



Baptist Churches
of NSW & ACT

Cycle of Discovery
Information Booklet

Prepared by the Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT

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Version 1.0

Introduction

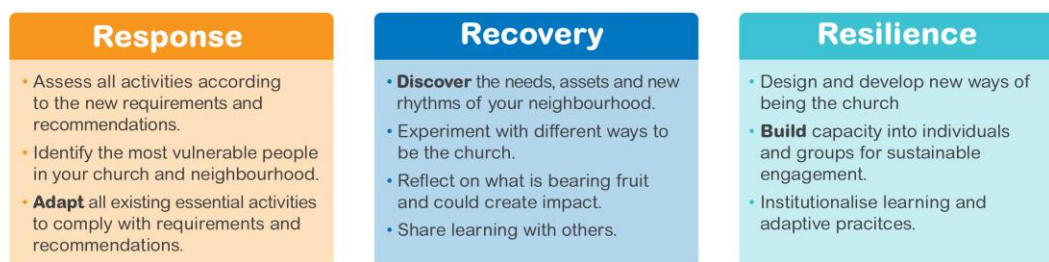
Late 2019 and early 2020 saw unprecedented disaster for Australians. The prolonged drought followed by a devastating bushfire season was then broken by floods. Just as communities were beginning to rebuild following the fires, the Covid-19 global pandemic brought daily routines and many livelihoods to a grinding halt. Churches, like many entities, have been grappling with how to worship, serve and engage during this difficult season.

Because they are grounded in place, churches are well-positioned to minister to communities in a time of crisis and have a long-term recovery function to play for their congregations and local communities.

The aim of this document is to introduce the Cycle of Discovery, a tool that assists in the discovery phase of the Response Framework for adaptive capacity-building and engagement for churches. This framework is based on disaster response, recovery and individual and community resilience.

Response Framework

In times of disaster and emergency, governments, organisations and communities go through a process of response, recovery and building resilience.



<https://vimeo.com/405398594>

This is the framework that we're using to support you and your church and one of the ways we can assist you in leading your church within the broader community.

The *response* phase is the immediate reaction we have to the crisis. It will occur at the onset of the crisis and can reoccur when new information or realities emerge. In the response phase it is important to:

- Stay up-to-date
- Assess all activities according to the new requirements and recommendations
- Identify the most vulnerable people in your church and neighbourhood
- **Adapt** all existing essential activities to comply with requirements and recommendations

The *resilience* phase is the new growth that occurs out of the crisis. It is the result of a positive response and creative recovery and is a time to move from survival to flourishing

In the resilience phase it is important to:

- Design, develop and articulate new ways of being the church
- **Build** capacity into individuals and groups for sustainable engagement
- Capture and normalise learning and adaptive practices to thrive and better respond to future crisis.

The middle *recovery* phase is the beginning of developing a new normal. This part of a crisis is organic and experimental in nature and transformative by necessity. In the recovery phase it is important to:

- **Discover** the needs, assets and new rhythms of your church and neighbourhood
- Experiment with different ways to be the church
- Reflect on what is bearing fruit and could create impact
- Share learning with others

One of the tools we will be utilising in this phase is the Cycle of Discovery.

Cycle of Discovery

As we see the restrictions around the coronavirus ease, have you considered that church will look different post-COVID? That things won't just go back to the way they were. Society has changed and the question for individuals, churches, organisations and even whole communities is, how do we come back stronger? What will be our new normal?

In a disaster recovery framework, the recovery phase is when communities start to see some restoration of normalcy while also embracing the possibility that the rebuild could make infrastructure and community social fabric, stronger than before. In our adapted recovery framework, this stage is about discovering a new rhythm of life and ministry that is stronger, healthier and more resilient than before.

I wonder what resilient churches and communities will look like in a world where global pandemics could happen again? I wonder how our experiences during this

time will shape the way we gather, or make disciples, or practice community and love our neighbours?

In the recovery phase, we want to encourage discovery and experimentation. It is about being willing to try new things, fail forward and learning. It's about sharing these stories, the wins and the loses, with others.

We know that people are experiencing information overload, so the Baptist Association have produced an infographic and template to help churches navigate the Recovery phase well and to discern what training, content or resources might be helpful for them and their communities.



CYCLE OF DISCOVERY

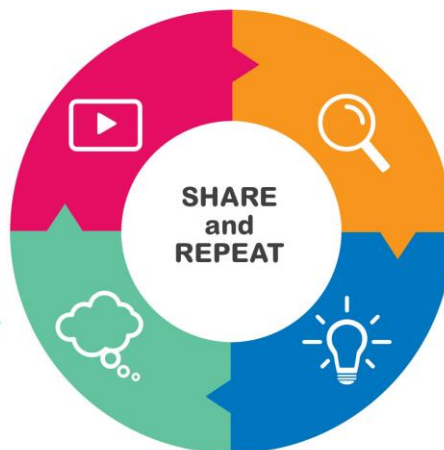
An agile approach to Life and Ministry

ACT: I will

Give it a try. Put your new insights into action and reflect on how it went. What could you do differently next time?

DREAM: I wonder

Begin to dream about how this shapes the way you could be the church.



OBSERVE: I see

Create a list of how life has changed. What are people doing differently? What are the assets and strengths in your church and neighbourhood?

INFER: I think

Discuss together how to make sense of what you have observed.

Introduction to Process - <https://vimeo.com/418724056>

Role Play on use of Cycle - <https://vimeo.com/418678764>

We would encourage churches to empower a team that can meet regularly to work through this cycle of action and reflection, developing an agile approach to life and ministry.

1. I see...create a list of how life has changed, what are people doing differently, what are the assets in your church and neighbourhood? What do you do well as a church and what are the strengths of the individuals in your church community? What needs do you see?
2. I think...discuss together how to make sense of what you've observed?
3. I wonder...begin to dream about how this shapes the way you could be the church
4. I will...give it a try, put your new insights into action and reflect on how it went – what you could do differently next time?

It is important for the group to then share any relevant learning or stories and repeat the cycle again each time they meet. As we do this, we become adaptive and agile, able to respond to a God who is always at work and a world that is constantly changing.

The makeup of the group is also something to consider wisely, so that you get a breadth of perspective. For example:

- Who has a pastoral heart for the church, to see the church grow to maturity?
- Who can bring the voice of the vulnerable in the community?
- Who has a passion for evangelism and can share the good news in this age?
- Who has a global perspective?
- Who thinks differently? Who is someone who challenges the status quo?
- Who will bring the voice of children and young people?
- Who is pulling thoughts together and formulating a plan?

Reflection

The Cycle of Discovery is based on the belief that God is already at work and invites His church to join in His purposes for all creation¹. It is a key part of discipleship and starts with the invitation to see where God is already working.

In John 5 Jesus said, “My Father is always at his work...the Son... can only do what he sees his Father doing”. The emphasis on the need for observation in discipleship extended to the way Jesus invited people to be his disciples, “come and see” (Jn 1:39) he told them. And in Luke’s account it was when the first disciples see the abundance of fish from their obedience to Jesus’ direction that they “left everything and followed him” (Lk 5:11).

Paul’s life of discipleship began with an encounter of Jesus on the road to Damascus. This appearance of the risen Jesus was central to what Paul received and passed on (1 Cor 15:3-8).

Each new step of discipleship begins with seeing. Think about it. The Gentile inclusion in the spread of the gospel began with Peter’s vision (Acts 10:11-20) and in Antioch it was when Barnabas “saw the evidence of God’s grace” that he encouraged them to remain true to the Lord.

Barnabas and Paul then take their observations to the Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15), sharing stories of God's work amongst the Gentiles along the way (v3).

At the Council, the apostles and elders met to think through the question of Gentile inclusion, given the reports of what had been seen. James then proposed the new form for the church and the whole church decided to set aside messengers to communicate this new direction.

The cycle of discovery is supported by the research into inquiry and visible learning. Inquiry based learning “can be defined as ‘seeking for truth, information or knowledge / understanding”². It is about self-motivated curiosity and wondering. The aspects of visible learning the Cycle of Discovery draws on include, formative evaluation, feedback, self-verbalisation, questioning etc.

Conclusion

Finally, we would love to hear and share stories of what churches are discovering and how you are experimenting. You can send us an email or tag us in your social media posts. Consider even using these hashtags: #ourstory; #nswactbaptists

As a movement let’s continue to stand together in responding to COVID locally and globally. To assist you with this process we have formatted the Cycle of Discovery onto a double-sided template that may assist you in utilising it in your own context.

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