

# Regenerating the Church Strategy 2022-2026 Review and Recommendations

11 May 2026

Mission Strategy Education (MSE) committee sought to review the 'Regenerating the Church Strategy [2022- 2026]' (RCS 2026) of the presbytery strategy and vision, bold goal, 5 Focus and related SMART goals. We also sought to evaluate how the presbytery carried out the strategy implementation.

The Regenerating the Church Strategy [2022-2026] has been motivating and encouraging new and renewing mission for over 14 years in the Presbytery of Port Phillip West (PPW). **It has supported the PPW presbytery with a strong missional purpose for everything it does:** church planting, new missional initiatives, education, creating new ministry placements, grant-giving and building developments.

**This presbytery's experience suggests that being intentional about mission produces results.** COVID significantly disrupted much of our mission as a Uniting Church. Since 2022 our new mission initiatives are up 150% and this is on a congregation level. We represent a 38% share in all new mission initiatives across VicTas, double or triple that of every other presbytery. This proves that the missional imagination of our congregations has dramatically increased throughout this review period.

## Vision & Bold Goal:

**The Regenerating the Church [2022-2026] Strategy and its vision is widely recognised and supported** by members of Presbytery in Council. Church leaders have been participating in discussions concerning our vision in Presbytery in Council meetings, regional gatherings and locally in congregations and Church Councils. [Recommendation 1]

Efforts to achieve our Bold Goal, which looks at long term sustainability for congregations, originally "within the next 10 years", has included mission conversations in their local context. The presbytery has been working with congregations concerning the need for new mission fields, shared ministry, appropriate budgets, income potential and the release or development of property that is 'fit for mission' to give congregations long term sustainability.

[Recommendation 2]

## Our Strategy:

**The Regenerating the Church Strategy [2022-2026] has had high levels of participation, through** Presbytery in council meetings, emails, regional conversations and in local contexts and church councils. During the last 5 years, presbytery ministers have actively taken these strategic discussions to the regions.

## Our Story:

**Our story is our narrative, helping to transition the culture and mindsets needed to implement our strategy.** Our common story is vital to the presbytery's self-understanding and its relationship to congregations: Our presbytery is a community garden, and every congregation, faith community, school, hospital, and agency has a plot in this garden. Every plot is unique and different. Some plots are thriving while others lie fallow. God is the owner of our community garden, and we join with Jesus as gardeners. Our Presbytery Ministers are the beekeepers whose job it is to cross-fertilize the plots.

## Our Focus:

**In the future PPW will be a fruitful place for the growth of new contextual communities of faith.** Our presbytery's ongoing commitment to New and Renewing Communities is a strength of the presbytery. While we may lament that we have been unable to transition Armstrong Creek Faith Community into a long-term church plant, we have learnt a lot about how to start-up mission, sustain it and embed it within the community. We think that for PPW in the future these insights will be fruitful in supporting the growth of new contextual communities of faith. [Recommendation 3]

***Future Church Plants need funding to sustain them, for a minimum of ten years.*** Church plants are a long-term commitment. This presbytery has succeeded in providing short to medium term funding for mission activities and projects, however the presbytery has failed to provide long-term funding for church plants. This Review suggests that future church plants could also be

planted in congregations and schools and agencies which have their own structures of support.<sup>1</sup>

**Fostering on-line education and lay preaching training.** The implementation of *Goal 2: Education & Coaching* adapted to changing circumstances, as over the course of the review period, education began to be provided more widely and shared across the Synod with on-line training being offered, and eLM staff are providing education that is now addressing congregational and presbytery needs. There has been a greater focus on Lay preacher education: a) growing the numbers from 1 candidate in 2021 to 20 candidates in 2025 and b) the training of Lay Preachers in the Samoan language.

**PPW values our congregations 'giving mission a go' and addressing local needs.** Funds & Grants have been made more widely available and are addressing areas of rural need. There has been a good uptake of the Simpson Fund by 25 of the total 55 presbytery congregations and most of these applications came from rural areas who have greater financial need. The grants are given based on our 5 Foci. The Mission Initiatives Grants (MIG) are still providing an opportunity for congregations to dream big. [Recommendation 3a]

**We need to understand that encouraging Intercultural leadership is not merely providing leaders for our multicultural congregations; it is providing leadership for everyone.** A highlight of our *Intercultural* leadership development is the joint project between the Samoan UC Fellowship, eLM, Keilor UCA & the presbytery. This 4-way project sought to empower Samoan language lay leaders as recognised lay preachers. We are also supporting intercultural leaders through engagement in Lay Preachers training and recognising Ministry as Pastor and Minister in Reception processes. [Recommendation 3]

**Intergenerational ministry trends show a 27% growth** overall of generational and intergenerational activities since 2022. While play groups and mainly music programs have declined, we have seen a rise in Easter / Advent workshops – which means that there are fewer yearlong programs and an increase in short-term seasonal programs. While number of traditional worship services has remained constant, there was a decrease in Multi age/ Family worship and contemporary worship and an increase in café / meals-based worship. [Recommendation 3]

**Digital Ministry and good communications bridge the gap between city and country.** The Westerly is used by 88% of our respondents at least monthly or weekly. Our Face Book page receives 1840 views per month, and our website has 300 visits per month. The PPW Communication Plan has been a useful tool for congregations planning website development. Our congregations have been receiving support from IT people in other areas. Our presbytery has offered three on-line missional learning opportunities. [Recommendation 4]

**Our work in regions has been important in gathering church leaders together to have conversations about the future church.** *Collaborations* across the presbytery concerning congregational amalgamations, clusters or partnership and regional conversations have greatly increased. The regional conversations have helped church leaders to know more about their nearest UCA congregations and their needs. Congregational Partnerships are dynamic and evolving, they are not set once and forgotten. Moving forward, Faithful Futures is encouraging us to identify our 'coordinated ministry areas' into which team ministries could be placed.

Congregations need to be asking themselves: How are we making community connections and making disciples? What pathways of discipleship are being formed and showing results? **The PPW Vision that encompasses 'disciple-making' is already placing a priority on forming disciples.** [Recommendation 3]

If we incorporate the Faithful Futures project goals in our Strategy for 2027-2031, this will explicitly introduce a new goal regarding **Respecting Country**. . It is acknowledged that we still have work to do to uphold and honour the Church's Covenant with the UAICC. [Recommendation 3]

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<sup>1</sup> The 2021 Review proposed that future church plants should be embedded in congregations who have the longevity to sustain ministry.

## Recommendations to Presbytery in Council:

1. In considering a new strategy, that the **vision** of the Synod and the PPW 4-key words inform our future values: Vibrant, Diverse, Contextual, Disciple making.
2. In considering a new strategy, that the presbytery keeps its **Bold Goal** with a renewed awareness of its priorities in the next 5 years [2027 -2031].
3. That the five faithful futures goals (Coordinated Ministries, Respecting Country, Intercultural Leadership, All-age growth, New communities of faith) form the basis in the consideration of a new strategy, noting:
  - (a) That the **New Communities of Faith** goal will continue our work of collaboration across the presbytery to look at establishing new Christian communities by 2030.
    - i. That the current presbytery policies of missional support be maintained, including grants, education fund and festival funding.
    - ii. That the presbytery continues to consider how new church plants are resourced.
  - (b) That the MSE Committee continues to work with the PPW regional structure to accommodate the goals of Faithful Future **Coordinated Ministry** Areas. That the new strategy considers how we are forming disciples in the life of the church and its mission in the world.
4. That in considering the new strategy, there should be thought given to how the practices of the church engage in digital ministries.