

Understanding your Church

The purpose of this step is to create a 'church profile' — a clear picture of what your church is like. It should include consideration of the health of activities, buildings, congregations and finances. There are many ways this profile can be created and church members should be given ample opportunity to contribute.

Below are a number of strategies that could be employed to help build a profile. You don't need to do all of them. Choose what works for you. Many of these activities might be best conducted by drawing people together to draw, write and discuss.

Having done this work, think about how you might synthesize and present the profile so that the information is in a format that can be easily understood and shared with those inside and outside the church. This could include using pictures, stories, infographics and statistics. Consideration should be given to what information is important and what can be left out.

Activities and Sources of Information

Description

Describe as many aspects of your church as possible. Include styles of worship, members, resources, activities and connecting points with the community.

History Audit

Explore together the themes that have shaped the church and local community, including points of growth and sticking points. This could be done by creating a timeline on butchers paper, marking up key events and discussing them.

SWOT or SOAR Analysis

Conduct a SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats) analysis or a SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results) analysis on your church and local community. Divide your space into the four designated areas, for example, strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. Provide butchers paper and pens for people to write their ideas. Alternatively use different coloured post it notes to represent the four different areas and as people write their ideas stick them up on the walls.

What if...

In small groups discuss the following questions:

1. If this church closed down what would the congregation/s miss?
2. If this church closed down what would the local community miss?
3. If this church closed down who would notice?

Understanding your Church *(continued)*

Metaphors

In seeking to discover the values of the church, metaphors may help people express how they see themselves. Have people finish a sentence such as:

My church is like... [a family...a farmyard...]

When people have completed the sentence, invite them to explain the meaning behind their metaphor. The themes and ideas that come from these answers can bring useful insights into the church.

Audit

Invite someone in to do an audit of your church considering elements such as welcome, worship, buildings and communication.

Survey

You might consider creating and conducting your own survey to find out what people think about your church. You could also interview people or conduct focus group discussions.

NCLS Church Life Survey

The NCLS Church Life Survey is an evaluative tool that churches can use to reflect on their vitality and health. It's an effective way for church leaders to listen to and receive feedback from church members including adults, children, youth and leaders. The survey results, which are presented in a format that's easy to interpret, provide a credible evidence base for churches to evaluate and strengthen their vitality, develop effective leadership and inform their ministry and mission. A Church Life Survey can be completed at any time.

<https://www.ncls.org.au/planning/about-church-life-survey>

NCD

Natural Church Development (NCD) is a survey tool that enables a church to get a clear picture of the status of its key characteristics that relate to church health and growth. The survey results help a congregation to pinpoint in everyday terms where action or intervention may be appropriate. When a congregation intentionally and consistently addresses the issues that are scored lowest in the survey, the process helps to release the growth potential that God has put within each congregation. NCD focuses on increasing the quality of a church rather than on numerical growth goals, with the assumption that quality improvement will lead to numerical growth over time.

An NCD survey can be completed at any time. For further information about NCD or to conduct a survey, contact the Parishes and Other Mission Agencies Commission on pmc@anglicanchurchsq.org.au.

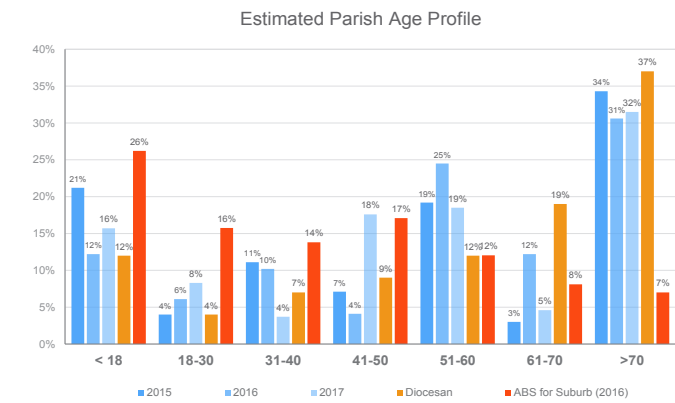
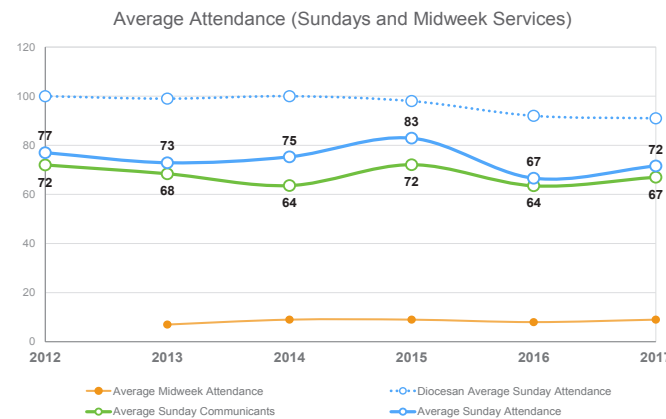
Understanding your Church *(continued)*

Parish Dashboard

The Parish Dashboard provided by the PMC and developed from information collected through the annual returns can provide helpful insights into your church's health.

Example of a Parish Dashboard

Name of parish



Summary Indicators for Services, Vitality, and Giving

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
SERVICES						
Average Sunday Attendance	77	73	75	83	67	72
Average Sunday Communicants	72	68	64	72	64	67
Average Number of Children			8	11	9	7
Christmas Day Attendance	95	54	46	40	48	26
Easter Day Attendance	78	100	76	81	97	90
Midweek Attendance			9	9	8	9
VITALITY						
Number of New Adults			4	2	7	5
Number of New Children			1	1	0	1
Small Group Involvement			42%	41%	48%	50%
Introduction to Christianity Courses			Annual	Annual	< Year	Annual
PASTORAL						
Funerals	1	3	2	2	2	2
Marriages	0	1	0	0	0	0
Confirmations and Receptions	0	2	0	4	4	3
Baptisms (Child)	0	0	1	0	0	0
Baptisms (Adult)	0	0	0	0	0	0
FINANCES						
Income	\$ 228,195	\$ 221,683	\$ 225,564	\$ 231,689	\$ 250,414	\$ 307,733
Offertery	\$ 189,973	\$ 198,629	\$ 186,276	\$ 197,680	\$ 220,807	\$ 209,305
Average Annual Offering per Person	\$ 2,467	\$ 2,725	\$ 2,474	\$ 2,385	\$ 3,315	\$ 2,923
Contribution	\$ 17,160	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,900	\$ 18,900	\$ 18,900	\$ 18,900
Mission Giving	\$ 35,094	\$ 25,750	\$ 18,020	\$ 18,660	\$ 20,137	\$ 20,916

Summary Information

Parish: _____ Church Size in 2016: **Small** Church Size in 2017: **Small**
 Region: _____ Archdeaconry: _____
 Deaconry: _____ ASA: 67 ASA: 72
 ABS Code: _____

Growth 2012 to 2017	Growth 2014 to 2017	Growth 2016 to 2017
Decline	Neutral	Growth
77 to 72	75 to 72	67 to 72

For further information on using this dashboard, please refer to the accompanying notes. For further assistance or queries, please call the PMC on (07) 3835 2284.

Understanding your Church *(continued)*

Review the most recent dashboard for your church and complete the 'Observe', 'Interpret' and 'Act' questions for each key metric listed in the table below.

	OBSERVE	INTERPRET	ACT
	What are the key patterns?	Why might this be the case?	What action could be taken to influence the key patterns?
Average Sunday Attendance			
Average Sunday Communicants			
Number of New Adults and Children			
Small Group Involvement			
Introduction to Christianity/ discipleship programs			
Average Annual Offerings per Person			
Age Profile			
Other			