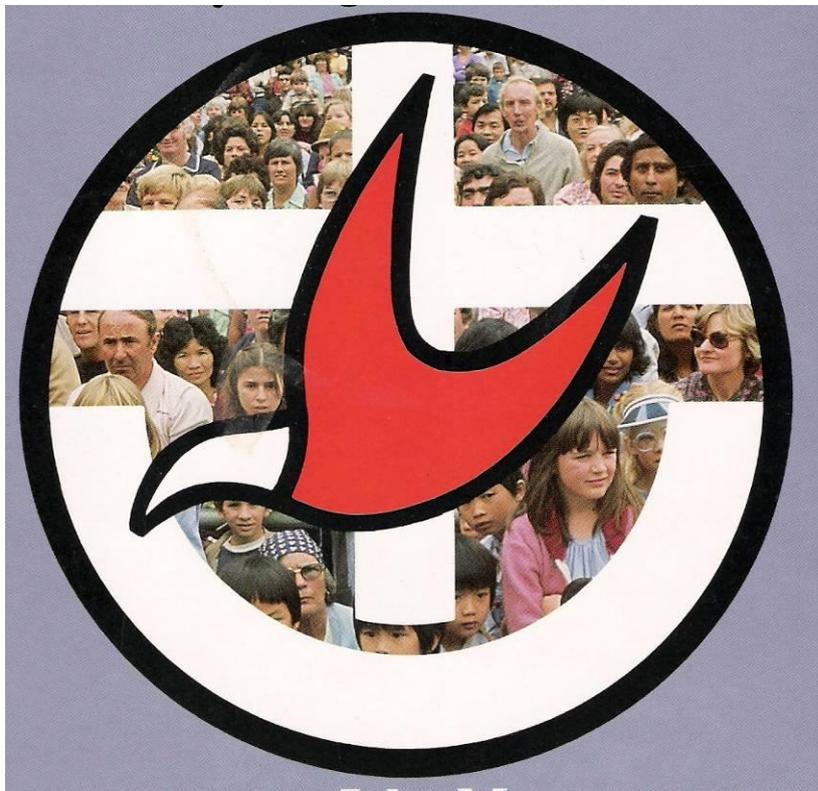


**PARRAMATTA NEPEAN PRESBYTERY
OF THE
UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
(NSW SYNOD)**



**MISSION AND PROPERTY REVIEW
2009**

FINAL CONGREGATION VERSION – 7 FEBRUARY 2010

FOREWORD

What we have in our hands is a story of the faith of God's people in this region going back many decades.

This report is a snapshot in time and represents the accumulated ministry of our forebears.

It states emphatically their gifts to us, that have come from their response to God's call and their witness as they sought to discover God working in their midst. These pages contain a story of triumph and struggle, growth and decline, faith and hope. We cannot let their journey end.

We are on the same journey. To be God's people, responding to the Christ call to be disciples and receiving in our journey, the gifts the Spirit lavishes upon us.

Our journey starts in 2010 and it starts where this report leaves off.

The faith we have needs to take on new depths and dimensions if we are to be the Church beyond the one on the hill.

The Church we are part of, needs to come out from under the lamp and shine where the church has never shone before.

Our congregation needs to look beyond the pews to the community that is seeking life that is fulfilling.

Our communities of faith need to congregate with one another and share the challenges and hopes, the gifts and skills, the poverty and riches that we have received from God.

Our task is no longer to maintain the system. That way is death.

Our task is to seek where God is in the western suburbs of Sydney, to seek where the Kingdom is being uncovered and humbly seek to bring what we have been given to the great divine ministry.

The report offers ways of growing faith, growing ministry and growing witness. It opens up ways to look for God and turning to what God wants us to do.

Read it for what it is, a story of faith and a way in which our story can witness to our faith.

I recommend it to your prayerful reading.

Rev. David M. Peters

Chairperson

Parramatta Nepean Presbytery

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1. Executive Summary

This Mission and Property Review was commissioned and authorized by the Presbytery Standing Committee in December 2008. It was made possible by a grant from The Synod Mission Resource Fund (SMRF) as part of its grants available to Presbyteries to undertake strategic reviews of their mission and property. The purpose of all such reviews is 'to discern an agreed collective direction that will inform future decisions concerning mission resources'.

Presbytery has developed and adopted a strategic vision and mission, and spent two years communicating the vision across all congregations and agencies. This review was also conducted in the light of that vision. Vision2055 provides a long-term strategic view at a high level and as Congregations of Presbytery we plan:

“to generously share ourselves and mobilize God’s resources to support God’s mission, so to 2055 and beyond, the Uniting Church is a vibrant, Christ-centred presence in Western Sydney, in all its diversity”.

The research undertaken by the Review Team has focussed primarily on the Mission, Property and related financial elements of Congregational life of the Parramatta Nepean Presbytery. The research included assessments of:

- health, sustainability and vitality of the Congregations of Presbytery;
- potential for strengthening specific congregations and the Presbytery as a whole in their participation in God’s mission;
- issues relating to Mission and Property which are hindrances for building mission potential;
- effectiveness of the current utilisation of property assets.

The key outcomes delivered by the recommendations are to:

- Encourage the reorientation of congregational life to meet the needs of our society
- deepen the understanding of intentionally connecting & walking with God by lay leadership
- Participate more fully in God’s mission by being more outward focussed
- Reconnect with the outstanding services and practical ministries by UCA Agencies
- Encourage intentional engagement of congregations in mission partnerships within zones, to build relationships and a mutual understanding of local mission
- A positive change in the general population that are Christian or affiliated members of the Uniting Church in Australia (as measured in the Census)
- Create closer intentional connection of ministry agents not linked to congregations
- Use of benchmarks for efficient & effective use of assets.
- Establish new mission partnerships with Faith Communities and congregations from other Presbyteries that are geographically located within Parramatta Nepean

The Review Team recommend the following strategic directions:

- a) Orient the Mission of Congregations through Mission Partnerships within Zones
- b) Increase the resources/capacity of large congregations to support Zones and significantly expand their capability
- c) Encourage congregations to embrace the inclusive and diverse ministries of the Uniting Church through its Agencies and Missions
- d) Promote different models of ministry
- e) Provide resources and leadership to all congregations
- f) Explore opportunities within Mission Zones for full time placements
- g) Encourage creativity within zones

2. The Report

2.1. Authorisation

The Presbytery of Parramatta Nepean, through its Standing Committee and funded by the Synod Mission Resource Fund, authorised the 'Mission and Property Review' to be undertaken. .

In March 2009, a Mission & Property Review Team comprising John K. Martin (Team Leader), Ian Gray and Geoff Brown was established, the Project Plan was approved and work commenced.

2.2. Scope

This Report has been produced by the Mission & Property Review Team as the key output of a Mission and Property Review of the Congregations of the Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery within the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia.

2.3. Background

Vision2055 is the title given to the Vision Statement of Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery. The focus of this Vision Statement is towards building a legacy so that to 2055 and beyond the Uniting Church will be strongly missional in the diverse contexts of western Sydney. The Vision seeks to be proactive concerning meeting the needs of our presbytery in recognition of:

- rapid population growth in the region;
- expansion of diverse communities and cultures;
- leadership and resource allocation.

2.3.1. Where have we been?

Presbytery has developed and adopted a strategic vision and mission, and spent two years communicating the Vision across all congregations and agencies.

Vision2055 provides a long-term strategic view at a high level and as Congregations of Presbytery we plan:

“to generously share ourselves and mobilize God’s resources to support God’s mission, so to 2055 and beyond, the Uniting Church is a vibrant, Christ-centred presence in Western Sydney, in all its diversity”.

Presbytery encourages its' congregations to work as a collective group to further develop Vision2055 through a detailed strategic plan so that:

- mission goals are identified & pursued at both a local and regional level;
- Congregations will feel they are contributing to the enterprise of bringing the Good News of Jesus not only to their own locality, but to their region and beyond.

2.3.2. Where are we now?

The Review Team has compiled information from a variety of sources and listened to the aspirations and visions from key leaders of the Uniting Church nationally and in Western Sydney.

We have been humbled by the wisdom and commitment of people associated with the Uniting Church who have given so much of their lives to the proclamation of the Gospel within their community and beyond.

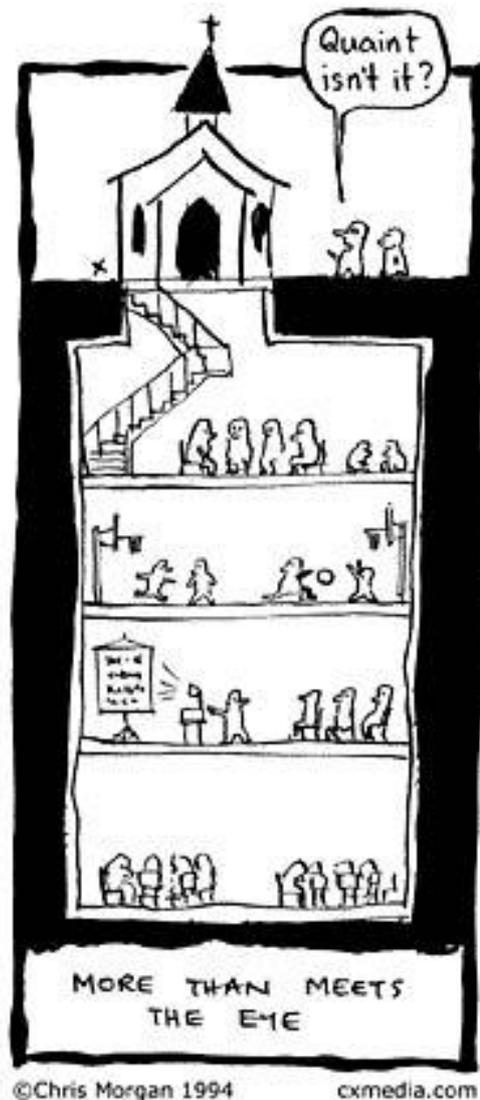
The Uniting Church is a remarkable movement of people that is embraced for its inclusive and diverse ministries. Its outward focus is valued by the community.

In many respects the Uniting church is so large and diverse that it is difficult for the “average” person connected with our congregations to appreciate the significant work being done in the name of the Uniting Church within our local community. Uniting Church agencies and Missions are living out the Gospel through the services that they are providing to the marginalised, lonely, disadvantaged and frail in our community

The Review Team seeks to establish workable, practical and achievable objectives for ongoing prayerful reflection by the Presbytery, and propose strategic directions which aim to embody Vision2055 at the grass roots level.

This process will include:

- celebrating the diverse life of the Presbytery as it shares in God's mission throughout Western Sydney;
- recognising the need to further strengthen the missional life within our congregations;
- recommending changes to support and encourage the Congregations of Presbytery to foster the growth of vibrant Christian communities.



2.4. Purpose of Review

The research undertaken by the Review Team has focussed primarily on the mission, property and related financial elements of Congregational life of the Parramatta Nepean Presbytery with respect to the:

- health, sustainability and vitality of the Congregations of Presbytery;
- potential for strengthening the mission of specific congregations and the mission of Presbytery as a whole;
- identification of issues relating to Mission and Property which are hindrances for building mission potential; and
- effectiveness of the utilisation of property assets.

Faith Communities, whilst included in the Review data, have not been assessed to the same level of detail as applied to Congregations.

The Review Team has not considered:

- performance aspects of Ministry Agents;
- ability of Congregations in connecting with their communities;
- comparison with other denominations.

Whilst the Review Team was not tasked with gathering data relating to the extensive gifts and skills of the “people assets” (Ordained and Lay) available within the Congregations of Presbytery, we believe that this is a significant resource whose potential needs to be further explored and developed as the elements of Vision2055 unfold in time.

The outputs of the Review are a series of Recommendations and a draft Implementation Plan.



2.5. Data Snapshot

During the course of the Review, data was collected from a plethora of sources (see section Appendix A-2).

The following is a snapshot of some of this data:

- *There are 83 worshipping entities in Parramatta Nepean Presbytery (72 Congregations, 10 Faith Communities, 1 Community Ministry)*
- *There are 71 ministry agents placed within congregations, equating to 44 full time equivalent placements*
- *There is a general population growth of 0.8% p.a. within the Presbytery boundaries*
- *Attendance at Uniting Church worship services is decreasing at 2% pa*
- *Total Operating surpluses have increased by 2% over last four years (static after CPI adjustment)*
- *Average Offerings are less than 1% of family (or giving unit) income*
- *The percentage of the general population that are affiliated members of the Uniting Church is 3.6%, and is decreasing at a rate of 2.8% per year*
- *The percentage of the general population that are Christian is 65.9%, and is decreasing at a rate of 5.8% per year*
- *The percentage of the general population that are Non-Christians (e.g. other faiths) is 12.7%, and is increasing at a rate of 36.2% per year*
- *The average age of The Uniting Church in Australia attenders is 57 years*
- *The average age of the population within Presbytery boundary is 41 years*
- *The Average 'Passionate Engagement' measure for Congregations of Presbytery is 49%. Passionate Engagement is defined as the commitment level of a congregation to its Mission through Worship, Witness, Service*
- *58% of members are committed to their Congregation's Vision and Goals*
- *43% of members feel their gifts are being used by their Congregation*
- *There are 136 Properties with a total market value of over \$128 million*
- *Average utilisation of properties for Sunday Worship by Uniting Church Congregations is approximately 31% of hours available*

3. Recommendations

3.1. Recommended Strategic Directions

In order to implement the desired outcomes in section 3.2, the following strategic directions are recommended by the Review Team.

The Review Team acknowledge other strategies may also achieve the outcomes..

Recommendation 1) Orient the Mission of Congregations through Mission Partnerships within Zones

- Encourage partnerships between congregations in geographical zones in order to use collective strengths to participate more fully in God's reign.
- Support, nurture, resource and encourage active medium, and vital small congregations in the life of the community and Zones
- Seed "Resource Ministry" capacity and potential
- Focus on deepening, and equipping of ministry agents & lay leaders
- Use pilot partnerships to test the strategies
- Review current assets against recommended benchmarks for efficient & effective use of assets.

Recommendation 2) Increase the resources/capacity of large congregations to support Zones and significantly expand their capability

- Establish covenants/agreements between Congregations and Presbytery to facilitate mission partnerships (e.g. placements, funding, approvals)
- Review asset requirements of these congregations to ensure the optimal allocation of mission resources
- Support, nurture, resource and encourage Regional Churches to dynamically engage in new missional activities
- Foster the growth of at least five worshipping communities each supporting around 500 persons within five years

Recommendation 3) Encourage congregations to embrace the inclusive and diverse ministries of the Church through its Agencies & Parish Missions

- Enhance and strengthen community connections and the emergence of the Uniting Church as an "Australian Church", as well as encompassing the traditions of global Methodist, Presbyterian & Congregational denominations within Australia
- Promote within the broader community, the acknowledged strengths of the Uniting Church in Australia: (e.g. Diversity – Inclusiveness – Social Justice)
- Encourage all Uniting Church congregations from any Presbytery, Faith Communities and Agencies within the notional geographic boundaries of Parramatta Nepean Presbytery to participate in mission partnerships

Recommendation 4) Promote different models of ministry

- Reduce focus on "attractional model" of church (ie attempting to create attractive worship and programs that may no longer meet community needs)
- Develop practical community-based faith outcomes for partnership/integration of congregations and agencies with the community.
- Encourage congregations to communicate and journey together.

Recommendation 5) Provide resources and leadership to all congregations

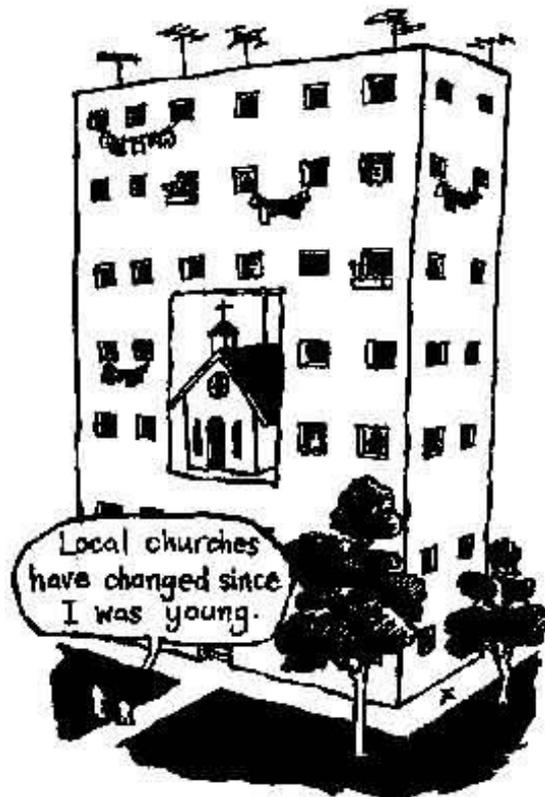
- Intentionally develop personal faith of individuals who connect with the life of the Uniting Church in Australia
- Nurture ministry agents to foster mission partnerships within Presbytery
- Assess the capacity, gifts and skills of current leadership in our Presbytery
- Identify people who can be mission partnership champions.

Recommendation 6) Explore opportunities for full time placements within Mission Zones

- PRC to respond to the 'collective vision' of the congregations in the area, when making placements
- Encourage intentional placements to address mission priorities of zones
- Consider forms of 'Resource Ministry' during the preparation of Ministry Profiles

Recommendation 7) Encourage creativity within zones

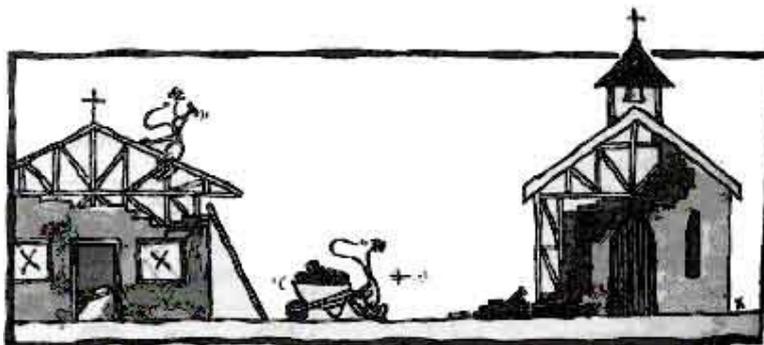
- Promote new thinking in organisation of worship, witness and service nurturing interdependence rather than independence.
- Encourage congregations to explore creative means of releasing capacity for mission.



3.2. Key Outcomes

The Review Team recommendations will deliver the following outcomes:

- Release energies at a local level to invest gifts and talents to proclaim the Gospel
- Encourage the reorientation of congregational life to meet the ever changing needs of our society, ensuring that everything undertaken has a Missional focus.
- A deeper understanding of intentionally connecting & walking with God by lay leadership
- Participate more fully in God's reign and God's mission by being more outward focussed (based on a theological understanding of mission)
- Reconnect with the outstanding services and practical ministries being undertaken in the name of the Uniting Church in our local community and be proud of what is being achieved
- Encourage intentional engagement of congregations in mission partnerships within zones, to build relationships and a mutual understanding of local mission in a wider geographic community
- A positive change in the general population that are Christian or affiliated members of the Uniting Church in Australia (as measured in the Census)
- Create closer intentional connection of ministry agents not linked to congregations (eg aged care, hospital, tertiary, & prison chaplains, synod placements) with the mission of our congregations
- Use of benchmarks for efficient & effective use of assets.
- Establish new mission partnerships that enable support of, & inclusive mission planning with, Faith Communities and congregations from other Presbyteries that are geographically located within Parramatta Nepean Presbytery
- The Review Team has identified potentially within Presbytery:
 - Congregations have stewardship of \$128m of property assets
 - \$10m of property which may be made available for alternate missional use;
 - between \$5m–\$13m of non-strategic of property, that may be sold and re-invested in growing new communities of faith & new mission ventures



3.3. Implementation Plan

To achieve the key outcomes, the following three phase implementation plan is recommended:

3.3.1. Immediate – First Twelve Months

- Encourage intentional engagement of Congregations & Faith Communities within zones, to build relationships and a mutual understanding of local mission
- Presbytery intentionally resources three mission partnership zones (as pilots)
- Identify and celebrate assets and resources of Presbytery
- Encourage Congregations from other Presbyteries that are geographically located within Parramatta Nepean Presbytery to participate in Mission Partnerships (eg Tonga Parish, Fiji Parish, Korean Commission)
- Encourage functional networking between large & small congregations
- Identify the needs of those few congregations whose journey is reaching conclusion and affirm our members' journey as they transition to alternate places of worship and community
- Encourage Presbytery to explore innovative ways to deploy resources across zones so that they are more equitably used in the growth of the kingdom and share the needs with the Synod
- Identify Ministry Agents and lay leaders who could become trained as resource persons and leaders with specialised skill sets, such as Intentional Interim Ministry, Transitional Ministry Placement, Resources Ministry, Consultation Teams, formal conversation teams etc. to implement and foster emerging partnerships
- Share the key messages of the Review over a number of full Presbytery Meetings and utilising "Sydney Alliance" relational communication tools to commence intentional conversation between individuals in zones
- Establish conversations with key people within each zone in order to share experiences and explore possibilities, reporting back to Standing Committee
- PRC to intentionally allocate a component of the 10% of 'Presbytery ministry agents hours' prescribed to the work of the wider church, to assist in developing mission partnerships and zones
- Acknowledge and celebrate the opportunity to connect with other communities of faith to build each other up to love and serve
- Presbytery's Mission Resource Officer take the lead role in implementing the actions and outcomes of this plan
- The methodology for promulgating the outcomes of the Review will be determined by the Standing Committee, in consultation with each of the Committees.

3.3.2. Medium

- Presbytery, at strategic times of decision making (eg: JNC, PRC), to have intentional regard for the priority of missional strategies including a review of the vitality of call of ministry agents as part of a team within a zone
- Build closer association with UTC and other training institutions to improve the skills and expertise of lay & ordained ministry agents and lay persons

3.3.3. Long Term

- Presbytery devolves resources to mission partnership zones to localise missional focus and ownership
- Presbytery re-orientates resources across zones in response to identified missional needs

Appendix A-1 Theological Reflections

During the course of the Review, a number of images and theological perspectives were discussed. Two images are included.

1 - The Vine

Jesus gave indication as to how we may be productive within the Kingdom.

"I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples. (John 15:5-8. The Message)

The picture illustrates the need for ongoing grafting to the vine which provides the sustaining and nurturing base for the growing life of each disciple.

Extending this concept to the Congregations of Parramatta Nepean Presbytery, we may envisage vast geographical dimensions, observe extensive assets in property and people and recognise rich theological depth and cultural diversity. The branches of the vine are the Congregations of Presbytery, complex, interconnected, some healthy and fruitful, others struggling for survival, yet each remaining connected to the Vine to sustain nourishment and sustenance.

As the parable illustration runs, for ongoing fruitfulness and vitality, it is sometimes necessary for pruning or reshaping of the branches, so that the functioning of the plant as a living, growing and fruit-producing organism may experience the liberation needed to become more fruitful, adapting more readily to the environment in which it lives. This sometimes necessitates adjustments to ensure the strengthening and fruit-producing of all the branches.

During the course of this Review, it became clear that many of our Congregations are strong and vibrant, yet others struggle for life. The Recommendations from this Review recognise the possibility for some "re-shaping" so that there will be maturing and strengthening of the collective missional fruitfulness.

2 - A Biblical Basis of Stewardship

A fundamental part of the message of God recorded in the Scriptures and affirmed by Jesus in the gospels, is that everything in Creation - property, people and everything else – is created by God and belongs to God.

*“...God made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth...”
Gen 1:1; Acts 17:24*

Human beings own nothing in their own right,...

“For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life” Matt 16:26 (Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25)

... but as creatures of the Creative Spirit, are given stewardship of the gift of creativity, one life and a body to hold it in, a range of relationships with other humans and a collection of assets (including property of various sorts). Possibly the most valuable gift we are given is the unknown quantity of time each of us has been given to participate in the story of God and the story of the world as living mortal beings. The question is what do we achieve with our gifts in the time allotted to us?

The call to Discipleship – that we can only become disciples by ‘dying to ourselves’ – is a call to stop using God’s gifts for ourselves and start using them for others, living lives of generous service rather than self-centredness.

*“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”
c.f. Matt 16:24-5; (Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; c.f. John 12:25)*

The concept of stewardship is complex. While God owns everything, God values our creative stewardship and expects us to be fruitful. We add value through the reorganisation of God’s creation - through the application of ‘our’ creativity and effort. We receive a share in the fruits of our work as God’s stewards, but we often forget that the assets used are God’s. As everything we have used was created by God, when we claim ownership of (steal) God’s assets for ourselves, this is sin.

For example, try reading the story of forbidden fruit in Gen 3 as an act of theft; This concept suggests a likely interpretation to the parable of the ‘wicked tenants’ - Luke 20:9-16; or the ‘rich fool’ Luke 7: 16-21. N.B. A common economic definition of a private good or property is ‘the ability to exclude others from access’.

Likewise, refusing to employ our creativity, effort and ‘possessions’ to make the world a better place is also sin (see Matt 25: 14-30).

Appendix A-2 Data Sources

The data researched by the Review Team during the course of this Review was obtained from the following sources:

- Financial data from the Synod Reports (UR1) from all congregations within Presbytery covering the last five years;
- Property Resource data from Uniting Resources for all Properties within Presbytery;
- Data on Congregation Mission Profiles – 2006 NCLS Survey;
- NCLS - Community Social Profile (Census) data for the area around each congregation;
- A full-day Workshop using set questions, discussion and feedback, comprising Presbytery Staff and key personnel who have detailed knowledge of congregations;
- Fifteen two-hour interview sessions with a diverse cross section of key practitioners in a variety of ministries and functions both within and outside the Uniting Church and its Agencies;
- A variety of documents and papers relating to the Structure, Mission Development, Health Assessment and Strategic Direction relating to congregations across NSW.

Subjective data from each congregation (e.g. NCLS self assessment) was gathered providing an 'internal view' of the health of each Congregation.

Objective data enabled the Review Team to undertake trend analysis and formulate recommendations based on that analysis.

Both the objective and subjective data that surfaced during the many conversations with experienced practitioners, staff and workers in their respective fields, enabled the Review Team to recommend certain outcomes and strategic directions.

Appendix A-3 Vision 2055

Vision2055 is about building a legacy that will enable the Uniting Church to be strongly missional in the diverse contexts of Western Sydney both now and into the long term future.

It seeks to be proactive, concerning meeting the needs of our presbytery in relation to rapid growth in our region, diverse communities, leadership and resource allocation.

Vision2055 seeks to be holistic in two ways: it is a whole of Presbytery concern; it also seeks to be holistic in holding together worship and service, witness and fellowship, evangelism and social concern.

Vision2055 is intentionally evangelistic in appropriate and meaningful ways. Its seeks to allow the Gospel to transform lives and foster meaningful community.

The VISION is expressed as follows:

In 2055 and beyond the Uniting Church is a strategic, vibrant, Christ centred presence in Western Sydney in all its diversity

The MISSION is expressed as follows:

To generously share ourselves and mobilise God's resources to support God's mission

An integrated approach is taken: worship, witness, service and fellowship are seen as necessarily inter-related. Hence local churches and Uniting Church Agencies will be encouraged to work in association with each other rather than separately. The Church is to be both at the centre and at the edges of community life.

Flexible approaches are encouraged. Facilities will not necessarily be owned by the church, and other community facilities are and will be utilised.

Vision2055 - Five Big Moves

Presbyteries 'Five Big Moves' provide the manner in which the Mission of God might be expressed in the Presbytery of Parramatta Nepean in the years to come.

The "Five Big Moves" are also the operating principles of the Presbytery as it seeks to engage Vision 2055. They are values that underpin our thinking and acting in partnerships, councils and groups.

1) We will continue to become missionally oriented.

Just as God is oriented towards the world in love, so we will seek to shape our life towards the world around us in love. We affirm that the whole Creation belongs to God. We believe that God is already at work in amongst the people, communities and systems of Western Sydney. Our purpose will be neither to maintain what currently exists nor conserve what once was for its own sake; but to allow God to constantly reorient us for the sake of the mission of God.

2) We will foster the growth of healthy, vibrant Christian communities.

Our reason for being as a Council of the church is to give oversight to the life and mission of the church in Western Sydney; to resource and be in accountable relationships with Congregations and Faith Communities. We will therefore stimulate and encourage, as well as ask and be asked hard questions, to keep Congregations and Faith Communities focussed on their calling as the embodiment in one place of the one holy catholic and apostolic church.

3) We will promote collaboration for mission.

We believe that our best efforts with a mission field as large and as diverse as Western Sydney will require partnerships of all kinds. We will value generous, innovative and flexible approaches to collaboration. We will advocate for pioneering models of missional cooperation between Congregations, Faith Communities, wider Church Agencies and community groups.

4) We will communicate effectively.

We recognize that we need to hear as well as proclaim and so we commit ourselves to speak clearly and listen well to all our partners. We will develop relationships that value open and honest dialogue. We will prioritise creative, multi-cultural and intergenerational approaches to communication with respect to languages and technologies.

5) We will embody inclusiveness.

In response to the rich diversity of our region we will value the inclusion of all people and seek to model this ethos throughout the Presbytery, its committees and initiatives, all its people and amongst those whom we serve.

Appendix A-4 Mission Partnership Zones

A.4.1 Mission Partnerships

The Basis on Union recognises the Uniting Church as “a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal”. Over years of our journeying as a community of faith, the church has celebrated the rich and diverse elements of its heritage, history and culture. It has also, through its mission objective to share the Good News, sought new approaches to be contemporary, culturally relevant and adaptive to the needs of our changing society.

During the Review, we recognised the variety of historical structures and models that have served the church well over many years and continue to do so in a variety of ways. It has been particularly encouraging to gain a greater understanding of the cultural diversity, variety of expression and heritage that comes from the enrichment of Australian society and church life with the emergence of a multicultural nation.

Yet, despite so much history and potential, we find ourselves as a church struggling.

John Thornton, Ministry Team Leader at NorthWest Uniting Church shares his insights:

“I believe that we limit the kingdom work of God because of our parochial nature. Even many years after the term ‘parish’ was supposedly dropped from our church lexicon, many of us still use the word and are perhaps subconsciously lured into a thinking that seriously limits our capacity to do so much more.

A major reason that we are seeing many congregations - and by extension the wider church – struggling, is that our thinking about church is too small. Because we limit our thinking to a border defined by a parish boundary, we automatically limit our resources. An even greater danger is that our parochialism can too easily see those outside our boundary, either other congregations, or even worse Presbytery or Synod as ‘The enemy’. We build walls and in doing so block entry of that which might well bring new life and hope.

The new future for the Presbytery must surely be that of a body that is equipping and encouraging the whole church in its pastoral care and where necessary (with great love and tenderness) beating down those walls of resistance. I believe that the Presbytery has to assume the roles of leadership that Paul refers to:

‘It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.’ Ephesians 4:11-13 “

It was evident from our discussions that we must orient ourselves in such a way to strengthen our mission effort and bring new life and hope into our congregations. However, this needs to be achieved in a manner which is non-threatening nor likely to create an environment of fear. What has unfolded throughout the Review is the need to explore new ways for re-orienting the focus of the Congregations of Presbytery, rather than creating a prescribed restructure.

However, like any call to follow Jesus, any change involves risk.

The offering of a co-operative model like Mission Partnerships within Zones is another step in our journey. There is nothing prescriptive proposed. Rather, the Review Team sees that Zones may provide encouragement and resourcing for partnerships to develop between congregations across Presbytery to break down walls and expand thinking.

We believe that mission partnerships should be nurtured so that the gifts and skills of our people may be better recognised and utilised. Our hope is that this will help to re-orient the focus and strengthen the mission potential of every congregation.

It is through such partnerships that more effective mission will be possible through:

- more effective use of gifts and skills of ministry agents
- greater sharing of assets (people, property and financial)
- release, and increased sharing of the gifts and skills of lay people
- freeing up of ministry resources, people and property, so that the most appropriate assets are deployed to meet identified needs

Table 1 – SWOT Analysis of Mission Zone Culture gives an analysis of the introduction of Zone Culture to Presbytery.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Zone Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-orient church culture towards growing more effective disciples • Promotes a new culture of working together, embracing our unity and diversity to sustain and grow the Body of Christ • Brings new hope to small or struggling congregations whilst strengthening mission capacity of larger congregations • Creates bigger picture thinking, creating enthusiasm and expanding opportunities for mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May stretch some congregations as they struggle with a broader vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free up latent potential for participation in mission and ministry • To discover and effectively utilise the gifts and skills of Lay people • More effective use of all assets, including property, people and finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of reverting to an outdated Parish model • Possessive tendencies relating to assets and Ministry Agents

Table 1 – SWOT Analysis of Mission Zone Culture

Acknowledgement of informal or non-geographic zones

The Review Team considered mission partnerships which are not geographic, whether Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) theological based.

Many forums already exist for similar partnerships (eg Assembly of Confessing Congregations (ACC), Tongan National Conference (TNC), Youth Networks, Eco-Theology, Children’s & Families Network, etc), hence are not covered by this review.

The Review Team felt, that if Presbytery decided to create non-geographic zones between congregations of mutual interest, then many of the recommendations & implementation plans could be used.

A.4.2 Proposed Zones

The mapping of current congregations in to zones, build around natural communities.

<p><i>Hawkesbury</i></p> <p>EBENEZER - PITT TOWN Ebenezer Pitt Town</p> <p>KURRAJONG HEIGHTS LEETS VALE FAITH COMMUNITY RICHMOND * WINDSOR/ WILBERFORCE Wilberforce Windsor</p> <p><i>Blue Mountains</i></p> <p>BLUE MOUNTAINS * Blackheath Katoomba Leura</p> <p>CENTRAL BLUE MOUNTAINS SPRINGWOOD UC * WINMALEE-FAITH COMMUNITY</p> <p><i>Wollondilly</i></p> <p>CAMDEN COUNTRY * CAWDOR PICTON * TAHMOOR</p> <p><i>Nepean Valley</i></p> <p>DOONSIDE FAITH COMMUNITY ST MARY'S COOK ISLAND BIDWILL COMMUNITY MINISTRY BIDWILL TONGAN BLAXLAND - WARRIMOO EMU PLAINS GLENBROOK (St. Andrew's) JAMISONTOWN LUDDENHAM ** PENRITH * Mt Hope Penrith</p> <p>PETELI TONGAN ST CLAIR ST MARYS/ROOTY HILL Rooty Hill Rooty Hill Fijian Rooty Hill Cook Is St Marys</p> <p><i>North West Sector</i></p> <p>BAULKHAM HILLS (St. Mathew's) * ** BLACKTOWN * GRANTHAM HEIGHTS NORTHWEST * QUAKERS HILL COMMUNITY QUAKERS HILL FILIPINO RIVERSTONE (ST ANDREWS)</p>	<p><i>Holroyd</i></p> <p>ASSYRIAN PENECONSTAL FAITH COMMUNITY AUBURN AUBURN BERALA (Tilba St) AUBURN NORTH (Rodger Page) CABRAMATTA Cabramatta Vietnamese Speaking Cabramatta English Speaking</p> <p>FAIRFIELD GUILDFORD - GRANVILLE-MERRYLANDS GUILDFORD McCREDIE HINDI FELLOWSHIP FAITH COMMUNITY MOUNTFORD NIUE TALAMITAKI FAITH COM . LIDCOMBE SAMOAN PARISH LIVERPOOL * Liverpool Cook Island Liverpool English Speaking Liverpool Fijian</p> <p>SMITHFIELD SMITHFIELD MARANATHA</p> <p><i>The Hills</i></p> <p>BAULKHAM HILLS (St. Mathew's) * ** CARLINGFORD Carlingford Carlingford Chinese</p> <p>CASTLE HILL (Wesley) * GALSTON KENTHURST WEST EPPING *</p> <p><i>Cumberland</i></p> <p>SYDNEY JOEUN (KOREAN) FAITH COMMUNITY DUNDAS WEST ERMINGTON GREYSTANES NORTH ROCKS COMMUNITY NORTHMEAD PARRAMATTA CENTENARY PARRAMATTA MISSION * ** Fijian - Ermington Leigh Memorial Fijian Parramatta (Leigh Memorial) Westmead</p> <p>WENTWORTHVILLE</p> <p><i>South West Sector</i></p> <p>ABBOTSBURY CAMDEN * CAMPBELLTOWN REGIONAL MISSION * GLENFIELD INGLEBURN LUDDENHAM</p>
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Note: Some zones may combine (eg NorthWest Sector & The Hills)

* Note some possible Lead or Resourcing Congregations are recommended

** Note some congregations are recommended to be members of several zones