



Appendix Six:

A Guide for leaders using the MSR Mission Principles: taking a proactive approach to developing mission

The Major Strategic Review (MSR) mission principles seek to capture God's big purposes for the loved creation and the mission of the Church within those purposes.

In June 2015 the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's Standing Committee (SSC) affirmed the use of the mission principles as an element within the MSR to aid in its process of faithful reflection, assessment and evaluation.

The MSR mission principles underpin the vision statement affirmed by the SSC for the MSR to use – Following Christ, seeking community, compassion and justice for all creation.

You are invited to engage with, reflect on and apply the vision and mission principles in your local context. We hope they stimulate imagination and raise questions about your church body's thinking and practice of mission. They are not a creed. They are a tool or a framework for discussions by councils and groups within the Church and beyond.

The inspiration and challenge of the vision statement and mission principles will not come from the words on the paper but from the reflection and discussions initiated.

Christian practice of examination

The Christian practice of examination – taking time out for regular reflection, assessment and evaluation – is one way that the Church and its leaders sustain and perpetuate 'faith-full' planning of future directions. Examination is communal, regular, grounded in the Christian faith, and purposeful.

The practice of Christian examination by way of reflection, assessment and evaluation requires three factors to be explored separately and together:

1. *Reflection:* What is your current understanding of God's mission to the world and your body's place within it? (Mission principles help here.)
2. *Assessment:* Is there a good match between your stated mission purposes and the actual practice and/or the culture of your body; does your church body 'walk the talk'? (This guide helps here.)
3. *Evaluation:* What is the current context within which your body operates and how do you tell if your practice is effective? (This guide helps here.)

All three are necessary for effective mission. It may be illustrated like this.



How to use this guide: Suggested options

How you choose to use this guide will differ depending on the breadth or specialisation of your Church council or group – a committee, board, commission, agency, school, institution, or congregation.

Frequency: For example, a Church Council with its broad focus may decide to consider each of the mission principles in turn over a series of meetings. A specialist ministry or board planning for the future may want to do all steps in one day or over a weekend retreat.

Time allowance: As a rough guide, you might allow 30–45 minutes for each of the first three steps, with at least 60 minutes for the final planning step. You should not expect to exhaust the topic in that time! If you have to meet again, or exceed time limits, then that is a small price to pay for deep insights and better focused mission.

The Christian practice of examination is ultimately a spiritual exercise, so use spiritual practices to underpin your meetings, including prayer, silence, scripture reading and eating together, as well as respectful discussion and listening.

For example: See Ephesians 3:14-21:

A Prayer for the Ephesians (New International Version)

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father,¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The guide is structured in four steps.

Step One **Reflection: Thinking about the vision and the mission principles**

(at least 30 min)

Step Two **Assessment: Matching what you say and what you do** (at least 45 min)

Part 1: What you say you do

Part 2: What you actually do

Step Three **Evaluation: Being effective within our own context** (at least 30 min)

Step Four **Future mission planning**

(at least 60 min collectively or separated in 20 min x 7 individual mission principles)

A copy of the *MSR vision statement and mission principles* follows at the end of this Appendix.

Step One

Reflection: Thinking about the vision and the mission principles

Your examination begins with the vision and the mission principles. Use the vision statement as your starting point and then work your way into the mission principles.

It is suggested you use this first session to review the vision and mission principles as a whole. Later sessions may focus on one mission principle at a time.

The mission principles are not written in any particular order. However, the last five depend on the first two for their meaning.

1. Thinking about the vision statement, consider each of the elements and their meaning for you:
 - a. Share your thoughts, motivations and stories.
 - b. Consider the diversity and unity in people's responses.
2. Thinking about the mission principles collectively, and separately. What do they mean for you?



Comment: The mission principles are 'shorthand' and require your theology (considered thinking and talking about God) and faithful input to "put flesh on the bones". For example when looking at the first mission principle what does your group believe regarding the content of "the Good News of Jesus Christ"?

3. Reflecting on the group's discussion, how could the vision and mission principles be used to engage and interact beyond the immediate group? Remember that the mission principles are a tool for discussion, not a creed.

Step Two

Assessment: Matching what you say and what you do

Part 1: What you say you do

Review the stated mission purposes of your church body or team. Stated mission purposes may include a mission statement, the *UCA Regulations*, your constitution, mission policies, etc.

1. In what ways are the MSR mission principles found in the stated mission purposes of your church body or team? This part of the process is "big picture thinking". What is encouraging? What inspires you?
2. Is anything missing in your mission purposes that you now think should be there? What may need changing about your stated mission purposes?
3. If your church body has no stated mission purposes, then you are at risk of having no direction for your church body or team. How might the MSR mission principles assist you in developing your own?

If you are a specialist body or institution of the UCA with a focused ministry:

4. What is the relationship of your stated mission purposes to the MSR mission principles?
5. What might enhance this relationship?
6. What is your relationship to the worshipping communities of the UCA?
7. If there is no genuine relationship to the mission principles or the worshipping communities, what are your reasons for your ministry remaining connected to the UCA?

Part 2: What you actually do

1. List the activities and ministries that your group/congregation actually does. Where appropriate, describe your traditions, culture or style.
2. Suppose your leadership team had to explain your mission based solely on what your body/congregation does. What would be revealed?

Comment: What we do and what we think we are doing are often very different so be honest and fair. For instance we may think we are nurturing disciples but what we actually do is provide poorly attended Bible Studies on randomly chosen topics. Alternatively we may think we are not impacting the community but when we list what many members actually do we are pleasantly surprised.



3. How well does your actual practice match your mission purposes as you have refined them or reflected on them in Steps 1 and 2 (Part 1)? Use examples to support your views.
 - a. What questions does this raise for you as leaders?
 - b. Are there more effective ways to do things?

Step Three

Evaluation: Being effective within your own context

Study your context and environment carefully.

1. Describe what factors in your context are relevant to your mission (e.g. secular, multi-faith, legal compliance issues, OHS, social media, time poor, user pays, local council, volunteers, etc.).
2. Next, look at who you are seeking to 'form relationship with'/serve, according to your mission purposes as you have refined them or reflected on them in Steps 1 and 2 (Part 1). If you have a number of mission purposes, examine them one at a time. Describe as much as you can about these people or communities. Then, evaluate each one in the light of Steps 1 and 2:
 - a. What are the indicators you might use to measure your effectiveness?
 - b. What reasons can you give for apparent effectiveness? What do you learn from this?
 - c. What reasons can you give for apparent ineffectiveness? What do you learn from this?
 - d. What insight do you gain when you pull together all you have been learning about the three factors: your mission, your actual practice/culture, and your context? (see *Faithful Effective Mission* diagram, p1)
 - e. Where do you need greater insight?
 - f. Who might help you develop your thinking further? Approach your Presbytery Minister, Mission and Education, or the Centre for Theology and Ministry for options, advice or support.

Step Four

Future mission planning

1. Reflect back over the past three steps:



Invite participants to note any topics they would like to offer to the group for further development. After a time of silent reflection gather the notes on a flip chart sheet or whiteboard. Collate these notes into several topics depending on what suggestions from the notes seem naturally to group together.

2. Now begin an open session of conversation, using the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - a. What does your church body or leadership team now seek to give fresh commitment to? Make a list on a flip chart or whiteboard.
 - b. What does your church body or leadership team seek to do differently as practical expressions of your commitment to God's mission? Have this discussion in the light of your particular calling, context and the various cultures with which you relate.
3. What are your next steps? Lay them out in as much detail as possible. Give a set amount of time for each step, and give a specific person responsibility for each step.
 - Lay out what resources are needed to achieve your goals? Include this in the steps.
 - Who else do we need to work with? Include this in the steps.
4. What communications will be required to fully inform your people regularly about new directions?

For example: in the case of a congregation, employees or volunteers you may need to take them through the process with you to inspire people to get on board especially if they are deeply invested in the previous ways and directions.
5. What steps will you now take to celebrate milestones reached and also to constantly encourage and build one another up in shared experiences of God's mission?
6. Thank God, using a prayer or suitable reflection.

A Prayer for the Ephesians (New International Version)

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

MSR Vision Statement and Mission Principles

Following Christ, seeking community, compassion & justice for all creation.

God in Christ reaches out to the world and calls the Church in the Spirit to:

The New Testament vision is cosmic in scope. It tells of a loving, gracious and merciful God who desires a living relationship with the whole of God's good creation. The Church exists both to enjoy this love and to participate with Christ in realising God's wonderful purpose for the world. The Spirit empowers us for this.

1. share the Good News of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ reveals the Good News of a new life with God. This is revealed through Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection. God invites response through the hearing of the Good News. So telling the story means telling it to those who have not yet heard it. (Romans 10:14)

2. nurture disciples in life-giving communities of reconciliation

Following Jesus and his way of life brings about positive transformation in all aspects of a person's life over time. This "discipleship" takes place within a faith community, because the new life in Christ is both personal and communal. The life of the Church community is a witness to God's reconciliation as barriers are overcome and all find a place at God's Table. The witness is the mutual love which is Jesus' mark of discipleship (John 13:34-35). Discipleship is not a withdrawal from the world because the Spirit immediately draws us into the world where Christ is at work.

3. respond in compassion to human need

This response begins within and moves us to action. It occurs in like identification with those in need, in feeling the pain with those in pain, and in responding in the hope that God has given in Christ. We are to be a community of healing not injury.

4. live justly and seek justice for all

God is just, calls us to be just, and to work for that day when justice fills the earth. The church must also shine the light on itself, and in humility and repentance acknowledge that it too must fight the darkness found within it.

5. care for creation

God's care is for all creation. In following the witness of the First Peoples, we are called to care for God's creation, to uphold its integrity and to protect the life that comes from God as gift and blessing.

6. express the Gospel in fresh ways for each generation and culture

God desires reconciliation with people of all cultures, generations and places. In making mission primary and Church forms and traditions secondary, the Spirit frees us from cultural captivity, teaches us to respectfully listen, and leads us to be open to new words, deeds, and forms of Church.

7. pursue God's Mission in partnership

The Uniting Church in the name of the God of reconciliation seeks to be reconciled with the rest of Christ's Church and will work side by side in mission. Furthermore, there are many in the world who work for justice, compassion and care for the creation who do not own the name of Christ. It is proper that God's Church work in partnership with all people of good will to fulfil God's purposes.