



Uniting Church in Australia  
Western Australia

# ***MANUAL FOR ACTION***

## ***SYNOD STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2021***



**A CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITY  
FOR EVERYONE**

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## INTRODUCTION

The best way to predict the future is to create it!

The Strategic Planning process provides a format for developing specific strategies, converting those strategies into a planning process, and establishing measurable and attainable organizational goals. It is a process that involves not only determining where the organisation wants to and needs to go, but also, how it is going to get there.

This Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2021 seeks to recognise the changing response to the church, particularly in the West, and the reduced value given to the Gospel of Christ today. The church has been significant in establishing many of the values which have shaped today's world and remains as a significant advocate in areas of social justice, and the care for humanity and creation. However the place of the church as a contributor to the building up and wellbeing of the local community in body, soul and spirit has diminished.

The purpose of this plan is to seek ways to re-establish the Church as a community which seeks to share faith, to build lives and to care for others and for creation. It is a plan which seeks to create Christian Communities for Everyone.

### A Christian Community for Everyone

A Christian Community for Everyone is a non-discriminatory, welcoming and safe community. It is a community which recognises the hope which Christ has for every person and seeks to make that hope a reality in each person's life. It is a community which seeks to be a Repairer of Broken Walls and a Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (Isaiah 58:12 NIV)

## THE PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The threefold purpose of the Strategic Plan is to encourage the Uniting Church in Western Australia to be:

Uniting in God's Mission to the World  
Growing Communities of Christ-Followers  
Grounded in Worship, Witness and Service

### 1. Uniting in God's Mission to the World

God's mission is for the reconciliation, renewal and redemption of the world. The Church seeks to be together in partnership with God in this transformation, and will seek to do so by...

### 2. Growing Communities of Christ-Followers

Community relationships are in serious decline and personal connections have fallen well below the Dunbar number of 150 stable social relationships.<sup>i</sup> Robert Putnam<sup>ii</sup> suggests that the loss of membership in churches and civic organisations generally has created a decay in social capital and has impoverished society as a whole.

A significant feature of this plan is to seek to rebuild communities which are centred on Christ and which seek to work together through collaboration and discipleship to offer the hope which Christ has for every person and so to make that hope a reality in the life of others.

### 3. Grounded in Worship, Witness and Service

The heart of Christ's call to the church is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind; and to love our neighbour as ourselves. (Luke 10:27 NRSV)

This calls us to be grounded in worship, to be witnessing to others about the Gospel of Christ and to be serving others in the way we would like to be served.

## OBJECTIVES

- To establish at least 4 healthy and vibrant community-based networks which embrace around 30 separate communities of faith (congregations, school communities, Agency service centres)
- To establish a network of 5 Remote Area Ministry bases, serving Aboriginal communities, pastoralists and miners in remote areas of WA
- To encourage strong, resourceful and passionate leaders
- To provide ongoing training for existing and future leaders
- To establish a useful base of property resources
- To ensure a healthy funding base for future development of mission
- To be inspired by the Spirit of God and committed to an ongoing creative, adventurous life of faith, characterised by openness, flexibility, hope and joy

Open Communications  
Faith Formation & Faith Sharing  
Training for Ministry Leadership  
Community Engagement

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### 1. Open Communications

- Develop a network of collaborating communities to stimulate healthy and life-giving congregations, agencies and schools
- Introduce Presbytery Ministers to ensure care and communication at all levels of the Church
- Develop reporting processes for all Synod/Presbytery groups and bodies to stimulate the flow of information and create openness and transparency. Best knowledge management practices
  - a. Reports
  - b. Minutes
  - c. Internal correspondence
  - d. Projects, events
- Enhancing the UCA brand through the effective use of a variety of media vehicles
- Being a prophetic voice in the community – using a variety of platforms

## 2. Faith Formation & Faith Sharing

- The resourcing and strengthening of our congregational footprint:
  - a. Identify geographic areas of growth;
  - b. Develop a property policy geared for the development of missional communities
  - c. Establish networks of collaborating communities
- Establish missional driven Synod budget and use of resources
- Work together with agencies and schools to identify faith sharing opportunities
- Develop a mission planning training resource
- Communities of faith to practice invitational and relational hospitality and fresh expressions of church
- Identify, develop and implement a ministry culture attractive to a younger generation
- Focus on ethnic groups and create multicultural congregations

## 3. Training for Ministry Leadership

- Develop and implement a continuous life and witness consultation process for congregations, commissions, committees and other church bodies and give feedback
- Develop position descriptions and best practice performance reviews for all ministry agents and give feedback
- Review current training and education programs
- Survey all options and possibilities for training and formation (ministry, lay)
- Introduce appropriate training and leadership development strategies
- CEDAL to facilitate all education and training
- Develop a program for the recruitment of all ministry agents with a focus on younger candidates
- Incorporate the work of NCLS, Christian Research Association and other relevant research organisations

## 4. Community Engagement

- Develop a 'Discover your Community' toolkit for congregations – emphasis on Asset Mapping approach and use of NCLS data
- Develop a register of cultural/country/migrant associations
- Promote multicultural/cross-cultural/intercultural ministry
- Develop a '2nd generation' program in collaboration with ethnic congregations.
- Improve engagement with chaplains at schools, prisons and hospitals (safe church, shared learning, relationship building)
- Establish missional focussed congregation budgets and use of resources
- Promote fresh expressions of church/ Mission Shaped Ministry
- Develop a network of Remote Area Ministry placements

## RESOURCES

There are a number of resources and information sources available for individuals, congregations and other pioneering leaders who feel called to develop or to be part of a network of collaborating communities.

- Consultation & Guidance

The Presbytery Minister (Mission), Strategy & Mission Planning Committee and the General Secretary are available for consultation and guidance on how best to use the opportunity of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 so that we are:

Uniting in God's Mission to the World  
Growing Communities of Christ-Followers  
Grounded in Worship, Witness and Service

After an initial review by the Strategic & Mission Planning Committee, a grant to a maximum of \$10,000 will be available for professional assistance in developing the Mission Plan for each project.

- Congregations, Schools & Agencies

The concept of Collaborating Communities is intended to draw together a number of faith communities – congregations, schools and/or Agency service centres. The factor which draws them together (at least 3 participating units, but preferably more) will vary by circumstance. Some groups may be connected by a common mission, or common interests. Others may be connected by geography, or shared space. Still others may be connected by a shared leadership or administration structure.

However they are connected, there does need to be significant collaboration in striving towards the **vision** (*A Christian Community for Everyone*) and **purpose** (*Uniting in Mission, Growing Communities and Grounded in Worship, Witness and Service*) of the Strategic Plan.

Where assistance is required to initiate or establish connections with other groups (congregations, schools, Agencies), contact can be made with the Presbytery Minister (Mission), Strategy & Mission Planning Committee or the General Secretary.

- Property Assistance

The development of Collaborating Communities will almost certainly involve property and assets in one way or another. This may include the purchase or lease of property, sale of excess property where a number of faith communities combine to use a common property, use of unoccupied manses, and/or the sharing of property.

There may also be a requirement to refurbish or extend a property. This may include the purchase of equipment.

In each instance, the guidance of the Senior Property Manager, Synod Property Unit, Presbytery Property Committee and Placements Commission

should be sought. In all cases, the final steps and approval of the Synod Property Board (Resources Commission) will be required.

Guidance on property matters may include funding advice but will not include the grant of funding which is dealt with by the Presbytery Strategy and Mission Planning Committee (small grants for specific projects) or the Council for Mission (significant grants intended to resource and strengthen the congregation footprint in the UCWA).

- Leadership Development

The training and development of leaders is an important aspect of the Strategic plan 2018-2021. Historically, by default rather than intention, the Church has tended to rely on ordained clergy (MOW and Deacons) to take up leadership roles. Given the very low level of candidature and difficulty in attracting clergy to Western Australia, leadership roles are now being filled by lay persons – specifically Lay Preachers and Pastors, but also Elders and Church Councils. Most of the latter are older persons and trained mostly by experience.

This issue has been recognised nationally in the Uniting Church and new national standards for theological training were introduced in January 2017. In Western Australia, where the difficulty has been particularly acute, steps to address the situation began several years ago, and have gained momentum under the guidance of the Commission for Education, Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL). New approaches to training in ministry leadership are continuously being developed and further information is available from the Director of Education and Formation.

Those considering candidating for ministry should consider entering the Period of Discernment at the earliest opportunity. Those seeking recognition as Lay Preachers or in Ministry of Pastor roles will need to fulfil the requirements set down for this recognition.

National courses offered by the Adelaide College of Divinity are also available. (Uniting Leaders Plus focusses on Christian Leadership, Leadership and Organisational Culture, and Change Management. The National Executive Leadership Program seeks to equip current leaders in current practices. Both are 18 month post graduate qualifications with residential intensives).

Each application for funding through the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 must include plans for further training and development of key participants, and could request financial assistance for this through the funding application.

- Programs for Community Building

The National Church Life Survey has revealed that few Uniting Church members share their faith with others. This, despite the fact, that many are involved in wider community service programs.

A survey conducted amongst WA ministers and Synod staff by our HR staff, using Robert Quinn's Competing Values approach, has also revealed that the

predominant culture amongst the participants is of the Clan type, favouring internal maintenance, rigid control and a resistance to change. The Clan type competes within its own structure and has limited connections outside of that structure. This is an unhelpful stance for community building.

The church is not unaware of this difficulty and across the world, churches are developing new ways of connecting with community. In WA, the Strategy and Mission Planning Committee have launched initiatives in Messy Church, encouraging fresh expressions of church and Mission-Shaped Ministry. Each application for funding through the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 must include participation in these initiatives.

There are other forms of community building initiatives, and applicants are encouraged to consider how these might be used in their collaborating community concepts. These include the 3DM discipleship program, Alpha course and the community building initiatives from the Bank of Ideas.

(<https://bankofideas.com.au/>)

- Funding Sources

Release of Embargoed Funds

Many congregations have funds invested in the Uniting Church Investment Fund which most often have derived from the sale of property. The release of these funds is contingent on the provision of a mission plan approved by the Strategy and Mission Planning Committee.

Such an application could involve the purchase of property, extension or upgrading of facilities, particular mission programs etc. Congregations are encouraged to access these funds as a first resort for their missional programs. The Presbytery Minister (Mission) will be able to provide guidance on the process.

Specific Grant Funding

For several years, and for the foreseeable future, the Strategy and Mission Planning Committee have been able to provide funding in limited grant amounts for specific missional initiatives by faith communities. These grants may not be used to fund the cost of the ministry agent. They are intended to provide funding, which might not otherwise be available, for community building initiatives. Examples could include Messy Church programs, children and youth initiatives, or any other form of community building.

Applications for these grants are made directly to the Strategy and Mission Planning Committee.

Funding for Collaborating Communities

In 2018, the Synod has budgeted for \$1,000,000 to be used for the funding of the Strategic Plan. From 2019, the funding will derive from the return on the Foundation Trust Fund. This Fund has been boosted by a significant injection by the Uniting Church Investment Fund to bring the capital amount up to \$20 million. However, part of this is in landed property rather than cash, and thus does not bring an immediate income return. Provision has been made in the

establishment of the Trust to allow for further donations and requests. Contact the General Manager Resources if you wish to make a donation or bequest. The process for accessing these funds (\$1 million per annum) is dealt with in detail in Point 7.

Essentially, each application is assessed on merit by the Council for Mission. There is no limit to the extent of funding sought, but only \$1 million will be available each year in the form of grants. The funding grant will ensure that the funds are available throughout the duration of the grant request, and will be available for draw down against the proposed funding arrangement. So for example, a funding request for \$300,000 is granted for draw down at \$100,000 per annum over three years. This would leave \$700,000 available for other applicants in that year. In each of the 3 years, \$100,000 is guaranteed to be available for the applicant.

Once the available grant in each year has been allocated, no further funding will be available from this source.

Use of the funds must be acquitted (accounted for) and regular audits and assessments of the projects will be undertaken. If a project fails to achieve its key objectives, or if circumstances occur so that the key objectives cannot be met, the project must be re-evaluated and the provision of funds may be withdrawn.

## BARRIERS

The suggestion has already been made that the prevailing culture within the Uniting Church (and indeed, in most traditional churches) does not lend itself to building communities. It is important to recognise this, to confront it and to seek to move beyond, as far as we are able.

### *Limited by Culture*

The culture within the Uniting Church is inward looking. We find it difficult to engage with the world around us. To a significant extent, this is because we have relied too much on the credibility given to the church by the secular world in the past. That credential is no longer available and the church no longer knows how to respond. In the first instance, we need to be more certain of our foundational beliefs – our values, and our principles. These can be found in the one page document attached to this document. Secondly, we need to learn how to connect with community. Some of these approaches have been addressed in the section titled “Programs for Community Building”. The Strategy and Mission Planning Committee, and CEDAL, offer opportunities to learn new ways of connecting with the community.

### *Limited by Tradition*

The secular world has changed dramatically in a short space of time. However, we might feel about it, the worship service is the “shopfront” of the church but the traditional worship services of the church in culture and form are already alien to the children and grandchildren of our members. The prevailing secular culture is post-Christendom and post-church. There remains a search for spiritual meaning and significance but for anyone under the age of 50 years, this is not significantly found in the traditional worship services of the church.

The Fresh Expressions movement which is endorsed by the Strategy and Mission Planning Committee has provided new ideas for engaging the community in the area of their search for faith.

### *Limited by Demographics*

Critical mass (the weight of numbers) is a significant factor in achieving change and one wonders whether the Uniting Church in Western Australia has sufficient numbers for the required change (uniting with God in mission, connecting with the community and being grounded in worship, witness and service).

Average attendance in all Uniting Church congregations in 2016 was 4100 people – a decline of a further 1000 since the last survey in 2013. The majority of congregations have less than 30 members, only 25 congregations have more than 50 members. More than half of our ministry agents are older than 60 years and only 6 are under the age of 40 years.

The limitation in the current demography of the Uniting Church congregations has been a major factor in the development of the collaborating communities concept of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021. Few single congregations have the critical mass, and/or age capacity, to address the decline in church/faith connections today. By drawing together several congregations, possibly with school and/or Agency service centre connections, the intention is to develop the critical mass which is required. It is worth noting that Uniting Church schools and Agencies are connected with thousands of people, most of whom fit the age demographic of the State (Average age = 36 years).

## **PROCESS TO ACCESS FUNDING**

- Understanding the Essential Criteria

In order for an application to be successful there are several essential criteria which need to be met.

- ✓ The plan must match the purpose of the Strategic Plan 2018-2021  
*Uniting in God's Mission to the World*  
*Growing Communities of Christ-Followers*  
*Grounded in Worship, Witness and Service*
- ✓ There must be a clearly identified Project Leader
- ✓ Preference will be given to projects focussed on networks of communities, especially congregations, schools and Agencies
- ✓ Should use a community asset-based approach (seek ways of connecting with community assets – schools, clubs, programs)
- ✓ The plan must have a clear set of objectives, processes, key indicators, achievement goals and specific funding requirements. Ill-conceived presentations will not be considered

- Developing Objectives

The Mission Plan submission should have clearly defined and measurable objectives.

The following process will be helpful:

- ✓ Define the Vision

- ✓ Determine what changes are to be made
- ✓ Collect Base Line data eg membership, worship attendance, people served in mission
- ✓ Decide on realistic goals
- ✓ Set the objectives, which should be:
  - a) Specific: How much, of what, by whom, by when.
  - b) Measurable
  - c) Achievable: How will the project continue when funding period is over
  - d) Relevant to the Strategic Plan Purpose
  - e) Timed: A clearly defined timeline
  - f) Challenging: What significant improvements are expected

**Think  
S.M.A.R.T +C**

- Connecting with Communities

It has already been mentioned that most of our congregation communities are small and without the critical mass to progress much beyond maintaining the status quo. For this reason it is important to connect with other congregations, schools and Agency service centres. The individual communities would however maintain their separate identities, with all the communities so combined referred to as “collaborating communities”.

The process of connecting and facilitating introductions to other communities can be guided by the Presbytery Minister (Mission) and/or the General Secretary.

- Developing Plans

Initial Reviews of ideas and plans can be presented to the Strategy & Mission Planning Committee for comment and guidance. These do not need to be in detail but should observe the S.M.A.R.T+C characteristics noted earlier. Assistance in the development of the Mission Plan for final presentation may be provided by the Presbytery Minister (Mission).

A grant of up to \$10,000 is also available, if required, to cover the cost of a consultant who would prepare the final Mission Plan. A full quotation would need to be submitted to the General Secretary in support of an application for this grant.

- Submitting Mission Plans to the Council for Mission

Final Mission Plans seeking funding will need to be submitted to the Council for Mission, a project focussed sub-committee of the Synod Standing Committee. The committee meets by appointment to consider specific applications for funding from the Uniting Church Foundation.

The Council for Mission is convened by the General Secretary and comprises representatives from:

- ✓ Synod Standing Committee
- ✓ Presbytery Standing Committee
- ✓ Resources Commission
- ✓ Strategy & Mission Planning Committee
- ✓ Presbytery Property Committee including Senior Property Manager

- ✓ Placements Commission

Mission Plans should be circulated to the Council for Mission (through the General Secretary) for review at least two weeks prior to a formal presentation. The formal presentation is limited to 60 minutes and may include various media forms, eg Powerpoint, video, hard copies etc. It should be comprehensive and clearly address the objectives noted above.

- Evaluation of Mission Plans

Responses to the formal Mission Plan presentation will be made within one week of the presentation. Responses may include:

- ✓ Yes, together with guidelines on the funding process and regular evaluation
- ✓ Guidelines for more work to be done before final approval
- ✓ No. Good reasoning for the decision will be provided

- Putting the Mission Plan into effect

The launch of each Mission Plan will take place at a specific event which will include worship, prayers and a presentation of the Mission Plan. The event will be guided by the Moderator.

## MEASUREMENT FOR SUCCESS

- ✓ Are we uniting with God in mission to the world?
- ✓ Are we growing communities of Christ-Followers?
- ✓ Are we grounded in Worship, Witness and Service?

## EVALUATION

The Mission Plan will be evaluated at 6 monthly intervals (or such other time determined by the Council for Mission), and may include site visits. The evaluation will focus on:

- a) Meeting the Key Objectives
- b) Return on Investment – is the funding provided a good investment measured against the goals established in the Mission Plan?
- c) Sustainability – Does the project have sufficient momentum to continue for several years?
- d) Going beyond – Has the project become more successful than originally envisaged? Is the project being replicated in other communities? Can the concept be transferred elsewhere?

The Council for Mission reserves the right to cancel any further funding based on the evaluation.

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<sup>i</sup> Dunbar, R.I.M. (June 1992). "Neocortex size as a constraint on group size in primates". *Journal of Human Evolution*.

<sup>ii</sup> Putnam, Robert D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.