET FOR THE SECOND STAGE IN MISSION PLANNING

(see chapter of BURNING HOPE on Congregational Vitality)

Here is a workbook for a Mission Planning Process, the second stage in the scheme tabulated left: “Study Health and Vitality”.

**THIS IS HOME WORK FOR EVERYONE**

*You could break it up into smaller segments over three periods of time if you wish.*

1.**Read** the quotes and the bible passages supplied, and make notes on the pages about your hopes and your fears.

2. Read the quick survey of the **12 Core Qualities of Vitality** which shows, across Australia, the twelve QUALITIES of a vital (alive) church. Compare the results of the most recent survey of this church, which is now 18 months old. Are there any surprises for you in this?

3. Then turn to the questions on the twelve core qualities. **Take one day at a time** for two weeks to pray over each one of the twelve qualities. “God what is the state of our heart in relation to ..... Thank you for ... What ideas do you have for us? What gifts can I bring into this area? What resources of time and talents and funds could we do with?” Write these down and bring them along to the Phase One Large Meeting as outlined above.

**QUOTES TO WRESTLE WITH**

**Ask** the Holy Spirit to be in the whole prayer and planning process and in every one’s thoughts and communication.

**Decide** to commit to going forward with trust in God, and to implement the plans collectively decided.

**Let go** of all images in your head of the perfect church and welcome the one that God is making. The church is about sharing a LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS (Jn 10.10), not about ministers, churches, Sunday school and budgets.

**Ask God** to read you the quotes below and show you any affirmations or improvements.

**“It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world but the God of mission who has a church in the world”**

 ( Tim Dearborn ***Beyond duty: a passion for Christ, a heart for mission*** )

MARK 2.1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . .” He said to the paralytic, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

**Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find food D.T.Niles**

Romans 12.9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**“Mission happens, therefore, wherever the church is; it is how the church exists. Mission is the church preaching Christ; it is the act of Christians struggling against injustice and oppression; it is the binding of wounds in reconciliation; it is the church learning from other religious ways and being challenged by the world’s cultures. Mission is the local church “focusing not on its own, internal problems, but on other human beings, focusing elsewhere, in a world that calls and challenges it.”**

**Stephen Bevan SJ**

John 15 Jesus: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

**Christian mission is nothing more or less than “participation in God’s existence in the world. Stephen Bevan SJ**

Romans 12:3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

**“The gospel always comes to people in cultural robes. There is no such thing as a ‘pure’ gospel, isolated from culture”-- (David J. Bosch. Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. 1991:297)**

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

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|  | CHURCH VITALITY - HEALTH CHECKOnly a healthy church will grow good fruit, and a church which has no new fruit is not healthy. We can do something about that. Use the 12 Vitality qualities to look at where we are and where we would like to be. |
|  | The 12 Core Qualities look at the internal life of this church as a loving community, not just as an organisation, even less as a denomination. It looks at how we connect and share faith (words and deeds) with those who are part of our individual worlds, as well as those we connect with as a church. That’s because, on Monday, you ARE the church. Our work is a way of worship, our prayers alone as important as our worship services. And leadership issues very much include two-way communication, consultation, inspiration, a shared sense of direction and discovery of our God-given gifts of service. We all have at least one gift! So that’s just a taste of what is to come.  |

National Church Life Survey research has examined and re-examined the experiences of thousands of congregations across Australia. Over two decades it has discovered twelve critical characteristics that tend to be present in congregations that are effective and healthy. These characteristics are strongly connected with each other. They come in four equally important quadrants – Faith and Worship, our Life Together, our connection with the wider community, and our shared sense of vision and purpose. Each of these is a health check like a blood test or a fitness test - tools that help us think, pray and assess. They are not laws.

Each brief description below includes statistics for all the churches across Australia. Note down your thoughts and questions as you go. Call someone and talk it over. Do that a lot. Share your thoughts, be a sounding board to another.

Time to start. Read this Summary of the 12 core qualities, today, then go to the detailed study, and do one core quality per day. You have two weeks to do the lot before we meet together.

**Faith and Worship**

**this church is a loving community, not just an organisation, even less a denomination**

**Core Quality 1: An alive and growing faith**

The majority of attenders (85%) have experienced at least some growth in faith over the past year. The age of attenders makes very little difference to whether attenders feel they are growing in their faith.

**Core Quality 2: Vital and nurturing worship**

The majority of attenders (74%) usually experience a sense of God’s presence as part of attending church. Growth in understanding of God, and a feeling of joy or inspiration are also usually experienced. Those in the youngest age bracket (15%) are the most likely to feel bored at church services. There is a generational gulf that exists between the music and worship style preferences of older and younger church attenders.

**Our Life Together**

**Core Quality 3: Growth in belonging and involvement**

Most attenders (82%) say they have a strong sense of belonging to their congregation or parish. On the other hand, 15% of attenders do not feel they belong.

**Core Quality 4: An active concern for those on the fringe of church life**

Only 28% of all attenders indicated that they always or mostly make new arrivals feel welcome.

**Core Quality 5: Care for young people**

Among 15-18 year olds, only 23% are very satisfied and 39% are satisfied with what is offered for youth by their church, while 17% are dissatisfied. Young adults (19 to 25 years) are even less satisfied than youth,

**Community Connections**

**Core Quality 6: A focus beyond ourselves**

More externally focused aspects of church life, such as wider community care (12%) and reaching the unchurched (12%) are valued by smaller proportions of attenders. Across the denominations, attenders at the Salvation Army (20%) and Uniting Church (16%) are most likely to value the wider community care aspects of their church involvement.

**Core Quality 7: Serving the wider community**

Attenders over 60 years of age are more likely to be involved than younger attenders. Such activities here include community service, social justice or welfare activities. The Uniting Church has the largest number of attenders involved in community-based activities (43%), followed by the Anglican Church (37%) and the Presbyterian Church (32%).

**Core Quality 8: Discussing faith and inviting others to church**

Half of all attenders (52%) feel at ease talking about their faith if the opportunity arises and another 14% intentionally seek opportunities to do so. Some 37% say that they would be prepared to invite someone and had done so in the past year, and a further 36% would be prepared to invite someone but had not done so.

**Core Quality 9: Integrating newcomers**

Of all church attenders, 6% are newcomers, not regularly involved in a congregation elsewhere. The Salvation Army (14%), Pentecostals (13%), followed by the Anglican Church (10%).

**Vision and Purpose**

**Core Quality 10: A clear, owned vision for the future**

Only 27% of attenders say that they are strongly committed to the vision of their church. Many attenders (19%) say that their parish needs to rethink where it is heading or that the future of the congregation or parish is unclear or doubtful.

**Core Quality 11: Openness to new possibilities**

Around 62% of attenders agreed that their parish or congregation is always ready to try something new. Some 28% are neutral or unsure and 10% disagreed.

**Core Quality 12: Empowering and inspiring leadership**

Nearly half of all attenders saw their leader as best described as “inspiring people to action”. Some 71% of attenders say that their senior leader takes attenders’ ideas into account at least to some extent. Also 55% say that their leaders put a priority on attenders discovering their gifts and skills, at least to some extent.

The most recent survey of this church, was ….

So, HOW ARE WE GOING REALLY?

The main aim of this exercise is to find where WE are strongest, not to find where we are imperfect.

The second aim is for you to learn something about your part in our overall health.

Work through each of the characteristics in more detail now, one section one day at a time. Each Quality starts with a section of results of the NCLS surveys (What We Know), followed by a section with several questions that try to make that more concrete for our particular situation. Many people will find that some questions are just not relevant to them. That is fine, just miss it out and move along. At the end, what else can you think to say about that quality that is NOT already mentioned here, or elsewhere in the 12 Core Qualities.

Pray a prayer something like this. Trust God to work in you: “God, what is the state of our heart in relation to ..... Thank you for ... What ideas do you have for us? What gifts can I bring into this area? What resources of time and talents and funds could we do with?”

So, for each numbered question here are the starters.

**1. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten?**

**2. Does it give you ideas? What are they?**

**3. Out of everything in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time? Don’t be shy about having an opinion about this – when we all come together, everyone’s views together will provide the shape to our decision making.**

**Faith and Worship**

**Core Quality 1: An alive and growing faith**

**WHAT WE KNOW**

At the heart of vital and effective churches is an alive, growing faith. A primary purpose of a community of faith is to point people to God, helping them worship God and live out their Christian faith in all aspects of their lives.

We need to be actively part of a Christian community for our faith to develop authentically.

The affirmation of Christian beliefs diminishes considerably with length of time away from regular church participation.

Attenders must feel they belong and are listened to and that the leadership puts a priority on helping them discover their gifts and skills.

Attenders are more likely to talk about their faith and invite others to church if they themselves are growing in their faith. They are also more likely to be involved in serving others, both in formal and informal ways.

Too many attenders feel that what they do on Sunday or what they experience within their Christian community is quite separate from what goes on in the rest of their life.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. How often do the prayer and worship events help you to sense your connection with God?

2. How often do the teaching/preaching/discussion times stimulate you to **live out** your Christian faith in all aspects of your life – emotions, ethics, relationships, work, neighbourhood life, issues?

3. How vital (as distinct from being a shopping list of things for God to fix) is the **prayer for others** both for you personally and in church?

4. Were any **new ways to pray** or spiritual disciplines offered, tried and found useful?

5. Were there any opportunities provided for you to express your **commitment**?

6. To what extent is there a desire across the whole church to **grow and exercise** one’s faith?

7. To what extent were **wider resources** from outside your local church – books, videos, conferences , training- taken up?

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 2: Vital and nurturing worship**

**What we know:**

The percentage of people who come to church for purely social reasons is quite low.

Vital congregations are characterised by the fact that existing attenders are positive about, and satisfied with, their worship experiences.

Churches with contemporary styles of worship and music are significantly more likely to be attracting newcomers without a church background and growing numerically than other churches.

Churches with contemporary styles of music are much more likely to retain young adults from within their life than those who are more traditional or formal in their worship. Nearly half of all infrequent and non-attenders feel that church services are too boring or unfulfilling.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. Have you in the past three years tried any **new styles of worship services** (cafe church, Taize, silence, labyrinth, mediation, all age, open prayer, etc. )that stand alongside that which was already in place?

2. In the past year, have you introduced to your worship service eight or more **new forms of prayer or worship songs** ?

3. How adequately do you respond to the ways of different **generations**? Do the cultural forms you use affirm the presence of different **ethnic** groups?

4. Have you adapted to the felt need of the newcomers or the not-yet church goers that church services may be boring or **unfulfilling**, by focusing on: relevant issues, Engaging approaches or methods, Explaining what is going on and why we do it, Everyday concerns of home and work and health, Eliciting heartfelt responses to God, Appropriate variety of voices and styles of input.

5. Are **stories shared** in worship, through interview or testimony, about people’s everyday lives of faith?

6. Are there **adequate buildings** for all to feel comfortably-enough connected?

 Parking within 200m walk

Light to read by, warm or cool enough

Entry area is relaxed, building is safe

Seating is approachable and supports the back

 Sound and projection is clear

What else can you think to say?

**Our Life Together**

**Core Quality 3: Growth in belonging and involvement**

**What we know:**

Over two thirds of all attenders feel a strong sense of belonging to their congregation or parish; the majority of these feel that their sense of belonging is growing.

There is an extremely strong relationship between attenders’ sense of belonging and the extent to which they believe they are growing in their faith.

Higher levels of belonging are found in churches with a clear sense of purpose and vision, and churches where the leaders put a priority on developing their gifts and skills.

Helpful worship contributes to a sense of belonging, but is not the only factor. Relationships and nurture activities for any life stage also play their part.

A sense of belonging is an important prerequisite for attenders being willing to invite others to church.

Only 40% of Anglican/ Protestant attenders feel they belonged to their congregation straight away, with others taking 6 months, 1 year, 2 years or more .

A person’s level of church attendance is strongly related to the attendance of their close friends and spouse.

What attenders get out of involvement with their churches is important, but so too is the contribution that they make.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. What percentage of your church are in regular **small groups** for friendship, music, bible study, prayer or some form of service?

2. How are the **leaders of these groups** coordinated, supported, trained or resourced for the task?

3. Are new people **invited personally** into these existing groups or into new groups?

4. Do the church **communications** inform everyone equally well of decisions being considered?

5. Have past conflicts been faced and attempted to be **reconciled** or are they buried?

6. Is there a systematic pastoral **visitation** of all ‘attached’ persons by both clergy and lay persons, at home or/and at work?

7. Are people noticed when they are absent, and are people acknowledged for their contribution to the church community?

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 4: An active concern for those on the fringe of church life**

**What we know:**

The ‘fringe’ includes both people who are increasing and decreasing involvement. Some are reducing their involvement, because of age, infirmity or other pressures. Others are drifting out because of disillusionment and disaffection, feeling that participation is no longer useful to them in their daily lives.

While most Australians claim to have attended church or Sunday school prior to the age of 12, only 20% attend church ‘frequently’ (=‘at least once a month’, according to the NCLS survey, but I would not call that frequent) today.

The number of people who attend church infrequently is numerically similar to the number of regular attenders.

A significant percentage of non and infrequent attenders who have attempted to become involved with the church at some stage have failed to make a successful transition.

Only one in three people who sought to become involved in church life and then stopped were followed up by the church that they attended.

Attenders leaving active church involvement are more likely to drift out rather than drop out.

Where attenders welcome new people or visit those who are drifting away, churches generally have higher levels of newcomers or are growing numerically.

Half of all infrequent attenders used to attend church more regularly.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. How well have you avoided becoming fully **preoccupied** with the needs of the regular attenders?

2. How much attention is paid to the needs and concerns of the **infrequent attenders who** are attached to your church’s network of activities?

3. **Do you know** whether they are exploring further involvement, drifting out, limited by particular pressures or infirmities, or simply happy to stay on the fringe?

4. In the last year, how many people have come along **once or twice** then not continued? Were they followed up? Do you know why or whether they have gone elsewhere?

5. Have infrequent attenders recently made a **successful transition**into a greater involvement in the life of the church community?

6. Is **caring for fringe** undertaken only by the leaders or by all attenders or by no one that you can see?

7. Do you relate intentionally and sensitively to **non-attending spouses or partners** of regular attenders?

8. What avenues exist for **relatives**, children/grandchildren/grandparents/parents of attenders to be invited to become further involved?

9. How do you respond to **early warning** signs of possible departure?

10. What avenues exist to extend an invitation to **something more** and how well are they utilised?

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 5: Care for young people**

**What we know:**

Positive care for children, youth and young adults is vital to retaining young adults.

Almost all of attenders' children aged under 10 years attend church. By the time they pass through secondary school and into young adulthood, around 40% may have ceased to attend.

Many parents who move to a new area find it difficult fitting into a new church.

More children currently have contact with church teachings through contact at school than through Sunday schools or church groups.

Attenders aged 15-29 years are most likely to move on if they are dissatisfied. They also have the lowest levels of denominational loyalty of any age group. They are attracted to churches with large numbers of other young adults.

Young adults are not motivated to attend church if they find the services boring or unfulfilling. Many stop attending church when they move house.

Young people can have an important role in mission. Their number of contacts, combined with their enthusiasm and openness, can make them important links with the wider community.

Churches where attenders are growing in their faith are more likely to retain young adults.

Across a wide range of aspects of church life, post-war generations think and act differently from pre-war generations.

In an era when many attenders are willing to shop around for churches that meet their needs or those of their families, our research suggests that attenders' satisfaction with children's and youth programs is often significant in their decisions about which, if any, church to attend.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

**GENERAL**

1. How well are the **parents** of children and youth **trained** in the nurture of their children’s faith?

2. Is your church welcoming and **adapting** to the needs and the giftings of small children, younger teenage and young adults?

3. Have you explored with **other churches how** to offer appropriate youth ministries?

**Ministry Among Children**

1. Are the young children of attenders (those under 10 years of age) having a **positive church experience**? Are they addressed by name by the grownups? Do you express your love to them?

2. Do you provide children with positive environments, actions and appropriate materials in which they can build **the basics of Christian faith** for their current life?

3. Do you **provide a** crèche, Sunday school, children's liturgies, playgroups, afterschool clubs, and other children's activities, a Christian child-care programme, or Christian school?

4. Are the parents with young children receiving sensitive **support**?

**YOUTH**

1. Do the teenagers have **a space** and a safe environment in which to explore, experiment and discover their own faith and values?

2. Is there an expressed **respect and affirmation** for their emerging adulthood?

3. Are they addressed by name?

4. Do youth leaders allow for high energy healthy humour, social fun, **as well as** thinking talking and hanging out in ‘quietness’?

**Young Adults**

1. In how many ways do **older persons connect** with or nurture young adults in their faith journey – e.g. mentor, pastoral carer, Christian teaching?

2. Do you encourage young adults to **try new things**, and to explore the wider world, to ask difficult questions of the church, even if you are not comfortable with it?

3. How well are the well-churched young people **welcomed into adult** church life?

What else can you think to say?

**Community Connections**

**Core Quality 6: A focus beyond ourselves**

**What We Know:**

For four out of ten church attenders, most or all of their friends attend a church.  On the other hand, more than half of infrequent and non-attending Australians have no close friends who are regular church attenders.

We should not be afraid to encourage wider community involvement. Attenders who are highly involved in community groups, for instance, are also more likely to be highly involved in church life  and growing in their faith.

A strongly developed focus beyond themselves to the communities they seek to serve is characteristic of vital churches.  Churches with such a focus are also more likely to:
· Have a vision for the future to which attenders are committed.
· Be more open to new initiatives or implementing new directions.

Undergirding churches that are focused beyond themselves are:
· Leaders that attenders feel are outwardly focused, listen to them, encourage them to use their gifts and inspire them to action.
· An alive and growing faith among attenders and a positive worship life that they find helpful.

The mission of the Church is the mission of members in their homes and families, workplaces, community activities, institutions of society and leisure-time pursuits.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. Have you read / visited in order to understand the unique characteristics of your **location**, including the nature, interests and hopes of the people that make it up?

2. In what ways is your church life more suited to **certain types** of people or groups than others?

3. Does your church have people with involvement in cross cultural or overseas partners (**missions )** or Indigenous reconciliation?

4. Do the people in your church have a ‘mission mindset’ for your **own area**?

5. With all the churches in your area, have you together considered how you can **complement** each other in God's Kingdom?

6. In the course of their everyday lives, church attenders are **in touch with how many** others in the wider community in such a way that conversations are more than passing (say 10 minutes)?

7. Are you **involved** in community groups, sporting activities or networks?

8. In your church plan, are money and people allocated to **conjoint Christian** activities which open doors in the wider community .e.g school chaplains?

9. Do your key leaders have as part of their role to attend **civic** functions e.g. Anzac, shire council, citizenship, etc.

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 7: Serving the wider community**

**What We Know:**

Apart from denominational caring agencies many individual congregations and parishes make a significant contribution to the communities of which they are a part.

In their everyday lives, attenders also make a significant contribution: More than a quarter are involved in community care, welfare or social action groups not connected to their congregations.  Church attenders are much more likely to be involved in care, welfare or support groups than non-attenders.

Levels of growth in faith are higher among attenders involved in mission activities and wider community groups.

Our past research among Anglican and Protestant attenders suggests that, on the ground, most do not hold a clear distinction between spreading the Gospel and social concern, seeing words and actions as needing to be held together.  Holding together words and actions also tended to be a characteristic of congregations that were vital in other areas .

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. Is it broadly understood in your church whether you are **local** in your focus or do you have a concern for a **region (**including**,** a particularethnic group, age group or particular interest groups over a larger area)?

2. Do you know what your denominational **agencies** or parishes do, and what other denominational agencies and parishes do, for the wider community in your area?

3. Is your **property** used by community groups or an agency? Is your relationship on a positive footing? Does your church connect with these people?

4. How many attenders are involved in serving in the **wider** community and/or taking a stand on social issues – it can be professional (choose to work for low wages)or voluntary (even lower!)?

5. The people who actively feel called to make a difference in their **everyday** lives at work, home and in the wider community – how are they **supported** to make a Christian influence?

6. Do you share in church these **stories** of involvement?

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 8: Discussing faith and inviting others to church**

**What we know:**

At the heart of faith-sharing churches is:
- An alive and growing faith among attenders.
- Worship life that attenders find positive and helpful.

Attenders comfortable in discussing their faith are more likely to feel that they are growing in their faith.

Appropriate training in mission or ministry is helpful in building confidence to discuss faith with others.  Over 75% of Anglican or Protestant attenders who look for opportunities to share their faith have had training of some sort.

Attenders involved in nurture groups or small group activities are more likely to be comfortable discussing their faith with others.

Churches whose attenders regularly invite others are also likely to have:
- A strong and growing sense of belonging among attenders.
- A clear vision for the future, owned by attenders and focused beyond themselves to the communities for whom they are concerned.
- Leaders who empower attenders and that inspire them to action.

Most newcomers without a church background first came as a result of a personal invitation from a friend, relative or church member .

Willingness to accept an invitation decreases markedly for those without previous church involvement.

The issue is not a calendar of events but how you can grow a culture of inviting people to church.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. What training and support in the past three years has helped the different needs of people to be able to **talk about their faith** with others?

2. List the personal **invitational** strategies (e.g. hospitality, verbal invitation to low key events) you have adopted in the past 3 years.

3. List also the **impersonal** approaches (e.g. are advertising, media publicity or high visibility).

4. How do you help those who say they **don't know any** people outside of church life?

5. What **styles** of worship or other activities are appropriate for those you could invite?

6. How do you help people to **celebrate** their faith and express their enthusiasm with others, when their faith is alive and growing?

7. How can you bring to higher levels their **participation** in nurture and group activities?

8. Are your church-based programmes in the community **free to explain** appropriately the motivation for their compassion?

9. Would we invite **former attenders** who no longer attend to “give it another try”?

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 9: Integrating newcomers**

**What we know:**

Many factors work together to create a church that is attractive to newcomers and makes them feel welcome. High-newcomer churches tend to have:
- A clear vision for the future to which attenders are committed.
- An intentional outward focus.
- Attenders who are keen to invite others to participate with them in church.
- Worship that attenders find positive and helpful. In Anglican and Protestant churches at least, high newcomer churches tend to offer contemporary worship.
- An openness to new directions.
- Attenders with a growing faith and a strong sense of belonging to their church.

Around 7% of church-goers in an average week are newcomers without a church background who have joined in the last 5 years.

Personal contact and invitation plays a significant role in attracting newcomers to church, making them feel welcome and helping them settle in.  A worship service is the first impression of church life for most newcomers.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

WELCOME

1.To what extent is your church environment or worship service helping newcomers to feel quickly **comfortable** and establish rapport ?

2. Do you “do the welcome” as a formality or do you take a **keen interest** in the person, try to remember their name, regardless of their appearance or smell or background?

3. Have you considered how to impact positively, and to invite attenders at your **weddings and funerals and Christmas/Easter** services, to attend at another occasion or regularly?

4. How much is this responsibility shared by **all attenders**, not just allocated to a few?

FOLLOW-UP

5. How can **“first timers”** be followed up after their first Sunday?

6. When newcomers **cease**, how can you follow them up?

ENCOURAGEMENT

7. What sort of **orientation** process to this church could be offered in groups or given one to one?

8. Are newcomers encouraged gently over 12 months to get **involved** in ways they find comfortable?

GROUPING

9. Are there sufficient **new groups** forming for newcomers to feel at home?

What else can you think to say?

**Vision and Purpose**

**Core Quality 10: A clear, owned vision for the future**

**What We Know:**

Only 28% of all attenders feel their church has a vision for the future to which they are fully committed. A further 30% are only partly or not committed to it, while 42% are not aware of a clear vision.

A clear, owned vision for the future is a key characteristic of churches which are effective in mission.  High vision churches are more likely to:
- Be open to new initiatives.
- Have an intentional focus beyond themselves.
- Have attenders willing to discuss their faith or invite others to church.
- Have an effective program for nurturing children, youth and young adults.
- Be drawing in newcomers without a church background and retaining the children of attenders as they grow through adolescence towards adulthood.

High vision churches tend to be built on the strong foundations of:
- An alive and growing faith among attenders.
- A corporate worship life that attenders find positive and helpful.
- A strong and growing sense of belonging among attenders.
- Leadership that empowers and inspires.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

WHERE WE ARE (30)

1. How clearly can you state what has recently been your church’s purpose, the vision that has brought you **to this point**, even if it was unwritten? What do you think were the signs of its vitality?

2. To what extent is your vision **complementary** to that of other churches/groups in your region?

What else can you think to say?

VISION FORGING

3. Is your current vision-setting process surrounded by **prayer**?

4. What percentage of attenders as well as key leaders are **involved** in the process?

5. What **capacity** have your leaders shown to listen to attenders , to analyse information, discern the indicators, and help everybody name new directions?

6. How many of the following **ways** have you used in discovering a vision for the future - .

a. **examining** the local community and ways to connect with it

b. from the vision and enthusiasm of a few people who have a **passion** to develop a new ministry with a particular people or group

c. looking at contemporary realities in the light of the Gospel and your own heritage, maybe reading, discussions or sermons on this.

What else can you think to say?

OWNERSHIP

7. What percentage of your regular attenders can **state the vision** of your church?

8. Is the church **owning** and becoming inspired and committed to its vision and directions? Does it own it ‘too much’ and it is controlled by a few?

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 11: Openness to new possibilities**

**What we know:**

Because of the age profile of church attenders (38% are over 60 years of age) the next 20 years will see a significant loss of attenders in some denominations. This is especially true of Uniting.
· Only a minority of attenders want their congregations or parishes to keep going as they are.
· Between a quarter and a fifth of attenders with an opinion feel that their church needs to rethink where it is heading or that the future is unclear.
· 42% of infrequent and non-attenders consider that church worship services are boring and unfulfilling.
· Anglican and Protestant Churches that have started services intentionally designed for non-churchgoers  have higher levels of newcomers.
· Attenders generally feel their congregation or parish is willing to try something new. Around 62% believe this to be the case, including 12% who strongly agree this is true.
· Churches which attenders feel are open to new initiatives are also more likely to have high levels of belonging, a clear owned vision for the future and a focus beyond themselves. Attenders are also more likely to feel they are growing in their faith and to be positive about worship.

Jesus used the image that new wine should not be poured into old wineskins (Mk 2:22). He also talked about ‘pruning’ the vine to make it even more fruitful. (Jn 15.2) These are harder leadership tasks that are resisted in small churches especially. In Anglican and Protestant churches our research suggests 'new wineskins' may often be more effective than old ones.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

OPEN-NESS

1. To what extent are you open to being a **multi-channeled** Christian community where people are supported to express their faith in very different ways?

2. Does your denomination develop **regional plans** so that new initiatives complement what is already being done?

3. Have you in the past three years reviewed **issues to do with timing** of services or other activities, the use of property, the time allocated by leaders to certain actions, and so on?

4. In the past three years, have you tried **something new**? Did you learn from the experience?

What else can you think to say?

START

5. How readily do you **set people free** of their current established responsibilities in order to be able to start to do things in different ways, or to discover new ways of being a gathered Christian community?

6. Are you supporting and **celebrating** the way that they bring wisdom and creativity to the process? Are attenders appreciated, thanked, valued and empowered?

7. Do you actively **manage the risks** of change and seek to involve those who feel threatened by it? Do you affirm the validity of what already exists?

What else can you think to say?

ONGOING

8. What is **the measure of consensus** on your leadership team on the Christian beliefs and values to which you must remain true?

9. How well and for how long do you support involved persons in the tiredness, course-corrections and **discouragements** that often accompany a new project?

What else can you think to say?

**Core Quality 12: Empowering and inspiring leadership**

**What We Know:**

\* Around two thirds of Anglican and Protestant leaders feel that they were inadequately prepared for working in ministry across cultures and in rural communities.

\* About two thirds of leaders feel that their training has been poor in areas of administration and finances

\* Nearly half of all leaders feel they were poorly trained to equip lay people for ministry or mission.

\* Leaders of churches doing well with the core qualities tend to have the following characteristics:
- They are seen as someone who inspires people to action.
- They listen to attenders’ ideas and perspectives.
- They place a high priority on encouraging attenders to identify their gifts and skills.
- They model an outward focus beyond the immediate life of the church
- Many have a capacity for innovation and lateral thinking.

**QUESTIONS**

a. How strong do you think our church is at present on this single point? How many out of ten, or whatever is the number at the end of the line?

b. Does it give you ideas? What are they?

c. Out of all of them in this Core Quality, what are the two or three most important points for this church at this point of time?

1. How well are the leaders - minister/ pastor/ priest /overall leader/ church council members/ heavy duty volunteers - supported? Are unreasonable **expectations** placed on him or her by large numbers of the congregation in terms of gifts, roles or responsibilities?

2. In what areas has your minister/pastor/priest most needed your support - teaching, preaching, leadership of worship, pastoral care, administration, handling stress, finding people to fill roles in the life of the church,   setting aside adequate time for recreation, relaxation or personal reflection, reducing work hours, take holidays and days off as they should, separating work life from home life, finding people to talk to about the pressures of their role, cross-cultural ministry, rural ministry, administration, finance and equipping lay people for ministry?  What **training** can be sought or provided for these needs?

3. Do you experience from your key leaders that they have **inspired** you and others to action, and model an Outward Focus? (Not overly directive, nor overly non-directive)

4. To what extent are your leaders **capable** of achieving the particular goals that have been set?

5. How effective in the recent past has been **follow through** on decisions?

6. Do your leaders put a priority on **releasing** the potential of others, listen to the ideas of others, discern the gifts of attenders and help them find places to exercise those gifts, or is it always a case of ‘round up the usual suspects’, the same people volunteering all the time?

7. Do your leaders put adequate time to the role of **supporting** and empowering?

8. Do they **develop** an accurate picture of their own skill areas then find others who are complementary in their gifts and skills?

9. Are the **lines** of decision-making, communication and authority clear and accepted by all?

10. Do your people **follow**, cooperate with, refuse to nitpick or do they hold back from a good leader and only go with their own ideas?

What else can you think to say?

This is the end of this aspect of the Vitality check. The data is important to the overall planning we are attempting, so please give it your best.

Also, your personal responses can now be fuel for your prayers and longing and intercessions.