

9.3.6 Guidelines for a Local Church Review

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What is a review about?

The aim of the review is to develop a dialogue between the church courts and the local church, as well as promoting discussion within the local church. A review is not an inspection and it is not supposed to be threatening.

The review report should give a fair reflection of the life and work of the local church, a sense of their vision for the future, and evidence of mission planning. Specific recommendations can be included for partner churches or the local church to act on.

Who runs the review?

The Coordinating Partner of a local church, in consultation with the other partner(s), is responsible for convening a review team, but in some areas this task may be delegated, by agreement with the partner(s) to a Regional Forum. Usually the review team will have 4-6 members who represent the wider interests of the church. Each local church partner should have at least one appointee on the review team.

How often should a review be held?

Ideally a local church consultation should be held every five years. This allows time for implementation of some ideas, but also is soon enough to catch any negative concerns or directions. Pastoral concerns relating to the local church may influence when a review is held.

The process

(see the accompanying table)

The leader of the review team should be appointed (by either the Coordinating Partner or Regional Forum) at least six months before the proposed review date. The review team leader liaises with the members of the team (and ensures that people are appointed from appropriate groups) and with the local church about timing.

The review papers should be given to the local church council at least 3 months before the proposed review date. The review team leader should ensure that the team members are familiar with the process and expectations.

The local church council works through the review papers – this is expected to be a team effort and should not fall on only one person. The review papers should be forwarded to the review team members at least two weeks before the review date.

On the review date the team and local church council (and possibly members of the congregation) meet to discuss key aspects of the review papers, to reflect on the life of the local church, and to establish development strategies for the next five years.

Following the review the team leader coordinates the writing of a report within four weeks of the local church visit. A draft copy should be seen by key leaders of the local church to check for accuracy and to avoid any pastoral insensitivity. A local church may disagree with elements of the report, but the report is to reflect the opinion of the review team.

The final report and a copy of the review papers is provided to the local church and to the local partner churches (the review papers are usually only to be filed, not distributed). A copy should be forwarded to the UCANZ office.

Time Line	Coordinating Partner Or Regional Forum	Review Team Leader	Review Team	Local Church Council
12 months earlier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish that a review will happen in consultation with the partner(s) 			
6 months earlier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint a team leader Invite partner churches to appoint team members 			
3 months earlier		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send review papers to local church Liaise with team members and local church on actual review date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review process of reviewing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise about date Complete the review papers
2 weeks earlier		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forward review papers to team members Lead the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet as appropriate Meet as a team to ensure all documentation is gathered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure review papers are with the team leader Meet
Review Date				
2 weeks later		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate report Submit draft report to key leaders of the local church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define who will write a report 	
6 weeks later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive the report and act on any recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit report to Partner Churches (and Regional Forum), the local church and to the 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key leaders to consider draft report for accuracy and sensitivity
2 months later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up with the local church on 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive the report

6 months later	the process and actions	UCANZ office		and act on any recommendations
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Resource for a Local Church Review

This resource is provided as an indicator of what might be involved in a local church review. It is not intended as the complete package – review teams are asked to be led by the Holy Spirit in how they conduct the review.

Documents

The following documents are usually reviewed.

- A copy of the latest Annual Report
- Financial Statements for the last 3 years
- Strategy documents
- The previous review report

Check List

The following list is completed and given to the review team.

Do all employees have an up-to-date contract?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have appropriate police checks been conducted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do the church buildings have all required Warrants of Fitness?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do the buildings comply with OSH and Fire regulations?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are the buildings suitably insured?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have the church accounts been reviewed or audited in the last year?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are all accounts up to date?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have all the requirements of Charities Services been met?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there any liability issues that are being dealt with?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is there a notice about complaints procedures visible?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Which church is the Coordinating Partner?	<input type="text"/>	
Has the role of Coordinating Partner been reviewed in the last 5 years?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
When is the next ministry appointment review expected?	<input type="text"/>	n/a

Discussion Points

The following questions give an overview of the sort of areas that should be discussed with the review team. Some questions will be treated lightly, others may need deeper exploration.

1. What are some of the positive aspects of your church life?
2. What are the challenges that your church is facing?
3. What is happening with worship in the church?
4. What are the mission aspects of the church?
5. What strategies/plans have you got for the next 5 years?
 - a. Is the church in a viable position?
6. What structure does your church management have?
 - a. Is this effective for you?
7. Is there a positive working relationship between minister and church council?
8. How well does the church plant meet the needs of the parish and wider community?
 - a. Are there plans for any major development?
 - b. Are the buildings structurally sound?
9. Is the leadership structure of the church effective in mission?
10. Are there positive relationships with the participating partners?
11. Are there ways that the partner churches could resource your mission?