

Our life together

Core Quality 3 Growth in belonging and involvement



CORE QUALITIES

3. Growth in belonging and involvement

4. An active concern for those on the fringe of church life

5. Care for young people

The Christian faith is not merely an individual matter. It involves communities of hope which have a primary role in the proclamation of the gospel. Christians are called to live in committed, mutual relationships which provide care, accountability, intimacy, encouragement, discernment and a reference point for the journey. Communities of faith exist to provide a place for everyone, including those who are on the edges of the community, for whatever reasons. They are there to encourage involvement and participation, empowering people to live out their faith and develop their gifts and skills. *Our life together* in a community of faith is not an optional extra but part of the core of our Christian life. Christ promises his presence 'where two or three are gathered in [his] name' (Matthew 18:20 NRSV).

Our research suggests some key priorities for congregations and parishes wanting to develop their life together:

- Growing belonging and involvement
- An active concern for those on the fringe of church life
- Care for young people

In your community of faith, what areas should be a priority in your thinking and planning?

See the *Connections for Life Profile* for your church to see how attenders responded in each area.

Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love. (Ephesians 4:16 New Living Translation).

As society becomes increasingly fragmented, people are searching for a sense of community and belonging, somewhere that offers identity and security. The churches can meet this need. A community that is truly centred in Christ can offer the ultimate security, companionship and sense of identity. For many people, the church provides that sense of community and belonging.

To a large extent Christian belief is developed through people's involvement with a community of faith, nurtured within a network of relationships with other believers. When Christians meet together it's more than a celebration of beliefs; it's a necessary part of keeping the fires of faith brightly burning.

'Many still see the church as a place where a warm sense of community can be found'

For many attenders, church is like a large, open, welcoming family in which they experience the presence of Jesus and are both challenged and nurtured in their journey of Christian discipleship. Interestingly, our wider community research suggests that, while some view church negatively, many who do not attend still see the church as a place where a warm sense of community can be found.

It would seem natural to assume that large congregations are more impersonal than smaller ones, that the experience of church as family decreases as the size of the congregation increases. This need not be the case. Large congregations, as well as small ones, can build a strong sense of community, love and friendship. However, in larger churches it can take longer to develop a sense of belonging among attenders and can require more deliberate action on the part of leaders.

The 'glue' that holds together Protestant church communities appears to be somewhat different from what holds the Catholic community together. For many Protestants a sense of belonging to their congregation is quite high, but loyalty to their denomination is relatively low. Catholics exhibit strong denominational loyalty. Being Catholic is an integral part of one's identity. However, younger attenders across all denominations exhibit lower levels of denominational loyalty than older attenders, which suggests that important changes may be taking place.

Making a contribution is something also involved in belonging. Full belonging involves both receiving and giving. Attenders can contribute in a great many ways, both formally and informally. They do this through involvement in worship, joining a church group, being part of outreach ministries or other activities, taking on a role or responsibility, or contributing financially. Taking particular care of newcomers and those on the fringe of church life is also an invaluable contribution that's often overlooked.

37

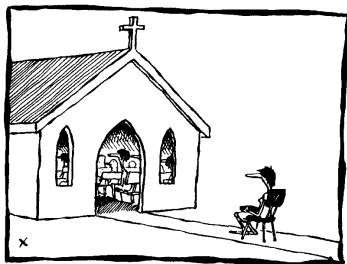
38

Core Quality 3: Growth in belonging and involvement

Core Quality 3: Growth in belonging and involvement

What we know

- Over two thirds of all attenders feel a strong sense of belonging to their congregation or parish. Most of these people feel that their sense of belonging is growing.
- There is a strong relationship between attenders' sense of belonging and the extent to which they believe they are growing in their faith.
- Higher levels of belonging are found in churches with a clear sense of purpose and vision and in churches where the leaders put a priority on developing attenders' gifts and skills. Churches where attenders have a high sense of belonging are more likely to be open to new directions and initiatives.
- In congregations where attenders have a high sense of belonging people are more likely to discuss their faith with others. A sense of belonging appears to be an important prerequisite for attenders being willing to invite others to church.
- A person's level of church attendance is strongly related to the attendance of their close friends and spouse.



Each week, Leanne's chair came that little bit closer...

What we can do

The churches appear to be effective at present in providing current attenders with a place where they feel they can belong. The challenge for churches is for them to ensure that they offer appropriate care and compassion to those on the edge of church life as well as to more regular attenders. Churches must work to help everyone to belong, including, for instance, disabled people and people from different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds or with different levels of education. They must work to make welcome the people who, for whatever reason, feel they are on the edge of church life.

A church where attenders have a sense of community may be attractive to some other people, but it doesn't guarantee that the church will draw in newcomers or that it will have an outward focus. Indeed, there may be cases where a sense of belonging among those currently attending builds a wall between those who are part of the in-group and anyone else seeking to join.

Our church community can be welcoming or exclusive. If it's welcoming, newcomers are made to feel welcome regardless of their background and are encouraged to get involved in ways they are comfortable with. A church like this is likely to have good formal and informal communication channels, so that everybody feels they know what's going on. On the other hand, an exclusive church is likely to have cliques, where some groups have a say in decision making while others don't. In these churches, communication only flows to those in the in-group.

Conflict in a congregation or parish can be damaging to a sense of belonging in both the short and long term. While conflict can't be totally avoided, it's important that it's dealt with openly and honestly and not left to fester over a period of months or years. Other people can quickly sense the presence of unspoken tensions that undermine people's life together.

Questions to ask

1. Is there a strong sense of community in our church? How welcoming are we? Do people of different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds feel welcome?
2. Is there anything we can do to help people on the fringe of church life become better integrated? How can we best care for people who want to stay on the fringe?
3. How do people in our parish or congregation make a contribution to the life of the church community? Are they encouraged to do so? How equipped are they for their roles?

See the *Connections for Life Profile* for your church to see how attenders responded in this area.

39

40

Core Quality 4
An active concern for people
on the fringe of church life

Faith & Worship

1. **An alive and growing faith (p28)**
2. **Vital & nurturing worship (p32)**

Our Life Together

3. Growth in belonging & involvement
4. An active concern for those on the fringe of church life (p42)
5. Care for young people (p46)

Community Connections

6. A focus beyond ourselves
7. Serving the wider community
8. Discussing faith & inviting others to church
9. **Integrating newcomers (p66)**

Vision & Purpose

10. **A clear owned vision for the future (p72)**
11. **Openness to new possibilities (p76)**
12. **Empowering & Inspiring leadership (p80)**

It's tempting to consider people on the fringe of church life as a relatively insignificant group. They often constitute only a small percentage of attendees at worship services in an average week and are less likely to be involved in church activities. However, disregarding them is a grave mistake. The number of people who attend church infrequently (less than monthly) is nearly the same as the number who attend frequently (once a month or more often). If even a small proportion of these people could be drawn more closely into church life, the impact would be considerable.

People on the fringe include both those who are increasing and those who are decreasing their involvement. Some are reducing their involvement, because of age, infirmity or other pressures. Others are drifting out because of disillusionment and disaffection, feeling that participation is no longer useful to them in their daily lives.

'The importance of relationships in integrating new arrivals into a church community should not be underestimated'

A significant proportion of non-attenders and infrequent attenders who have tried to become involved with the church at some stage have failed to make a successful transition into the life of the church community.

Not all new arrivals into our churches have the same needs or expectations. People who come from another church of the same denomination may be familiar with how the community functions and may be clear about their own expectations and hopes. People coming from another tradition may not understand how or why things are done in the way they are. Newcomers without a church background of any kind, tentatively experiencing church life for the first time, will have different needs again. For many who attend a church on a single occasion, their experience may be significant in whether or not they decide to come back again. At a simple level, if people enter a church and someone greets them in a warm and friendly way, they will feel welcome. The church will tend to immediately feel a part of the worship occasion. Similarly, at the end of the service, if newcomers are personally invited to join other worshippers for a cup of tea or coffee, they will know that this church values their presence.

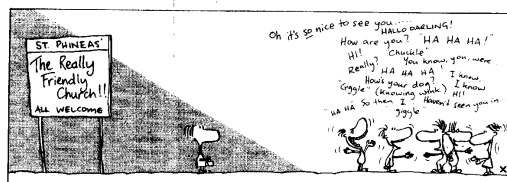
Beyond the church service, the importance of relationships in integrating new arrivals into a church community should not be underestimated. Our research suggests that programs can supplement but not replace personal contact and connections with other attendees in the process of helping people develop a sense of belonging.

Many new arrivals at our churches are people in their twenties and thirties who have moved to a new area or who are parents with young children. How well the church caters for children and younger adults during the initial service/mass or activity they attend (including occasions such as baptisms, funerals, Christmas, Easter and social gatherings) is likely to be important to them.

Core Quality 4: An active concern for people on the fringe of church life

From our wider community research in Australia we know that

- while most people claim to have attended church or Sunday school at least monthly prior to the age of 12, only about 20% claim to attend church at least monthly today³
- the number of people who attend church infrequently is about the same as the number of regular attenders
- a significant percentage of non-attenders and infrequent attenders who say they have tried to become involved with the church at some stage have failed to make a successful transition into the church
- only one in three people who sought to become involved in church life and then stopped were followed up by the church they attended
- at least among Anglican and Protestant denominations, congregations where attenders welcome newcomers or visit those who are drifting tend to have a higher sense of belonging, a culture of discussing faith with others and a stronger sense of personal growth in faith



Connecting with those who are drifting away

For every person in Australia who enters church life as a newcomer, there are many more who leave. In addition, half of all infrequent attenders used to attend church more regularly. Rather than suddenly dropping out of church life, these people tend to drift out, reluctant to cut ties with their childhood traditions but in the end losing the enthusiasm to stay.

It is vital for us to understand, sooner rather than later, what is going on for those on the fringes of church life. Responding to early warning signs of possible departure may allow us to respond helpfully before it is too late.

The pattern of drifting out is most dramatic among the young, with many leaving in their teenage years once there is less parental compulsion or pressure to attend. Many others leave as young adults. Over the last fifty years, the process of leaving appears to have started at an earlier age with each passing generation. Doing something about retaining attenders is a critical issue on the agenda of the churches at this time.

What we can do

It's easy for us to become preoccupied with the needs and concerns of regular attendees. Their voices are loudest and most commonly heard.

Yet those on the fringe of church life also deserve attention, not just from leaders or the welcoming team but from all attenders. Helping these people to integrate into church life and to grow in their sense of belonging makes good sense for our churches and is in keeping with gospel imperatives.

Churches may need to make a special effort to listen to the needs and concerns of people on the fringe of church life and take new initiatives to address any issues that surface.

The 2001 survey results suggest that attenders, at least in Anglican and Protestant denominations, are more likely to welcome new arrivals or visit those who are drifting where attenders feel they are growing in their own faith and where there is a strong sense of belonging among attenders and a culture of discussing faith with others and inviting others to church. Past surveys have also suggested that congregations that welcome those who are new or visit those who have drifted away are more likely to be growing numerically.

Questions to ask

1. How many infrequent attendees are part of our church? Are they exploring the possibility of greater involvement, are they drifting out, are they limited by particular pressures or infirmities, or are they happy to stay on the fringe?
2. In the last year, how many people came along once or twice but then didn't come again? Were they followed up? Do we know why they stopped coming or whether they went elsewhere?
3. How does our church welcome new attendees? Are infrequent attendees visited?

See the *Connections for Life* Profile for your church to see how attenders responded in this area.

⁵ The Australian Community Survey provides figures that are generally in line with other social surveys. It is important to note that such social surveys tend to overstate attendance compared to church attendance or mass head counts. There is some debate in academic literature on accuracy of attendance estimates, and such discrepancies have been noted in Australia in the 1994 NCLS publication *Winds of Change* (p. 262) and Kaidor, 1987, *Who goes Where? Who Doesn't Care?* (p. 19).

Community connections

CORE QUALITIES

6. A focus beyond ourselves

7. Serving the wider community

8. Discussing faith and inviting others to church

9. Integrating newcomers

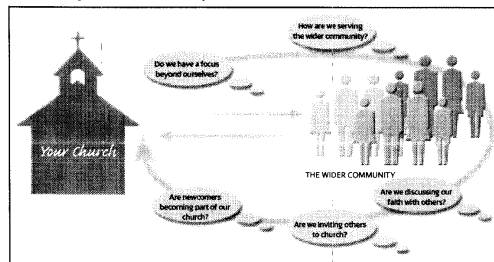
The church's mission is to be a signpost for the kingdom of God. It exists to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to serve the people that Jesus came to serve. In fulfilling this mission, all members of the church have a role to play.

When asked about their involvement with their congregation or parish, most attenders are positive, with more than 75% expressing a strong sense of belonging. The same is true when they are asked about their satisfaction with worship or their growth in faith. However, when attenders are asked about their connections with the wider community, they are far less positive, with only a quarter strongly agreeing that their church has a strong and intentional focus on the wider community.

A challenge for the churches today is for them to *build, rebuild or strengthen connections* with the communities and people they have a concern for. It's important for us to explore these connections, to evaluate our external relationships. How well are we *connecting out*, being salt and light in the communities we have a concern for, both as a church community and through the daily lives and actions of attenders? How well are we *connecting in*, integrating new people into our Christian community?

These different aspects of our community connections need to exist in relationship with each other. Some churches limit their community connections through a lack of personal contact with the communities around them or because they've been in contact but haven't made the effort to understand what they've encountered in those communities. Others don't take seriously their call to be a signpost to the kingdom where they are placed. Some churches are limited because their people are uncomfortable discussing their faith or inviting others into church life. Others are limited because those who come to them are not integrated into the church's life.

Evaluating Our Community Connections



Too often we develop strategies for spreading the gospel without thinking about providing appropriate nurture for those we are in contact with. At other times we pursue social action initiatives without recognising the importance of the gathered body of believers and its growth. Too often we have tried to work on the basis of simplistic church growth principles without being aware of the specific needs and cultures of groups distant from the Christian faith.

Developing strong community connections involves having genuine concern for and commitment to those we seek to serve. It involves integration of words and actions and a willingness on our part to allow others to grow in and express their faith in ways that are true to them rather than being comfortable for current attenders. If we are going to reach out, we must be prepared to be changed by that process and by the perspectives new people bring with them.

In our changing and diverse society it is vital that churches put their community connections under the microscope, and that they evaluate all aspects of what they do in relation to the people they seek to serve. The *Connections for Life Profile* and our overall research provide a useful starting point for this, providing indicators across all these aspects, focusing not just on church activities but also on attenders in their everyday lives.

The following four issues are distinct and important aspects of a positive and sustainable mission strategy.

51

52

Core Quality 6 A focus beyond ourselves



When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground. (Psalm 104:30 NRSV)

You became imitators of us and of the Lord . . . so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia . . . not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known. (1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 NRSV)

Followers of Jesus are not simply members of the church, they are the church. The mission of the church is the mission of its members in their homes and families, their workplaces, their community activities, their leisure-time pursuits and their involvement in the institutions of society. Through the efforts of all, the church is present and active in all these places, transforming society like yeast in dough.⁶

In many churches there is the attitude that as long as programs are in place and the church doors are open the church is fulfilling its purpose. This view is a relic of a time in the past when society was seen as a collection of villages and towns more or less identical in their class structure, culture and lifestyle. In these communities the church provided a universally applicable style of worship, practice and leadership.

Contemporary society is nothing like this. Within our countries there are many different communities, each with its own unique characteristics. In relating to a particular community, churches need to take seriously the nature, interests and hopes of the diverse groups of people it's made up of.

It's critical that the churches develop a focus that extends beyond themselves to their community—that they develop, in effect, a missionary mindset. Missionaries intentionally move out of their own culture into another culture; we often see the passion and genuine love they come to have for the communities in which they work.

In contemporary society there are missionary frontiers in our own backyard, frontiers related to age, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. The difficulty of connecting with these groups may vary; church life may suit certain types of people more than others. Our churches are significantly over-represented with people who are well educated, are older and are involved in caring professions rather than business, which suggests that we need to work harder to connect with other groups.

For a church to be involved in mission, it has to be in contact with the community it has committed itself to. Churches can be in contact with the wider community in a myriad of ways. Some of this contact is *formal*, through such things as church services, mission activities and Sunday schools, and also church schools, playgroups and counselling services.

But most contact, by far, occurs *informally*, between attenders and other people in their everyday lives—at work, university or school, through recreation clubs, sport, community or interest groups, and with neighbours and friends. Attenders who have little contact with people not involved in churches may unwittingly be helping their congregations become closed systems, cut off and separate from the community.

'For a church to be involved in mission, it has to be in contact with the community it has committed itself to'

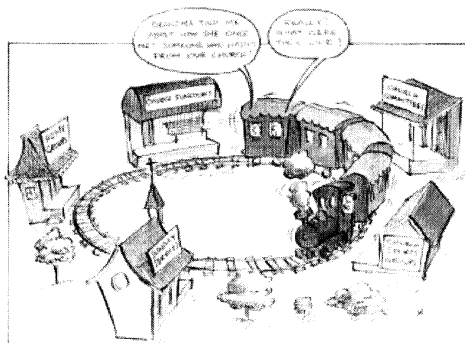
⁶ Handbook for Parish Pastoral Councils, Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese, 1999, p.7.

53

54

What we know

1. In the case of four out of ten church attenders, most or all of their friends attend a church. By contrast, in Australia at least, more than half of those who are not regular churchgoers have no close friends who are regular attenders.
2. We should not be afraid to encourage wider community involvement on the part of churchgoers. Attenders who are highly involved in community groups are also more likely to be highly involved in church life and to be growing in their faith.
3. It is characteristic of vital churches to have a strongly developed focus beyond themselves to the communities they seek to serve. Churches with this kind of focus are also more likely to
 - have a vision for the future that attenders are committed to
 - be more open to new initiatives or to implementing new directions.
4. Undergirding churches that are focused beyond themselves are
 - leaders that attenders feel are outwardly focused, who listen to them, and encourage them to use their gifts and inspire them to action
 - attenders that have an alive and growing faith and see their church as having a positive worship life that they find helpful.



A common reason given by attenders for not inviting someone to church is that they don't know people from outside the church or that their friends and contacts live too far away. The failure of church attenders to maintain contact with the community is a failure of mission and is probably at the heart of many stories of church decline.

What we can do

The first step in developing a missionary mindset is to work out which sections of the community you want to engage with. A comparison of the make-up of your church with that of the surrounding community may be a useful exercise: examine the commonalities and differences between the people of your church and those in the surrounding communities, then look for potential points of linkage.

This is not to say that all churches need to relate to all sections of their community. It may be more effective for you to develop a primary concern for a particular section or group. It may help to look at the other churches in your area, what they are like and what they are doing. Can you complement each other in your corner of God's kingdom?

Churches where attenders have little contact with people in the community may want to consider starting activities that put attenders in touch with others. It's not necessary to start a whole new program; simply asking a church member to attend a local community meeting or function can start the ball rolling. Alternatively, leaders can encourage attenders to make contact with people outside of church life, to get to know better the people in their street or workplace, or to get involved in sporting activities or community groups or networks.

As you focus on the wider community, your church will probably become aware of the need for new initiatives that build bridges to connect attenders with people outside the church. Your church may also need to reshape its worship to make it more engaging for those beyond the church community.

Questions to ask

1. What is the community we have a special concern for? Is it a geographical area or a particular group of people?
2. What are the distinctive characteristics of the community or people we seek to serve? What are their hopes and aspirations?
3. What are the different ways in which our church connects with the community or the people we are concerned for? [Make a list; you may be surprised at what you find.]
4. How can you develop closer contact with the groups you are concerned for? Are there people in your church whose networks and contacts make them important bridges into the community? Are new bridges needed to develop strong connections with people outside the church? What support or training would help people in your church to be more effective in relating to others?

See the *Connections for Life Profile* for your church to see how attenders responded in this area.

Interconnections

Other areas you may wish to consider in relation to a focus beyond ourselves include:

Faith & Worship

1. An alive and growing faith
2. Vital & nurturing worship (p32)

Our Life Together

3. Growth in belonging & involvement
4. An active concern for those on the fringe of church life (p42)
5. Care for young people

Community Connections

6. A focus beyond ourselves
7. Serving the wider community (p58)
8. Discussing faith & inviting others to church
9. Integrating newcomers

Vision & Purpose

10. A clear owned vision for the future (p72)
11. Openness to new possibilities (p76)
12. Empowering & inspiring leadership

Core Quality 7
Serving the wider community

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6.8 NRSV)

Most Christian traditions have a strong heritage of care for people who are poor, sick or marginalised. Most seek to speak for justice and for values and principles they consider important for the wellbeing of society. Following Jesus' exhortation to 'love your neighbour as you love yourself', churches and church people serve others in ways that make a significant contribution to the wider community.

The churches contribute to the material and social wellbeing of Australians and New Zealanders in a multitude of ways. Church and denominational agencies are the largest non-government providers of community and social welfare services, providing aged care, childcare and family, youth, unemployment and disability services. As well as providing material welfare such as food, clothing and furniture, they also provide counselling services and institutional chaplains. They are major providers of health care and of education, both at the primary and secondary school level, and are also the largest providers of pre-marriage and marriage relationship education.

In addition to the activities of denominational agencies, many congregations and parishes offer services and activities for the benefit of the wider community. Past survey results for Anglican and Protestant churches in Australia are illustrative: around 40% provide counselling services and over 60% provide material assistance. Around 30% run groups such as mothers groups and playgroups. A majority of churches participate in special community events and allow community groups of various kinds to use their property.

In addition, many attenders in their everyday lives are involved in serving the wider community and/or taking a stand on social issues. More than a quarter are involved in community care, welfare or social action groups beyond their congregations, and many are involved in community organisations of one sort or another.

Church attenders are much more likely to be involved in care, welfare or support groups than non-attenders. Former attenders are also more likely to be involved in such groups. The size of this volunteer workforce is huge, with hundreds of thousands of people making a regular commitment of time and energy. Their investment in society shouldn't be underestimated or undervalued. In an era when the social fabric of communities is under threat, the churches represent an important part of the glue that holds contemporary life together.

Older attenders are much more likely than others to be involved in community care, through participation in church-based care or justice activities and also through involvement in wider community groups. Younger people tend to contribute in their everyday lives at work, home and in the wider community.

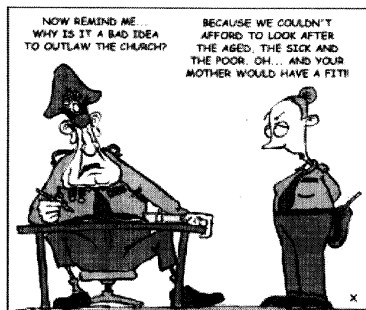
The higher levels of community care activity on the part of older people is no doubt a reflection of the fact that those who are retired or no longer have children at home have more time available to them; their greater involvement is a matter of life stage.

However, there is evidence to suggest that some forms of volunteerism are in decline in Western societies. In part this may be

Church attenders are much more likely to be involved in care, welfare or support groups than non-attenders

What we know

- In addition to denominational caring agencies, many individual congregations and parishes make a significant contribution to the communities they are part of.
- In their everyday lives, attenders also make a significant contribution. More than a quarter are involved in community care, welfare or social action groups not connected to their congregations. Church attenders are much more likely to be involved in care, welfare or support groups than non-attenders.
- Levels of growth in faith are higher among attenders involved in mission activities and wider community groups than among those who aren't.



due to social factors such as the increasing involvement of women in the workforce. If the trend away from involvement in community service is due to generational and social shifts, this may affect the ways in which churches can serve the wider community in the future.

Churches would do well to consider how best to encourage attenders to make a contribution to the community in the course of their everyday lives. What kinds of involvement are appropriate for people at different stages of life? How can we encourage those in the workforce, for instance, to make their contribution in that arena, living out their faith and their commitment to others sacrificially in that context?

The larger a congregation, the less likely it is that its people will get involved in community groups. However, larger congregations are more likely than others to run their own social action or welfare activities.

Contrary to what many may think, higher church involvement on the part of attenders does not lead to insularity. Those who are more involved in church life are often more involved in wider community groups as well.

Growth in faith among attenders is also higher among those involved in mission activities and wider community groups. While we can't say which comes first, it's clear that faith prompts community involvement, which in turn stretches and develops faith.

The 2001 survey asked attenders to say how they had helped others in informal ways, such as by lending money to someone outside their family, caring for someone who was very sick, giving money or possessions to someone in need or contacting an MP or councillor about a public issue. Analysis of the results so far suggests similar patterns to those revealed by previous research: those contributing to the needs of others are more likely to be growing in their faith.

What we can do

What sort of community involvement is appropriate? Many churches don't have a local focus but have a concern for a region, an ethnic group, an age group or particular interest groups. Many churches have a stated or implied local focus but are actually regional in terms of the people they attract to their activities. In thinking about how we can effectively engage the wider community, it's important for us to be clear about the communities or people we want to be involved with.

To provide effective care for people in the wider community, churchgoers will need to develop skills in listening. There are too many stories from our missionary history of well-meaning people going into cross-cultural situations with their ears closed and their mouths blazing! Understanding where people are coming from is essential in any relationship. Building quality relationships between church and community will involve two-way communication.

Sometimes churches become caught up in planning activities or creating organisations that are hard to maintain. There are many simple ways of making a contribution to the wider community. Activities that can be adapted and changed and require little maintenance are often the most effective.

Churches are often more involved in the wider community than they think. Very often people are making a contribution in ways that no-one else is aware of. It may be helpful for churches to encourage people to talk about the various links they have with the local community and how they may be contributing in the workplace or the wider society. This involvement in the community can then be celebrated and intentionally supported. Discussion about the issue may produce ideas about how people can build on the connections or extend them.

Some traditions emphasise sharing faith and reaching the unchurched. Others stress serving the community, particularly those who are hurting or in need. There have been heated discussions in some denominations about the relative importance of word and deed in mission. Our research among Anglican and Protestant attenders in Australia suggests that, in practice, most people don't make a sharp distinction between spreading the gospel and having a social concern; they see words and actions as needing to be held together.



Questions to ask

1. To what extent does our church inspire attenders to make a contribution to the lives of others?
2. What are members of your congregation doing as part of the wider community? How active is your congregation in supporting people involved in community groups?
3. For people we have a special concern for, or people in the wider community, what are the issues that most concern them and what are their hopes? Are there ways in which we can be of help to them?

See the *Connections for Life Profile* for your church to see how attenders responded in this area.

Interconnections

Other areas you may wish to consider in relation to serving the wider community include:

Faith & Worship

1. An alive and growing faith
2. Vital & nurturing worship

Our Life Together

3. Growth in belonging & involvement
4. An active concern for those on the fringe of church life (p42)
5. Care for young people

Community Connections

6. A focus beyond ourselves (p54)
7. Serving the wider community
8. Discussing faith & inviting others to church
9. Integrating newcomers

Vision & Purpose

10. A clear owned vision for the future
11. Openness to new possibilities
12. Empowering & inspiring leadership