

Mission Stories and Appreciative Inquiry

The Mission Stories process is ideal for the “Discover” part of an appreciative inquiry, and can lead into the “Dream”, “Design” and “Deliver” phases.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a discernment, planning and decision making process that moves beyond problem solving. Whereas the basic assumption underlying the problem solving approach regards organizing as a problem to be solved, appreciative inquiry sees organizing as a mystery or miracle to be embraced.

Appreciative Inquiry is often described as a discernment journey of four phases: Discover, Dream, Design & Deliver.

Discover Phase

In Discover the focus is on appreciating and valuing ‘the best of what is or what has been’. The emphasis is on what gives life to the context/person/organization – what happens when it is at its best. This is done through sharing stories guided by set questions. An important principle of the Discover Phase is to let every voice be heard.

We have designed Mission Stories to include small and large group discussion, research and documentation that will provide an overview of our current understanding, awareness and experience.

1. Local Context

What do we believe God is calling us to be and do in this place and time? Do our mission statements and vision statements communicate this effectively? Do we match intelligent vision and courageous action?

2. Compassionate Community

How do we live out our call to be the community of Christ, embodying the values of the gospel? What are our shared values? What are our shared missional priorities that shape the way we invest our time, energy and funds?

3. Empowering Disciples

How do we equip and resource people to respond to the call of God in their lives? What does that mean for people who are regarded as members of our community of faith? What does that mean for people who are on the margins of our community?

4. Partners in Mission

With whom will we collaborate in pursuing God’s vision for this place and time? What do we know about the work done by congregations, agencies, community organisations and individuals in our context?

5. Who are your People?

Who are the people groups that God is connecting us with? To which people groups do we relate naturally? To which groups do we need to build bridges?

6. Community of Integrity

How do we hold together the many aspects of God’s mission?

Dream Phase

The Dream Phase is about envisioning what might be in the near future. What might our participation in the mission of God look like in ten years time? Participants seek to discern what the Spirit of God is calling us to be by pulling together all that's been shared in Discover.

The dream process encourages the development of challenging proposals that are grounded in reality, expressed in bold, challenging terms and in the present tense, as though it were already happening. Shared dreams need to be congruent with our values and something we'd be passionate about seeing realized.

Local Context

What do we believe God is calling us to be and do in this place and time? How might this shared dream bring this to fruition?

Compassionate Community

How will this shared dream help us to live out our call to be the community of Christ, embodying the values of the gospel?

Empowering Disciples

How will we equip and resource people to respond to the call of God in their lives?

Partners in Mission

Who will we collaborate with in pursuing God's vision for this place and time?

Who are your People?

Who are the people groups that God is calling us to connect with?

Community of Integrity

How will we hold together the many aspects of God's mission?

Design Phase

Here the emphasis is on identifying the action areas and organizational arrangements needed to turn the overarching vision into reality. It's about determining the operational implications of the challenges that have been embraced.

The task here is to identify the cultural and behavioural changes, systems, issues and strategies necessary to fulfil the vision together with the relevant accountabilities, resources and timeframes. Findings are shared among all groups for ownership in plenary. Who will go? Who will they go to? How will they relate?

Deliver Phase

In the final phase the focus is on integrating the outcomes of the Design Phase into the organization overall. Attention is given to identifying the structures, systems, processes, relationships, identity perceptions & behaviours and communication strategies that will keep the vision alive.