



Introduction to Church Consultancy

A service of the Ministry and Mission Committee
of the Presbyterian Church in NSW

Version 8.4

'WORKING WITH CHURCHES TO HELP THEM TO GROW & REMAIN HEALTHY'

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Forward

The Ministry and Mission Committee eagerly desires that all Presbyterian congregations develop towards maturity and be, for God, all that they can be. We are committed to resourcing congregations in any way we can so that they might be formed, developed and staffed well. As part of that resourcing, we have established a team of consultants to help congregations discover ways to enhance their service to God.

This booklet explains the principles and processes of our consultancy services and how your church can access those services.

Please read through this booklet carefully. If you would then like to consider having our consultants help in your work or if you need more information before making that decision, please contact the Church Consulting Coordinator or myself.

Bruce Meller
Superintendent

What is Church Consultancy?

Church Consultancy is a service of the Ministry and Mission Committee aimed at supporting the local church. It involves a church's leadership entering into a commitment with trained consultants to work together to develop achievable objectives for the benefit of that local church.

Consultancy services have been provided to churches for over 10 years, helping them to address issues and grow towards health.

The model and training that our consultants follow is based on best practice management and biblical principles utilised by many other denominations in Australia. These are continually under review and development.

Our consultants are wise and mature Christian men and women who have a significant role in their local church community and have experienced the ups and down of ministry. They are made up of ordained Ministers and their wives, elders and their spouses, and other highly respected members of congregations.

Church Consultancy is an opportunity for healthy churches to ensure that they remain healthy and for troubled churches to receive help. It is available to churches irrespective of their size, stage of growth, financial resources or location.

What Church Consultancy is not.

Church consultancies do not hold out easy, unrealistic solutions. Rather, they allow alternative strategies to be compared and evaluated until achievable goals are determined.

Church consultancies do not impose a monochromatic, stereotypical programme. Because each church is unique, the Consultancy team draws on a broad range of resources, applying them as local circumstances might indicate.

Church consultancies do not serve as an opportunity for outsiders to impose their views. While team members have the advantage of objectivity, because they are not caught up in local issues, their role as consultants is to assist the leadership. Ultimately, local objectives are set by the leaders of the local church.

Church consultancies do not substitute for presbyterial visitations. Presbyteries have their own role within the Church and our consultants are not permitted to undertake fact-finding missions for presbyteries.

How a Consultancy Might Help Your Church

Through the timely use of trained consultants, churches may work more effectively to identify and achieve key objectives, avoiding difficulties, addressing problems and gaining new vigour for their service of God.

Why consultancies are valuable to local churches

a. Advantages of an objective viewpoint

Because the consultants come from outside the local church they are in a favourable position to hear differing points of view. They can maintain objectivity, especially in the midst of difficult situations and can often observe factors which are not so easily seen in the local church.

b. Flexibility

Each church situation is unique and so different methods may be appropriate for each different church. The Consultancy team has been trained in a variety of techniques which they can adapt and apply to situations as needed.

c. Objectives are set by the local church - not the consultants

The aim of the consultancy process is to help the local Church decide on its best course of action. Consultants do not claim to have all the answers. Their role is facilitating, guiding, information gathering, communicating and recommending.

d. The observations and recommendations that follow the consultancy are for the consideration of the local Church

The local Church decides what to do concerning the recommendations of the consultants.

e. The consultants are trained and gifted people

The consultants have been carefully chosen and are involved in on-going training and supervision. They are wise and mature Christian men and women who have significant ministry experience.

When might a consultancy be helpful for your Church?

a. When a church wants to review its health and direction

- Vision/Mission/Value/Goal Statements.
- Are we achieving our aims?
- Do we need to review our leadership structure/model?
- Review of effectiveness of leadership/pastoral team.
- Evaluation of effectiveness/appropriateness of current direction of the church and its ministries.

b. When a church is going through a period of change

- When the church is growing and needs to change structures to cope.
- When a church is considering a major change – e.g. a new ministry, a partnership with another church, or a church plant.
- When church has reached a plateau or in decline.
- When new pastoral staff are being considered.
- When restructuring is being planned.

c. Address periods of difficulty

- In times of conflict and/or crisis.
- When there is the need for independent mediation.
- When there is the need for outside perspective: consultants can help a church to see the real issues.
- When a Church is struggling with a specific issue that potentially could hinder unity and growth.
- When a church needs external objectivity to help crystallise issues or see through challenges

Consultancy Processes

The key steps in the consultancy process are:

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Understanding the need

- Session and wider leadership of a church identify a need for external help around an issue or issues. This may be defined like *"we need a new vision"* or could be unclear *"things are not working around here but we aren't sure why"*
- If needed the Superintendent, Co-ordinator or a member of the Consultancy team may meet with the minister, elders and leaders of particular ministries in the congregation to explain the consultancy process and assess whether a consultancy may be able to help.

Decision to progress

- The Session will gain, from the Committee of Management, agreement to meet the costs of the consultancy.
- The Session of the local church requests a consultancy through the Consultancy Co-ordinator. This will be reported and approved by the Superintendent of the Ministry and Mission Committee.
- The type of consultancy will be initially identified and will be confirmed at the first formal meeting of the consultancy team with Session. Generally, consultancies fall into one of the following five areas:
 - Preventative-Proactive
 - Leadership Review
 - Church Vacancy
 - Church Planting
 - Crisis Intervention (typically involving conflict or moral failure)
- The Consultancy Agreement will be confirmed by the Session.
- If a consultancy is approved, at least two consultants will be assigned by the Consultancy Co-ordinator.

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What's involved

No one consultancy is the same as the issues and dynamics from one church to another are not the same.

Consultants are trained in a number of tools and techniques that they can adapt to each consultancy. However, the following will commonly occur:

- **Objectives setting** - The consultants will generally conduct an Objectives setting meeting with Session on its first visit, which will set the key objectives to be met for the consultancy. This will be agreed by Session before the consultancy continues.
- **Information sessions** may be provided to the broader membership of the church, to explain the objectives, and the approach of the consultancy.
- Often the wider **leadership or membership** of the church will be involved in the consultancy. This will usually be in the format of group work.
- The Session may need to establish a **consultancy working party** consisting of the minister/s, some or all of the elders, and selected leaders of other ministries within the congregation.

This working party may need to meet regularly to assist in the progressing the consultancy and afterwards in implementing the recommendations.

- A **consultancy report** will usually be presented at the end of the consultancy which will include the objectives, findings and recommendations for Session. The consulting team will usually walk the Session and others (as Session views appropriate) through the report prior to finalising it and presenting it to Session.

Policies Governing Consultancies

Consultancies provided by the Ministry and Mission Committee are governed by policies established by the Committee. The policy suite may be obtained, upon request, from the Co-ordinator of Church Consultancies or the Superintendent. The following statements are explanations of selected policies.

Independence

Consultancies will take note and accommodate reasonable requests in relation to findings and recommendations in reports provided to the church at the end of a consultancy. However, consultancies reserve the right to provide a clear and independent report based on their findings.

Accountability

The Consultancy Team operates under the authority of the Superintendent of the Ministry and Mission Committee who invites and accredits members of the Consultancy Team and who is responsible for maintaining professional standards among team members.

Supervision

The Consultancy is led by the Consultancy Co-ordinator and supported by a leadership team. The leadership team ensure regular training and oversight of all team members.

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Each consultancy, while in progress, is supervised by an experienced member of the Consultancy Team.

Confidentiality

The Consultancy process is subject to the Privacy Policy of the Ministry and Mission Committee together with the following principles:

- Each consultant will regard the details of each consultancy as confidential to the church concerned and the currently accredited members of the Consultancy Team. Details may be discussed within the Team for the purpose of skill development and peer review. Under some circumstances, legal requirements may obligate a consultant to disclose particular matters to relevant authorities.
- Before any referrals are made to people outside the Consultancy Team (e.g. for professional advice) or the Superintendent Ministry and Mission, permission will be gained from the appropriate authority in the congregation.
- The Superintendent Ministry and Mission Committee, having general oversight of the consulting work, or their representative have access to any and all information pertaining to consultancies.

They may request information from the consultancy team and matters may be referred to the Supervisor if required. The Superintendent will receive a copy of the final report of each consultancy.

- Any allegation of sexual abuse emerging during a consultancy will be treated under the Presbyterian Church of NSW policy in relation to the prevention of sexual abuse and relevant State/Territory laws.

Session and Presbytery

- Should any matter arise which might appear to call for the exercise of discipline, the roles of the Session and Presbytery will be respected.
- While Presbyteries may encourage congregations to engage consultants to address particular concerns, any consultants thus involved will be engaged by, and work with, the congregation, not the presbytery.

What Next

If you would like more information, please contact the Church Consultancy Coordinator of the Ministry and Mission Committee as shown below:

Name: Mark Maskell
Mail: 18 Whitfield Cct, Nicholls ACT 2913
Email: markmaskell0@gmail.com
Phone : 0413 450088

Church Consultancy Costs

1. Consultancy Fees

Consultants provide their time free of charge. However, there are costs associated with travel to churches and other incidental out of pocket expenses. M&M's aim is to keep these costs as low as possible to churches involved and charges are based on a cost recovery basis with a small contribution towards the ongoing support of this programme (which is mainly covered by M&M).

Fees for church consultancies are reviewed annually to ensure the sustainability of the programme.

The standard consultancy fee for is **\$500 per visit**, with a deposit of **\$300** to commit to the consultancy. Most consultancies will involve 3 visits at a total cost of **\$1500**. This cost assumes the following:

- That accommodation and meals are provided by the church;
- Two consultants are involved; and
- The consultancy is not a major conflict or recovery type of consultancy (which will usually have a higher cost as more consultants are needed).

Depending on the type of consultancy this fee could be discounted (ie facilitation of a planning day requiring only 1 consultant) or additional charges might be applied (ie significant conflict or recovery where more than 2 consultants are required). Consideration will be given to churches in financial hardship on request.

2. Suggested donation

Where possible, the congregation involved in the consultancy should endeavour to make a donation to the consultant's home church as a way of thanking it for releasing the consultant. The donation should respect the value of the time devoted to the consultancy both in meeting with the congregation and preparing reports and recommendations.

3. Invoice

Outstanding consultancy costs will be invoiced after the consultancy has been completed.

4. More information

You are welcome to discuss the costs of a consultancy for your church. Please contact:

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